Impact of farmers’ organisations

Initial inventory of available information and views on impact, with farmers’ organisations and agri-agencies

This working paper has been prepared by the AgriCord M&E team (Pekka Jamsen, Jur Schuurman, Anne Souharse, Ngolia Kimanzu, Marek Poznanski, Thomas Vervisch), on the basis of field visits carried out by Frans van Hoof (AFAFO) January 2012.

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Today, in parts of Guinea, Mali and DR Congo, farmers send their children to universities, live in decent houses, drive on their motorcycles, are well dressed and healthy, and have enough food throughout the year thanks to their farmers’ organisation. The latter help them to become entrepreneurial and professional farmers who produce for an interesting market. The farmers’ organisation provides them with training and improves their access to land, agricultural inputs, advice and credit, which enables them to increase their production both in quantity and in quality. To further increase their income, the farmers’ organisations provide services to group, store, grade, or process their harvests, thus adding value to the produce. They negotiate with traders or processors, to get the best price. Some of the farmers’ organisations managed to influence the agricultural policies and programs of their country making them in favour of small scale farmers.

The farmers’ individual development attracts other actors to the region and to the commodities at stake (agricultural labourers, input suppliers, traders, banks...) and initiates a broader economic development.

The impact of the work of farmers’ organisations has become evident, but needs appropriate means to be measured and monitored properly. This is a joint responsibility for the farmers’ organisations themselves, and for their different partners.

An observation, January 2012, by Frans van Hoof, AFAFO
1. Background

Towards a realistic method to assess impact
This report reflects a first step in a process to identify, with farmers’ organisations and development practitioners, an appropriate and feasible impact assessment methodology. The first step covers an inventory of information on impact, as available at FOs and agri-agencies, with 4 farmers’ organisations in 3 countries. Field visits to FOs in Guinea (Fouta Djallon) and in Mali (Ségou) provided comprehensive evidence of impact for FPFD, AOPP and Faso Jigi, and intensive correspondence did so for LOFEPACO in the DR Congo.

Focus on the actors, the farmers’ organisations
Smallholder farmers’ organizations (FOs) are institutions that deliver a wide range of (economic) services to their members, and/or speak on their behalf, thus becoming important players in the social and policy dialogue at local, national and international levels. These functions of FOs are crucial for their member farmers, who in general are poor and marginalized. Some of the functions provide them with access to the necessary factors of production (land, credit, inputs, advice) thus enabling them to increase their agricultural production. Other services of FOs (market information, grading, processing, packaging and marketing) help farmers to make a better price for their produce thus enabling them to increase their income and consequently improve their overall living conditions.

Focus on the support to the actors, the farmers’ organisations
Agri-agencies provide funding and advisory services to various types of farmers’ organizations in developing countries. Advocacy and lobbying is the core business of some of these FOs, especially the national and sub-national umbrella organizations, others are business oriented economic organizations, like cooperatives and their unions that operate at local and sub-national level. Agri-agencies support the capacities of these farmers’ organizations to ensure these core functions in the best possible way. Eventually, thanks to the gained capacities, the activities of well operating farmers’ organizations lead to higher family income from their increased agricultural production, to improved food security, to reduced vulnerability, to improved livelihoods, to better self-confidence of the farmers and to their social and political participation in the local community and in the society as a whole.

Challenging existing information
Reports and information registered by FOs and by agri-agencies reveal interesting developments in terms of increased production capacity and improved livelihoods at individual level. External evaluations also note successful activities at FO level and a trend of increased general economic development in the working area of the FO, but often lack the necessary quantitative or methodological evidence. Obviously, questions can be raised about the way impact is defined by different stakeholders, about the time period to be considered, about the attribution of impact, and certainly about the indicators and their registration.

Approach
To document existing practices and views of farmers’ organisations, AgriCord initiated a study on FOs’ impact in 6 focus countries. The specific focus of the study is to make an inventory of available information on the impact of farmers’ organizations (in terms of democracy and governance, of economic development and fair distribution of income) and of the views of farmers’ organisations on their impact. The study is the first step in a more year process to assist in the development of an appropriate impact assessment methodology, which by examining existing practices and regular interaction between interested FOs and agri-agencies would take the realities and perceptions of the FOs better into account.

