



**FARMERS
FIGHTING
POVERTY**

Evidence of Impact 2011





Evidence of Impact, 2011

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

AgriCord
M&E task team
June, 2011

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.

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 via www.agricord.org 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.

Farmers' organisations in different regions of the developing world

Farmers Fighting Poverty has been operating since 2007. Between 2007 and 2010, more than 180 farmers' organisations in 61 developing countries have been supported in a framework of 487 projects at a cost of 120 million EUR.

Most (almost 80%) of these farmers' organisations are national or sub-national. Fifteen per cent are local and others are regional or sub-continental (ROPPA, EAFF, SACAU, AFA, ACCU, COPROFAM, etc.). Just over half of them are located in Africa (mainly in East and West Africa), a quarter is in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the rest is in Asia, Mediterranean and others (Moldavia, Kosovo, Ukraine, Armenia, etc.). In terms of volume of activities, about 60% is in Africa, 16% in Latin America, 9% in Asia and the rest in Mediterranean and elsewhere.

Projects are based on long-term relationships between agri-agencies and farmers' organisations. Contracts are, where possible, multiannual.

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Preface

Increasing food production and striving to eliminate rural poverty are at the forefront of the work done by the agri-agencies, mandated by national farmers' organisations from Belgium, Canada (Quebec), Finland, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden.

FARMERS FIGHTING POVERTY

Farmers Fighting Poverty means *farmer-to-farmer cooperation*. Its aim is to build stronger farmers' organisations in developing countries, by connecting directly with fellow farmers in other parts of the world. It is based upon long-term commitments, so AgriCord is grateful to its donors for their consistent support to this farmers' effort.

Evidence of Impact 2011 is the third report on the impacts of Farmers Fighting Poverty. It provides evidence from activities in 2010, and it presents some of the ways in which the lives of farmers in the developing world have been made significantly less precarious. Earlier reports, published in 2009 and 2010, are available on request.

Monitoring and evaluation is carried out by the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) team of the AgriCord Project Committee. The report was compiled and written by Julie Harrod, with translation from French and Spanish provided by Pauliina Paananen. The team at AgriCord, with Pekka Jämsén, coordinated the process of compilation and writing.

This report shows how farmers' organisations are becoming stronger and how they encourage farming families in the developing world to improve cultivation practices, produce more food and participate actively in the market place. It endorses the Farmers Fighting Poverty approach, and is an encouragement to future support.

AgriCord is grateful to the leadership of AFA (Asian Farmers Association), EAFF (East African Farmers Federation), ROPPA (Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs Agricoles de l'Afrique de l'Ouest) and SACAU (Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions) for their participation in the dialogue (06 October 2010) on the priorities of Farmers Fighting Poverty.

27 June, 2011
Piet Vanthemsche
President

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Managing Director

Introduction

The developed world has recently been bombarded with news stories and reports about looming food shortages¹. But the subsistence farmers who are the majority of the world's poor need no reminding of the daily challenges of growing enough to live on.

A recent report by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) states that feeding a projected population of over 9 billion people by 2050 requires developing countries to double the amount of food they produce.² It also points out that, since four out of five people in rural areas of the developing world engage in farming, smallholder agriculture can offer a genuine way out of poverty for vast numbers of people.

IFAD says there is a pressing need to strengthen the collective capabilities of rural people:

Membership-based organisations have a key role to play in helping rural people reduce risk, learn new techniques and skills, manage individual and collective assets, and market their produce. They also negotiate the interests of people in their interactions with the private sector or government, and can help to hold them accountable. Many organisations ...represent the interests of poor rural people better than any outside party can. They need strengthening to become more effective, and more space needs to be made for them to influence policy.

IFAD's report also stresses the need for tailored solutions to suit the widely differing needs of different countries and farmers – an approach that Farmers Fighting Poverty adopted from the outset.

Farmers Fighting Poverty supports farmers' organisations in many ways. These are categorised for monitoring purposes into four broad 'work areas'. There is naturally some overlap between them, and a single project may well incorporate more than one work area. Indeed, almost all farmers' organisations will need significant support under work area 1 before activities under the other areas can take place.

Work Area 1: Organisational strength and inclusiveness - supporting farmers' organisations to improve the way they consult their members and disseminate information, and to widen their membership and improve accountability.

Work Area 2: Institutional development - helping farmers' organisations to make vital connections to public and private institutions.

Work Area 3: Policy elaboration and advocacy - supporting farmers' organisations to lobby effectively on behalf of agriculture and rural development, while ensuring that the voice remains genuinely that of the farmers themselves.

Work Area 4: Business development - supporting 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 cases that follow are presented thematically, but work areas are provided as a footnote in each case.

¹ The Economist (24 February 2011) A special report on feeding the world: The 9 billion-people question ; McKinsey Quarterly (April 2011) Four lessons for transforming African Agriculture

² IFAD (2010) *Rural Poverty Report 2011*

Overview

Farmers Fighting Poverty, established in 2007, operates as a fund managed by AgriCord. It supports farmers' organisations in the developing world, based on a firm belief that it is only by coming together in democratic groups that smallholder farmers can break out poverty. *Evidence of Impact 2011* draws material from many cases and reports from projects operating under the Farmers Fighting Poverty umbrella. The contents were selected from more than 70 sources from over 30 countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe.

Most of the cases reported fall under work areas 1, 2 and 4 (organisational strength and inclusiveness; institutional development; business development). Work area 3 (policy elaboration and advocacy) has fewer examples, but section 8, *Rising to challenges*, includes cases where farmers' organisations have successfully spoken out on behalf of their members.

A wide range of interventions is highlighted, showing that support is not 'one-size-fits-all' but is tailored to the specific needs of each farmers' organisation. Examples include crops from cashew nuts to honey, and cowpeas to onions. Many women tell of success. There are signs that farm households are benefiting from more balanced diets as a result of growing different vegetables, and are learning conservation techniques so that produce can be stored over traditional lean periods. Smallholders are getting better yields by switching to crops better suited to a fickle climate. Creative new approaches, as highlighted in *Impact 2010*, are increasingly proving their worth. And more farmers can access micro-credit and markets than a year ago.

This year, the evidence cases are arranged thematically. Looking first at **business development and markets**, there are clear cases from West Africa, Brazil, Uganda and Tanzania that farmers' organisations can help smallholders become entrepreneurs rather than subsistence farmers. Reaching the stage of running competitive businesses takes time, and there are other examples from Burkina Faso and Morocco of organisations at an earlier stage of development. They are helping their members to embrace the technical changes needed to increase agricultural production. This leads to better food security and nutrition status of farming families, who can also sell any surplus and move towards entrepreneurship.

The mechanics of introducing change rely on training, advice and mentoring through **farmer-to-farmer approaches**, as illustrated with various cases from Madagascar, Guinea, Peru, Vietnam, Niger and Kenya. The change process for agricultural finance at local level is shown by cases of micro-finance and savings schemes in Cameroon, Nepal and Laos.

Innovation, which includes **agro-tourism** and issues of **fair trade**, is becoming more important. Cases are given from Nepal, India, Vietnam, Albania and Mexico. **Improving sustainability of agriculture** despite increased pressure on land is covered with cases from Morocco, the Philippines and Rwanda.

Challenges facing farmers include **land rights and legal issues**, a lack of trained leaders for their organisations, and gender disparities. Some of the responses to these challenges are illustrated by farmers from Madagascar, the Philippines, the Democratic Republic of Congo and India.

Improving competences of farmers' organisations for collective action

Support to farmers' organisations addresses four broad 'work areas', and the related 'competences' in each work area.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Work Area 1

Organisational strength and inclusiveness

Supporting farmers' organisations to improve the way they consult their members and disseminate information, and to widen their membership and improve accountability.

Competences

1. Policies and strategies prepared with members' participation
2. Well-managed human resources and adequate facilities
3. Sound and transparent financial management
4. Democratic governance
5. Representativity and local membership base
6. Empowerment of young people, women and specific vulnerable groups

Work Area 2

Institutional development

Helping farmers' organisations to make vital connections to public and private institutions.

Competences

7. External networks and partnerships
8. Formal alliances and agreements

COLLECTIVE ACTION

Work Area 3

Policy elaboration and advocacy

Supporting farmers' organisations to lobby effectively on behalf of agriculture and rural development, while ensuring that the voice remains genuinely that of the farmers themselves.

Competences

9. Participatory policy formulation
10. Joint advocacy of family farmers on food security
11. External communication
12. Policy positions in national strategies

Work Area 4

Business development

Supporting farmers' organisations to envision, develop and undertake economic initiatives of various types, because such initiatives have a direct and immediate impact on farmers' incomes.

Competences

13. Fair access to land, water, credit and other resources
14. Access to inputs for agricultural production
15. Processing and handling services
16. Improved product marketing
17. Development of farmer-led enterprises

This report presents examples of the changes in the lives of farmers (women and men) in the field and their families as a result of collective action by stronger farmers' organisations.

Farmers' organisations have been very successful in produce deliverables in work area 4: business development for improved credit (deliverable 13), inputs (14), processing (15), marketing (16) and farmer-led enterprises (17).

Work area 3 (policy elaboration and advocacy) has examples in section 8, *Rising to challenges*, which includes cases of farmers' organisations that have been able to effectively develop positions and speak out on behalf of their members.

The cases that follow are presented thematically, but work areas are provided as a footnote in each case.

Annual profiling results are available for 52 farmers' organisations that have been profiled for three consecutive years (2007, 2008 and 2009).

Consolidated results are given below for 2007-2009 in two indicators, the rate of organisation and income diversification:

- the rate of organisation is the number of individual members compared to the potential target group
- the income diversification indicator takes into account both the diversity of income sources and the proportion of income from own sources (e.g. member fees).

Profiling indicators - Stronger organisations	Goal 2007-2010	Actual 2007-2009
% change in rate of organisation	2%	37%
% change in income diversification	7%	23%

1: Farms as businesses

Founded on the strong belief that smallholder farmers in the developing world can step out of poverty through their own efforts rather than as a result of handouts, Farmers Fighting Poverty works with farmers' organisations to engender a sense of self-help and independence. Producing enough from the land to sell as well as subsist on is crucial to success, so technical improvements in cultivation techniques need to be devised and disseminated. Once there are surpluses for sale, small farmers will benefit from the greater negotiating strength and bigger volumes offered for sale by a group.

Competitive agricultural systems and enterprises - a new approach in West Africa

The Strategic Alliance for Agricultural Development in Africa (SAADA) programme aims to improve the livelihoods of a million farm households in seven countries in West Africa using the Competitive Agricultural Systems and Enterprises (CASE) approach.³ The programme focused on a particular product in each country – rice in Benin, maize in Burkina Faso, fish in Ghana, soya beans in Mali, milk in Niger, sorghum in Nigeria and groundnuts in Togo.

The approach was developed over several years and it brings together Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) – either rotating crops, or combining mineral fertilizers with locally available organic material to replenish soil nutrients and improve the efficiency of fertilizers and other inputs – with improved conditions for competitive commodity chain development. The CASE approach is based on the belief that such competitive commodity chains can only develop when actors collaborate to mutual benefit.

³ Work Areas 1 & 4

A recent evaluation of the SAADA programme found that the CASE approach had contributed to a change in attitude in over 200 'clusters' of stakeholders (including farmers, traders, bankers, local entrepreneurs and people offering business development services). Farmers were increasingly able to recognise business opportunities and take collective action, and it was reported that the programme had created an important sense of ownership within farmers' organisations.⁴

Under the programme, farmers' organisations had been trained how to work more effectively for their members in areas such as collective marketing, negotiation, and advocacy and lobbying. The stronger organisations clearly attracted more members – membership was up by an average of 64% across the seven countries. Even though the increase could not be fully attributed to the programme, 'it indicates the allure of these organisations to ungrouped farmers.'

Positive impacts were seen in increased agricultural productivity and income growth, although the target of reaching a million households has not yet been met. Farmers now know much more about the importance of agricultural inputs, and they have learnt a lot about new production technologies and how to manage the soil.

⁴ Alidou, M., Lem, M., Schrader, T. and de Zeeuw, F. (September 2010) *Local entrepreneurship, agribusiness cluster formation and the development of competitive value chains – Evaluation of the SAADA programme 2006-2009*.

