General observations

1. Only figures will not do the job. But to talk about impact, we certainly need to have the figures right. That is what project monitoring systems are supposed to do. Farmers’ organisations and agri-agencies individually use different systems, mainly Excel-based. Farmers Fighting Poverty relies on Agro-info.net, supported by Agriterra. Agro-info.net has proven to be operational and reliable. Such software is needed to keep track of the figures. It gives a solid, although rather mechanical, starting point for results-based reporting. But more is needed. For instance, stories, case studies and narratives are needed, mainly to tell what happens at the farmers’ and household level. They document the spirit behind the figures.

2. Current monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is too much donor-driven, and should be developed as, and supported to become core business for every farmers’ organisation. PME is win-win for both. Farmers’ organisations and agri-agencies should look for simpler approaches, that satisfy the needs of donors, but in the first place serve the development of the farmers’ organisation(s). And obviously, farmers’ organisations will only invest in impact M&E if this has a clearly perceived interest for themselves.

3. Specificities of farming systems and farmers’ organisations (by continents, by region…) must be taken into account. In particular, it is felt that any M&E approach inevitably makes a political statement about family farming and about fighting poverty.

What is our definition of impact?

4. Impact needs to be defined in terms of poverty reduction. Farmers Fighting Poverty is a good name. We need to tell donors, in a convincing way, about how farmers fought for their land (as in the Philippines), and, after their struggle for many years, about how they increased their incomes. Different levels of impact are to be considered, from household to regional. But farmer level results are more relevant.

5. Impact in broader sense is related to vision. We need to keep the spirit of the experienced leadership of our organisations. We could think about mentorship. Not become too mechanical. We should support a stronger involvement of young farmers and their participation in development of the vision of the farmers’ organisations.

6. We are in the business of social development. Numerical aggregations to be completed by analytical aggregations. We need better analyses of what impact is, in all its aspects. But figures indeed come first, as well as the focus on the practicals, on what happens at the farmers’ level.

Reasons for measuring impact

7. For farmers’ organisations, measuring impact is like legalizing something that is already legal. But we need to be pragmaticallyal and give evidence to donors. We need to find a way of working with the system, to make it win-win for farmers’ organisations and for donors.

8. Farmers’ organisations have an interest to measure their own performance, and not only be answerable to donors. Projects and their objectives should be aligned with the purposes of the organization. But the organisational level is more than the sum of its project activities. Farmers’ organisations need an M&E system that satisfies both the donors and their own members (cfr. point 2). Win-win for farmers’
organisations means learning lessons for better services to members.

9. Through impact measurement, we want to show the value added of the agri-agencies, and of the peer-to-peer support by farmers’ organisations. Show that such inclusive processes are useful for the farmers. Working along the lines of the observatory on family farming in West-Africa is a valid starting point.

10. There is evidence (FAO, research in China) that countries with strong farmers’ organisations are better off than the others. Our efforts on M&E should build upon such evidence, and reinforce it.

Challenges

11. Donor requirements about impact are very broad. The core concern of farmers’ organisations and agri-agencies is about the strengthening of organisations. This should be considered as such as the impact. Farmers’ organisations and agri-agencies cannot reasonably be expected, in the context of Farmers Fighting Poverty, to prove the link between strengthening and farmers’ incomes or poverty reduction.

12. There is growing consensus, also among donors and development institutions, that a genuine monitoring of income changes at farmers’ level is not possible in the context of development projects. M&E approaches for income measurement require baseline information, information about farmers not participating in project activities, longer term follow-up covering several cropping seasons, etc. This is very resource-consuming, and –even then- still questionable. But we cannot afford not to make sensible statements about impact at micro-economic level, the farmers’ household level.

