



**FARMERS
FIGHTING
POVERTY**

Evidence of Impact

2010

AGRICORD





Evidence of Impact, 2010

Impact on living conditions of farmers through support to farmers' organisations

M&E task team

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Preface

The national farmers' organisations of Belgium, Canada (Quebec), Finland, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden join in AgriCord, and support "Farmers Fighting Poverty", with the conviction that only by working together can farmers break their isolation, enter the market place and pull themselves out of poverty. Farmers' own organisations can provide farm and business services, institutional access, confidence and voice to their poor members.

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For this reason, we work to build stronger farmers' organisations together with our fellow farmers in the rural areas of developing countries. This is not an easy task in often challenging environments. Investments have to be made with a long term view, and we thank our donors for supporting this effort.

The "Evidence of Impact" report is prepared each year for the General Assembly of AgriCord. Its purpose is to present the effects and impacts of the Farmers Fighting Poverty programme based on available evidence from activities in the year before.

Additional information and discussion of the concerns regarding impact can also be found in the Mid-term Performance Audit, which is available on request. A review meeting was organised in Brussels, March 2010.

Special thanks is due to the M&E task team (Nancy Jaspers, Ngolia Kimanzu, Jur Schuurman and Pekka Jamsen), who as part of the AgriCord Project Committee are monitoring this process. They provided insight and conceptual guidance.

The "Evidence of Impact 2010" report has been prepared by Julie Harrod from material provided by the AgriCord agri-agencies. Kaisu-Leena Rajala has worked in translating documents from French and Spanish, and providing summaries of their content. The team at AgriCord, including Marjolijn Hondebrink, Anne Kluivers and Marina Vanhecke have answered questions and made translations and clarifications throughout the writing process.

The Evidence of Impact 2010 report illustrates how farmers' organisations are becoming stronger and how the lives of farmers and their families are improving. This encourages us to continue with the next phase of "Farmers Fighting Poverty" in the coming years.

Ignace Coussement

MANAGING DIRECTOR
MAY 2010

Summary

“Farmers Fighting Poverty” is in operation since 2007. It operates as a fund managed by AgriCord, and provides support to farmers’ organisations in the developing world. At heart this is an exercise in alleviating poverty, because the rural poor are some of the neediest people in the world, and they number more than 800 million.

AgriCord was established in 2003. Its members include the following seven agri-agencies, which represent their respective national farmers’ organisations:

- AFDI for FNSEA, APCA, CNJA, CNMCCA (France)
- Agriterra for LTO, SSVO, NCR and NAJK (The Netherlands)
- CSA for Fédération Wallonne de l’Agriculture (Belgique)
- FERT for the group Céréalières de France (AGPB, AGPM, ARVALIS, UNIGRAINS)
- SCC for the Federation of Swedish Farmers (Sweden)
- Trias for Boerenbond, Landelijke Gilden, KVLV and KLJ (Belgium)
- UPA DI for l’Union des Producteurs Agricoles (Québec, Canada).

As Farmers Fighting Poverty moves into its second phase, this document presents a qualitative assessment of impact evidence collected from various sources. More than 80 projects were examined and about half of them selected for inclusion. The aim was to illustrate that effective support to farmers’ organisations can take many forms. Certain themes emerged, including markets, credit and savings schemes, organic production, agro-forestry and an agro-ecological approach, and a range of technical innovations.

The first phase of Farmers Fighting Poverty had 19 work areas. In the second phase these have been revised and consolidated into just four areas, which have been used as a framework to present the evidence:



Work area 1: Organisational strength and inclusiveness

Strengthening farmers' organisations is the crucial foundation of the Farmers Fighting Poverty approach, but it is a long and somewhat invisible process. However, the evidence suggests that farmers' organisations are slowly becoming more inclusive and better able to provide the services demanded by their members. There is good evidence that women and young people are becoming more involved in farmers' organisations and benefiting from support projects, and the same is true of people affected by HIV and AIDS. Women certainly appear to have gained confidence, and the increased income to families is often spent on education, which is a vital part of bringing people out of poverty.

Institutional capacity has increased, often from lengthy association and support. And stronger farmers' organisations can often access funds from other sources once they have shown that they are democratically run and have proper financial controls. It also appears that having an assured source of funding allows farmers' organisations to be more creative and adventurous in the way they provide services to their members.

Work area 2: Institutional development

There is some evidence that farmers' organisations are making connections with parallel organisations as well as with public and private institutions. Links with micro-finance institutions has been used as a means of providing health information (so-called 'credit with education' methods), an effective way of improving businesses at the same time as well-being.

Farmer-to-farmer exchanges have provided good opportunities to learn and share experience. Improving the quality of what they grow has allowed some cooperatives to sign trade agreements and become more commercial. The income of farmers' organisations has increased and this in turn allows them to provide better services to their members.

Other links are needed where there is potential conflict, such as between pastoralists and farmers. Developing the capacity of a farmer group has been shown to raise its profile and enable it to negotiate on a 'level playing field' about issues such as land rights.

Work area 3: Policy elaboration and advocacy

This too is an area where change is gradual, but already there is evidence that targeted support has made a difference. In some cases, national legislation has been changed in ways that benefit farmers' organisations, such as ensuring their voice is heard when relevant laws are under discussion. In other cases, small farmers have won important land rights that affect the way they can use the land and pass it on to future generations.

Work area 4: Business development

In the broad field of business development, there is evidence that farmers' organisations can help small farmers to become rural entrepreneurs. Various technical innovations have been introduced to improve the yield and quality of a range of crops and livestock. Improved incomes have been seen from different approaches – diversification in some cases, concentrating on fewer products in others. Micro-finance has also been important in improving livelihoods, as has improved access to markets. Information technology has also been important in spreading market information.

Challenges

Despite evidence that Farmers Fighting Poverty is having an impact, and that farmers' organisations are becoming stronger, there is still much to do. One critical issue is that many small farmers are still too poor to afford membership fees, so the organisations need support until they are truly sustainable. During this phase, it is important to make sure that organisations remain accountable to their members even though they have obligations to answer 'upwards' to donors. And to reach the farmers still living in extreme poverty, who are too busy simply subsisting to become part of the commercial world, efforts will need to be redoubled.

Introduction

Even though there have been tremendous increases in agricultural productivity throughout the world, there are still 800 million hungry people in the rural parts of developing countries. Most of them are small farmers and their families. The focus of the second phase of Farmers Fighting Poverty is on creating strong farmers' organisations that can make the lives of their members less precarious. Projects supported under the Farmers Fighting Poverty strategic framework have already reached more than 2.4 million farmers in 61 developing countries. In 2009, there were 314 projects involving partnerships with 189 farmers' organisations: 38% of the participants were women.

The Farmers Fighting Poverty strategic framework was developed to formalise farmer-to-farmer mechanisms of support. It strengthens farmers' organisations so they can provide better and more wide-ranging services to their members. Experience shows that the economic development brought about through the activities of dynamic farmers' organisations has wider benefits too, including more democracy and a better deal for women.

Farmers Fighting Poverty 2

Working through farmers' organisations rather than giving direct support to individual farmers is a deliberate strategy to improve democracy at the same time as reducing poverty and increasing food security. The common sayings, 'a group is greater than the sum of its parts,' 'united we stand, divided we fall' and 'there is strength in numbers,' may be well-worn, but they hold more than a grain of truth. Whether it involves sharing knowledge, setting up markets or lobbying for fairer policies, a well-run farmers' organisation is ideally placed to support its members, and Farmers Fighting Poverty builds on these inherent group strengths.

Throughout this document, the term 'farmers' organisation' is used as shorthand for a broad range of groups. It covers the many types of association – including cooperatives, unions and rural women's organisations – that may be formed by producers, peasant farmers, smallholders and rural dwellers.

The term also includes more general associations concerned with commodities, politics and economic services, and covers too those in emergent stages. The common thread is that their members are all involved in the land, whether in agriculture, horticulture or forestry.

Strength in an organisation does not appear overnight. It is an unseen quality that flows to a great extent from its leaders. And given that the leaders of a farmers' organisation are chosen from within its ranks, it is not surprising that they suffer the same disadvantages faced by small farmers all over the developing world – poor education, a lack of role models and little financial or management experience.

Developing leaders - teaching them how an organisation works and what constitutes a democratic group where women take positions of responsibility - is a slow process. But without leaders there will be no farmers' organisations, so Farmers Fighting Poverty places great emphasis on this aspect of support.

Evidence of Impact 2010 presents stories 'harvested' from farmers' organisations as well as results and comments taken from formal project evaluations (both internal and external). The stories are arranged by the four 'work areas' defined by the Farmers Fighting Poverty strategic framework. The 17 work areas referred to in Evidence of Impact 2009 have become 'deliverables' grouped thematically. Gender and environmental sustainability are cross-cutting issues that are considered in every project.

The material presented makes no claim to be exhaustive; rather the aim is to show the range of interventions that have proved successful, and to illustrate that support to farmers' organisations can take many forms. This sort of reporting is largely qualitative. There are also problems of attribution (it can be difficult to be sure that any change for the better results from a particular intervention), but it is important



nonetheless, presenting as it does the genuine voice of individuals who have benefited from being members of stronger, better farmers' organisations.

Agro-info.net (AIN) is an online database that covers all relevant aspects of the Farmers Fighting Poverty programme. Information on each project is available with a description, targets, financing, approval process and progress. This information can be accessed at www.agro-info.net and guarantees transparency of the Farmers Fighting Poverty process. In this report, projects are referenced by their AIN number.

Farmers' organisations often have long names in the language of their home country. For simplicity, this report refers to most of them by their acronyms. The full names can be found by looking on Agro-info.net under the relevant project number.

Emerging themes

Farmers' organisations can bring technical innovations to farmers in diverse ways. This report highlights innovative approaches although the nature of the tailored support given to each farmers' organisation means that they do not fall into neat categories. Five emerging themes and relevant examples are given below.

Markets

Markets are a significant area where there is clear evidence of impact. Being able to reach a market has a strong, direct effect on farm incomes, and markets are also good places to provide financial services and inputs for farmers. Market infrastructure is important: well-designed space for selling, with easy access for transport; secure storage for unsold produce, and longer-term storerooms for non-perishable goods that might reach a higher price at a later date all need careful consideration. But a market is process as well as a facility. Farmers need access to price information and fair weights and measures. Sellers may need to clean or process commodities. It has taken ten years of concerted action with MVIWATA to set up six new rural

markets in Tanzania, managed by small local groups of key market stakeholders, including representatives of farmers' organisations.¹ Sales volumes and range of products on offer are good ways of judging how useful a market is to the surrounding population: on these measures the new markets are flourishing, even if the profit made by each market is not large.