Farmers recognise the power of having more knowledge:

"We just spent 2 years with the project, and farmers are already developing the reflex to find buyers before producing - they say, 'Let's find the market first,' 'Let's contract,' 'Let's sell it together,' etc. Before, they just produced and waited for hypothetical buyers. So we can conclude that we are now moving progressively towards value chains."

Togolese farmer

"Today illiterate farmers are behaving as specialists because we've been trained on new production and management methods. And we learnt that it's better to produce less and be able to look after it, instead of increasing and not being able to care. We learnt how to negotiate with partners."

Beninese farmer

"I have learnt to keep records. It was not easy to structurally register my expenditures and revenues, but the business support services helped me to do so by coming by every week. After a while I had more awareness of my business. While I had thought that I was getting a good price for my rice, it turned out that I was producing at a loss. This was the actual gain of the training. Now I am doing things differently."

Nigerian farmer

They have learned to see problems as opportunities, which translate into new requirements for capacity development. These have included mechanization, conservation and storage techniques, processing, contract farming, business plans and how to approach banks for loans, as well as collaboration with agro-industry.

Producers involved in SAADA activities have seen their income increase significantly, with an average increase of almost 150% reported. The income gains were the result of higher productivity, better quality of product and good prices. Certain activities – collective marketing, price negotiations, product development, processing, storage, and warehouse receipt systems - had been particularly useful. External factors were important, of course, not least the fact that commodity

prices rose. But farmers had to pay more for fertilizer and other inputs, so the rise in income was not caused only by a rise in market price.

Better food security does not necessarily follow automatically from increased agricultural production, but they are certainly related – apart from having more home-grown food available, families can sell surpluses to buy different types of food and other necessities. Case studies suggested that households have seen positive effects on their livelihoods. In Benin, rice has become a daily food rather than a holiday treat; in Burkina Faso, people have a secure supply of food (maize) throughout the year with no hungry gaps, and people are better able to pay for health care and school fees. Fish farmers in Ghana now eat more fish and so have a better diet. Soya bean has become a more popular crop for farmers in Mali – although it fetches a lower price than cowpea, soya is easier to grow and can therefore be relied upon for a steady income. In Niger, turning surplus milk into cheese creates a higher value product which is sold to improve livelihoods. Productivity of sorghum in Nigeria has increased significantly, as has the area under cultivation, and in Togo groundnut production has gone up.⁵

Overall, the evaluation found that SAADA had brought important spin-off effects and was likely to continue to do so. It pointed out that impacts were more likely to be felt by better-off male producers but that women and smaller farmers had also benefited. Many results will be felt beyond the evaluation period simply because of the time taken for change and capacity building to become established. But concrete examples were already seen, such as farmers in Benin being able to pay for school fees, send money and food to children studying far from home, and deal with hardship periods. Women had been able to buy kitchen equipment and some

⁵ Groundnuts are not generally eaten by the household but are sold to generate income.

families had bought a motor bike or car. Others had opened bank accounts. In Burkina Faso, the CASE approach is being considered by Oxfam for integrating into their future interventions. A poultry cluster and a maize cluster want to link up, and soil fertility techniques are being adopted by farmers who are not cluster members.

A final thought from this evaluation was the observation that although business training was important, farmers needed to have sound technical knowledge – to improve their productivity in a sustainable way - before business training could be useful.

Links to bigger markets – Brazil and Central America

A project in Brazil is part of a worldwide programme, *Linking-up: local economic development in a global world*. Support for projects that strengthen family farms has been ongoing for more than twenty years in Southern Brazil. This used to be channelled via NGOs, but Trias now works directly with farmers' organisations.

The goal is to achieve socio-economic security for 60,000 farmers in rural Parana via five specific objectives.⁶ Improving the democratic governance of the partner farmers' organisations is a key part of the support, and flowing from this is an increased level of business professionalism within the organisations and their members.

A mid-term evaluation of the project found many more cooperative societies under the umbrella of UNICAFES, ANCOSOL and UNICAFES-PR, and their financial reserves have increased. Opportunities to sell produce on the institutional market have increased – for instance the national school of nutrition tries to buy at least 30% of its food from family farms. Better market opportunities have in turn encouraged growers to diversify, and household incomes have increased. The cooperatives are achieving better production quality and

are developing capacity towards industrialization of food processing, which should offer the chance for more economic gain.

Access to financial services has increased, notably for women, and more people (women and men) are accessing business services. Ninety-two women were trained as farmers' organisation leaders and 40 women's groups were set up as a result of wide-ranging gender activities.

Under the same global programme is a project to support various farmers' organisations in Central America (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador).⁷ It had a focus on activities to improve farm-related enterprises by offering services related to production (cutting costs, improving quality, diversification) and business and market development. Micro-finance was organised by various partner organisations.

More than 10,000 people benefited from the project, with over 2,000 men and more than 2,600 women accessing micro-finance. The loans were used for various purposes – agricultural equipment, improvements to irrigation systems, and buying and legalizing land holdings. Areas under cultivation increased, sometimes by large proportions. For instance, the area devoted to maize increased by 38%, to coffee by 26%, with smaller increases recorded for a range of other crops (cardamom, vegetables and sugar cane). Higher productivity of agriculture (up 34% per year) and better sales by farm business groups lead to increased incomes, and in turn better living standards for farmers and people involved with small businesses related to agriculture.

Farmers were better able to negotiate prices through partnerships, especially the growers of coffee, cardamom and milk. Groups that had formed a network found they had even more negotiating power, and contracts were signed at local and (in the case of coffee) international level.

⁶ Trias, Work Areas 1, 2 & 4

⁷ Trias, Work Areas 1, 2 & 4

2: Collective strength in the market

Liberalised markets have concentrated trade within commodity chains, especially in the food sector. Small farmers have to find solutions to their disadvantages in the market place. They produce small volumes of variable quality produce, they often lack up-to-date information on market prices and demand, and they do not have links to large buyers. However, as part of a farmers' organisation, an individual can benefit from collective marketing and economies of scale. Smallholders can become stronger players in the commodity chain and capture more of the value added.

Cooperative enterprises pool produce to share risks and benefits

As part of Farmers Fighting Poverty, the Market-based Agricultural Development through Farmers' Cooperatives programme encompasses 13 projects in 10 African countries.⁸ Support is channelled through seven agri-agencies via AgriCord. It is planned that up to 45,000 households (270,000 people) will benefit. The programme targets organisations that are membership-based and democratically managed, as trust and social cohesion are vital where produce is to be pooled and sold collectively. Poorer farmers may make smaller gains from institutional marketing services than larger members, but the overall benefits are believed to outweigh this risk.

A recent evaluation report on the programme found that the concept of joint marketing by members of farmers' organisation was relevant and has been put into place in Benin and for some food crops in Uganda (see below).⁹ Even farmers with few assets, such as a small plot of cashew

trees or some clumps of banana plants, were able to benefit from better marketing of their produce.

Farmers in Benin try group-selling of cashew nuts (URPA-AD)

In the North and West of Benin, some 36,000 cashew nut growers have plots of 1-5ha and grow between them 5,500-6,000 tonnes of unprocessed nuts every year. The regional growers' union represents 13 district unions and about 300 village coops. Total membership is about 3,500 (about 10% of all cashew growers), mainly from poorer levels of society. The union had already begun to collect and market members' output jointly and sales were 550 tonnes in 2008 when the project started.¹⁰

As cashew trees grow better without competition from weeds, grass cutters to mow between the trees were procured. Scales were also obtained, so that the nuts could be weighed accurately before sale. Another step towards boosting members' competitiveness was providing improved cashew seedlings (12,000 plants on 1,000 hectares in 2009). The improved varieties should give nuts of better quality, which can then be sold in more demanding markets. There was no spending on dedicated storage facilities, as the unions and coops used local village halls and other protected spaces to hold nuts until they were collected by the buyer.

URPA management was trained to analyse markets and negotiate business deals, after which they were able to strike a deal with an institutional buyer at 20% above the local market price, with the buyer paying in advance for the nuts and the cost of collection. Two-thirds of the extra income went to the producers, with the rest split between the village association, the district association and the regional

⁸ Work Areas 1 & 4

⁹ SIDA/ Swedish Cooperative Centre/AgriCord (February/March 2010) Draft report by mid-term review mission on the Market-Based Agricultural Development through Farmers' Cooperative Business Programme 2007/8-2010/11

¹⁰ AIN 5163, Afdi, Work Areas 1, 2 & 4

union. This division of the spoils had been formulated during training sessions and was accepted by all parties.

Ugandan farmers set up agro-enterprises (MBADIFA)

Smallholders in the Mbarara District of Uganda have until now depended largely on subsistence agriculture. Parts of the district suffer from a shortage of land and a lack of storage facilities for food crops, and in some places there are severe periodic food shortages. A project to improve food and nutrition security has shown good results, with 70% of the target 3,000 households adopting basic soil conservation practices.¹¹ Through farmer field schools and demonstrations, the effects of adding manure to improve fertility and mulching for water conservation were clearly visible and farmers were keen to try them on their own plots. The quality of bananas in particular improved, as a result of adding manure to the soil and planting them at the correct spacing.

As well as focusing on food security, the project also offered training for farmer's organisations to improve the way they functioned. Once they had the required structures in place (a constitution, proper record-keeping etc), organisations were supported to choose an enterprise for collective marketing and then develop a business plan. Sixty-four groups made links with specific buyers, and 38 groups were active in collective marketing. Seventy-eight groups increased yields (mainly of banana but also millet and beans), had a higher sales volume and made more profit. Although the average number of bunches of bananas sold increased by only 40%, average profits more than doubled, because the bunches were bigger and group negotiations resulted in better prices. Most farmers saw their profits increase by at least 50%. Some farmers were able to buy mobile phones, build permanent houses or send their children to better schools.

¹¹ AIN 5138, Trias, Work Areas 1, 2 & 4

A farmer's story - a budding entrepreneur in Tanzania

Mrs. Tatu Jala was a poor woman suffering with her family without proper food and basic necessities. Her family was involved in farming, but they used outdated methods which gave poor results. She was driven to take loans from the money lenders, which caused problems in her family. Her hard-earned income from farming was only enough to pay the interest to the money lenders. Lacking knowledge of up-to-date farming techniques, her family was not able to produce better yields although the land was fertile. Relief came in the form of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate sisters (DMI), who organised women into self help groups. Mrs. Tatu Jala became a member of her local group. The Trust of DMI also set up a project to help the women increase their income through collective farming. Mrs. Jala was one of the beneficiaries who learned new cultivation, collective farming and marketing techniques.¹²

Mrs. Jala learned about the importance of using natural fertilizers and cultivating seasonal and rotational crops to maintain the fertility of the soils. Along with other women in her neighbourhood, she started growing different types of vegetable. New farming techniques enabled them to triple their crop yield so there was a surplus to sell in the market for a reasonable price. She said, "Earlier the middlemen bought my produce for a pittance, today I am empowered to sell them on my own".

She started saving regularly and has repaid all her debts. She was able to build a new house with hollow blocks and to feed and educate her children. She now has a small poultry business too. By selling the chickens and eggs, she earned additional income for her family. She proudly says "I have climbed the social ladder and it is through me that our family's income has increased and that our children's future has changed dramatically.

¹² AIN 5260, Agriterra, Work Areas 1 & 4

3: Better food and income security

Farmers' organisations can make a significant difference to the lives of their members by helping them towards more secure livelihoods. Through various development approaches such as Participatory Agricultural Enterprise Development (PAED), smallholder farmers can learn techniques to improve the productivity of their plots, to grow a variety of crops for a more balanced diet, or to cultivate new crops better adapted to changing weather conditions. Once their food supply for the family is assured, they can move towards commercial production. Livelihood and business risks can be reduced by integrating local savings and credit services close to the farmers.

Balanced diets in Uganda (HODFA)

Improving the food and income security of smallholder farm households in Hoima District in a sustainable way was the objective of this project.¹³ The Hoima District Farmers' Association (HODFA) has been using the Participatory Agro-Enterprise Development (PAED) approach, which allows the organisation and its members to systematically plan, implement, monitor and evaluate project activities together.