1 Burundi, DR Congo, Niger, Benin, Mali, and Guinea
2. **Inventory of available evidence**

i. **Evidence available at the level of FOs**

**Documentation available at the FOs**
Farmers’ organizations are primarily occupied with the most pressing needs to collect the needs for agricultural inputs, buy them at the best possible price and get them in time to farmers, then collect and store the harvest, negotiate prices, transport the harvest to the market, sell the crop, repay the contracted loans and deliver the remaining money to the members. The information systems at FOs are designed to produce the information required for these primary activities in the most cost effective way. Managers focus on the most crucial information. The clerical personnel is usually fully occupied to deliver manual reports to managers on inputs, loans, and harvested, stored, transported and sold quantities and payments, that is book-keeping and crop finance statements. Documentation for monitoring that is required by the supervising government department, banks or the donors, is being produced on demand. FOs may have also other sources of information such as external evaluations, visit and survey reports, project or programme reporting and government statistics. A list of the information available from FOs for this inventory is given in annex.

**FOs have other priorities**
As a preparation of the field visits, all three FOs responded in a detailed way to a questionnaire asking them to list their different types of impact and their gained capabilities. The quality and quantity of responses differed from one FO to another, but all were quite aware about their impact. The answers were, however, less precise to point out the improved capacities and it was more difficult to describe how they were obtained. Perhaps the questionnaire was not specific enough or the perception of FO’s and their views on impact and capacities are different from those used in the questionnaire.

**Outputs and outcome rather than impact**
During the field visits all three FOs did their best to provide information on “impact”, as asked for. However, the availability of information in a “centralised” way differed from one FO to another, depending on their interest for the information: AOPP had detailed information of seed production, Faso Jigi knew everything about the financial operations for the ongoing agricultural production for rice, millet, sorghum and corn, and FPFD had quite some monitoring results for each of its activities. But a lot of important information from farm and local FO level is not yet centralised and thus not easy to access.

**Who needs the information on impact?**
In the past both AFDI (FPFD) and UPADI (Faso Jigi) helped FOs to develop a data bank containing information about the member farmers and their production/farm. However, FPFD did not finalize the data bank information system. Some information about the yields, costs and profitability of the individual farms is available at the local groups involved in farm management advice, but not at central level. Faso Jigi is using the data bank although this needs improvements to provide information about strengthened capacities and impact at the level of the member organisations and of the farmers. At this time, the Union monitors mainly its financial operations with each member. FPFD has developed, with the assistance of an international consultancy firm, a rather comprehensive monitoring system, showing the level of satisfaction about its performances aiming to achieve the different goals/objectives set for a particular period of time.

**Lack of macro-economic indicators**
In normal situations, some socio-economic data for a particular region would be available with the local government of that region. However in the countries involved in this study, government services are chronically lacking the means (and thus the motivation) to collect reliable data and make it available to the public.

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2 Not for shallots because storage and marketing is decentralized.
3 According to personal memory of consultant, he didn’t check this information with FPFD.
Impact information has been produced by donor some years ago
In the cases of FPFD and Faso Jigi, a source of information for substantiated evidence of (possible) impact is surveys carried out within the programs funded by the Canadian government. They measured progress and impact a few years ago and no current impact information is available.

ii. Evidence available at the level of agri-agencies

Agro Info Net (AIN) is the central source of FO support information
The AgriCord network makes use of the “Agro Info Net” (AIN) to centralize information about FOs and the support provided by the agri-agencies. The majority of the documents available on AIN are project documents, progress reports of FOs related to the activities supported by the agri-agencies, success stories harvested during visits to the FOs, profiling reports (tool used to measure progress in the capabilities of FOs). The online AIN system is a major source of information, which covers details of activities with more than 180 farmers’ organizations in 61 developing countries (as at end of 2010).