Savings and credit cooperative organisations (SACCOs)

A recurring theme is the proliferation of micro-finance banks known as SACCOs. Farmers can be affiliates of these cooperatives, which allow their members to take out small loans at affordable interest rates to expand their businesses. For example, working with the Cooperative Bank of Kenya, a community-based micro-finance initiative was set up especially for low-income small-scale entrepreneurs, including farmers, who would otherwise find it difficult to obtain a loan.² The project encouraged SACCOs to work as financial intermediaries for rural communities. As well as taking out loans, members were able to build savings, and more women were reached in 2009 than the year before. Other examples abound, and the voices of some of the beneficiaries can be heard in the stories presented below.

Organic production

Organic production and certification is another approach, particularly in Latin America. Organic and fair-trade produce has a growing market in the developed world, and switching to this way of production can give growers a higher-value crop that requires fewer expensive inputs. Members of 38 coffee-growing cooperatives (allied to PRODECOOP) in Nicaragua earn 20% more for their coffee and production has increased by 25% since the project started.³

Another project with CEDECO, targeting farmers in Central America whose average income is less than \$2 a day, has increased organic production to save money

1 FERT and MVIWATA (2009) *Rural Markets – FERT and MVIWATA's Experience in Supporting the Marketing of Agricultural Products in Tanzania*

2 *Agro-info.net (AIN) 5396, SCC*

3 *AIN 5433, SCC*

on inputs.⁴ There are now 120 organic plots (there were none at the start of the project) and 200 more are in transition. And in Guatemala, 12 coffee cooperatives (FECECOCAGUA) have pushed productivity up 10% per year (and 20% on demonstration plots).⁵ The cooperatives now have better internal controls and have kept their fair trade and organic certification. Applying agricultural best practice has reduced production costs and stabilised the incomes of cooperative members.

Agro-forestry and an ecological approach

These approaches can be effective for farmers in marginal areas. In a project with the Tanzania Association of Foresters, 48,000 farmers were reported to have improved capacity in agro-forestry methods of production. Maize, dairy products and honey all saw increased production, food security was improved up to 60% in some villages, and the increased income gave farmers the opportunity to join SACCOs and take out business loans. And there are more women members (70%) of these savings organisations than men.⁶

Another project in Costa Rica (with FECOOPA) chose to use agro-ecological methods to increase food security in a sustainable manner. Cooperative members (more than 1,800 people) now have better nutrition from a broader range of food, and the co-ops have moved away from the mono-cropping that was having detrimental effects on the social and natural environment.⁷

In Honduras, 17 communities (about 90% of the people living in the Tawahka Asangni biosphere reserve) are involved (with ICADE) in surveillance to protect forests and watersheds.⁸ Illegal logging and deforestation have been reduced by about 80%. At the same time, the communities are getting better yields of food crops, and are using solar dryers in some cases to reduce post-harvest losses. Kitchen gardens have been set up to produce vegetables fruit and non-traditional crops, and fish farming and poultry have also been introduced. People living here now have a better diet and cash income from selling excess. A good proportion (more than 40%) of women participated in all projects, and women have more than half the director

posts in the communities and training activities. Conserving biodiversity at the same time as protecting livelihoods cannot be done without understanding local groups' natural coexistence with the forest, which is why support through a farmers' organisation is so effective. However, even though progress has been made, the communities are not yet ready to deal with the remaining challenges alone.

Technical innovations

New technology to improve agricultural productivity will not reach farmers in remote areas of developing countries unless deliberate efforts are made. Farmers' organisations are ideally placed to do this. Under a project in Honduras with UNICOOP, 57 groups of *campesinos* (peasant farmers) now grow a wider range of crops and use micro-irrigation to extend the growing season.⁹ Individual farmers have adopted new technology and now have small greenhouses; some also follow organic principles. Farmer groups have learned that poor farmers can be productive using local resources.

In the south of Madagascar, 1,700 farmers reported better yields as a result of increased productivity of cassava, rice and pulses. They also learned how to farm fish and use more diverse production systems.¹⁰

In Morocco, cooperatives found that traditional silos maintain low temperatures and are better for storing grain than metal silos. Wheat producers have been able to cut costs by sowing seed directly, which uses less seed and is twice as fast as using traditional cultivation methods. There have been experiments using direct sowing machines using animal traction. And by using nitrogen fertilizer rationally they avoid waste and improve wheat quality.¹¹

4 AIN 5420, SCC

5 AIN 5425, SCC

6 Not yet on *Agro-info.net*. SCC project no. P821

7 AIN 5419, SCC

8 AIN 5432, SCC

9 AIN 5427, SCC

10 AIN 5351, AFDI and FERT

11 AIN 4951, Agriterra and FERT



Work Area 1: Organisational Strength and Inclusiveness

The fight against rural poverty starts with farmers themselves, through collective action which contributes to rural society and markets both horizontally and vertically. Farmers' organisations can be highly effective agents of poverty reduction via a series of economic and advocacy roles, but only if they are well organised internally, genuinely representative of farmers, and well embedded within the institutional fabric of the country. Their potential for poverty reduction, in proportional to their scale of operation as institutions, is huge.

Farmers' organisations need active members who are informed, motivated and keen to participate. They must represent a substantial proportion of the farmers, both women and men, in their area of operation. This strong membership base gives farmers' organisations economic leverage and allows them to include the poor (although specific actions might be needed to urge them to effectively do so), to transmit the voice of the genuine farmer, to influence policies and to contribute to the structure of rural society and markets.

Farmers Fighting Poverty supports farmers' organisations to improve the way they consult their members and disseminate information, and to widen their membership and improve accountability. It also draws specific attention and promotes actions to address the needs of women, young people and other vulnerable groups. And it strengthens other organisational aspects of farmers' organisations such as financial management, managing human resources, and monitoring and evaluation.

Farmers Fighting Poverty 2

Fostering strong, inclusive farmers' organisations

Helping organisations to become stronger and more inclusive is a complicated, lengthy process. Agri-agencies have to take the long view and make firm commitments. They also need to be creative in finding new solutions to fit particular circumstances, rather than take a one-size-fits-all approach.

There is clear evidence that, with support under the Farmers Fighting Poverty framework, organisations have become stronger. They have also reached out to those who are often excluded from development, such as women and the younger generation, as well as those affected by HIV and AIDS. These positive results have not appeared quickly: many are only seen after prolonged periods of cooperation.

Young people in Uganda (Uganda Cooperative Alliance)

Uganda is a country of young people: 47% of the population is below 15 years old. But this group carries the burden of unemployment, with many young people marginalized and under-deployed. The Youth Economic

Empowerment through Cooperatives project (YEECO) was set up in 2002 and has just come to the end of its second phase.¹² The project targeted young people aged 15-35 and explored how the cooperative model could be used to create economic empowerment: almost 12,000 become involved in 61 cooperative groups. Most are farmers or part-time farmers who rely on family for labour; they are also involved in part-time informal and formal business ventures such as repairing bicycles, shop-keeping, and running enterprises based on agriculture.

The project was designed to address the needs and priorities identified by the youth groups themselves. Gender was mainstreamed throughout the project, and there were slightly more female participants overall. Young people evidently have the potential to set up and successfully manage enterprises, and youth groups seem to be effective ways of creating employment and training future leaders.

This augurs well for the future of the Uganda Cooperative Alliance, as the young members learn cooperative values and principles, and gain the leadership and

¹² AIN 5385, SCC

management skills needed to take the UCA forward. Most of the youth cooperatives have joined existing area cooperative enterprises and local savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs).¹³ These enable young people to operate savings accounts and take out loans at affordable interest rates.

Young people now have access to and participate in markets. The concept of collective marketing is established: 60% of the groups set up village markets and market information centres, and 70% of the members of all groups claimed to use this information. Revenue to members increased by 47% on average during the four-year project period, and income to the marketing cooperatives increased by over 400%. These increases came from improved productivity, access to better markets and the setting of informed rates of commission. One youth group was able in 2006 to get a 39% higher sale price than the prevailing local rate – this premium increased to 62% in 2009. Another group obtained a 25% higher price for bulk tomatoes in 2009. At least one group has built a store to reduce pre-sale loss of produce.

An unexpected benefit of the project is that the youth cooperatives have become community reference points for social and economic issues, as well as for health and education matters. They have on occasion acted as delivery channels for other development agents. Some groups have actively spread awareness of environmental protection, gender equality and healthy living, often through music, dance, drama and sport.

The youth groups are now at different stages of development. Some still need support to build proper management structures, which will be vital for their survival, financial accountability and sustainability as the YEECO project ends. But a recent evaluation judged that most benefits accruing to the organisations and their members are sustainable, and the viability of youth savings and credit cooperatives has been demonstrated. It also found that the project had been effective in imparting job creation skills and organizing young people into self-sustaining groups.

Tanzanian farmers survive drought (MVIWAMO)

Agriculture employs 80% of the workforce in Tanzania and contributes 40% of GDP. Smallholder farming dominates, and poverty reduction initiatives hinge on growth in export crops, food grain and livestock. But the country suffers periodic droughts, storage and

processing facilities are inadequate, and markets can be unreliable.

An evaluation of the Agro-Pastoralists Productivity Improvement Project (APPIP) found that institutional capacity and the capacity of leaders and local networks of farmers' organisations in the Arusha region of Tanzania had improved.¹⁴ Small-scale farmers and livestock keepers were becoming more commercially minded, and were increasingly using improved seeds and relevant inputs to increase productivity. The project used many approaches: training 70% of farmers on common livestock diseases and installing 'para-vets', has reduced the incidence of serious animal disease. Bringing in cross-bred goats and hens, and artificial insemination for cattle has made it possible to reduce household food shortage.

Unfortunately the severe drought of 2009 killed 80% of livestock and left granaries and reservoirs empty. But supporting farmer savings and credit schemes allowed farmers to access loans to improve their business and household conditions, and many women are able to borrow money too. The project encourages farmers to join or form producer groups – there are now over 100 groups with over 1,000 members, more than 800 of them women.

“From the training and other forms of exposure I saw the need to reduce my herd of cattle from 84 to 21 and the number of goats from 100 to 36. I use money from sale of animals to invest in other businesses – e.g. buying and selling of livestock which seems to be profitable. Soon I will go into poultry. For me the danger of losing a large number of animals due to drought is almost averted.”

Saruni Ndiaka from Namanga, Longido division

“Previously I did not know the value of raising chickens, but the training organized by APPIP opened my eyes and I started with four hens and two cocks. I observed the ideas and advice of an extension officer who visited me regularly, I used proper feeds. At present I have a total of 60 chickens and I can see some progress. I am able to earn at least SEK 67.80 per week from sale of eggs. I use the money to meet household expenses and to pay school contributions for my children”.

Samwel Ng'eselai, a farmer at Namanga.

13 See the story of Mugerwa Wilson below.

14 AIN 5387, SCC



Small farmers in Nicaragua increase food production (UNAG-Chontales)

Latin America as a whole has suffered from the global downturn, which has led to a decrease in remittances and a fall in exports and foreign investments. Poverty now affects 34% of the population, and women and ethnic groups are more likely to be poor.