Targeting the 'active poor' – households who exist at around subsistence level, have an insecure income and food supply, and who know little about organised markets – it was important to use local languages. Training centres were spread widely so that farmers did not have to travel too far to attend training courses. And HODFA collaborated with local councils at different levels to make sure that as many farmers as possible were

mobilised. So far the project and has reached more than 3,500 households. Almost 1,900 households will have accessed microfinance services from HOKOFAM (the microfinance partner) by the end of the project. More than 200 farmer agro-enterprise groups have been formed.

Before the project started, most of the target households were growing food for home consumption only and did not view crops as having the potential to generate income. Now, households are now growing a wider range of foodstuffs that give them full and balanced nutrition throughout the year. They have learned better cooking methods that preserve the nutritional value of food – for instance steaming rather than frying, and not peeling some items such as sweet potato. Post-harvest handling of crops has been improved, for instance by the simple but effective use of tarpaulins to cover the ground and keep produce clean while it is being dried. Food conservation methods for the lean months are now widely used. Wood-saving stoves are becoming more common and home environments are cleaner with drying racks and hand-washing facilities.

"I have increased knowledge and skills in farming"

"I am a widow, but ever since I joined Trias, my incomes have increased and I can pay school fees for my grand children"

"I have increased knowledge on pest and disease control"

"I can now feed my family and buy some clothes; am no longer afraid to go to functions"

"Non-participating farmers come and ask us for vegetables"

"We eat well; children are no longer falling sick"

*Quotes from farmers
HODFA 2008-2010 progress report*

¹³ AIN 5139, Trias, Work Areas 1, 2 & 4

The two hundred-odd agro-enterprises developed under the project have reached different stages. Many have developed business plans and 194 were able to collectively sell value-added products beyond the farm gate. Linking with a specific buyer was more difficult, as it requires contracts to be drawn up between buyers and the group, but several binding agreements have been made with local seed companies (Afrokai, East African Seed Co., Nalweyo Seed Co. etc).

Enterprises chosen by the groups showed an increase in production stemming from better productivity and larger acreage. Rice yields went up 114%, from 0.7 tonnes per acre in 2008 to 1.5 tonnes in 2010. Maize yields too were 58% higher (from 1.2 tonnes per acre to 1.9 tonnes). Farmers were literally reaping the benefits of better agronomic practices such as early planting (in lines rather than randomly), timely weeding, planting on virgin land and improved seed varieties. With financial services available from HOKOFAM, farmers were able to take out loans to open up more land or rent from their neighbours. Average plot sizes went up from 0.3 to 1.5 acres for rice and from 0.7 to 1.5 acres for maize.

Thirty lead farmers have been trained as extension facilitators to take over the tasks of HODFA advisors – running farmer field schools and mentoring farmer groups in how to keep records and how to follow the steps of PAED. Seven secondary-level associations were formed (these should eventually form cooperative societies) which should be able to access bigger markets for members' produce.

A farmer's story - growing rice as a farming business, Uganda

"I am Kyosaba Abigairi, from Kitoba sub county Hoima District. I am a member of

Hoima District Farmers' Association.¹⁴ I studied up to primary six level. I am married, with children. We live in a mud and wattle house. I have been doing farming but on a subsistence level. I grow food crops like cassava, sweet potatoes, groundnuts and beans.

"I have been growing rice on about half an acre with a yield of 200kg per season and selling at the farm gate. In 2008 HODFA introduced us to a new program called Participatory Agro-Enterprise Development, a programme that involved us from enterprise planning to marketing. I discussed it with my husband and agreed to join the programme. I registered with a group called Twesigangane Kisonde in May 2008. By first season of 2009, we had gone through all the PAED steps, where rice and maize were selected as income enterprises.

"Using the farmer field school approach, we had a demonstration on how to plant rice. Before the PAED programme, we would plant rice in any way, at a seed rate of 60kg/acre and not in lines. But with the trainings from our facilitators from HODFA, I learnt to plant in lines, using only 30kg/acre.

"At germination, it seemed less in the field, and the neighbours who were not participating laughed at me with funny comments, like "You wasted your time and adopted the wrong advice from your facilitators". At weeding time, my rice had grown taller and smart in lines with the field full and no more gaps compared to those of my neighbours. They thought I had done gap filling.

"In the field of 0.8 acre, I harvested 1,500kg. I pooled my produce with my fellow group members: we milled and sold to Buganda traders at USh1,300 (about 40 euro cents) per kg. I was able to earn USh 1,267,500 (about 360 euro)

¹⁴ Work Areas 1, 2 & 4

from the sale of rice only. With this money, we have started a new house of bricks, which is now at wall plate stage, bought a cow which will be giving us milk for home consumption and sold for money.

“In season two of 2010, we got a loan from HOFOKAM to increase our acreage from 0.8 to one acre. We grew rice for East African Seed Company and harvested 1,800kg. From the sales of this rice, I am sure we are going to finish our house.

“In this programme also, we were sensitized on conserving the environment whereby we were trained and demonstrated on fuel saving stoves. In my local kitchen, I constructed a fuel saving stove which has helped me a lot on the saving of firewood used. On average a bundle of firewood would take less than a week, but now it goes for two weeks and above. It also saves my time because I light it and put two saucepans at a go.”

Cowpeas in Burkina Faso replace cotton (Unions of cowpea farmers of Pissila, Dablo and Pensa)

Rainfall in Sanmatenga Province in Burkina Faso has become irregular and the traditional cash crop, cotton, has been abandoned because it fails without sufficient water. As an alternative, cowpea is ideal - new varieties mature in 70 days and need only 370mm of rainfall. Being a legume, cowpea fixes nitrogen in the soil, improving it for the next crop. Other plus points are that it is easy to store, there is market demand for it and it fits well into the rotation of local farming systems. Finally, it is a nutritious food crop that brings protein to the local diet. A project to develop the cowpea sector in the province has been running since 2008 (continuing activities started in 2004), with the beneficiaries being mostly small farmers, all of whom are members of

cowpea producers' unions.¹⁵ More than half of the members of the cowpea producers' unions are women. Activities are implemented at the level of farmers' organisation and department union. They are based on four themes – support to producers on technical and economic aspects of the crop, support for conservation, storage and marketing, improved access to financial services and capacity building of the internal management of farmer groups and higher-level unions.

Training has been given on cultivation techniques. This includes using improved seed varieties and taking better control of the land with optimum sowing and weeding times, and methods of applying fertilizer. Demonstration plots were set up in 26 villages to show the new cowpea (and sorghum) varieties. Learning how to recognise insect pests and good spraying techniques means farmers are now able to respond to infestations in good time to prevent serious losses. Post-harvest losses are reduced by drying the cowpeas thoroughly and storing them in three-layered bags.

Results were monitored and new techniques spread by means of a network of 96 'experimental farmers' (both women and men) who were trained by the project team to record all their costs and income so that gross margins could be calculated. These farmers also act as conduits for knowledge transfer to their fellow farmers, sharing the skills they acquired during training and monitoring them during the growing season. Interestingly, the women managed to obtain yields comparable to those of men, despite being spending less on inputs. It is suggested that the women compensate for the lack of financial resources by spending more time on their (smaller) plots.

¹⁵ AIN 5072, FERT, Work Areas 1, 2 & 4

The overall area under cultivation with cowpea increased from 607 to 715ha and the average yield from 600 to 780kg/ha between 2009 and 2010. This year's success is partly due to good rains, which cannot be guaranteed in future. But better cultivation also played a part - the experimental farmers' yields increased by 47% (compared to a 27% increase for the other farmers), showing that their greater technical expertise allowed them to take advantage of the rainfall. Another contributing factor to success has been the availability of credit, as farmers have learned how to apply for loans and banks understand better the needs of agriculture. Finally, the government has launched a pilot scheme to support inputs.

"Soil fertility of the plots has improved sustainably and permanently during project actions."

"The food ration of the beneficiaries, especially the most vulnerable; children, elderly, pregnant women, has improved from the second year of action."

Opinions of producers

A farmer's story - a new life thanks to a new crop, Burkina Faso

Mr. Soré Nongma is a producer in the village of Solomnoré in Pissila. He is a member of a cowpea group called Wendlamita. He has four wives and he is a father of 13 children. One of his daughters is married and his eldest son went to Côte d'Ivoire. Of the eleven children who still live at home, four are old enough to help with farm work. In 2010, he has grown 4ha of sorghum with cowpea and 3ha of pure cowpea. Sorghum is for family consumption and is never sold, but the cowpea is a cash crop and is the main source of income for the family.

Before he began growing cowpeas seven years ago, Mr. Soré could not feed his family or educate his children. He was

then obliged to sell livestock each year to buy food and his flock never prospered. In addition, he didn't have the equipment, plough or a donkey, so he cultivated by hand using a local hoe. During one of his trips to Djibo, Mr. Soré discovered the culture of pure cowpea and decided to try it on a small area of 0.25ha; he was the only one in the village doing it. Other producers observed him and were convinced: after a few seasons, they started to do the same. They have all gradually increased their production area of pure cowpea, and Mr. Soré has increased his production area from 0.25 to 3ha over two years.

The move towards cowpea started by Mr. Soré was strengthened by the arrival of Cowpea Project 2 and the activities developed by the Departmental Union of Producers of Cowpea Pissila (UDPNP), of which M. Soré's group is a member.¹⁶ The group got a sprayer that allows producers to treat cowpeas, which they could not do before. Producers received technical guidance by a facilitator during the project. They learned to sow seed in lines, how to apply mineral and organic fertilizer, improved varieties and how to recognise pests.

New techniques are shared better now that Mr. Soré has become a pilot producer: he gets training and transmits it to the members of his group; he also visits their plots and advises other farmers. He records his farming activities and expenditures, analyses the results and presents them to the rest of the group.

Since 2009, producers have been storing their harvested cowpeas in a collective storehouse and selling it at a better price. In 2009, the group received three bags of cement to repair the store and in 2010 they got a door, gate and lock to make the building more secure.

¹⁶ AIN 5072, FERT, Work Areas 1, 2 & 4

Mr. Soré now has a new strategy: he sows one part of his fields early to harvest in September when prices are high: in 2009 he sold nine sacks at 33,000 CFA (about 50 euro) and 22 sacks at same price in 2010. A month later, at the peak of harvest, the price had almost halved, to 18,000 CFA.

The rest of the harvest (late sowing and local variety) is stored and then sold through the Union (in 2009, a sack was sold at 27,500 CFA – about 42 euro). A part of the money obtained is reinvested in the inputs of the following year. His wives also grow cowpeas (0.25ha each) in addition to peanuts, sorghum and maize. But since cowpea production is more profitable than others, it is an ever more important in their rotation.

Since he started the pure cowpea production, Mr. Soré has bought bulls, two ploughs and a donkey, reinvested in field inputs, re-roofed his wives' houses, paid school fees for his children, maintained their social network and met the needs of his family. His latest purchase is a motorcycle. His flock has

grown too, since he is no longer obliged to sell the animals each year to cover the spending. Today, he has 16 goats, 14 sheep as well as poultry on his farm. He has also been able to meet his responsibilities as a tribal chief.

Empowered by the success, Mr. Soré wants now to enlarge the cultivation area. His son - who lived in Côte d'Ivoire - should return next January to work with him. In addition to the cowpea, and thanks to the training received on sorghum and improved varieties tested in his plots, he also envisages a gradual transition from local to improved varieties. To do this, he will increase the surfaces of his test plots each year during three years before choosing the variety of sorghum that suits him best.

He is also building a house to Pissila city. The plot is already acquired. He is the newly elected president of his group and wishes to further strengthen the capacities of other members of the group and make every effort to ensure that his group is engine of the Union, so that it can offer more services to the members.

4: *Introducing technical innovation*

Technical innovation is vital if smallholder farmers are to see the increase in yields that are necessary to feed a growing population. Correct use of fertilizers, pest and disease control and better growing techniques (zero tillage, conservation farming, irrigation etc) all have their part to play. And making the most of scarce resources without degrading the environment takes skill and knowledge.

Farmer-to-farmer approaches are effective for practical adoption of innovative practices. Projects under Farmers Fighting Poverty introduce effective ways of bringing farmers together to share experience and best practice, some of which are highlighted below.

