

# CROSSROADS



A group of Kenyan farmers on a demonstration plot - Copyright Fert

## *All about Crossroads*

BY DANIEL SZCZEPANSKI

It has been a long time coming, but it is finally here. We proudly present to you our first issue of AgriCord's digest, called Crossroads!

So what is Crossroads? It's a newsletter with the latest lessons learnt and interesting developments from across all our alliance's programmes.

With this digest, we hope that others may learn of past challenges and successes for the future.

To provide content, AgriCord will organize virtual learning sessions with agri-agencies to gather lessons learnt, success stories and other case studies.

In the meantime, if you can think of anything that might be interesting to your peers and partners, we encourage you to get in touch with us.

We hope that you will find these issues both interesting and informative!

Please feel free to share this newsletter with other partners, if you think it might benefit them.

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# *Bokashi: or how agroecology can be beneficial*

IN COOPERATION WITH OUR MEMBER AFDI AND CNOP-MALI

For some time now, it has become evident that alternatives to chemical fertilizers have to be found.

Their use has significant negative effects on public health and the environment. This is particularly obvious in fragile contexts, such as Mali.



Farmers making Bokashi in Mali - Copyright Afdi

Our member Afdi and the National Coordination of Farmers' Organizations (CNOP) of Mali are working closely with 28 cooperatives in 4 regions, including local cooperatives in Kati and Koulikoro to train young farmers in the manufacture and use of this fertilizer.

After having tested Bokashi, local farmers saw the benefits and started using Bokashi. Since then, they have been spreading the word, recommending this natural compost to their peers.

There are also economic costs. Farmers have to set aside more capital to buy chemical fertilizers. Young farmers are often not able to afford more expensive and imported chemical fertilizers.

In response, the use of natural fertilizers, such as Bokashi, is proving to be a sustainable agro-ecological practice.

Bokashi is an organic fertilizer, entirely made of locally available components. This includes black clay, coal, ash, sheep or cow dung, yeast and water.

Bokashi is easy to produce: its components can be sourced locally. Youth with less capital and means can make it themselves. Quite apart from that, using Bokashi is better for the environment and public health.

Agroecological solutions can provide some answers in providing more sustainable solutions. We can learn much from such examples.

## FARMERS' VOICES

*"I used bokashi in my plots because it saves money and fertilises the soil. It is made of traditional products. It is very good for our health, there are no side effects. Through bokashi, we can have very good results in our gardens and fields, without spending too much money."*

BINA KONATE - RELAY FARMER AND COORDINATOR FOR LOCAL COOPERATIVE BAGAN-NAFA DE KATI





## FARMERS' VOICES

*"The banana platform is crucial for me, because I grow bananas and some of my plantations were attacked by diseases and perished without any remedy and moreover, I am very pleased with the creation of the banana interprofession because it will help us to receive different information related to the banana industry and the local, regional and international markets."*

BEATRICE  
NTAKIRUTIMANA, A  
BANANA PRODUCER  
FROM MWUMBA (NGOZI  
PROVINCE)



# *A Story of an Interprofessional Platform*

IN COOPERATION WITH OUR MEMBER  
CSA AND CAPAD

The humble banana plays a vital role in Burundi's economy and society.

Production and marketing of bananas remain a crucial source of income for small-scale producers in Burundi. It is the most common crop in the country, covering between a quarter and a third of its area. The humble fruit is also strongly rooted in local culture.

Traditionally crafted beer remains highly popular.



A still of the official launch workshop - Copyright CSA

Though it's still early stages, much has been achieved. For one, a management board has been set up and an activity plan for the interprofessional has been created. In May 2021, an official workshop launched the platform.

Representatives from the sector attended, including from government.

Like any such process, there are challenges. The platform is self-financed, which requires a balancing act to not burden producers' income. Apart from that, bringing so many different players together is no mean feat. There are many divergent interests, for example, among larger processors.

Yet, there are many challenges facing the sector as a whole. Over the past years, diseases have run rampant and destroyed numerous plants. Small producers lack market knowledge to sell their crops. Processors lack access to quality packaging. Limited access to regional and international markets prevents goods commercialized abroad.

In response to these challenges, a platform was set up with support from Confédération des Associations des Producteurs Agricoles pour le Développement (CAPAD), the largest national farmers' organization in Burundi. Its members include producers, processors, retailers and government services.

CAPAD has strong links across the value chain and a broad national member base. Having such a solid and respected partner proved vital to the discussions so far.

Another major success factor have been exchanges between Senegalese, Beninese and Burundian farmers. This has been a major source of inspiration for CAPAD and Burundian banana producers.

Hopes are high. Amid much enthusiasm indeed, the interprofessional platform has gone off to a roaring start.

# Consortium or bust: Towards a stronger alliance

IN COOPERATION WITH TRIAS, ACODEA AND CLAC - DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

It isn't always easy to work between different organizations. Even within the same field. Different organizations have different cultures and rules. Yet, the experience can be immensely enriching and benefit project work.

As part of our programme in the Caribbean, our colleagues from Trias, Acodea and Clac formed a consortium to manage a project in the Dominican Republic.

They share their expertise and distribute the work. For example, there is one project logframe and narrative report, resulting in more efficiency.

It is still early days for the consortium. Yet, its work can offer some perspectives for similar initiatives elsewhere. Our partners drew some valuable lessons from their working together so far:

1: A **common vision and trust**, based on clear formal agreements and through informal contact, are essential to successful cooperation.

2: A **model** should be defined at project start **to manage relationships** within the consortium and clearly delineate responsibilities.

3. **Processes** in support of activities should be designed **in a timely manner** in support of **complementary and synergistic action** between the partners.

4: **Participatory and binding processes for farmer organizations and their membership** are essential to support cooperation within the consortium.

## Savoir-Faire & Links

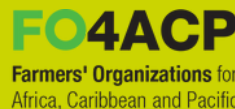
Our member agri-agencies and local partners are doing great work supporting farmers all around the world. We would like to share some interesting resources with you all!

[Responding to COVID-19 by providing digital information services to smallholder farmers in Kenya](#) in English (by our member AHA and KENAFF). An interesting case study how information on COVID-19 services can be brought in a low-tech manner to all farmers.

'Les Savoirs des Gens de la Terre' (LSGT) Radio Rurales, set up by our member UPA-DI, has a series of excellent clips (in French). [This video is a sketch on rural flight, but also the opportunities provided by FOs to provide support to farmers.](#)

One more exciting announcement: AgriCord will be also launching its own series of clips, called Spotlight. This will be hosted on a new YouTube channel and it will feature case studies with challenges, successes and lessons learnt. We expect the first video to come out in May 2022.

Stay tuned!



THE BELGIAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION **.be**

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QUESTIONS? WANT TO SHARE YOUR STORY? A FRIENDLY CHAT?

CONTACT US!

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AgriCord is a global alliance of agri-agencies mandated by farmers' organizations. The mission of the AgriCord Alliance is to promote and help to build strong, democratic, inclusive and professional farmers' organisations and cooperatives and in that way to spur development.