Against this background, one organisation of small and medium sized producers in the Chontales district of Nicaragua (UNAG-Chontales) has been cooperating with Agriterra for more than a decade.¹⁵ A recent review of project support said the greatest contribution in terms of Farmers Fighting Poverty was to increase food production and to bring producers together to market their produce. A focus on organisational strengthening led to good participation by women and young people at all levels in various events. In terms of effects on livelihoods, help with production and technical aspects (buying and distributing seeds and tools for communal use, and encouraging farmers to adopt new techniques) were important. Maize yields increased by 35% and beans by 23% overall, and all communities improved the quality of their crops.

Building capacity to combat HIV and AIDS in East Africa

The HIV epidemic takes many people from the workplace during their most productive years. Preventing new infections and mitigating the effect on infected people and their families is a high priority, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. This project aimed specifically to help partner farmers' organisations to mainstream HIV and AIDS in their development work, targeting Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.¹⁶ More than 28,000 people were reached by various initiatives and training courses.

The farmers' organisations' capacity was strengthened in this important area. Six out of ten partner organisations now have HIV and AIDS mainstreaming plans, and all ten have introduced workplace policies on HIV. More than half have put in place trained focal point persons and workplace committees, both of which are significant from the point of view of human resources. The Uganda Cooperative Alliance successfully applied for funding from ILO CoopAfrica to combat HIV/AIDS.

¹⁵ AIN 5100, Agriterra

¹⁶ AIN 5401, SCC

The project contributed to poverty alleviation directly (through livelihood interventions) and indirectly (by making people more aware of the virus and how it passes from person to person). People living with HIV were supported to continue being productive. It is difficult to assess the degree of impact, but an evaluation reported that target households had increased their income levels and that the effect of AIDS had been mitigated somewhat.

Long-term support to the Zambia National Farmers Union

More than two-thirds (67%) of Zambians live in rural areas, and most of them are small farmers. Agriculture generates 22% of GDP and provides livelihood for more than half the population. The ZNFU represents 50,000 farmers, big and small, and its alliance with SCC was formed in the mid-1990s. ZNFU is unusual in that it includes both big and small farmers but, as the latter could not afford subscription fees, the union needed support. SCC was determined to give sustainable support rather than handouts. The relationship has not been entirely smooth, but the fundamental tenet of long-term capacity building has always been kept in sight.

In the early days, the focus was on reaching more members, encouraging them to diversify the crops they grew, and the creation of a women's group. Farmers now grow a variety of crops (with an emphasis on horticulture) that give high value produce all year. An interesting new extension strategy proved very successful: community information centres, which evolved out of the need of small farmer to meet, share, and learn relevant information. The information centres were also driven by philosophy of fair trade. And they are learning points, from which information trickles down to groups of about a dozen farmers.

These centres are still developing. As one farmer commented, "We want our ICs to do more than just information sharing, we want them to facilitate the bulking of our produce. We have poor roads in this area, we therefore need sheds where we can store our goods and then we call one buyer to collect from one place, this will save us transport costs and we can bargain for even better prices. We have done it once. Farmers benefited from this support and it led to increased membership".

The relationship with SCC gave ZNFU credibility and the Dutch Government became a big donor, trebling support and allowing the union to reach 15 more districts. The agricultural officers deployed to support district efforts were trained in participatory extension

skills, financial management and accounting. Florence Phiri, the senior agriculture officer based in Choma said, "Those years will be remembered as the years when the foundations of our activities were laid. We attended many training courses." Scaling up into more districts confirmed the Union's national status, and the Zambian Government began consulting the Union on key policy issues.

Over the years, support has moved from production techniques towards markets and the cross-cutting issues of gender and HIV.

"My husband died last year. My relatives thought I would become a pauper, this did not happen, I had acquired the knowledge to look after my crop which was better than my neighbours'. I learned about conservation farming and early planting, this is exactly what I did, while people are crying that there is too much rain, I have a standing crop. Look, I have constructed these three houses, I have a TV and solar, so my children enjoy when they come from college. You see the girl who met you when you came in, she is in college and her two brothers in the garden here are helping me, they are also in college, I pay their fees without depending on anyone. I would never have managed without the skills gained."

Alice Banda, farmer in Petauke

Both parties see the partnership as being very rewarding, not least because it has already lasted ten years. Strategic collaboration over future years is already being discussed. Patricia Mukumbuta, the SCC country coordinator says: "It was good to have a strong partner; they kept us on our toes." Ndambo Ndambo, ZNFU Deputy Executive Director adds: "SCC are our good friends. They have been so faithful. We were always assured of funding; this made it possible for us to try new things."

Stories of change: impacts from stronger farmers' organisations

Housewife aims for parliament (ZNFU)

Jennifer Handondo, a farmer in Choma, describes how she has benefited from membership of the Zambian National Farmers Union.

"I joined the Union in 1997, when I was a housewife planting seedlings.¹⁷ I came to the Union to look for a market for my seedlings and discovered that I would get more than just market. One thing I thank the Union for is equipping me with agriculture and leadership techniques which have enabled me to stand on my own. Today, I am a divorcee because my participation in the Union activities and the progress I made created problems with my former husband. The exposure I received from the Union is enormous; I travelled to Israel, Namibia, Zimbabwe and other regions of Zambia. I moved from being a very shy person who could not talk to what I am now. I can train others and a number of organisations, including GTZ, MS and World Vision, hire me and they pay for my services. I walked away from my husband without anything except the knowledge I acquired from the Union. I now have 30 hectares under cultivation. I am also the Grains Representative of this district. Now things are moving! I will soon be the Member of Parliament for this area, since I know the needs of the people! When you go back, let SCC know that we are really grateful; if they had not supported the Union, some of us would not be where we are today."

Increasing confidence amongst Beninese farmers (FUPRO)

In Benin, several groups of farmers receive training - not in some sports discipline, but in empowerment.¹⁸ Under the Farmers' Knowledge Programme they learn, for example, about farmers' rights and obligations and the basics of democracy. They are also taught how to design a plan of action so they are better able to defend their rights. Six groups of around twenty farmers are enrolled in this training for two days each month. Talking to a group of pineapple producers who have been following the course for almost two years, it is clear they have already learned a lot.

17 Okore M. and H.P. Dejgaard (2008) *Building Trust, Lessons learned from 10 years of partnership between the Zambia National Farmers Union (ZNFU) and the Swedish Cooperative Centre (SCC) SCC Studies - Southern Africa*

18 AIN 4949, UPA-DI



The group described three situations where they have stuck up for their rights, thanks to their expanding knowledge. For example, one farmer's request for fertilizer was denied by the organisation (CECPA) that is supposed to provide it on credit. But because of the training he knew his entitlement, so he went back to CECPA and insisted on his right to receive the fertilizer, which he then obtained.

Another example concerned the forest bordering the village. This used to be a public place and freely accessible to the villagers, but it was taken over by a big landowner. The villagers, led by the group of farmers, lobbied with the local authorities to reclaim the forest as a public good. The woods are now open again and women are allowed to gather wood for personal use as well as to sell in the local market. A similar story is told about the village well.

Not only are the farmers more aware of how to defend their rights; but women too have gained influence. They now participate in discussions, both within and outside the group. For instance, sessions may break into small groups to work on an assignment which they then present to the group as a whole. When the project began, women were hesitant to voice their opinions, so the participants collectively decided to make a rule that women should be the first to respond to the presentations. One woman explained enthusiastically how this encouraged her to join in conversations and group discussions. In the wider village community she is also more confident to take part in discussions.

Defying tradition in Madagascar (FEKRITAMA)

A farmer group has enabled women to become land owners despite long-standing traditions to the contrary. Such progress against ingrained custom can only be made by organisations that have considerable status in the community.¹⁹

Patricia Rasoananbinina is 39 years old with five children. She has been a member of FVTME, a group of 25 farmers, since October 2004. But she, like other women in the region, was until recently not allowed to own land. Barring women from inheriting land was an established custom arising from the wish to keep land ownership within communities: if a woman married a man who was not local, her land would be transferred to her husband's community. Women were generally not allowed to own land to prevent this happening.

¹⁹ AIN 5105, Agriterra

But FVTME has educated women and taught them to stand up for their rights. The ten women belonging to FVTME have learnt that, although local folklore and tradition sustain the custom, there is no law preventing women from owning land. They have also learnt that women and men are equal before the law, and that women have the full right to inherit and to own land. Through the organisation, Patricia now has rights over the parcel of land that she grows rice on.

Since Patricia started using more advanced techniques, the yield and quality of her rice have both increased. Patricia now manages the rice improvement project and she has received training in financial and strategic project management by FEKRITAMA (the nationwide network that FVTME is part of). Twenty-three other small organisations also carry out micro-projects under the network. FEKRITAMA supervises the project management administered by the groups; each group has to prove they can manage a project and they are subject to strict controls.

Thanks to the workshops she took part in, Patricia's confidence has grown. The transition from traditional to modern techniques (for instance using a structured sowing method, with a set distance in between the plants so that harvesting – and weeding – becomes much easier) has led to bigger and better harvests. Thanks to the increase in family income, the children can now attend school. Patricia has enough money for school supplies for the children and also is able to provide them with sufficient, healthy food. Patricia's hope is for her children to have a better future than her, through their schooling.

Moving towards self-sufficiency (SorKorPor)

The national farmers' organisation in Thailand, SorKorPor, has been supported since its beginning in 2000.²⁰ As part of its approach to improve the position of farmers in Thailand, SorKorPor has ten regional training centres. Farmers who have benefited from training courses share their knowledge with neighbours, indirectly encouraging them to join SorKorPor. But the time needed for this sort of intervention is starkly illustrated by the fact that only 1% of Thai farmers are actually members of SorKorPor.

Mr Lek Sripon, a farmer in the Surat Thani province in Thailand, joined a five-day course in 2008 where he learnt how to grow trees, to make organic fertilizer and biodiesel, and how to maintain a pig farm. Several months after the training, SorKorPor came to visit Mr

²⁰ AIN 5104, Agriterra and ZLTO

Sripion to see if he used the knowledge that he had learnt on the course. He was able to show them that he uses organic fertilizer and pesticides and that he grows different vegetables. Before the training he only had a few crops, but he now grows rubber, local vegetables, palm trees and he has a fish pond. Now his only occupation is farming, whereas he used to have to do other jobs, such as fishing and general labouring, to generate more income.

The first day of the training course was theoretical but the other four days consisted of practical activities. They also visited a self-sufficient farmer where Mr. Sripion saw a fish pond, which inspired him to build his own. There were more than 100 people on the training course. Mr Sripion shows a list of participants and proudly points to his name and that of his son on the list.