Moroccan farmers improve wheat production

Until recently, most cooperative societies in Morocco were milk producing unions – small coops dealing with wheat production and marketing were almost non-existent. Following a government decision to liberalise the Moroccan grain market and reorganise the national grain industry, Moroccan farmers needed to adapt to these changes. A two-year project to promote a cooperative approach to better wheat growing has seen some positive results.¹⁷

Study trips to France for representatives of farmers' groups and specialist input from French technicians, together with six-month internships in Settât (one of the project's three areas) for two agricultural students from Paris, were some of the means by which new methods were introduced to Morocco. The three project areas, Settât, Khenifra and Meknes, saw

slightly different activities but in all areas experimental plots were set up to test cultivation techniques, sowing density and different wheat varieties. Establishing best practice in a particular environment is vital to keep costs down and maximise yields.

It was found that direct drilling was effective and compared well with conventional techniques such as using a chisel plough or broadcasting seed. The trial plots of direct drilling in Khenifra showed that it was possible to halve establishment costs and save three-quarters of the working time needed for conventional cultivation.

Wheat sown at lower density made many side shoots (tillers) and gave a good population of ears. Proper agricultural practice (correct fertilizer use – or planting after a leguminous crop - and pest control etc) improved the quality of the harvest. It was found that correct use of nitrogen in particular was cheaper and gave better results. Storing the grain in sealed bags preserved its qualities and prevented insect damage.

Baking qualities - whether it has a high gluten content and is therefore suited to bread-making, for instance – affect the price of wheat. Experiments established which wheat varieties and growing regime gave the highest value, so that farmers could maximise their income. Correct doses of nitrogen were found to improve baking quality.

A prototype winnowing machine to clean wheat after harvesting was also designed and tested, so coops can now clean their wheat to a higher standard than is possible with hand-winnowing.

¹⁷ FERT, Work Areas 1 & 2

Madagascar sets up agricultural service centres

With the support of two partners, this project has set up Agricultural Service Centres (CSAs) at district level to bring farming services closer to the farmers that need them.¹⁸ Before the centres were established, it was difficult for farmers in remote areas to access services related to agriculture, livestock and fisheries. The centres also received some government funding to provide public services.

At the time of the first project evaluation, when the CSAs had only been running for less than a year, 11-15% of the population had already benefited from them. A later evaluation found that the majority of requests made to service centres concerned the need for either training or agricultural inputs. Overall, the centres were judged to be good tools to improve agriculture, particularly in the way they could coordinate and direct technical and financial assistance. They had built good relations between farmers, between farmers and service providers, and between different service providers.

Some farmers remained dissatisfied, though:

"Training is good, but it is still necessary to have the means to put in action what we have learned."

"We know now how the vaccine animals, but have no means of procuring vaccines."

"I was trained to improve rice production, but how to finance the inputs (improved seeds and fertilizers)?"

Learning by exchange (FIFATA)

A project in Madagascar looked at exchange visits as a tool for development, based on experiences in three regions of the country.¹⁹ An exchange visit usually consists of a meeting between the host

and representatives of one or more farmers' organisations. The meeting will cover a specific theme and include a theoretical presentation as well as practical sessions. There is also a mechanism for sharing information with those who did not make the visit but would be interested in the information.

Many positive effects have been seen following exchange visits, including changes in the practices used on family farms. The visit itself can revitalise a flagging farmers' organisation, providing new ideas and motivation for farmers. Farmers see concrete examples of success, such as the effects of technical or management decisions, and 90% of them said they were satisfied with the exchange. The host (whether an organisation or a 'model' farmer) is encouraged to present itself to best advantage, so makes extra efforts towards success. And the visitors exchange views on the journey home as well as during the visit itself. Finally, visits to an unfamiliar place can show farmers new and unexpected ideas.

"The hosting of exchange visits required farmers' organisations to take very good care of their farms. It is a matter of honour!"

"A month after an exchange visit to the chicken farming in Talata Gasy Ampano in July 2010, the Miaramandroso farmers' organisation has established a common chicken farm to demonstrate to members and other local people the benefits of improved techniques of farming."

"It is an opportunity to buy onion seeds directly from the producer with a good price," says a farmer from Ambinaniroa (High Matsiatra) who bought seeds from Betroka (Ihorombe) during an exchange visit.

"The exchange visit to the improved pig rearing farm in June 2010 at Antsirabe allowed us also to attend the national fair of agricultural machinery."

"The exchange visit to Anjoma Itsara enabled us to discover a new plant which is very useful in the making of compost."

"At the end of each exchange visit, there are always debates or discussions at night and even during the return journey."

Comments from exchange farmers

¹⁸ AIN 5343, FERT and Afdi, Work Areas 1 & 2

¹⁹ FERT, Work Area 1

Working through specialised service-providers (Guinea)

A large-scale project to support local economic development and defend local interests in Guinea has been operating through four local NGO partners.²⁰ The NGOs provide various services, depending on their specialisation. The first NGO has been involved with training entrepreneurs, including interactive training using radio, developing business plans and training individual enterprises and farmer's organisations in accounting, data processing, computer skills and marketing and planning. Another NGO focused on processing, marketing and general support. The third works with animal traction, cultivation techniques and the agricultural calendar, crop management, and sustainable agriculture and environmental protection through teaching compost-making. The fourth, CAFODEC, has provided microfinance.

To reach as many people as possible, CAFODEC set up 34 microfinance desks close to possible beneficiaries. Loans totalling more than GNF 6 billion (over 630,000 euro) were made, with a repayment rate of over 90%. This made a significant contribution to the financial needs of target groups. With NGO support to microcredit services, 12 platforms and eight small machines have been set up in favour of 20 farmer groups.

Tools and equipment, including 300 ploughs, 80 hoes, 80 manual excavators, 80 harrows, were introduced by an NGO to four farmers' groups. The tools have increased agricultural production in the project area (by 20%) because they save effort and time, and they have significantly reduced the amount of manual labour required of women. Producers' income has increased by 38%.

²⁰ AIN 5197, Trias, Work Areas 1, 2, 3 & 4

Marketing support to COPRAKAM in Upper Guinea has helped them participate in national fairs and to sell five tonnes of raw shea butter and nearly a thousand jars of shea 'cream' for a total of 108 million GNF (about 10,000 euro). These successes have resulted from a better supply chain and incentives to producers, together with better packaging and higher standards of quality and hygiene.

In Kondoya, women have a stronger place in the household with the acquisition of civil registration, and they demand more rights over common goods, including access to land, health and the education of their children. In Kabeleya, women and their organisations have access to credit and training to improve the way they cultivate – planting in lines, and weeding promptly when necessary – to improve their income.

Demonstration plots and model farms in Peru (CNA)

Established in 1974, the National Agrarian Confederation (CNA) of Peru represents small-scale producers and has 182,000 members organised in various associations. Almost a third of its members are women. Cooperation between CNA and Agriterria has been ongoing for almost a decade, and recent projects focused on making women and young people more food secure and using sustainable agriculture techniques.²¹

The farmer-to-farmer methodology (in Peru known as *campesino a campesino*, or CaC) is at the heart of information transfer in this organisation, and it has proved its worth yet again with these projects. Farmers know the problems faced by other farmers, so their advice is trusted and relevant. Through workshops, seminars and meetings, problems were identified and helpful information spread

²¹ AIN 4843 and 5278, Agriterria, Work Area 1

via radio broadcasts, blogs, videos and the publication *El Vocero*. Over 100 demonstration family farms were set up, and 96 demonstration plots established.

More than 1,500 families have incorporated sustainable agriculture and food security practices to their farms, and they now use organic fertilizer and soil conservation techniques. They have learned to grow a wider variety of crops, which improves family nutrition and reduces dependence on external food supplies. Children especially have benefited from better nutrition. Clean kitchen facilities and toilets, which were also part of the project, have improved health and quality of life.

Cooperatives offer technical training to members

Farmers' organisations, once they have reached a certain size and are working as properly structured democratic institutions, are ideally placed to provide training to their members. They are aware of the particular needs faced by farmers locally, they speak the same language, and their focus is on the betterment of their members. Two cases below illustrate the effectiveness of training offered in this way.

A farmer's story - better rice cultivation in Vietnam (Cầu Nhi Cooperative)

Mrs. Thi Hao, who lives in a village in the North Central Coastal of Vietnam, has been a farmer since childhood. Until recently, she and her family lived in a small hut and their rice fields produced hardly enough for their own consumption. But over the past five years their situation has improved. Their rice yields have quadrupled, they have started producing rice seed and other crops, and they earn a good income.

In Vietnam the government owns all the land, but since 1997 people have been

able to acquire land-use rights for specific plots, generally around 1,000m² per person. Most plots can only be used for growing rice - land use is determined by the government. Mrs. Thi Hao's family (her husband, two children and her mother-in-law) has land-use rights over three plots. They also lease 1ha from elderly people who can no longer work their own land. She and her husband work on the rice fields together.

Their early agricultural activities 'were a mere shot in the dark', and there was no support available. But once they joined the Cầu Nhi Cooperative they were able to take part in its various training activities.²² One course covered Integrated Crop Management for rice, offered by the cooperative with support from Quang Tri's Cooperative Alliance & Small and Medium Enterprise Association.

The Vietnamese slogan for Integrated Crop Management for rice is '3 down - 3 up'. It is a simple way to remember the policy - reduce the amount of seed, fertilizer and pesticides and increase the quantity, quality and income of rice. Another advantage is less environmental damage because of using fewer chemicals.

Old varieties of rice and traditional cultivation methods gave yields of about 500kg per crop or 1,000kg per year (two harvests). This was barely enough for their own consumption, and there was certainly none left over to sell. But with the improved variety of rice made available by the cooperative and better farming skills, their yield increased to about 2,000kg per harvest, which is more than enough for their own needs. The average price for 1kg of rice is 5,500 dong, about 18 euro cents. For 2,000kg they receive about 350 euro, giving an annual income of 700 euro (there are two harvests per year), which is comparable to the salary of an office worker in Vietnam.

²² AIN 29, Agriterra, Work Areas 1 & 2

Recently the family have been producing rice seed for a seed company. This contract runs through the cooperative, with assistance from the department of agriculture and rural development. Seed rice fetches a higher price, so the Thi Hao family earn an extra 1,500 dong per kilo. Ten years ago the family were poor farmers with few possibilities and little knowledge, but now they are successful and active farmers who can earn a proper living from agriculture.

Their improved farming skills and their love for agriculture also allowed them to make good use of a 1,500m² piece of land in the higher, less fertile, part of the village. The Thi Hao family already had the right to use of this land but did very little with it. Now they cultivate the field and grow crops in a diversified system. Produce includes groundnuts, maize and green beans, which generate a good profit. The family income is derived roughly 80% from rice and 20% from these other crops.

The family's home used to be no more than a hut, but by saving some of their profit and taking out a loan, they started building a proper house three years ago. It is nearly finished and they have already moved in.

The family has found that the services of the C u Nhi Cooperative have increased and improved. They can now buy good fertilizer, on credit if necessary, via the coop. They also benefit from the coop's extensive information services and hope to participate in more field training activities and learn more about disease control in rice.

A farmer's story - training for more efficient farming in Kenya (KENFAP)

Mary Wanjiru Kibui lives in the small town of Rwathia, in central Kenya. She learned a lot from the training courses for small-scale farmers run by the Kenya National

Federation of Agricultural Producers (KENFAP).²³

Mary, 35, is married with two children - a girl of 11 and a boy of 7. She has been a member of KENFAP since 2004. At that time she was not employed but she had an interest in farming. Since joining KENFAP her situation has changed. Her father-in-law has allowed her use about half an acre of land (although it will never become her property) and, thanks to several training courses run by KENFAP, she has learned how to use her small plot efficiently and provide fresh food for her family.

She also learned that farming is a business and has improved her entrepreneurial skills. She planted tea and coffee bushes that are now both fruitful and profitable. The training courses she attended have changed her life. Her income has increased, and her children go to school and will therefore have more opportunities. A part of the income she uses for her family, the rest she invests in the farming business.