13. We are aware of the huge heterogeneity of farmers’ organisations to be dealt with: village general interest farmers’ association, women’s product groups, rural savings groups, regional marketing cooperatives, one-issue national organisations (land issues), national commodity organisations…

14. Challenge is to unify and to come to one system that is acceptable for the so many different financial partners (donors). It must be possible to demystify M&E. Bring it down to essential elements – key indicators – wherever possible, and combine with learning and sharing of experiences, and feed innovation. Such sharing is to be carried out by the farmers’ organisations themselves. Agri-agencies can mobilise specific added value to support and (accompagner) such processes.

15. The practice of external evaluations, commissioned by donors, has shown its limits, and causes genuine frustration among farmers’ organisations. This definitely underpins the need for jointly agreed (key) indicators and for harmonisation to be realised by farmers’ organisations and agri-agencies.

16. Projects funds do not allow for comprehensive impact assessments in all its aspects. We need more flexibility to allocate funding to such assessments.

17. Some issues of broader concern (cross-cutting) are mainly donor-driven, but must be taken into account: gender, environment. It is not obvious to make a link, from observations at the farmers’ or household level, to these concerns.

18. For any further new steps, we will need to agree (i) among ourselves, and (ii) with the donor community.

Impact and the regional platforms of farmers’ organisations

19. Regional advocacy platforms cannot measure their own impact or their own outreach down to the farmer, but only through the organizational chain. We need to realize honestly where the dollar ends. Directly, the regional organisations only have a small number of member organizations, but indirectly all farmers are concerned.

20. Regional organisations are in an excellent position to contribute to development of shared approaches for impact monitoring, to promote harmonisation, to promote short checklists, to promote profiling, to
organise joint learning and sharing of experiences and conclusions coming from M&E activities.

21. **Role of regional farmers’ organisations in impact measurement** can be developed by building the M&E capacities of national farmers’ organisations. We should standardize tools for regionally coordinated and nationally implemented activities.

### How to measure impact

22. Farmers know, they observe very well, but they are rather bad in writing reports. Farmers’ organisations generally know very well what a project or activity means for farmers and their families. We must involve farmers. We need systematic collection of information, standardize tools and provide incentives for answers. We must explain to farmers how the information collection and answering questions will help them.

23. One can only measure impact if the design of the programme, project or plan of the farmers’ organisation is clear and properly done. The architecture must be OK. The results chain must be clearly defined. We need to invest more in the design stage, and in particular we must be a lot more realistic in terms of expected results. Projects should be sharper. Often the objectives are too ambitious for the funding. Objectives should be realistic, and we should put more emphasis on what we control in the results chain. Only then we can talk about how outputs have been achieved.

24. We are responsible for the quality of the figures we enter into our M&E records and reports. To a large extent, registration of results is based upon observations by farmers, by staff and leaders of farmers’ organisations, and by agri-agency staff. Such observations must be traceable and verifiable by third parties (external evaluators).

25. **Who defines what impact is?** We are entitled to use our own indicators. We need to demystify M&E and simplify the procedures and indicators. (EAFF) We can use numbers from accounting of the FOs to explain about farmers’ incomes and strong FOs. (SCC)

26. If we define common indicators, we must make sure that they serve both the interests and concerns of the donors as well as of the farmers’ organisations. And that M&E of these indicators can feed internal processes in the organisations.

27. For statistics we should address government. Establish links to Ministries and other institutions for macro-economic and other information that is related to the impact of the work of farmers’ organisations. Reference was made to the recognition of family farming in Brasil, with specific Ministries, and specific information related to the situation of family farmers at state and national level. Make use of data collected by other institutions. Farmers’ organisations can force others to make sure that relevant data are collected. Reference to specific Ministries dealing with family farming and data at national level, as in Brasil, proving poverty reduction, assessing access to land, improvement of housing, upsaling of activities, etc. National level statistics included, in particular if a link to the MDGs is to be made. Cooperate with larger organizations such as FAO to activate and support M&E at the national level. (AFA).