“I liked the training, because now I use organic fertilizer instead of chemicals,” says Mr Sripion. The total yield of rambutan (a fruit) has increased since he stopped using chemicals. In 2007 he produced 12 tons of rambutan, which increased to 20 tons in 2008. Unfortunately, the rambutan production matured earlier in eastern Thailand than in his region. By the time they could sell their harvest, the rambutan price had dropped. In 2007 Mr Sripion sold his fruit for 10 Baht per kg, but in 2008 he only got 2 Baht per kg. So although using organic fertilizer increased production, Mr Sripion did not make more profit.

Mr Sripion considers himself a self-sufficient farmer, because he has diversified his crops. He is now an example for neighbouring farmers, who come several times a month to see his methods at work. He also helps at the SorKorPor learning centre, as an advisor and to teach other farmers how to make organic fertilizer. He thinks the learning centre is a good way of teaching other farmers, because not everybody is able to attend training courses, and he (and others) can pass on the knowledge they have learned. Once a week, he tries to go to the learning centre to work on the organic fertilizer as a community project.

Workshop finalises strategic plan (KCGA)

All organisations need to plan for the future. Supporting the planning process is therefore an important way of improving farmers’ organisations. As part of a two-year project, the Kenya Cotton Growers Association (KCGA) held a workshop at Machakos (in eastern Kenya) from 6-11 September 2009.²¹ Farmers’ leaders from more than a dozen cotton growing

21 AIN 5297, Agriterra

areas in Kenya were invited to help draft the new strategic plan.

The Kenya National Federation of Agricultural Producers (KENFAP) and the Agricultural Sector Coordinating Unit (ASCU) sent Charles Mbuthia and Nicholas Karuku to support the process. Tom Dienya (Maseno University) and economist Simon Gicheru (Ministry of Agriculture) were the facilitators and trainers, guiding the farmers and other participants through the five-day programme. The KCGA mission, vision and core values were defined and used as a guide throughout the meeting. Challenges facing cotton farmers were highlighted and strategies put forward to tackle these problems with the aim of elevating the cotton industry in Kenya. KCGA members, through a Special Annual General Meeting, also elected a new board of governors.

The workshop was judged a success and a draft document was completed. The final strategic plan should be published early next year.

Intensive farming boosts yields in Burkina Faso (FEPA/B)

In Burkina Faso the national farmer’s organisation, FEPA/B, wants to decentralise and improve contact with its members, and there are several initiatives focusing on the latter. One initiative trains rural families in entrepreneurship, and yet again the farmer-to-farmer approach shows its worth. However, the organisation still needs to become stronger so that the cooperative can pay farmers as soon as their crops go into store.²²

One of the trainers (*animateurs*) says enthusiastically, “Thanks to the trainings, the farmers have learned to cultivate more intensively. We know now that it is not about the land area we have but the yield of the fields.” Three farmers who took part in the training share the same conclusion. Their production has increased significantly thanks to more intensive cultivation. “We can earn more with a small piece of land.” Yields used to be just 1 ton of maize per hectare, but using better techniques has tripled production. Before sowing, the farmers plan how much they need to grow to supply their family with food and have excess to sell.

The *animateur* is employed by the Union de Producteurs Agricolle de Silly, which comprises 22 member farmer groups. Most of the *animateurs* are farmers themselves – the one we spoke to was first a board

22 AIN 5210, Agriterra



member of his farmer group; he then became secretary of the Union de Producteurs Agricolle. Nowadays he is an *animateur* and proud of his progress, having been trained to coach other farmers within the CEF training programme. He has learned to express himself in public and he has also learned how to intensify his production. He owns 5 ha: this used to produce a total harvest of 20 bags of maize; now he grows 20 bags per hectare.

Besides training farmers, the *animateur* also visits the farmers to check whether the lessons are being put into practice. If not, he tries to convince the farmer by giving examples of other farmers who have increased their yields. The fact that the *animateur* is in most cases a farmer himself gives the people the confidence to take his advice.

Although the farmers are happy with increasing yields, there are areas of disagreement. For example, the cooperative buys the grain from the farmers, stores it and pays the farmer only when it is sold. The producers would like to be paid directly when they send it to the cooperative store. Not surprisingly this creates tension. The cooperative could fix this problem by using rotation funds but these are not available because the cooperative does not make enough profit yet (the market is poor and not all members pay their contribution). And the cooperative does not qualify for a loan because it does not yet have its own rotation fund or sufficient capital.

Patience pays (Uganda Cooperative Alliance)

Mugerwa Wilson, a member of the Buyobe Produce and Marketing Cooperative Society, describes how he became a young model farmer through the interventions of Youth Economic Empowerment through Cooperatives project (YEECO) of Uganda Cooperative Alliance.²³ Involving young people is particularly important in a country where nearly half the population is under the age of 15.

“My life has been full of hardships and pains. In the year 2002, I stopped going to school due to lack of school fees. This is because my father had died and my mother was unwilling to meet my school dues though she had the ability to do so. She had little interest and concern in education, after all she had not gone to school. After dropping out of school, digging became my only way of survival; we used to go digging on a daily basis, morning to evening. Being young, I saw this as suffering and a big punishment being inflicted on me by my own mother. Neighbours and other

people within my village spent most of their day time digging in their gardens but I used to see no one getting out of poverty. At home we used to harvest small quantities of maize, beans which could not even be enough for home consumption. We used to spend our life in a situation of hand to mouth. Life was hard to go on.

“In the year 2003 I joined a youth community based organisation called Buyobe youth group, which is now a strong cooperative society. This is where I started seeing some light. This was because I was introduced to so many trainings related to personal development and business skills provided by YEECO project of the Uganda Cooperative Alliance funded by the Swedish Cooperative Centre (SCC).

“Knowledge and skills were acquired from training on strategic planning, record keeping, business planning, financial management, enterprise selection and farming as a business. This helped my change of attitude towards farming and my capacity to plan for the future was greatly enhanced. I started venturing in agriculture as a business.

“I began with half an acre of maize, but when YEECO project took us for study tours and agricultural shows, I was challenged to even work much harder. This was after getting testimonies from people who had become millionaires out farming. I implemented what I had learnt from the training and study tours. As a result my farm productivity increased tremendously and made profits from my farming enterprises.

“Today I am a model farmer in my village. I have been able to buy my own land to expand on the cultivatable acreage and I have now managed to establish new projects like piggery and poultry. I have also established a pineapple garden of one and a half acres. My living standards and income have generally improved. YEECO project has also linked my cooperative society to the Area Cooperative Enterprise within our sub-county; here I am able to access daily market information which empowers me to negotiate better prices for my products.”

Wilson summarises his success story by stating, “My breakthrough has entirely come from the skills and values obtained from the training conducted by YEECO project in our cooperative society.”

²³ AIN 5385, SCC. The background to this story is given above.

Going organic - olive oil from Palestine (PFU)

In areas of conflict, farmers' organisations need all the support they can get to reach out to members and help them improve their farming practices and markets.

In Palestine, especially in the West Bank, olive trees flourish. It is no surprise that many farmers earn their money with olives. Mahmoud Abdou produces organic fair trade olive oil from his 150 trees and he also cultivates some herbs. He is member of the Zaytouna Cooperative Olive Farmers and the Palestinian Farmers' Union (PFU). The cooperative offered 76 olive farmers a four-year course on how to improve the quality of their oil.²⁴ The course, which also covered production and processing techniques, helped him to improve his product. He learned about running his farm as business and because he now produces olive oil of better quality and the price of organic fair trade oil is higher than it was, his income improved.

²⁴ AIN 5330, Agriterra



Work Area 2: Institutional Development

Farmers' organisations do not operate in a vacuum. They need sound links with many public and private institutions, including government, line ministries, research institutes, major international development institutions, NGOs and the private sector. When farmers' organisations connect with these policy makers, service providers and funding agencies, they benefit from the competences of other stakeholders. And in turn the efficiency of institutions improves when working with farmers' organisations.

Farmers Fighting Poverty helps farmers' organisations and other stakeholders to make these vital connections, using different strategies to create or consolidate a stronger institutional setting. Farmers' organisation representatives are trained using participatory methods to make the most of their mandated positions.

Farmers Fighting Poverty 2

Learning how to connect

In order to work successfully with other organisations, farmer groups need themselves to have reached a certain level of development. Their internal democracy needs to be strong and they need a professional approach. Since the work of Farmers Fighting Poverty focuses on improving farmers' organisations in these very ways, it can be said that all of its projects contribute to this process. However, some are highlighted below.

Brazilian farmers in Belgium (UNICAFES)

For more than two decades, Trias has been supporting small-scale producers in the state of Parana, Brazil.²⁵ Early work included the formation of a credit and savings cooperative system, CRESOL, which now reaches 140,000 small-scale farmers. CRESOL promoted the creation of an umbrella cooperative network, UNICAFES, which now has a presence in 11 states as well as nationally, and has an estimated 250,000 beneficiaries. Reflecting the fact that gender is a delicate subject in Brazil, UNICAFES has its own specific gender department: more women are now members of the cooperatives (up from 4% to 20%).

A training cooperative, INFOCOS, was created to strengthen cooperative leadership and knowledge. It works with all cooperatives under UNICAFES in Parana, and is currently involved in an exchange exercise with UCACCENTRO in Ecuador so that the latter can create similar training cooperatives.

²⁵ AIN 5215, 5233, Trias

But this is not the only current farmer-to-farmer exchange. Dairying in Parana is an important value chain and over the past three years there has been liaison between the Brazilian farmers and Boerenbond of Belgium (BB) to strengthen the former's dairy cooperation system. The exchange has been productive: the bylaws of the UNICAFES dairy cooperatives have been harmonized and a single commercial label created. This allows better negotiation with private companies and supermarkets.

Following the farmer-to-farmer exercise in Belgium, the Brazilian cooperative reconsidered its relationship with the company that used to buy and process all its milk. It has now set up its own dairy units to process milk, and the most recent exchange visit focused on making cheese so that the product base can be broadened. And more connections are being forged: the dairy coops of Parana are now negotiating with cooperatives in the other southern states of Brazil with a view to investing in a venture to make long-life (UHT) milk.

Linking-up: local economic development in a global world (community banks in Ghana)

Aiming to improve local economic development in Ghana by supporting small family entrepreneurs and farm families, this project engaged with 12 rural and community banks (RCBs) serving rural populations.²⁶ It was hoped that a target group of 8,000 small entrepreneurs and farmers would then be able to access

²⁶ Trias Ghana (2010) *Linking-up: local economic development in a global world 2008-2013 – a mid-term reflection report*

financial services and thereby be able to join the social and economic development process.