Mary also has a small computer shop where people pay a small fee to use the internet, fax machine or printer. She says that she was able to start this business because of the money she earned from the farm: she was able to get a loan to buy the computer and other equipment. The profit from the shop is comparable to what she earns from the farming business.

Besides the farm and the computer shop, Mary runs the shop where KENFAP members sell their products and she is secretary of the 150-strong women's group 'Maguna Andu'. Many of these women have benefited from KENFAP training courses, and Mary encourages other women to enrol.

²³ AIN 5287, Agriterra, Work Areas 1 & 4

A farmer's story – advice from a private company improves onions in Niger (Yoreize Koira)

In some cases, advice can be brought in via a farmers' organisation from a private company. The farmer's organisation will be well placed to choose a company that will provide the right advice for members, and can act as facilitator for the process, as described in the case below.

Thanks to the advice and stem seed from Dutch onion specialist De Groot & Slot, onion farmers in Niger have improved their onion production.²⁴ Horticulturalist Ali Adamou expanded the area under cultivation from several square metres to 0.5ha - his crop is of excellent quality and he makes a good profit. He is not the only one. All 76 members of Ali's cooperative, Yoreize Koira, have adopted the new, more productive way of growing onions. And about 20 other farmers in the surrounding area now use this production method and enjoy its benefits.

The Yoreize Koira cooperative has been involved in the project - implemented by the umbrella national horticultural organisation FCMN-Niya - since 2006. Ali Amadou, father of 11, grows onion seed as well as various vegetables. Before the project started, it was hard for Ali to buy quality onion seed and he often got into debt with the seed merchant. Sometimes the seeds were of poor quality with low germination rates. A high proportion of the crop tended to bolt (run to seed early) so these onions fetched a lower price. The crop was rarely profitable.

In 2003, Ali contacted Japanese staff who were supporting a project in his region. Together with several other farmers, he visited traditional onion-growing areas (Maradi and Galmi Thaoua) to learn more. In 2005, the Dutch onion and shallot specialist De Groot & Slot - through Agriterra - came into contact with FCMN-Niya. They wanted to share their expertise to the benefit of farmers in Niger. Since then, the company has been helping to improve onion cultivation and has established commercial onion seed production. This support now extends to the Yoreize Koira coop.

The exchange of knowledge and of experience inspired Mr. Ali to experiment. He tried different cultivation methods, and when they proved successful he modified his traditional techniques. By using onion sets from De Groot & Slot as well as receiving technical support, he produces more onion seed of higher quality than before.

The success of onions and the cultivation of onion seed is not limited to the cooperative in Yoreize Koira - the surrounding villages have adopted the new methods too. The cooperative now sells seed produced by its own members throughout the whole area. Production is checked by FCMN-Niya to guarantee its high quality. Meanwhile technical support on the cultivation process is provided almost exclusively by local instructors who have been trained by the Dutch company.

²⁴ AIN 5107, Agriterra, Work Areas 1 & 2

5: Practical financing of local agricultural innovation

Growth requires investment at farm level, and one of the most pressing challenges faced by smallholder farmers is lack of ready cash or access to credit. They may be ready and willing to make changes to the way they produce crops, but unless they can buy the fertilizer, tools or improved seed varieties they need, they are stuck with their old, under-productive methods. Links between farmer's organisations and micro-finance institutions provide practical financing systems that are accessible at local level help farmers to borrow the (often very small amounts of) money they need.

Together with facilitating access to small loans, helping farmers to save money is vital to support their development from subsistence to commercial agriculture. For poorly educated rural dwellers, entrusting even small sums of money to a third party requires confidence that their hard-earned cash will be safe – the intervention of a farmer's organisation can provide this reassurance. Farmers' organisations that are accountable and democratic can be instrumental in encouraging their members to start making regular savings.

The cases below describe some of the successes in microfinance and savings schemes.

A farmer's story - a small business loan in Cameroon (Teze Women's Group)

More than 40 women and their families of the Teze community in Cameroon now have higher living standards because they joined a local project that promoted economic activities at grassroots level.²⁵ The women, members of local women's

groups and most of them living in extreme poverty, learned how to start their own small businesses based on palm oil, rubbing oil and medicated soap. Training courses taught them how to produce, process and market the oil and soap, and they were able to borrow money to set up a business from a credit system set up by the project. One of the women who escaped from poverty by this route is Mrs. Ambeazieh Angela.

Mrs. Ambeazieh Angelina was born in 1956 in Teze village. She had nine children, but five of them died because the family lived in extreme poverty and terrible circumstances. They couldn't afford medicine for the children, did not have enough to eat and their house was no more than a shelter. She became a widow in 1996 when her husband died - he was very sick but they could not afford to take him to a better equipped hospital in Bamenda Town some 80km away. Since 2007 Mrs. Angelina has been taking care of her two grandchildren as well, because both of their parents (Mrs. Angelina's son and daughter-in-law) died too. Besides caring for her children and grandchildren, Mrs. Angelina worked on her farm where she grew some vegetables. All the remaining children except one (who is an epileptic) helped her on the farm.

Faced with all these problems, Mrs. Angelina joined the Teze women's group in 2008, hoping it would help improve her situation. In 2009 the whole group was invited to take part in a local project to improve the lives of women and their families by setting up small businesses. The women received financial support in the form of a small investment to set the business up. They could also borrow money and join training courses to learn

²⁵ AIN 5260, Agriterra, Work Areas 1 & 4

about the production, processing, storage and marketing of palm oil, soap or rubbing oil. Mrs. Angelina chose the palm oil training because she already had some idea of palm oil production and marketing, albeit on a small scale.

Starting out was difficult but she persisted, grateful for the start-up funding and training opportunities. After a while she found her way in the palm oil chain and now, with other women in the group, is able to bulk-buy the raw palm fruit for a lower price. She processes them into oil with help of her children and other women, and sells the oil for a good price to many clients in her community. The profit from her palm oil activities has improved her family income. She can now pay school fees for her children and grandchildren, as well as being able to afford nutritious food and health care for the family.

A farmer's story - small loans, big improvements in Nepal (Chapagau SACCOS)

Mrs. Rai and her family of four children used to live in Dhankuta, a remote district in the east of Nepal. She worked on other people's farms and her husband was with the army. In the year 2000 the family decided, for security reasons, to move to the Kathmandu Valley. They rented a house and a small piece of land to farm. In 2002, Mrs. Rai joined the Chapagau Saving and Credit Cooperative Society (SACCOS).²⁶ The society provides loans for micro-finance up to a maximum of NRs 100,000 (about 1,000 euro) and all the members are women. Mrs. Rai attended training courses run by the society on the importance of saving, financial literacy and financial administration.

After saving for about six months she took a first loan to start mushroom growing.

²⁶ AIN 5513, Agriterra, Work Areas 1 & 2

She chose mushrooms because her husband has had some training on how to grow them. With a micro-loan of NRs 8,000 (about 80 euro) they constructed their first plastic tunnel (a kind of green house). In a relatively short time they had made a profit of about Rs 40,000. Later, with a second loan and their own savings from the mushroom profits, they put up four more tunnels. And with another loan and more savings of NRs 50,000 they built another eight sheds. In total, Mrs. Rai has invested about NRs 300,000 in the business over the last eight years.

Now the family has 13 tunnels and produces about 100kg of fresh white mushrooms per day. Mr. Rai sells the mushrooms at the market, and the family employs three full-time labourers. At this stage, the business gives the family a net annual income of about NRs 250,000 (2,500 euro).

The family is much more financially secure now, and they have managed to build a new life in the densely populated Kathmandu Valley. They have bought a piece of land of about 80m², and both husband and wife are fully engaged in the business. Mrs. Rai is very happy and proud of her business. She also has ambitious plans, limited only by the rule that the SACCOS does not provide a loan higher than NRs 100,000. Mrs. Rai is considering getting a loan somewhere else to fulfil her expansion plans.

A farmer's story - learning to plan ahead in Laos (ACCU)

"I am a farmer. Every day I go to the farm. I do not know how to manage my money. Each day I have a small amount of money that I can use to support my family. I am not thinking of tomorrow and the day after. I have never managed my finance for life."²⁷

²⁷ AIN 5052, Agriterra, Work Areas 1 & 2

“A commercial bank knows how to manage money for people, but there is no system to transfer this knowledge to people who do not know to write. Then it is difficult for people to connect to the bank. They do not know how to save money or how to loan money. They will never know how to manage their life.

“When the government came to see the situation in my village, they went to talk with the village chief, who is a person who is very close to us and knows how to speak our language. The village chief is like a father to us. He gives suggestions to improve our lives and hears the individual problems of village people.

“The government decided to support the village with a fund. They created a village development fund (savings and credit union, or SCU) where people could loan money to manage their own lives and improve the village. The village chief explained the programme to us and explained how to save and manage your money. They explained it very slowly, step by step, so we felt very comfortable. The village chief created trust and used easy words. It is not a big investment, but we know how to put in small amounts. We

now have our own bank. We feel independent and comfortable.

“Cooperation is a very important element. We can share one idea, one decision. If we have very little money, we still have a chance to loan a small amount to the SCU that we can help support any family member who has an emergency or help your family to run a small business.

“The SCU knows how to manage your money, how much you have collected in one day and how much you will collect in a year. With the SCU we can plan what we are going to do with our money and compare our finances with our own economic situation.

“So why did I become a member? I have a chance to make a decision, to work in cooperation, where we can exchange open-minded ideas and to change my economic situation. I can be part of a big cooperation with millions of ideas.

“Why do I want to support the SCU and invite new members to join? Because we want to see the future. We want to change our poor education and poor economics to the same level as that of the rich people. That is our plan.”

6: Innovative approaches, new markets

Organic production can provide smallholder farmers with new and more rewarding markets. Once the farmers have learned new techniques for growing organically, the produce has a higher value than conventionally grown crops and they save by not having to buy artificial inputs. Growing interest in the developed world for a more ecological approach is also shown in the popularity of agro-tourism experiences, where tourists choose to stay on farms to see at first hand and participate in the daily routine of rural life. The fair trade movement also plays a part in helping market the produce from small farmers' organisations. The Farmers Fighting Poverty cases below show how these demands from sophisticated markets can become opportunities for small farmers in the developing world.

A farmer's story - eco-tea good for the environment and a Nepali farmer's purse (Eco Tea Coop)

In Kolbung, a little village in the eastern part of Nepal, lives Mrs. Ganga Rai. She and her husband run a mixed farm of 1.8ha with the help of their four children.²⁸ Part of the land is used to grow tea, an important cash crop for the family. Until five years ago they used chemical fertilizer and pesticides. But they encountered problems with the pesticides and found that the demand for organic tea was increasing. In 2007 they joined the Eco Tea Cooperative, which helped them switch into organic farming. Although it was not easy to convert to an organic system, their production is now stable and their organic tea fetches twice the price of the conventional tea they used to grow.

The Tea Sector Service Centre (Teasec), of which the Eco Cooperative is member, provided technical services on the Code of Conduct (CoC) for organic production and on how to manage tea plantations for maximum yield. CoC-certified tea includes organic tea but is not yet internationally recognised. Teasec promotes CoC tea as an ethical "All Fair Nepal Tea, Socially responsible Quality tea from Himalaya".

Mrs. Ganga Rai and her husband also grow other crops - vegetables, corn and potatoes - mainly for their own consumption. They also keep cows, goats and hens. They now produce all their crops using organic methods. Tea is the most profitable crop so they would like to expand the area under tea. But since it is mainly Mrs. Rai and her husband who work on land, they cannot expand without employing labour, which they cannot afford.

Mr. Rai had joined the Eco Tea Cooperative before his wife, and he encouraged her to become a member too. Shortly after joining, and somewhat to her surprise, she became an Executive Committee member. She thought she didn't have the time to become an active member. She says: "I am a very busy woman with my agricultural activities, four children to bring up and lots of household chores. I do not have time to sit in all those meetings". But Mrs. Rai has had four years' of schooling – her literacy skills make her a valuable board member.

The cooperative does not only provide training and support for organic farming, it also makes small loans. Mrs. Rai borrowed about 130 euro, which she used to improve her tea plantation and to buy ginger seeds. She has recently taken a second loan from the cooperative.