Development of FO competences is monitored by deliverables and profiling
AgriCord’s Farmers Fighting Poverty monitors the development of competences of the farmers’ organizations in the support (work areas) requested by the FOs. Progress as immediate project outcomes is measured by deliverables and their targets, which are registered in the AIN system at baseline and annually during the support period. Profiling of FOs provides an in-depth observation of the FO capacities by 8 parameters at a particular time. Successive profiling exercises have been made in 50 major FOs in the past few years to provide evidence of FO development.

Impact information should be available in AIN
However, few agri-agencies, other than Agriterra, use the central AIN database to store documents with interesting experiences of their partner FOs. These documents are stored in the own internal systems of the agri-agencies and not yet (directly) available for knowledge sharing with the other member organizations of the alliance.

Longer term perspective supports impact, but impact should be substantiated further
When looking into the documents available for the different FOs in the 6 focus countries it became clear that for their older partners, agri-agencies were able to provide better and more objective information (external evaluations, baseline and impact surveys). For more recent partnerships, descriptive documents reveal signs of clear impact, but most of the documents lacked sufficient data to substantiate this evidence. Several FOs are implementing innovative activities, substantiating their results and impact better would convince and inspire both other FOs and development agencies and even financial institutions.

More information is available on economic activities than on lobby and advocacy
Quite logically, more data is available from FOs involved in economic activities, than for those active in advocacy and lobbying. Business management means record keeping, and comparing and analyzing results.
3. Linkages from capacity building to impact

The following two sections on impact presents the “obvious” impacts at different levels as observed and confirmed during the field study.

i. Impact on democracy and governance

Winning markets for local member farmers

In Guinea, the farmers’ movement with FPFD as the main engine focuses mainly on economic development. Both interviews with FPFD leaders as those with high level staff of the Ministry of Agriculture witnessed that in the early years of potato development in the Fouta Djallon, farmers faced stiff competition from the imported potatoes that were cheaper and apparently of better quality. To secure a market for local producers, FPFD lobbied for a ban on imported potatoes during the few months of local production. When they were not heard, FPDD even threatened to mobilise farmers to come to Conakry. Eventually, the government accepted this temporary, annual ban. However, in the following years the FPFD worked on reducing the cost of production and helped to improve the quality of local potatoes, the packaging and promoted a label “la belle de Guinée” (the beauty of Guinea). Once the citizens of Conakry discovered that the local potatoes tasted even better than the imported ones, the battle had been won. There was no longer need for a ban since the traders preferred buying the local varieties.

Lobbying for FO legal status succeeds

Through its national umbrella organisation CNOP-G, the FPFD lobbied for a law providing specific legal status to farmers’ organisations, as they had none at that time. According to the coordinator of the CNOP-G the contents of the law was mainly been prepared by the FOs themselves. It took persistent lobbying over years for the law to be finally adopted.

Convincing the President and major donor agencies for improved agricultural funding

In 2011, the newly elected president met, at the request of CNOP-G leadership, with 700 farmer leaders coming, at their own cost, from the four regions of the country. He was briefed on the achievements of the Guinean farmers’ movement, the constraints farmers are facing and their views on possible solutions. According to the national Directors of one of the key services of the Ministry of Agriculture it was after this exchange with farmers, that the president became committed to agricultural development and for the first time, the budget for agriculture was higher than the 10% agreed upon in the Maputo declaration. This result oriented way of operating of FPFD and CNOP-G appeals also to donors, such as IFAD and the EU and the French bilateral cooperation, who support them and provide funds for infrastructure and capacity building.