The recent mid-term review found that all 12 RCBs had improved the quality of their services and had adapted them to the needs expressed by small farmers and entrepreneurs. The banks also provided health education at the same time as business advice, using 'credit with education' methods. Farmers said that having access to financial services had significantly improved their businesses and hence their livelihoods. They also felt healthier. Overall, businesses have expanded, incomes are higher, and sanitation and nutrition are both improved. The target group is also more committed to savings, and is better able to pay for education and domestic expenses. Partnerships have been created with other bodies such as the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ghana Health service, the national board for small scale industries and NGOs.

However, there are challenges. Some would like to borrow larger amounts and repay over longer periods. But the amount of money available to loan is insufficient, as deposits are limited – small farmers still have low incomes and can only manage to save a little. Bad roads hinder logistical support to dispersed rural communities, especially during the rainy season, which is the when farmers need credit to buy seed and fertilizer. An underlying problem is simply that small farmer and entrepreneurs are held back by the symptoms of poverty, suffering from inadequate education, poor leadership and apathy.

Flourishing rural businesses in Paraguay (FECOPROD)

Focusing on small farmer cooperatives and creating commercial consortia among them, this project targeted poor *campesino* men and women who supply the raw materials for the cotton, sugar cane and tobacco industries or who labour for large land-owners.²⁷ Their farms average 10ha in size, their annual income is less than \$800 and they have scarce working capital.

Improving the skills and knowledge of the small business directors led to better commercial, productive and financing arrangements. The cooperatives have improved the quality of their products, they now have better access to national and regional markets, and their income has improved. Organisations' income has increased 30% since the start of the project. The most developed consortium signed 30 trade agreements in

the two-year period, and a whole range of items (mainly fruit) were properly commercialized.

A trade association, CEARD, comprising 23 small farmers' organisations, was formalized to coordinate the businesses and speed the commercialization process. CEARD has its own strategic plan and gender equality policy.

The cooperatives are now better managed and they can afford to employ good technical staff. Farmers can access small loans at low interest rates, and there is a high rate of recovery on loans taken out to improve production. Farmers are being trained in technical innovations to help them move towards more profitable and sustainable agriculture. They then share their new knowledge using farmer-to-farmer methods.

The emergence of the consortia and CEARD shows the maturity of the farmers' organisations (and their members) and demonstrates the value of creating links that can ultimately improve living standards.

Leadership for change in East Africa (Uganda Cooperative Alliance)

With good leaders, farmers' organisations can be more influential in public policy and when negotiating with the private sector. Leadership skills can be taught, and this regional project worked with staff members, ordinary members and leaders from SCC partner farmers' organisations in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda.²⁸

One example of impact from this project was the Bakajulula cooperative society in Uganda, which used to be simply a loose group of milk producers supplying a local dairy. A leadership seminar for the leaders of the Bakajulula groups gave them the impetus to consolidate and register officially as a cooperative. This is now a strong legal entity planning to establish its own milk cooler.

Over the whole project, 264 staff members took part, 26% of them women. Participants found new confidence in their abilities, and they learnt how to deal with groups and communities in effective ways. One participant stated, "I was empowered and my mobilization skills improved to work... with communities as a change agent." Another said, "The fact that someone has a different opinion from mine does not mean they are opposing me or they do not like me."

27 AIN 5439, SCC

28 AIN 5395, SCC



Peace for pastoralists in Niger (AREN)

There is tension between pastoralists and farmers in Niger over natural resources, and pastoralists have traditionally had a lower status and profile. The national association devoted to improving their situation (AREN) has been cooperating with Agriterra in a project that has over 58,500 beneficiaries, of whom 48% are women.²⁹ The aim is to strengthen grassroots groups, making cattle raisers more aware of rights and obligations, and training them (both men and women) how to manage natural resources sustainably and fairly. The project encompasses a variety of activities, including make sure that stock raisers have a place on decision-making bodies and land tenure committees.

Cattle raisers now have access to veterinary services, and non-formal education is being provided for children. Bringing in new techniques to improve production and marketing of their livestock has increased pastoralists' income, and some have diversified into poultry. Some milk is now processed into more valuable butter and cheese. AREN has worked to amend cattle market regulations so there is more transparency; cattle sellers now achieve higher prices.

AREN is member of other bodies involved with natural resource management, and it raises the profile of cattle raisers in these forums. Pastoralists now more confident in dealings with local officials, and conflicts with farmers are reduced or dealt with peacefully.

Dynamic farmers' organisations in Madagascar (FIFATA)

Madagascar struggles with periodic cyclones and floods, and there is increasing pressure on the land from its more than 19 million inhabitants. An estimated 70% of the population lives on less than a dollar a day, and it is vital to improve agricultural yields to relieve some of the pressure on the indigenous forest where many endemic species are found.

A project under Farmers Fighting Poverty has helped regional farmers' organisations in Madagascar to consolidate their bylaws and improve their internal management.³⁰ By working together, they are now better able to match their services to farmers' needs. The project also focused on bringing women onto administrative committees and making sure they could benefit from the services (particularly training) on offer. There

were 259 training courses with more than 3,000 participants, of whom 40% were women. The courses covered conservation agriculture and animal husbandry as well as specific crops such as maize, onions and potatoes.

There was also a focus on young people in agriculture (linked to AIN project 4952), reflecting FIFATA's commitment to rural youth. Since 2003, with support from several partners, it has offered courses in agricultural colleges so that the sons and daughters of smallholders can learn to become professional farmers. In 2009, a fourth agricultural college was opened, and a monitoring mechanism set up to help young people realise their career plans after their three-year training. A film was also made and widely distributed, which gives voice to local people, including farmers, young people and trainers

A training and demonstration centre for fruit and vegetables was set up too and, to spread information, a newspaper, radio broadcasts and a vegetable market information service were supported. Farmers were better able to choose the best markets to sell their produce.

There are plans to develop exchanges with other organisations, on national and international platforms. Efforts are also being made to broaden the range of financing partners.

²⁹ AIN 5248, Agriterra

³⁰ AIN 4800, Agriterra and FERT

Work Area 3: Policy Elaboration and Advocacy

Farmers form the majority of the poor, but their voices are rarely heard in public. However, farmers' organisations can legitimately articulate the needs of the rural poor; they can and should directly influence public and private sector policy (including intermediates in the marketing chain) in developing countries. Farmers Fighting Poverty supports farmers' organisations to lobby effectively on behalf of agriculture and rural development, while taking care to ensure that the voice remains genuinely that of the farmers themselves.

Most farmers' organisations lobby on behalf of their members, but these activities can be scaled up. Farmers can be more closely involved in the lobby agenda (this might require increased awareness), and can be encouraged to take part in the analysis and design of policy positions and advocacy strategies. Better coordination with other stakeholders will also broaden support for the farmer-led lobby agenda.

Farmers Fighting Poverty 2

Advocacy brings results – in the end

Changes to policy are rarely introduced quickly. At national and regional levels, the wheels of bureaucracy can grind slowly – persistence and clear vision are needed to set policy that works in favour of the poorest, including small farmers and those working the land. Because of the time needed to effect such changes, evidence of impact is slow to emerge. But already there are good examples of targeted support leading to policy change, and some of them are highlighted below.

Policy making in Tanzania (MVIWATA)

“Supporting the voice of ordinary people and farmers in the policy-making process...is not entirely alien to a country with a strong tradition in mass and grassroots mobilization. But the autonomous actions of civil society organisations and member-based organisations such as MVIWATA in the more modern framework of policy analysis and lobbying and advocacy work have a much shorter history and thus need more support.”

Trias (2010) Mid-term Reflection DGDC Programme Tanzania

Thai farmers to be consulted on new legislation (SorKorPor)

Persistence has paid off and the Thai national farmers' union, SorKorPor, has after ten years succeeded in

establishing a legal basis for a National Farmers Council. Consistent support from ZLTO and Agriterra has concentrated on lobbying to make sure that from 2010 SorKorPor will be consulted on all new legislation affecting farmers.³¹

An external evaluation from November 2009 noted that SorKorPor had worked 'round the clock' since 2000 to keep the law firmly on the political agenda and make sure that it would be favourable to the three million farmers and their families. The National Farmers Council will have 99 seats, of which 76 will be for provincial farmers' representatives. As a result of the project's work, there are judged to be enough local board members with organisational and advocacy experience to fill these seats in 2010.

Securing land in Honduras (La Via Campesina)

Acquiring the legal title to land gives a farmer more than simple security. Title deeds can be used as surety for a loan, and knowing that the land cannot be taken away encourages farmers to take a longer view when deciding how to farm it. There is more incentive to improve the infrastructure on a plot (storage for produce, good quality shelter for livestock, a reservoir for precious water resources or a pond for raising fish) if the benefits accrue to the farmer herself.

Campesino organisations in Honduras have long campaigned for proper protection of their land and, with support to their efforts provided under Farmers

³¹ AIN 5104, Agriterra and ZLTO



Fighting Poverty, they were involved in the drafting of an agrarian reform law.³² This has secured land tenure for more than 400 *campesino* groups, to the benefit of more than 10,000 individuals. During the struggle to legalise land ownership, rural men and women were able to take a clear, firm position on vital issues of food sovereignty and the protection of native seeds, and the new legislation makes significant changes in favour of people living in rural areas.

Campesino organisations in Paraguay engage in politics (GeAm)

After only a year of implementation, small farmers' organisations in Paraguay have shown both interest and commitment to resolving common problems jointly. Five national *campesino* organisations, representing over 48,000 people, have come together under a coordinating body in which women and men are equally represented.³³ They have formulated a joint proposal for agrarian reform and are backing a proposal for a small farmer development model. This culture of political engagement is a first step towards uniting the *campesino* movement, and the agrarian reform and development model should lead to future poverty alleviation.

Bringing women into rural development (CONPACCOOP)

Also in Paraguay, a project targeted the *campesino* sector and associated enterprises belonging to a body known as CEARD (*Coordinadora de Empresas Asociativas Rurales Departamentales*).³⁴ The project helped CEARD formulate proposals to improve the social and economic situation of its members and present them to public institutions such as the ministries of health, agriculture and education. In just a year, CEARD has been recognized by civil society and public authorities. Small farmers are now more aware of their rights to healthcare, education and local infrastructure, and the authorities are more inclined to listen and respond to the legitimate demands of farmers' organisations.

Formulating better proposals in Brazil (AECA)

The *agricultura familiar* men and women living in the huge state of Bahia in Brazil suffer deep inequity in access to land and resources, exacerbated by gender and race inequality. More than 5,000 of them, belonging to the 'Farmers without land' group, were targeted

in a project to improve their planning and proposal capacities.³⁵ They took part in various activities designed to help them assess their own problems and formulate ways of overcoming them. Significant results were seen in terms of access to housing, increased earnings, food security and education.

A story of change

Land rights in Costa Rica (CMC)

"We women are the first ones to rise and last ones to go to bed. In that regard I am a true *campesina*," comments Juliana Espinoza. Juliana is a co-founder of a Costa Rican countrywomen's organisation.³⁶ She is a tireless woman with a fighting spirit who has made strenuous efforts to make a better life on the land.