²⁸ AIN 5523, Agriterra, Work Areas 1 & 2

Despite her initial lack of enthusiasm about joining the cooperative and becoming a board member, Mrs. Rai acknowledges that without the cooperative she would not have a successful organic farm. She knows she would not be getting such a good price for her tea (twice as much as last year). And about her position as an executive board member of the cooperative she says: "If at the next election they re-elect me, I will take up this responsibility again".

A farmer's story - Organic mushrooms replace fishing after the 2004 tsunami, India (IEDS)

Mrs. Shoba is a housewife in India, whose husband, Stephen, is a fish trader. It is a traditional fishing family. But after the tsunami in 2004 the fishing industry collapsed and Mrs. Shoba started her own business to increase the family income. She and 32 other rural women joined the skill development training courses being offered by the Integrated Education and Development Society (IEDS) to learn how to make their own living.²⁹ Mrs. Shoba was chosen to participate because she was already a member of the IEDS group in Arokiapuram. The society is a member of the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW).

Asked why she had opted for this training, Mrs. Shoba said that she had eaten mushroom curry in a hotel in Kanyakumari. Having discovered that the hotel bought its mushrooms from the neighbouring state of Kerala rather than locally, she spotted an opportunity to augment their family income. Mrs. Shoba's husband, once a famous fish trader, could not continue his business as profitably as before the tsunami. His income was so meagre that he could not provide properly for his family. Mrs. Shoba had already learned, through

various activities of her self-help women's group, about the dangers of excessive use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. She wanted to produce foodstuffs without using hazardous chemicals and preservatives.

The participants visited a mushroom farm at the Government Agricultural College in Tuticorin district. After training, Mrs. Shoba set up a production unit with credit of IRs 5000/- (about 75 euro) from the project through her group. First, she sold the harvested produce locally. Later IEDS helped to market the mushrooms in hotels in the Kanyakumari tourist area. Mrs. Shoba claimed that, before Agriterra's project was implemented, the hotels had bought all their mushrooms from Kerala. Now at least some of the mushrooms can be sourced locally.

Bringing goods from Kerala is expensive because of the distance and because of cross-state levies. Hoteliers paid dearly for their imported mushrooms. But now three major hotels buy mushrooms from members of Mrs. Shoba's group and the mushroom eaters, especially the vegetarians, are happy to find it regularly on the menu at a moderate price. Many local families also are delighted with this new source of protein. A new food system is springing up around Kanyakumari, where more and more consumers are seeking greater control over their food. Community-supported agriculture is becoming widespread, offering a different farmer-consumer relationship.

A fresh supply of organically-grown mushrooms is attractive to consumers who are willing to pay a better price for them. Consumer awareness on issues such as 'food miles' and hazardous materials used for preserving and packing is increasing. Local consumers are happy with locally produced organic foodstuff. For Mrs. Shoba and other participants of the project, a fair trade marketing system is offering an exciting

²⁹ AIN 5260, Agriterra, Work Areas 1 & 4

economic opportunity. However, the success and sustainability of this type of farming requires specific inputs and regular supply of mushroom spore, although a good point is that it has low demands for fresh water. There is no doubt, though, that the project has changed the lifestyle of the participants. Before they were simply housewives with responsibilities for household duties and child rearing. Now they are budding entrepreneurs. They generate income, and are improving their managerial abilities to deal with resources, production and marketing.

Mushrooms - a rich, nutritious, organic and fresh food – are now available to local people and to the larger tourist community in hotels. The creation of a more ethical business model is exciting. And the project has provided a pro-poor agricultural service from pre-farming training to post-harvest management and markets. More opportunities will be available once the producers get regular supply of spore.

Out of the 33 women who joined the training course, 24 are involved in farming activities and three in marketing the produce. They sell about half of the mushrooms in the neighbourhood and the other half to hotels. As there is more demand for mushrooms in the area, expansion is a real possibility.

A farmer's story - agro-tourism in Vietnam (VNFU)

Tourism has been developing rapidly in Vietnam, contributing to the national and local economy as well as providing opportunities for local communities to benefit. Among tourists from western countries, back-to-nature and agro-tourism is a growing market. The Vietnam National Farmers Union (VNFU) has a long-term project to promote agro-tourism initiatives amongst its members,

to make sure that it is not just the big hotels and tour agencies that profit from foreign guests.³⁰ Women play a crucial role in supplying labour to a wide range of services in the tourism industry. The VNFU hoped that women, as a vulnerable group, would benefit particularly from agro-tourism activities. The experience of two widows is described below.

Mrs. Neang lives in Van Giao in the south of Vietnam, near the Cambodian border. She is a widow with three children. Before she joined the project, she was extremely poor. She grew rice, corn, sweet potatoes and other crops to feed her family. Her children had to work in the house and on their small plot so they couldn't go to school every day.

VNFU consulted community leaders to decide who to invite for the agro-tourism training courses, which were provided free of charge for about 100 members by students of the University for Tourism. A range of topics was covered, including weaving handicraft silk clothes, marketing, hospitality and communication skills, and entrepreneurial skills. Mrs. Neang joined all the sessions and learned a lot, but because her house is too small (she has only room for one bed) she can't offer accommodation to tourists.

However, Mrs. Neang turned out to be a talented weaver. VNFU bought some looms for its members, and promoted handmade woven products. Mrs. Neang sold her handicraft silk clothes first at the local market, mainly to Cambodian people. Thanks to the extra income she earned she was able to buy her own wool and other raw materials for weaving. She used to be shy and timid but can now have a sales conversation with Cambodian businessmen. She is currently the coordinator of handicraft silk clothes, collecting them from other women and families in her village. She then negotiates

³⁰ AIN 5002, Agriterra, Work Areas 1 & 2

with businessmen to get the best price, and she also coordinates the purchase of weaving materials for the women.

Her income has more than doubled and she expects that her little business will do better in future. Shortly after the beginning of the project, she was already earning enough to send her children to school every day. Mrs. Neang can now afford school fee easily and still has enough money to feed her family. The future looks bright.

Another beneficiary of the project is a 55-year-old widow belonging to the Ta Phin commune in Sa Pa Town, in the north of Vietnam. Her youngest son is still living with her, and other members of the family live locally. As do most of the farmers in her region, she has a mixed farm with livestock (buffalos and chickens) and crops (rice, corn, sweet potatoes and some other crops). The produce is mainly for her own food supply and for the tourists she hopes to welcome in the near future.

The training courses described above taught some basic English, so she can welcome tourists. She also learned how to guide them and cook suitable food. She was chosen to join an exchange visit to agro-tourism locations in Thailand to see how they treat tourists, particularly the need to be helpful without hassling them. In the town where she lives tourists are pestered by local people trying to convince them to buy their products or to stay in their accommodation. Back in her village she shared this knowledge with the other women, and the VNFU helped her financially to arrange twenty beds to set up a home-stay destination for tourists.

The widow reported having learned a lot about tourism, which had improved not only her knowledge but also her social status. Other village people listen to her advice and she has become a local counsellor. Because she only just setting

up her home-stay, there are no big changes in her financial situation yet. But she is very eager to learn, is open-minded and loves the contact with foreign people. Her income has improved a little thanks to the first tourists who stayed with her. She is hoping for more tourists soon. Marketing is essential: the unique selling points of agro-tourism facilities must be promoted to draw more visitors, and she hopes VNFU can play a part in this.

Albania develops agriculture with tourism (ADAD)

Voskopoje Municipality, in a mountainous region of Albania, has a population of only about 2,700 living in five villages. Family farms raise mainly sheep with a few cattle, to produce meat and cheese. Some cereals, potatoes and tree fruit (mainly plums) are also grown, and the quality of local foods is recognised throughout the region. The area could benefit from tourism, and a project to create a sustainable, integrated development plan for the area focuses on this.³¹ Although it is a relatively poor area, and although Albania is a country still in transition to a more decentralised economy, Voskopoje is scenically attractive and has an interesting natural and historic heritage that could be enjoyed by visitors. If the infrastructure can be improved at the same time as protecting the environment, local people should benefit from an influx of tourists.

So far progress has been slow, partly because the long legacy of centralized control means that people are not used to taking decisions and acting together on a regional scale. There are still too few farmers' associations in the area, and access to funds is difficult. Nevertheless, the local economy is already showing some improvements, with incomes increasing. The area of orchards has doubled, as has the number of beehives,

³¹ AIN 5346, FERT, Work Area 1

and there has been some purchase and management of equipment in common. With an eye to the tourist market, handicraft production has been increased, and a tourist information guide produced.

A farmer's story - fair trade honey from Mexico (CAPIN)

Miguel Hernández Jiménez is a 43-year-old beekeeper in Mexico. He has no land, but he rents a plot for his bees. As a member of the Coordinadora Mexicana de Pequeños Productores de Comercio Justo, he is one of more than 800 beekeepers who benefit from the export of fair trade honey to Europe. The organisation is supported by Agriterra and Miel Maya Honing, a Belgian NGO based in Mexico and Guatemala, which supports beekeeping organisations and works in Belgium to raise awareness about fair trade and honey.³²

The farmers' organisation CAPIN, which is a member of the Coordinadora Mexicana, has links to various distribution channels in Europe. As well as export, the organisation also arranges exchange visits.

Miguel is one of the beekeepers that have visited Germany and Belgium to see for themselves how beekeepers work there.

Miguel now knows more about honey production and the market and he uses better beekeeping materials (baskets), knows when to introduce a new queen bee and has more knowledge about quality and price of honey. There is great demand from Europe for the fair trade honey from the farmers of Coordinadora Mexicana (CM), so increased production should find a ready market.

Before CAPIN and the CM had made contact with Europe, Miguel lived in poverty. His honey production was low and of poor quality. Moreover, he had no knowledge of the market and sold all his honey to agents without even weighing it. Thanks to the education, training and exchanges, he improved his own honey production in both quality and quantity. He is now an example to other beekeepers, showing that with a good entrepreneurial spirit and a supportive organisation, landless farmers can get out of poverty.

³² AIN 5296, Agriterra, Work Areas 1 & 2

7: Sustainable agriculture

Large-scale farmers in the developed world can turn to expensive technology and inputs to increase yields. But poor smallholders in remote parts of the developing world have fewer options. In many cases climatic patterns are changing, populations are growing, and there is no opportunity for farmers to buy their way through artificial inputs into better productivity. But an agro-ecological approach, which uses external inputs sparingly, offers a different route to production. Soil fertility, structure and water-retention can be improved by using organic, biological and mineral resources. Water can be applied less wastefully. No single example can be taken as a blueprint, and intensifying agricultural production in a sustainable way may well need more knowledge than conventional approaches. Farmers and their organisations devise local solutions by using science together with local knowledge, as shown in the cases below.

In addition to the examples given below, other aspects of sustainable agriculture have already been mentioned. Wood-saving stoves in Uganda (see under HODFA) are making a difference to women's lives – collecting firewood now takes less time because a small bundle lasts much longer than when burned on a fire. And using legumes in rotations – such as cowpeas in Burkina Faso – is another way of improving soil fertility without having to buy expensive fertilizer.

A seed drill for small-scale mechanization and animal traction

Given that most seed drills are designed for large areas and need significant traction power to pull, small farmers should benefit from a small seed drill developed by a joint FERT and Afdi

project.³³ The drill is based on the principle of a wheelbarrow (which is easier to push than to pull) and for use with animal traction or a small tractor. It has only one disc and does not need much weight to penetrate the soil. Trial plots of direct drilling (although they did not use this device), described above under Morocco grows more wheat, showed that establishment costs could be halved and the working time dramatically reduced compared with conventional cultivation. In areas where rainfall may be erratic, being able to get crops sown quickly has clear benefits.

Composting in the Philippines (FFF)

Composting is mentioned in many cases of success. Making compost is a simple skill to learn and the end product is very effective as a soil conditioner and, to a certain extent, fertilizer.

The Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) in the Philippines encourages the production of organic crops and compost among its members.³⁴ Bebung, Jimmy and Rey are the lead farmer-technicians in the formation of a bio-farming cluster. They are producing FreeFarm Organic Fertilizer (FFOF) for sale. Others have joined them and members of the San Agustin Bio-farming Cluster are optimistic about the future of FFOF.