Organizing farmers’ protests to voice grievances

In Mali, the farmers’ movement has spent much more time and energy in lobbying and advocacy to defend their interests. AOPP leaders and the AFDI representative witnessed that for more than five years already, AOPP (and the national umbrella CNOP-Mali) have been lobbying for a specific Agricultural Law (which has been adopted) and for its actual implementation (elaboration of sector laws: seed production, land tenure, etc.). Compared to Guinea, the Malian government plays a much more dominant role in agriculture, particularly in cotton and rice, and more recently by attracting foreign investors for sugar and bio-fuel production. The country has had several major actions of protest by the farmers’ movement, e.g. the cotton strike, refusal to pay for water in rice production, and recently the protests against “land grabbing”. The eventual influence of the FOs on political decision making in agriculture seems less effective than in Guinea, but probably the interests at stake of the other stakeholders are much bigger in Mali.

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4 Before this, the new president who lived abroad before being elected wanted to send the leaders to Burkina Faso to learn from the experiences of FOs there.
5 The Government may not be able to maintain such a high level of commitment in the future.
6 République du Mali, Loi d’Orientation Agricole (LOA), 5 septembre 2006, 41 pages. And his practical guide (47 pages)
Farmer leaders influence local governance
FOs and their leaders have a broad influence of on local governance and democracy. Interviews with local leaders revealed that during recent local elections both in Guinea and Mali, several of them were elected in municipal councils and in a few cases even as mayor or vice-mayor. It is however too early to appreciate their actual influence on local governance, and to list effective changes in favour of small scale farmers. According to some of the leaders, they also play an active role in social activities like health insurance associations or parents’ councils where they use their leadership capabilities to influence the good governance of these bodies.

ii. Impact on economic development and fair income distribution

High economic impact at farmer level
Both data provided by documents and FOs and concrete examples witnessed by farmers show clear evidence of increased yields per hectare leading to higher production and higher income. Higher incomes allow farmers and their families to increase the size of their land/farm, to start mechanisation (purchase of ploughs), to improve their post-harvest practises (building warehouses, purchasing threshing and other equipment). This leads again to even higher income. The increased production and income enable the farmers’ families to improve their meals, to pay for school fees (children go for secondary and university education without major problems), for health care, and improve their own standard of living: home equipment, better housing, mobile phones (has become standard), bicycles and motorcycles, etc. Eventually all this leads to increased self-esteem of farmers in relation to other professions.

Farmers access important agricultural business services through their FOs
Interviews with farmers list some of the services of the FOs that contributed most to these improvements: access to agricultural inputs (improved seeds and fertiliser), agricultural advice and exchange visits (showing that change is possible, and in which way): use of manure (cheaper than fertiliser) and better agricultural practises (spacing, treating plants and animals in time, better post-harvest practices), cost calculation (creating awareness about the cost of each input compared to its impact on the yield) and considering agriculture as a business.

“What is in it for farmers?” is key!
All this is only possible when farmers produce for an interesting market, when they and their FO make a clear choice for commodities with quite a profit margin, or if the FO succeeds in increasing that margin. The comparison between the involvement of farmers and FPFD in Irish potatoes and in onions and tomatoes (the three main commodities of FPFD) shows an increasing interest for the first commodity. As farmers prefer to use local seeds for onions and tomatoes instead of the expensive quality seeds offered by FPFD, the production of these crops has reduced. The success of AOPP in seed production is mainly because of high demand and thus interesting price for certified seeds. Faso Jigi’s decline in number of farmers involved and quantities of grains marketed these recent years is mainly due to the price paid by the Union for rice (80% of its business). Some of the rice growers sell to traders instead of respecting their contract with Faso Jigi because of its higher quality requirements and lower farmers’ profit margin.

Farmers access infrastructure for productive agriculture through the FOs
FPFD’s huge impact at farmer level is first of all due to irrigation works that enable farmers to produce continuously, off season for the market when prices are very high (Irish potatoes), and for their own consumption (rice and corn) during the rainy season. This means that the outreach and the inclusiveness of services of FPFD with regards to that particular high level of impact, has its limits (the availability of means for further irrigation). On the other hand because of its profitability, more and more farmers start growing Irish potatoes outside the irrigation schemes during the rainy season.
**Improved women’s entrepreneurship has changed gender relations**

In the case of FPFD (male workers left to work abroad) in general and in that of the shallot growers cooperatives of Faso Jigi (in the irrigated zone male farmers mainly deal with rice), the above mentioned economic impact has particularly benefitted the female farmers and fully changed gender relations (both at family level and within the local community). During the field visits this was mentioned by both male and female leaders.