"I received five years of education before having been forced to work for a living, as my family was poor. When I married, we occupied a plot of land in northern Costa Rica to make a living from. We undertook this action along with other families striving to have the land registered in our names. And over the years we have won this battle, partly thanks to a land reform law. Together, my husband and I own 14 hectares half of which is registered in his name and half in mine. We are still living on it today, along with our six children and our grandchildren.

"Ever since 1978 I have been active in several organisations. In the beginning I participated in mixed organisations. But realising that women appeared not to be taken seriously, I founded a separate one for countrywomen. This national organisation is called the *Coordinadora de Mujeres Campesinas* (CMC). It is very important to us that women be offered the opportunity to escape from their subordinate position. The local view is that women belong in the home, should care for their children and perform household tasks. In Costa Rica, women do have rights to land, but are often afraid to exercise them. Men believe that they are in charge and that women are under their supervision.

"While striving to have our occupied land legalised, I discovered with my own eyes that women are by no means any less than men. And it is this viewpoint that CMC tries to promote. It does not mean to force this view on anybody, but aims to offer women the chance to develop themselves and to make a concrete contribution to the family income. This takes time and requires a fighting attitude.

32 AIN 5428, SCC

33 AIN 5442, SCC

34 AIN 5443, SCC

35 AIN 5447, SCC

36 AIN 5304, Agriterra

“At first, my husband used to be a real macho as well. But gradually things have changed. Nowadays he helps me out a lot, also with household tasks. He knows how to cook, cleans the house, irons, and does the laundry. Realising that I was not merely wandering the streets but actually undertaking useful activities when I was gone, changed his attitude. He joined me a few times to CMC meetings and noticed how we are dedicating ourselves towards the improvement of the quality of life of rural women, and by that means, of that of the entire family. When we started our projects, I had even less time left to make the home. It took my husband a while to get used to this, and so did my children. But when I am at home, we are spending quality time together. My husband is proud of me and our family is getting on well. We own livestock, grow some crops biologically, and thanks to the CMC chicken project, we have eggs for our own use as well as some for sale.

“My dream is for my children to be able to make a good living here in Costa Rica, and not migrate to the U.S. or to Spain. For them to continue sowing and reaping from the earth that we have cultivated for so many years. This dream is shared by many other women and CMC hopes to make it come true by contributing to the development of Costa Rica.”



Work Area 4: Business Development

In areas of subsistence agriculture, increasing the productivity and profitability of small family farms is essential for poverty reduction and rural development. Farmers are often isolated physically, economically and institutionally from services, inputs, markets and innovations, but farmers' organisations can break this isolation. They can provide members with services or help them establish new services themselves. They can also improve links with existing service providers, and access to markets and innovations. The development and improvement of agricultural services increases productivity and may create rural employment.

Farmers Fighting Poverty supports farmers' organisations to envision, develop and undertake economic initiatives of various types, because such initiatives have a direct and immediate impact on farmers' incomes. The process of establishing or strengthening farmer-led businesses requires analysis of the needs of the farming members and the markets for their products; a bankable business plan; and links to financial and other service providers.

Farmers' organisations serve their members by disseminating ideas, research findings, appropriate technologies, and advice on production and markets. Their layered structure allows them to spread knowledge over wide areas at grassroots level, and local cooperatives and sub-national unions are ideally placed to increase farmers' economic productivity and entrepreneurship.

Farmers Fighting Poverty 2

Stepping out of subsistence

One of the greatest strengths of farmers' organisations is that they can help small farmers become rural entrepreneurs. Moving away from subsistence agriculture to a level where a cash income is generated is a big step for the poorest in society, but with carefully planned support it can be done successfully. Since this is a core activity of farmers' organisations, and Farmers Fighting Poverty has contributed to many projects focusing on business development, the selection below has been chosen to reflect the diversity of support rather than trying to be comprehensive.

Women's income increases in rural Nicaragua (FEMUPROCAN)

Active for more than a decade, FEMUPROCAN is an organisation for women who are members of agricultural cooperatives.³⁷ There are just over 500 members, 200 of whom are on the board of directors of grassroots cooperatives. The women have small plots (less than 2ha for crops and 3.5-7ha for livestock) and some work on rented or borrowed land; half of them live below the poverty line.

³⁷ AIN 5434, SCC

A significant technical innovation was to introduce drip-irrigation systems. Irrigation allows a wider range of crops to be grown and makes it possible to produce three crops a year. Using this appropriate, environmentally friendly technology improved yields and income, and hence food security for members and their households (almost 3,500 people in total). Eighty per cent of the target group reported incomes that had increased by an average of 20% compared to 2006. The only limitation to replicating this more widely is the cost of the equipment needed for drip irrigation.

More than half of producers are now organized into 25 business networks. By better processing (where appropriate) and selling produce direct to local markets rather than through a middleman, the women make larger profits.

Business development in cooperatives in El Salvador (FECANM)

When this project began, FECANM was promoting more than ten unprofitable productive areas.³⁸ Following a technical and market study, it was decided to focus on just two – macadamia nuts and honey – that offered greater market and production potential. An

³⁸ Not yet on Agro-info.net. SCC project no. P316

alliance was forged with the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Apiculture Commission for specialised technical support to honey production. Support to macadamia growing comes from a link with IICA Fru-tales, which donated plant material so that the area devoted to macadamia could be increased.

Beekeepers are now more efficient, and organic management of the hives has increased the value of the honey. The yield from over 900 hives was 25 tonnes, generating earnings of \$110,000. Macadamia production has increased from 5ha at the start of the project to 20ha in early 2009. By the end of 2009, a group of 66 beekeepers (of whom 36% were women) were registered with the public health authorities to commercialise products made from honey and macadamia.

Dairy farmers in Madagascar learn business skills (ROVA)

Milk production in Madagascar shows seasonal patterns – cows give less milk in the dry weather when there is less forage, and there is a corresponding increase in production during the rainy season. It makes business sense to try and flatten the curve, feeding cows better in the dry season and finding a way of using surplus milk at other times (for instance by making cheese). For small farmers – and the target group here in Vakinankaratra region have on average only one or two cows – this is slowly being achieved through their membership of cooperatives under the umbrella of ROVA.

With support of this project, dairy farmers are becoming more professional, improving the productivity of their livestock and finding better markets for their milk.³⁹ Two ROVA field technicians, who themselves have been specially trained in the technical and business aspects of dairy farming, are now able to respond to farmers requests for training. Courses have so far covered milk recording and the dairy cow diet. Another priority need identified by the farmers themselves is support in animal health, so more training is planned to cover common diseases and their management, and how to manage a herd to prevent disease. A veterinary officer is also being recruited.

The ROVA feed mill factory produces cattle feed as a service to member farmers, and annual production is increasing despite problems in 2008 when efforts were focused on starting up the dairy. To overcome the shortage of bulk fodder during the dry season, ROVA is trying to design a fibrous mix of concentrates and dry

fodder. This may provide a business opportunity for one of the member cooperatives situated in an area unsuitable for dairy production but where hay and forage production can be successful.

Cattle are now being fed better, and more high quality milk is reaching the dairy, thanks to improvements in collection centres. The drop in dairy production during the dry season was reduced. And to deal with the surplus milk during the rains, ROVA has built a new ageing cellar for cheese. This can store 3 tonnes of cheese (the old store could only hold 150kg).

Marketing has been improved – there is a more diverse customer base and more products, including cheese, are made. Pasteurised semi-skimmed milk is in demand in supermarkets, and a by-product of this is fresh cream, for which there is a steady demand. ROVA's business success makes it better able to provide its members with the services they need to develop their own small enterprises.

Developing the local economy in Guinea (PADELFI)

Although Guinea's mineral wealth makes it potentially a rich country, its people are among the poorest in West Africa. It still suffers from the results of earlier political turmoil and a significant influx of refugees from Sierra Leone and Liberia. There is pressing need to develop local economic initiatives, and under this project different partners deliver a range of services.⁴⁰ The services are provided on demand, and all aim to build on existing activities:

- In a pilot village, Dakhagbé, vegetable growers found that manufactured fertilizer was expensive. They were taught a simple, cheap technique to make compost and now they make their own. Production costs are lower and the plants are healthier.
- RGTA-DI has helped farmers by introducing harness for draught animals. With animal traction, one man can cultivate several hectares much quicker than by hand. Those with draught animals set up a network so that other farmers could use them. This light mechanization of agriculture, together with modern techniques (sowing in lines and using a harrow) has resulted in an average increase of over 25% in earned income.
- Grazing animals cause problems during the growing season, creating conflict between cattle raisers and

³⁹ AIN 5050, FERT and SCC

⁴⁰ Trias Guinea (2010) Mid-term review



crop farmers. In Upper Guinea the problem has been solved by establishing collective pens. Cattle from one village are kept together in one pen, watched over and fed by one or two people. As well as reducing crop damage, the children who used to herd the animals are now free to go to school. And breeding rates have accelerated, thanks to close proximity of animals to each other.

- Support channelled through CAFODEC offered technical help to establish an association for financing services (ASF). Micro-credits granted by ASF have made agricultural and commercial activities easier in countryside and reduced the dependence on loan sharks.
- Entrepreneurship has developed with help of ATC and AGUIDEP, and producers have come together in income-generating activities. Selling as a group has given them influence and they can achieve better prices.

Stories of change: impacts on business development

A productive loan (Uganda Cooperative Alliance)

Enabling small farmers to borrow money to develop their businesses is an effective way of improving livelihoods. In this case a well-run micro-finance project gave farmers the confidence to set up savings accounts.⁴¹ Loans were made in tandem with technical support to improve crops, and sound businesses were the result, as in the story below.

“My name is Mucunguzi Joseph. I am from Karera Parish, in the county of Bugongi in the Bushenyi district in Uganda. I am 38 years old and married. My wife and I have three children. I first heard about Bugongi SACCO in 2002 but at that time I did not know what it meant. Later that same year our area Member of Parliament visited me together with SACCO officials and Uganda Cooperative Alliance (UCA) people. They explained the work of the SACCO and urged us to join in. At first, I was in doubt because membership also meant having to put in money for the shared capital, a savings account with them and the contribution of membership fees. I feared that I would lose my money, because this was what happened before with the money of people who were in the old cooperations. But UCA and SACCO officials convinced us that our money would be safer in the SACCO than it is at home.

Our MP explained to us that SACCO runs many development programmes. Hesitantly, I joined the SACCO and became member number 527. I was allowed to pay my dues in instalments, and after having paid the final instalment I became a full member in April 2003.