Bebeng made P20,000 (about 316 euro) by selling 100 50kg bags of compost at P200 per bag. Jimmy sold 235 sacks this season, 185 sacks for cash and 50 payable in kind, such as rice after the harvest (two sacks of rice for five sacks of compost) or in the form of groceries from a shop owner in exchange for compost. Bebung

³³ FERT and Afdi, Work Area 1

³⁴ AIN 4865, Agriterra, Work Areas 1 & 4

says she had just bought a box of laundry soap to last until the next season out of the proceeds from the sale of compost.

Bebeng, Jimmy and Rey have almost perfected the art of compost making. The growing number of repeat customers proves that the material is effective. Their customers are conventional rice farmers who use the compost by ploughing it into the soil before planting. They have seen the soil improve, their farm input costs reduced and their yields maintained. These are careful and observant customers who usually try the compost on a small plot before applying it to their entire farm. A number of the customers use the compost for areas that produce the rice for home consumption.

To guarantee the quality of the FFOF, the cluster is going to take charge of overseeing production by individual members - only those who follow the required procedures may participate in the Bio-farming Cluster's marketing activity. For taking orders, guaranteeing quality and ensuring supply, the Bio-farming Cluster will add a premium to FFOF that it sells in the market.

Occidental Mindoro as a rice-producing province is has suffered from heavy use of chemical fertilizer and pesticides. Huge areas are showing signs of over-use of inorganic fertilizer – the soil is turning whitish gray and getting harder – which has created a market for organic fertilizer. FreeFarm Organic Fertilizer is proving an effective, cheap solution for reconditioning the soil and the San Agustin Biofarming Cluster is preparing to seize this market opportunity. Their main marketing strategy is to show off their own rice and vegetable farms thriving on the compost. The strategy is strengthened by the testimony of their conventional farmer customers who keep coming back to place their compost orders to make sure they have a ready supply for the next cropping season.

Other members are now making and selling FFOF. Some members help gather the constituent materials - animal manure, rice straw, leaves from *Leucaena leucocephala* - or prepare carbonized rice hulls. They have even found ways of sharing the proceeds after putting the raw materials together: one rancher allows a group to gather cow manure from his ranch in exchange for 20 bags of compost per season.

The members of the San Agustin Biofarming Cluster are optimistic about the future of their compost, which has now reached not only other *barangays* of San Jose but nearby towns and even the neighbouring province.

Fighting erosion with terraces in Rwanda (IMPUYAKI)

Gicumbi District in the north of Rwanda is densely populated and the 375,000 people of the district have to farm high on steep slopes subject to erosion. Eight per cent of the population is affected by HIV and AIDs, and 275,000 live below the poverty line. In the face of declining productivity and soil fertility, the IMPUYAKI coop supports its members with their multiple farming enterprises. The project has, promoted the use of terraces as a way of preventing erosion.³⁵

'Radical terraces' are simply giant steps cut by hand into a steep hillside to create a series of flat, cultivable fields. Humus-containing topsoil is first moved aside before the land is reshaped – by hand – into terraces. The topsoil is then replaced before crops are grown. Agro-forestry was promoted, with tree seedlings used to stabilize the terraces. Farmers were said to be happy with the land management services – it is too soon to see higher productivity or incomes, although both of these are expected to follow.

³⁵ AIN 5064, SCC, Work Area 1

8: Rising to challenges

Some fundamental issues are very difficult for smallholder farmers to resolve alone. Land rights, for instance, are problematic in many parts of the world. Without legal title to land, farmers cannot use it as a guarantee against a bank loan, and the “tragedy of the commons” attracts short term behaviour that results in soil degradation. Many farmers have had only basic education, so illiteracy is common – especially among women. If a person has problems with reading and writing, keeping good records of farm operations and cash flow is almost impossible.

Local shortage of inputs, even where farmers could afford to buy them, is another persistent challenge. Fertilizer distribution in particular is often subject to political whim. And the uncertainties of shocks from the wider world – political, economic and climatic – can be much more damaging to poor farmers who have little to buffer them in times of difficulty.

In all these cases, though, farmer’s organisations have their part to play in giving strength to their individual members. The examples below show some of the ways they do this. Cases also show the role of good leadership in organisations, and the importance of training future leaders.

A final challenge is gender. Women do most of the work on farms in many developing countries but they often lack independence and their incomes lag behind those of men. Some farmers’ organisations have been set up for women only. In all projects supported by Farmers Fighting Poverty, the issue of gender is specifically addressed.

Legal advice for farmers in Madagascar (AROPA)

An ongoing pilot project has established a legal information and advice service for farmers in Ihorombe and High Matsiatra regions of Madagascar.³⁶ Early work to identify farmers’ most pressing needs for information suggests that land rights are of overwhelming importance (65% of enquiries), followed by issues of inheritance (22%). Other questions concerned contract law (including sales contracts, contracts to buy land, and housing) and judicial proceedings.

This new advice service was widely advertised by posters, on radio and television programmes, and in articles in farming journals. Farmers were encouraged to attend information sessions at which specific legal issues were clearly explained.

So far nearly 1,000 people have attended 31 public information sessions in 22 municipalities, and the information is further disseminated by means of radio, TV and print media. The Agricultural Service Centres (CSAs) described earlier in this report helped bring the legal advice service into operation quickly by gathering farmers’ requests and working to coordinate the various meetings.

A farmer’s story - marching for land and health, the Philippines

“My name is Regina Racasa and I live in the Philippines. My husband, Joey, was one of the 55 marchers who walked 1,700km from Sumilao, Bukidnon to the Department of Agrarian Reform office in Manila in 2007 to claim our 144ha of land. In August 2008, we Sumilao farmers

³⁶ Work Areas 1 & 3

finally got our certificates of landownership. We received our 0.25ha share of land, on which we immediately planted the local variety of corn.³⁷

“When we became part of the Philippine Farmers for Food project (four organisations in the Philippines that received 1.4 million euro from the EU to work on improving food production and stabilising food prices) in May 2010, we were able to diversify our farm from just corn to include cassava, peanuts, fruit trees (banana, pomelo, avocado, coconut and others), other vegetables (eggplant, string beans, carrots) and a herb garden. We also received a male and a female goat - currently pregnant.

“Because of our diversified farm, our household expenses are much lower than before. Instead of buying fish or canned goods, we can use the harvest from our farm for our daily consumption. We also save on fertilizer costs since our goats provide us with natural fertilizer. And we get extra income by selling vegetables. There are weeks when we earn up to P160 (about 2.47 euro) for string beans and eggplants. Our health has also improved: we used to go to the doctor at least once a month but now we feel stronger and healthier, because of our more nutritious diet. When we suffer from minor ailments, we use herbal medicine from our own garden.”

Training leaders for the future (FORMAGRI)

FORMAGRI has been in existence as a training institute for farmers in Madagascar since 2001. Two particular courses have relevance to farmers' organisations, and a recent report reviewed them and sought the opinions of

farmers and leaders themselves about leadership qualities.³⁸

Madagascar recognises agriculture as an asset in a difficult economic context. In a changing political environment, leaders who will speak for Malagasy farmers are more important than ever. The theoretical basis of the two leader's courses was found to be sound, but that there were some aspects of leadership that could not be taught. It was therefore important to select the correct candidates – including women - at the outset.

Farmers leaders trained in Congo (SYDIP)

The history of Congo is characterized by violent conflicts, and many people have fled the country to seek refuge elsewhere. Living standards are low, and most Congolese people eat only one, often unbalanced, meal a day. Laws are flouted with impunity. Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that Congolese smallholder farmers are short of leaders with a vision to develop their organisations. This was especially true of the Kivu region, but to a lesser extent of the whole country.

In 2002 farmers' organisation leaders travelled to the Netherlands to launch (with the support of Agriterra and LTO Noord) a leadership training programme.³⁹ So far, 1,443 leaders have been trained, of whom about 67% were women. Maliyasasa Syalemberaka, a SYDIP coach, says that other organisations have seen the good results and have called for similar training. Leadership training is now taking place not only with other Congolese organisations but also in neighbouring Burundi where CAPAD, a platform of 72 cooperatives, has embraced the training programme.

³⁷ AIN 5519, Agriterra, Work Areas 1 & 3

³⁸ Network for Rural Development (January 2011) Training of future agricultural leaders: Capitalization of FORMAGRI experiences, Work Areas 1 & 3

³⁹ AIN 5324, Agriterra, Work Areas 1 & 3

There is a focus on training women for leadership positions. Seven sessions, each covering three days per month, are interspersed with time when the participants go back to their own organisations to put theory into practice. In the following session, they exchange experiences on how they applied their learning and the difficulties they found. Colleagues exchange advice on how to circumvent these difficulties. Participants say that the classes fit in well with the requirements for developing their organisations, the communities they live in and their standard of living.

Within SYDIP, educated farmers have taken the initiative to improve the governance of their grassroots organisations (agricultural centres and local committees). They have formed splinter groups by geographical area called 'Cercle de Réflexion et d'Actions' (CERA), where they outline their experiences and the problems they come across. Agricultural centres around Beni, in North Kivu, had problems with members who did not pay back loans. The leaders subsequently identified which members were involved and wrote to SYDIP headquarters for help to solve this problem. Now all debts, including some that had been outstanding for years, have been repaid.

In the agricultural centre of Munyakondomi (a village near the town of Lubero), the leaders realised that you cannot lead if you are economically poor. They have developed teaching methods on agricultural entrepreneurship so that they can concentrate on improving their agricultural production. This centre now has several entrepreneurs. People who followed the workshop on agricultural entrepreneurship say they learned a lot. Some have better houses, can now pay school fees for their children and are not worried about food security.

In other places leaders apply what they have learned in training. Kasereka Kaleverwa from Bulambo says that he can contribute to the development of his environment, and he now lectures on networking and lobbying. He encouraged organisations to carry out a situation analysis of their environment, after which they have launched several projects, including building an exemplary health centre. Furthermore, they have encouraged people to lobby the council to construct a 15km road to link them to market. Thanks to this pressure, the council has finally built this road and the farmers can now transport their produce to market more easily. The region is renowned for its beans, which are sold in the cities of Goma and Butembo.

Farmers' organisation committees led by people who have attended leadership training are better structured than those where the leader has not been trained. At gatherings of FOPAC, a platform for all organisations in North Kivu, the trained leaders are firmer and more coherent, and dare to express their interests to the authorities. In short, leadership training is good for farmers' organisations and bears many fruit.

Influential peasant leaders such as Paluku Mivimba, president of FOPAC and one of the initiators of the training, speaks out at national and international level on behalf of Congolese farmers. He would like to see other important figures, from society and from the state government, involved in leadership training - he thinks that government officials lack vision and tend to obstruct farmers' leaders initiatives.

A farmer's story - Sophie's farm now thrives in Congo (UPDI)

Because of the dangerous situation prevailing throughout the last decade in the South Kivu region of Congo, development in agriculture stagnated. Now, with peace established in

many places, it is high time for the agricultural and horticultural sector to forge ahead. The Union Paysanne pour le Développement Integral (UPDI), an organisation representing the interests of farmers in South Kivu, is ready to take action.⁴⁰ UPDI makes rural people aware of their rights and obligations and helps them overcome a variety of problems.

Ten years of civil war and insecurity had a significant impact on farmers, who have suffered from poor production facilities and low sales. UPDI and its member groups and associations stalled in their development and are now trying to make progress again. UPDI wants to set up warehouses to store produce and farming equipment, and to encourage the creation of market value chains.

South Kivu has generally fertile soil with a year-long growing season in the lowlands. Potatoes are suitable for intensive cultivation and there is a reasonable demand, so there is the opportunity to create a value chain which might serve as a model for other products.

Potato farmers currently use little fertilizer apart from animal manure mixed with ash. Bert Sandee, a potato farmer from the Netherlands, suggested during a visit to UPDI that they should apply manure to the fields before planting. He also advised sprinkling urea a month after emergence, if necessary. Sandee said that farmers should start preventive spraying against potato blight as soon as the leaves in a row meet, rather than waiting for the plants to show symptoms of blight.