28. **Provide more resources for M&E to match the needs of farmers’ organisations and the expectations of donors.**

Attached
- agenda with presentations by P. Jamsén (Agricord), F. J. Villas (Asiadhrra), M. Goïta (IRPAD)
- list of participants and observers.

16.11.2012
Agenda
All meetings at LRF/SCC offices, Franzénsgatan 6, Stockholm
Simultaneous translation English/French/Portuguese

Thursday 11 October 14.00 – 18.00 (all participants invited)
Advisory Committee of Farmers Fighting Poverty
Theme: Impact of the work of farmers’ organisations (and of support to farmers’ organisations)
Chair: Piet VANTHEMSCHE, president of AgriCord

14.00 Welcome. Presentations of participants. Introduction to the agenda.

14.15 Update on monitoring and evaluation within Farmers Fighting Poverty (Pekka Jamsen, Q/A). Document attached.

14.45 Views on impact of farmer leaders from developing countries – first results from a consultation in Asia (Asiadhra, Mr. Florante Jesus Villas, reactions members Advisory Committee, Q/A). Document attached.

15.30 Views on impact of farmer leaders from developing countries – first results from a consultation in Africa (IRPAD, Mr. Mamadou Goïta, reactions members Advisory Committee, Q/A). Document attached.

16.15 Break.

16.30 Comments and recommendations by members of the Advisory Committee of Farmers Fighting Poverty to the General Assembly of AgriCord.

18.00 Closing.

18.30 Evening drink and dinner, hosted by LRF, closing 20.30.
Advisory Committee for Farmers Fighting Poverty  
Stockholm, 11 October 2012

List of participants and observers

Participants from farmers’ organisations in developing countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFA: Asian Farmers Association</td>
<td>Esther PENUNIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAFF: East African Farmers Federation</td>
<td>Stephen MUCHIRI</td>
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<tr>
<td>PROPAC: Plateformes des org. paysannes d’Afrique Centrale</td>
<td>Gustave EWOLE</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROPPA: Réseau des org. paysannes et prod. de l’Afrique de l’Ouest</td>
<td>Ousséni Ouedraogo</td>
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<tr>
<td>SACAU: Southern African Confed. of Agricultural Unions</td>
<td>Ishmail SUNGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMAGRI: Union Maghrébine des Agriculteurs</td>
<td>Fatma BEN REJEB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICAFES:</td>
<td>Genes DA FONSECA ROSA</td>
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Participants from the General Assembly and Board of AgriCord

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<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afdi (Portugal)</td>
<td>Karen SERRES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agriterra (the Netherlands)</td>
<td>Albert Jan MAAT</td>
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<tr>
<td>AsiaDHRRA (Asia)</td>
<td>Uon SOPHAL (Esther PENUNIA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asprodeb (Senegal)</td>
<td>Ndiawar DIOP</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSA (Belgium)</td>
<td>Yves SOMVILLE (Joseph PONTHIER)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FERT (Portugal)</td>
<td>Henri de BENOIST</td>
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<td>SCC (Sweden)</td>
<td>Anniqa NYGÅRD</td>
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<td>Trias (Belgium)</td>
<td>Piet VANTHEMSCHE</td>
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<td>UPA DI (Canada)</td>
<td>João Cyrillo MACHADO</td>
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<td>Giuseppe POLITI</td>
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<td>Antti SAHI (Juha RUIPPO)</td>
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<td>Lorenzo RAMOS SILVA</td>
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Observers

- IFAD, Jean Philippe AUDINET, Roberto LONGO, apologised.
- European Commission, Patricia LARBOURET, apologised.
- Governments/bilateral development agencies
  - Finland, Kaisa KOIVISTO for Ministry of Foreign Affairs
  - Netherlands, Aaltje DE ROOS, DGIS, apologised
- representatives of farmers’ organisations
  - Willi KAMPMPANN for DBV, Germany
- resource persons
  - Florante Jesus VILLAS, AsiaDHRRA
  - Mamadou GOITA, IRPAD