“In June 2003, they organised a meeting for all the members. Here we learned about different methods of improving our crops as well as adding new crops to the ones we already had. I chose to start growing bananas since I already had a plantation, although the plantation had poor soil that contained many weevils. I applied, after which a SACCO-advisor specialised in the growing of bananas visited me and instructed me on how to set about the work. Unfortunately, I did not have enough money to buy equipment and pay people who could help me with the work. I visited SACCO and talked to the manager about the possibilities of getting a loan. I filled in a loan application form and in September 2003, I received a first loan of Shs. 350,000 (€140). With this money I bought cow dung at Shs. 154,000 (€62), labour (help with the cutting and carrying of mulched grass) at Shs 108,000 (€43) and other equipment at Shs. 88,000 (€35).

“My wife and I started with the work on the 1.5 acre banana plantation, and we also planted beans. We harvested the beans and sold them and used some of the money to pay off the loan, even before I got the money from my other work at our school’s construction site. To everybody’s and my own surprise, my banana plantation started to improve by March 2004. The plants now had more leaves, strong stems and they looked healthy. The SACCO representative had advised me on how to get rid of the weevils, and this succeeded. By June, a lot of green banana bunches appeared. In October I started harvesting them. Since the road to Kabwohe Town passes next to my home, banana vendors from Kabwohe started visiting me to buy my bananas. I sold a lot of them and got a lot of money. For the first time in my life my family had enough to eat. I got another loan of Shs. 650,000 (€260) and expanded my plantation. I now have 3 acres of land with bananas and sell 60 bunches a month. I have enough money to take care of my family. My savings account at the SACCO has been growing and very soon, I will take out a loan to build a house. All these achievements I owe to Bugongi SACCO.”

41 AIN 5157, Agriterria

Profitable bananas (KENFAP)

In this story, the farmers' organisation procured improved bananas and propagated them for their members.⁴² Local farmers could then start with plantlets that would outperform their old varieties. Although the project started only recently, the outlook for increased incomes looks good.

Eluid and Lucy Munyua, members of the Mulathankari local branch of the Kenya National Federation of Agricultural Producers (KENFAP) in Meru Central, are taking part in one of the micro-projects that KENFAP and Agriterra launched in 2007. The aim is to improve banana production and thus increase household income. Although Eluid and Lucy do not yet have tangible results, their prospects look good. They live alone on their two-acre farm: their four grown-up children have already left home, but they visit regularly.

Small-scale banana production in this part of Kenya faces several problems. The most important are the low annual yields (only one harvest per year) and the poor keeping quality of the bananas (they go bad after a few days). The fruit are also variable in size and shape, and therefore fetch lower prices from middle-men and consumers than more uniform produce.

The micro-project addressed these problems by creating a nursery (on the area branch chairman's farm) for improved banana varieties. The farmers can buy the plantlets and grow them on their own plots. Sales revenues are distributed on a 60:40 basis between the area branch (which buys the plantlets from the breeders and also has project management costs) and the farmers, on the condition that sales are done collectively.

Mr. and Ms. Munyua have yet to make their first sale and can therefore not yet say that their position has changed since the start of the project. Nevertheless, the figures look good, as the calculations below suggest.

The Munyuas bought 40 plantlets from the nursery at 100 KSh each, so their initial cost was 4,000 KSh. If all goes well (and the banana plants on their small farm already look good and are growing quickly) they will have three annual harvests from each banana tree. One harvest weighs around 30 kg and the price for improved bananas is estimated to be 10 KSh per kg. Therefore, each banana tree will generate an income of $(30 \times 10 \times 3 =)$ 900 KSh per year. Since there are 40 trees, the total income will be 36,000 KSh. Does this

mean that their profit will be $(36.000 - 4.000 =)$ 32.000 KSh? No, because, as was explained before, 60% of the proceeds will go the area branch. This means that Mr. and Ms. Munyua will receive 40% of 36,000 KSh, or 14,400 KSh. Deducting the original cost for acquiring the plantlets, it leaves them with the handsome net figure of 10,400 KSh, certainly more than they used to get for their low-quality bananas.

Ms. Munyua says, "We still have to see whether it actually turns out this way, but things look good, I am optimistic!" Her husband joins in and says that he hopes that in a year's time this financial scenario will be realised. They do not yet have plans for the additional money that they will earn, but they will surely invest it in their farm, that already looks beautiful. And perhaps now they will have the chance to travel themselves and visit their children.

Women take responsibility in Madagascar (FEKRITAMA)

The unequal balance of power between men and women in most developing countries hinders sustainable poverty reduction. Farmers Fighting Poverty sees gender as a cross-cutting issue that is considered in the design of very project, so that women can stand up for their rights, needs and wishes. In this project, women have been trained on improved poultry production. They can now generate income and have at least a little cash to invest.

Merline Razafiarisoa is an unmarried woman from Antsampanimahazo, a small village in the centre of the island of Madagascar.⁴³ She had two children, but her daughter died in her early twenties. Now she has only her son left, and he already has two children: Marline is a grandmother at the age of 43.

Merline is the chairperson of Oliva, a local farmers' group which has 22 female members. Oliva is part of FVTM, a union that in turn belongs to the national farmers' association, FEKRITAMA. Marline tells us that the women in her village are very anxious to improve their circumstances. She herself cultivates rice, potatoes, and beans on 30 acre of land. She also has a few pigs, chicken, and rabbits. This might seem a full-time job for a single woman, but she also runs a small canteen where she serves soup every evening. Although she could make ends meet in this way, Marline was not satisfied. She wanted to save some money, to be able to invest and to build up her business, to be an entrepreneur.

42 AIN 4976, Agriterra

43 AIN 5105, Agriterra



Merline's local group, Oliva, offered training courses to its members. Apart from learning about agricultural techniques, including training on new breeding methods and housing for poultry, attention was also paid to health activities. Using project funding, they were able to improve their poultry. The group also bought some good nesting houses. The number of chicken within the project has already increased. And Merline points out enthusiastically that the improved hens mature much more quickly.

Meanwhile Merline is an advisor on modern techniques of poultry housing within her community. She sees these changes in her life as very positive. She is now able to save money for emergencies or investments. "I am, as a single woman, still very busy, and it remains a challenge to combine all my tasks and duties. However, the current situation feels very good. My knowledge gives me responsibility within our community and also respect, which a single woman often lacks," she declares with pride.

From thousands to millions (1000S+) in West Africa (ROPPA)

In 2006 the International Centre for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development, in cooperation with ROPPA (a coordinating body for peasant farmers in West Africa) started the "From thousands to millions" (better known as 1000S+) project in francophone West Africa. Agriterra has participated in this project since 2008. 1000S+ aims to help rural smallholders run better businesses and thereby improve the livelihoods of their families. 1000S+ organises training courses on increasing production, improving quality and trade. The goal is to have one million producers taking part by 2010.⁴⁴

Two representatives from ROPPA, Samba Gueye and Ousseini Ouédraogo, were in Arnhem at the beginning of February to share their experience of the progress and current situation of 1000S+ with Agriterra.

Rice in Mali

In Mali, in one of the local 1000S+ projects, women are growing rice. Before the project started the rice was of poor quality, trade was weak and women earned little from it. Now women receive micro-credits to buy good quality seed. Ever since, production has increased and there is surplus. The women store the surplus and sell it for a better price when there is less rice on the market. The women have also learned to do business in a more effective way. They have set up a cooperative, which deals directly with the local market and avoids the need to sell through middlemen. The

profits benefit the cooperative and the families involved directly.

Fish in Niger

In Niger, fishermen were suffering because of increased pollution of the river. 1000S+ has helped by building fish-ponds and stocking them with small fish from the river. The local fishermen were then trained on fish farming. One year later there are six new fish-ponds, and fish traders come regularly to buy from the fishermen. It is not only the local economy and the living standards of the fishermen and traders that have gained: because of over-fishing, many fish species in the river were close to extinction, but fortunately they are now recovering.

Maize in Burkina Faso

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) is active in Burkina Faso, but for a long time it imported cereals (maize) from USA. Now WFP buys 80% of the cereals locally. The project in Mali focuses on improving seed quality. Micro-credits have been given to everyone involved in maize, from the seed producers to seed traders and maize cultivators. There have been improvements even in the way the project delivers maize to WFP. Improved results and a guaranteed market to WFP have improved the lives of many families and created an economic boom.

Samba Gueye sums up the conversation with a remark that it is not enough to simply give money. By advising and helping local people it is possible to increase their independence. "In this way," he says, "1000S+ has worked for sustainability in West Africa."

Business needs information (ATID)

Modern businesses rely heavily on information technology, so an innovative way of helping farmers' organisations is to improve the way they access and share information.

It is hard to manage a farm when you do not have access to information on prices, the newest techniques and developments, or the market demand for your produce. Remi Modeste Sambo, a farmer in the Menabe region of Madagascar knows all about the problem.⁴⁵ But thanks to a communication project run by the local agricultural organisation, ATID, she and the other 19 group members now access information from a computer connected to the internet. They can exchange information and find the best markets for their produce: they no longer need to travel long distances to obtain information.

⁴⁴ AIN 5143, Agriterra

⁴⁵ AIN 5105, Agriterra

Remi Modeste Sambo is 36 years old and has five children, all of whom are in school. Remi herself had no education; she has been working on the farm since early childhood. With her husband she now owns three hectares of land. They use two hectares themselves and share the other hectare with a friend. On one hectare they use modern cultivation techniques for the rice; on the other they use traditional methods. The modern method yields four tonnes of rice per crop, much more than from the traditionally cultivated hectare. Not surprisingly, Remi hopes to switch to modern techniques on all her land.

Since 1997 she has been a member of FTMM, a young farmers' organisation which supports young farmers to set up businesses, for example by providing workshops. The members share the ownership of 20 zebus which they bought using the revenues flowing from their rice crops. The cattle are used to transport the rice and to plough the fields. Some of the members founded a new group, aimed at technical support and development, named ATID. Currently, the group consists of 20 members, five of whom are women. Through the national organisation FEKRITAMA, ATID received funding from Agriterria for an ICT project at the end of 2008.

In the Menabe region there are only limited opportunities for farmers to communicate with each other and with other groups. They cannot compare current prices

at the markets available to them, and it is hard to share information. But now, thanks to the project, a small office in a central location has been equipped with a computer. On it, members can connect to internet and look up information and share their experiences. The members have received training in computer and typing skills. Every member benefits, as they only have to travel as far as the office to access information.

There are no direct revenues flowing from the project, but there are many indirect gains now that members are better informed about market conditions and the prices they can get for their produce on different markets. Remi explains that the rent for the office and the purchase of the computer have been paid for by the group. And that there is one person from the group responsible for disseminating information from the region to other districts of Madagascar.

In Remi's opinion, the future is bright thanks to the use of modern communication tools such as those that the project facilitates. She no longer feels like she is nothing but a farmer - today she also knows how to operate a computer and how to type. Most importantly, the administration of her business has been greatly simplified and she knows the current prices of all produce.