One farmer is Sophie from South Kivu. From her savings she bought 25kg of the disease-resistant potato variety called Mabondo. After harvesting a bean crop, the soil was deeply dug. Sophie then planted rows of potatoes and mixed fertilizer into the soil. About a month after the potato shoots emerged she spread a

little urea. Borrowing a knapsack sprayer from her neighbour, she sprayed them four times with Dithane M 45 and at the end of the crop twice with Ridomil.

Sophie's crop was over 300kg. She used half to feed her own family, and sold the other half for a good price at the market. With the income she bought good quality onion seed. Later her onion plot did well and produced a plentiful harvest. Her onions were snapped up on the market and she made enough profit to buy a goat, which now produces milk. Sophie hopes to buy more goats and so further expand her activities.

A farmer's story - bringing women to the fore, India (IIMF)

The social and economic gap between men and women in India is wide. In rural areas especially, women are still weak. In 2002, in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, a dairy cooperative (IIMF) was established to support women members of rural self-help groups.⁴¹

IIMF aims to improve the social position and incomes of rural women by helping them to produce more milk. It has invested in better nutrition, hygiene and veterinary care for the dairy buffalo, as well as buying more animals and setting up a programme of artificial insemination. The organisation wants to ensure that its members collectively provide quality milk to the market and get a fair price for it. The idea is to involve rural women in various stages of the value chain: the production, processing and marketing of milk.

Before Agriterra and the Rabobank Foundation became involved in the project, the women had already made great strides towards a professional organisation. The milk was collected at a central location and distributed from

⁴⁰ AIN 4911, Agriterra, Work Areas 1 & 3

⁴¹ AIN 5277, Agriterra, Work Areas 1 & 4

there. Work had been done to ensure consistent milk quality, including cooling it to keep it fresh. The organisation had made agreements with manufacturers to collect milk regularly from central locations.

In 2006, the Dairy Working Group (DWG) within the IIMF was set up with responsibility for the daily management and execution of all dairy operations. Nine female dairy farmers formed the DWG Board of Directors - they determined policy and evaluated performance, while executive staff was in charge of day-to-day management. In 2010, the DWG became part of the Intideepam Mahila Dairy Producer Company (IMD).

IMD facilitates loans for farmers to buy livestock. It also deals with vaccination, artificial insemination and other veterinary treatment. It also supplies animal feed at a reasonable price. It saves money by buying in bulk, and by using the same transport system used for milk collection.

The milk price - determined by IMD - is comparable to the prices paid to other dairy cooperatives. This creates price competition, so that even local traders and manufacturers have to pay a higher price. The creation of IMD, an all-female producer organisation, is a major milestone. IMD has nearly 10,000 active producers and 3,000 new members joined. The number of villages that participate increased from 175 in 2008 to 282 in 2009. Milk marketing orders increased by 52% compared to 2008.

IMD and IIMF (which together hold 51% of the shares) and private investors (who hold 49% shares) jointly supported the establishment of a milk processing and marketing company, called Star Rumenavian Ltd. Decca. The first

processing unit started in 2010.

What do the members of IIMF think? Vajramma Botta, 37, talks about her experiences: "When I was 14 years old I moved with my husband (a mason) of Nellore to the village in Maklur Nandipet municipality, in Telangana region. When I was a young housewife, it was difficult to make ends meet on the meagre salary of my husband. When I was 18 I had two children and our financial situation was still uncertain, I found it hard to keep their heads above water.

"I joined a self-help group and I borrowed a sum of Rs 5,000 to buy a buffalo. I sold the milk to a local merchant. Yields were low, but it made me more confident. The first sale felt like a big success in my fight against poverty and motivated me to continue. The self-help group made it possible for me to take out a loan, to develop my dairy operations. As an active member of the group I was even elected president of the Maklur MACS.

"There was a time when I was about to stop all my activities. Unfair trade by local milk vendors meant I got a poor price for my milk. I felt helpless because I was constantly misled by traders, it was financially very difficult. IMF's initiative to establish and promote a dairy was a real turning point. I understood immediately the value of the shareholding. It is our own business so we now get a good price.

"Today I own ten buffalo. I deliver milk to the IMD and I earn Rs 15,000 (about 215 euro) per month. I rent a piece of land where I graze my livestock. All these years, my husband and children helped me in my work. Now my daughter is married and my son is studying in the city, so I hired someone to help. I want to buy five more buffalo: my son wants to be an engineer. "

Annex: Inventory of evidence used in the report

1: Farms as businesses

AIN No.	FO and country	Agri-agency	Level of support	Type of Evaluation	Support period	Type of support/ quintessence of harvested story
Several	Several, Burkina Faso, Benin, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Togo	Agriterra	Regional	External	2008-2010	<i>Local entrepreneurship, agribusiness cluster formation and the development of competitive value chains</i> (evaluation of SAADA programme 2006-09) Competitive Agricultural Systems and Enterprises (CASE) approach to strengthen agri-business clusters, contribute to increased productivity and income, sustainably managed acreage and production, better service delivery to farmers
Several	Several, including UNICAFES-PR, Brazil	Trias	National	Internal mid-term evaluation	2008-2013	Goal is to achieve socio-economic security of 60,000 small farmers in rural Parana, increase their active participation in local economic development in sustainable way
Several	Several, Central America	Trias	National	Internal mid-term evaluation	2008-2010	Services to increase production, quality, diversification, plus development of businesses and markets

2: Collective strength in the market

AIN No.	FO and country	Agri-Agency	Level of support	Type of Evaluation	Support period	Type of support/ quintessence of harvested story
5163	URPA, Benin	Afdi	Sub-national	Internal and external	2008-2010	Group selling of cashew nuts – pilot to analyse problems of nut producers, define marketing strategies, negotiate price, etc
5138	MBADIFA, Uganda	Trias	Sub-national	External SCC/SIDA	2008-2010	Raising food and income security of smallholder farm households in Mbarara District
5260	DMI Trust, Tanzania	Agriterra	Local	Story harvesting	2009-2010	Training in farming techniques, collective farming and marketing techniques increased production and income

3: Better food and income security

AIN No.	FO and country	Agri-agency	Level of support	Type of evaluation	Support period	Type of support/ quintessence of harvested story
5139	HODFA, Uganda	Trias	Sub-national	External SCC/SIDA	2008-2010	Raising food and income security of smallholder farm households in Hoima District
5072	Unions of cowpea farmers of Pissila, Dablo and Pensa Burkina Faso, Sanmatenga Province	FERT	Sub-national	Internal activity report Jul-Dec 2010	2008-2010	Development of cowpea sector in Sanmatenga Province Cowpea can replace cotton where rains are uncertain – improves soil, nutritious source of protein etc

4: Introducing technical innovation

AIN No.	FO and country	Agri-Agency	Level of support	Type of Evaluation	Support period	Type of support/ quintessence of harvested story
Several	Several, Morocco	FERT	Regional	Internal	2007-2009	Coops and promotion of quality wheat in Morocco
5343	Several, Madagascar	FERT, Afdi	District	External (in 2 parts)	2008-2010	Implementation of Agricultural Service Centres (CSAs) at district level to bring services close to peasant farmers, harmonise interventions in rural areas in context of decentralisation and weakness of private options
-	FIFATA, Madagascar	FERT	Sub-national	Internal	2007	AROPA Project: The exchange visits as a tool for development: capitalisation of experiences in 3 regions of Madagascar

AIN No.	FO and country	Agri-Agency	Level of support	Type of Evaluation	Support period	Type of support/ quintessence of harvested story
5197	Trias-Guinea	Trias	Sub-national	External (final evaluation)	2008-2010	Programme of supporting local economic development and defending local interests
4843 5278	CNA, Peru	Agriterra	Sub-national	Internal	2007-2008 2009-2010	Two projects working with women and youth in sustainable agriculture and food security
4932	Câu Nhi Cooperative, Vietnam	Agriterra	Sub-national	Story harvesting	2007-2010	Training by coop improved farming skills, contract with seed company, improved income and living conditions
5287	KENFAP, Kenya	Agriterra	National	Story harvesting	2009-2010	Training for local groups improved farming and entrepreneurial ability of small-scale farmer
5107	Yoreize Koira Coop, Niger	Agriterra	National	Story harvesting	2008-2010	Better seed quality and advice – techniques of Dutch onion specialist improved production of farmers and income

5: Practical financing of local agricultural innovation

AIN No.	FO and country	Agri-Agency	Level of support	Type of Evaluation	Support period	Type of support/ quintessence of harvested story
5260	Teze women's group, Cameroon	Agriterra	Local	Story harvesting	2009-2010	Training and credit for starting small business – improved income and living conditions
5513	Chapagau SACCO, Nepal	Agriterra	National	Story harvesting	2010-2011	Successful mushroom business built up thanks to micro-loan
5052	Village SCU, Laos	Agriterra	Sib-national	Story harvesting	2008-2010	Thanks to SCU can save money and plan ahead

6: Innovative approaches, new markets

AIN No.	FO and country	Agri-Agency	Level of support	Type of Evaluation	Support period	Type of support/ quintessence of harvested story
5523	Eco Tea Coop, Nepal	Agriterra	Sub-national	Story harvesting	Jan-Dec 2010	Switch to organic tea production doubles the value of the crop
5260	IEDS, India	Agriterra	Local	Story harvesting	2009-2010	Training increases opportunities for women to generate income; better availability of nutritious organic food
5002	VNFU, Vietnam	Agriterra	Sub-national	Story harvesting	2007-2010	Training in agro-tourism and self-development improved income, way of living and self-esteem
5002	VNFU, Vietnam	Agriterra	Sub-national	Story harvesting	2007-2010	Training in agro-tourism and financial support for beds in home stay
5346	ADAD, Albania	FERT	Local	Internal	2008-2012	Implementation of sustainable, integrated development plan for Voskopoje municipality
5296	CMPPCJ, Mexico	Agriterra	National	Story harvesting	2009-2010	Thanks to exchange and information, quality and quantity of honey production improved

7: Sustainable agriculture

AIN No.	FO and country	Agri-Agency	Level of support	Type of Evaluation	Support Period	Type of support/ quintessence of harvested story
-	Mali and Morocco	FERT Afdi	-	Poster	-	Innovative seed drill for small-scale mechanisation and animal traction
4865	FFF, Philippines	Agriterra	Sub-national	Story harvesting	2008-2010	Introduction of compost improved yields and sells well
-	IMPUYAKI, Rwanda	SCC	Sub-national	Internal mid-term review SCC/SIDA	2009-2011	Multi-commodity project including sustainable management of natural resources

8: Rising to challenges

AIN No.	FO and country	Agri-agency	Level of support	Type of Evaluation	Support period	Type of support/ quintessence of harvested story
-	FIFATA, Madagascar	FERT	Sub-national	Internal	2010-2011	Pilot service to provide legal advice and information for farmers in Ihorombe and High Matsiatra regions
5519	FFF, Philippines	Agriterra	National	Story harvesting	2010-2011	March for land led to land rights; food project for more diversified range of crops, leading to better health and more income
-	FORMAGRI, Madagascar	FERT Afdi	Sub-national	Internal evaluation?	1997-2010	Training agricultural leaders for the future
5324	SYDIP, Democratic Republic of Congo	Agriterra	Local	Story harvesting	2009-2010	Leadership training improved professionalism of farmers' organisations and projects at community level
4911	UPDI, DRC	Agriterra	Local	Story harvesting	2007-2010	Use of good inputs improved production and income
5277	IIMF, India	Agriterra	Local	Story harvesting	2009-2010	Farmers' organisation enables loans for buying stock, vaccination, AI, feed etc and set up women's dairy coop. Led to more, better quality milk and better price

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SCC (Sweden), Trias (Belgium), UPA DI (Canada)

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

“Out of 1.3 billion of people active in farming all over the world, only 30 million (2%) work with a tractor, 350 million of them (25%) are using animal traction, and nearly 1 billion (the three quarters) work with manual tools.”

“Sur les 1 milliard 300 millions d’actifs agricoles que compte l’agriculture mondiale, une trentaine de millions seulement (soit 2% d’entre eux) disposent d’un tracteur; 350 millions environs (25%) disposent de la traction animale; et près de 1 milliard (les trois quarts) ne disposent que d’un outillage strictement manuel.”

25%

2%

73%



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