Challenges

Despite the varied evidence suggesting that producer organisations (and hence their members) are seeing impacts from interventions under the Farmers Fighting Poverty framework, there is still much to do. Many small farmers and producers are still too poor to pay membership fees to join their local cooperative, so the organisations will need support for some time to come.

There is tension too between the need for small farmers to attend training courses to improve their skills and the more pressing daily requirements of running a small farm. A project in Paraguay with ONAC (the national *campesino* organisation) has achieved many things, including better commercialization of vegetables and grain, more women having access to monetary income and being active within the organisation and better knowledge of agro-ecological techniques. The participatory approach has fostered leadership, analytical capacity and ownership of the development process, but its weakness is that it takes a great deal of the *campesinos'* time and hampers productive farm work.⁴⁶

A mid-term review of a six-year programme in Uganda (Linking-up: local economic development in a global world) found that the target group were increasingly taking part in local economic development process.⁴⁷ Progress had been made in governance, leadership, financial management, mainstreaming of cross-cutting

issues, networking and financial stability. More women were involved in decision-making; there was more participation of HIV/AIDS affected families; an increased awareness of HIV and environmental issues. Exchange visits, for farmer-to-farmer contact, opened many eyes even though they took place mostly within Uganda.

Despite these gains, the reviewers pointed out that developing agro-enterprises in a participatory way is a long, slow process. And that organisational strengthening was proceeding only slowly, partly because of this. *“The intensity, complexity and length of the participatory agro-enterprise development process – both for partner staff and farmer groups – were under-estimated.”*

And finally, a reminder that many small farmers are so poor that even reaching them is a challenge. Another mid-term review of projects in Southeast Asia reported that, *“The lack of resources and the abject poverty of the target group in the lower spectrum of poverty hinder their full participation in the local economic development process. As they are still in survival stage, how to bring them to the next level is a challenge particularly for the micro-entrepreneurs.”*⁴⁸ As was the case with the *campesinos* mentioned above, farmers were often unable to attend training sessions: *“assistance is always hampered by low prioritization because of their preoccupation with their livelihood.”*

⁴⁶ AIN 5440, SCC

⁴⁷ Trias Uganda (2010) Mid-term Reflection Report

⁴⁸ Trias Southeast Asia (2010) Mid-term reflection – Local Economic Development program in Antique, Camarines Sur and metropolitan Manila 2008-2010



Annex: Inventory of evidence used in the report

Emerging themes

AIN No.	FO ¹ and country	Agri-agency	Level of support	Type of evaluation	Support period	Type of support / quintessence of harvested story
P821 ²	Tanzania Association of Foresters	SCC	National	Internal	2006-2009	Internal OS; agro-forestry and improved food security.
4951	CAMM and CKC Morocco	Agriterra and FERT	Regional	Internal	2007-2009	Crop development and markets.
5351	Several Madagascar	AFDI and FERT	Local	Internal	2008-2009	Farmer-to-farmer approach, technical, economic and organisational capacity building.
5396	Cooperative Bank of Kenya	SCC	National	Internal and external	2007-2009	Community-based micro-finance.
5419	FECOOPA Costa Rica	SCC	Sub-national	Internal	2007-2011	Participatory policy formulation, grassroots, market chain development.
5420	CEDECO Central America	SCC	National	Internal	2007-2009	Business and marketing management of organic produce.
5425	FECECOCAGUA Guatemala	SCC	National	Internal	2006-2009	Internal OS; improve productivity and quality of coffee.
5427	UNICOOP Honduras	SCC	National	Internal	2006-2009	Internal OS; technical improvements, micro-irrigation.
5432	ICADE Honduras	SCC	National	Internal	2005-2009	Grassroots, sustainable development in forest area, watershed protection.
5433	PRODECOOP Nicaragua	SCC	National	Internal	2006-2009	Internal OS, gender; organic coffee and diversification.

1 Farmers' organisation

2 No Agro-info.net project number yet.

Work area 1: Organisational strength and inclusiveness

AIN No.	FO and country	Agri-agency	Level of support	Type of evaluation	Support period	Type of support / quintessence of harvested story
4949	FUPRO Benin	UPA-DI	National	Story harvesting	2007-2011	Thanks to workshops, farmers learned about their rights and improved their negotiating skills.
5100	UNAG-Chontales Nicaragua	SCC	Sub-national	Internal	Jan-Dec 2008	Strengthening organisations, production and commercialisation of UNAG-C members Market and chain development.
5104	SorKorPor Thailand	Agriterra	National	Story harvesting	Jan-Dec 2008	Training to grow trees, organic fertilizer, biodiesel, maintaining pigs. Diversified income.
5105	FVTME Madagascar	Agriterra	Local	Story harvesting	2008-2009	Training in women's rights and modern techniques of rice farming improves the income and lives of women.
5210	FEPA/B Burkina Faso	Agriterra	National	Story harvesting	2008-2010	Higher maize yields thanks to training.
5297	KGGA Kenya	Agriterra	National	Story harvesting	2009-2010	Workshop as part of support to strategic planning – internal OS.
5330	PFU Palestine	Agriterra	Sub-national	Story harvesting	2009-2010	Training courses on quality and higher selling prices, improved produce (olive oil) and income.
5385	Uganda Cooperative Alliance	SCC	National	Internal and external; story harvesting	2006-2009	Youth empowerment through cooperatives. Financial management, institutional development, internal OS. Young man becomes model farmer after joining youth coop group. Thanks to training, farm productivity increased enormously.
5387	MVIWAMO Tanzania	SCC	Sub-national	Internal and external	2006-2009	Agro-pastoralist productivity improvement project. Internal OS, institutional development, grassroots participation, market and chain development.
5401	All SCC partners East Africa	SCC	Regional	Internal and external	2004-2009	Building capacity to combat HIV/AIDS.

Work area 2: Institutional development

AIN No.	FO and country	Agri-agency	Level of support	Type of evaluation	Support period	Type of support / quintessence of harvested story
4800	FIFATA Madagascar	Agriterra and FERT	Sub-national	Internal	2007-2009	OS through training courses, demonstration centres and disseminating information via print and broadcast media.
5215	UNICAFES Brazil	Trias	Sub-national National	Internal	2008-2010	Market and chain development.
5233					2009-2011	Organisational development; farmers involved in decision-making.
5248	AREN Niger	Agriterra	Local	External	2008	Pilot project - improving the lives of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists.
5395	Uganda Cooperative Alliance	SCC	National/ regional	Internal and external	2006-2009	Leadership for change – trainer-of-trainers approach.
5439	FECOPROD Paraguay	SCC	National	Internal	2006-2009	Sustainable associative development of the rural sector. Internal OS.



Work Area 3: Policy elaboration and advocacy

AIN No.	FO and country	Agri-agency	Level of support	Type of evaluation	Support period	Type of support / quintessence of harvested story
5104	SorKorPor Thailand	Agriterra and ZLTO	Local	Internal	2008	Internal OS and capacity building.
5304	CMC Costa Rica	Agriterra	National	Story harvesting	2009- 20012	Land rights in Costa Rica – better position for rural women, more equity between men and women.
5428	La Via Campesina Honduras	SCC	National	Internal	2008-2009	Participatory policy making: strengthening campaigning strategies in Via Campesina.
5442	GeAm Paraguay	SCC	National	Internal	2009	Participatory policy making: articulation and advocacy of Paraguayan <i>campesino</i> organisations for public policies aimed at the small farmers and indigenous sector.
5443	CONPACCOOP Paraguay	SCC	National	Internal	2009	Building strategies for gender-equal rural development in the cooperative movement.
5447	AECA Brazil	SCC	National	Internal	2007-2009	Training to improve capacity in formulating proposals in MST, Bahia.

Work Area 4: Business development

AIN No.	FO and country	Agri-agency	Level of support	Type of evaluation	Support period	Type of support / quintessence of harvested story
P316 ³	FECANM El Salvador	SCC	National	Internal	2006-2009	Business development in cooperatives in the North of Morazan.
4976	KENFAP Kenya	Agriterra	Local	Story harvesting	2008	Profitable bananas. Farmers can buy improved banana plantlets for their own plots. Will produce more and get better price than for poor quality bananas. Agricultural development (crops). No tangible results yet but growing better varieties of banana.
5050	ROVA Madagascar	FERT and SCC	Sub-national	Internal	2008-2010	Market and chain development in dairying.
5105	FEKRITAMA Madagascar	Agriterra	Local	Story harvesting	2008-2009	Micro-projects e.g. thanks to funding and training, poultry breeding improved, can now save money; information technology.
5143	ROPPA West Africa	Agriterra	Local	Story harvesting	2006-2010	Business development – varied according to specific situation e.g. fish-ponds and training created better living conditions for fishermen; better yield and sales to WFP lead to better lives of farmers.
5157	Uganda Coopera- tive Alliance	Agriterra	Local	Story harvesting	2008	A productive loan – banking and credit sector. Improved soils, dealt with weevils, more bananas. Member of UCA-affiliated SACCO – got a loan thanks to membership, now family eats better.
5434	FEMUPROCAN Nicaragua	SCC	National	Internal	2006-2009	Gender and women in development; business development in FEMUPROCAN cooperatives.

³ No Agro-info.net project number yet.

Challenges

AIN No.	FO and country	Agri-agency	Level of support	Type of evaluation	Support period	Type of support / quintessence of harvested story
5440	ONAC Paraguay	SCC	National	Internal	2006- 2009	Efficient associative businesses, internal OS, grassroots participation.

Other references

FO and country	Agri-agency	Level of support	Type of evaluation	Title of report
Mwawita Tanzania	FERT	National	Internal	Rural Markets (2009) FERT and MVIWATA's experience in supporting the marketing of agricultural products in Tanzania
ZNFU Zambia	SCC	National	External	Okore M. and H.P. Dejgaard (2008) Building Trust, Lessons learned from 10 years of partnership between the Zambia National Farmers Union (ZNFU) and the Swedish Cooperative Centre (SCC) SCC Studies – Southern Africa
Guinea	Trias	National	Internal	Trias Guinea (2010) Mid-term review
Ghana	Trias	National	Internal	Trias Ghana (2010) Linking-up: local economic development in a global world 2008-2013 – a mid-term reflection report
Philippines	Trias	Sub-national	Internal	Trias Southeast Asia (2010) Mid-term reflection – Local Economic Development program in Antique, Camarines Sur and metropolitan Manila 2008-2010
Tanzania	Trias	Sub-national	Internal	Trias Tanzania (2010) Mid-term Reflection DGDC Programme
Uganda	Trias	National	Internal	Trias Uganda (2010) Mid-term Reflection Report

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Member agri-agencies: AFDI (France), Agriterra (The Netherlands), CSA (Belgique), FERT (France), Trias (Belgium), SCC (Sweden), UPA DI (Canada)

Associated farmers' organisations: CIA (Italy), MTK (Finland), UPA (Spain)