**FOs impact/benefit members more than non-members**

The economic impact at a broader level is visible but difficult to substantiate with precise figures. Reliable data/statistics are not available because the relevant government information services in Guinea and Mali lack financial means for the purpose. However surveys carried out during or at the end of the ACDI/UPADI programmes show a clear difference between farmers that are member of the FO /benefitted from their services, and those who did not.

**Food security, job creation and self esteem improved**

Furthermore, where in the “eighties” Guinea imported 95% of its potatoes, it now imports less than 5% to 10% (depending on the source of information), and it exports this commodity to several neighbouring countries. In the case of the FPFD, thanks to the profitability of agriculture in the Fouta Djallon region, people from other regions come to work as agricultural labourers. Like the vice mayor of the commune said: “You never lack a job in and around Timbi Madina”. A whole chain of chicken dung providers to supply the potato growers in Fouta Djallon has developed from Conakry all the way to the potato production area. And according to some witnesses, the citizens of Conakry have the same esteem for farmers from the Fouta Djallon as they have for people that emigrated to Europe.

**FO safe warehousing reduces postharvest losses and allows price setting**

In Ségou, the construction of appropriate warehouses for shallots by Faso Jigi have reduced post harvest losses substantially (estimated 50%). In its success year 2007, the warehouses of Faso Jigi contained one fifth of the national security stocks of grains (rice, corn, millet, sorghum). Local traders recognize that Faso Jigi is the “price setter” for these commodities. But as the Union sets her prices in an early stage of the agricultural season, this is also her weakness in rapidly changing markets, especially when farmers are not sure that the Union will pay them a premium at the end of the year/operations.

4. Attribution of this impact

Several “external” factors have had a positive influence on the successes obtained by the FOs.

**Goodwill and support from government and donors secured by FOs**

In the case of the FPFD, political willingness of the Government was mentioned several times, as well as the good cooperation with governmental technical services, and the financial support of the donors. However, the vision and determination of FPFD’s leadership has been strong enough to convince the Government of the need for an improved vision and adequate means to develop country’s agriculture. After its initial reluctance in the nineties with regards to the promotion of potato growing, the French bilateral cooperation never stopped supporting the Federation.

**Exchange by FO leaders with other countries**

Another major “external” element is the fact that many leaders of FPFD went to neighbouring countries (Senegal, Ivory Coast) to earn money, when they were young. They discovered that agriculture could be an interesting source of income, but needed initial investments. Also the exchange visits to France and Canada organised by AFDI and UPADI, where Guinean (and Malian) farmers’ leaders discovered how agriculture evolved over years, are highly appreciated by the leaders met during the field visits.

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1 The number of people surveyed both during the baseline survey and at the end of the project was rather limited.
2 Peuhls are the main ethnic group in the Fouta Djallon region, who are nomadic by origin.
Favourable climate and infrastructure for agriculture
Again in case of the FPFD, the altitude and thus the climate of the Fouta Djallon region, have highly contributed to the success of the potato and onion production. In the case of the Ségou region in Mali, the existence of the “Office du Niger” and its extensive irrigation works plays a determining role in the rice production. The latter comprises 80% of the grains marketed by Faso Jigi. Even the shallots are grown in subsidiary parts of the irrigated area.

Donor support for technical advice, capacity building, exchange visits and training facilities
Both Faso Jigi and AOPP received intensive support of UPADI and AFDI respectively in the initial establishment stage and the FOs have also benefitted from infrastructures (warehouses, classrooms, etc.) and trainings provided by various other development programs and institutions: IFAD programs, Sasakawa 2000, PRECAD/Syngenta, and from the agricultural research station of Cinzana for new seed varieties and improved agricultural practices. In addition to the positive effects of exchange visits organised by the agri-agencies, the FOs appreciate their technical support on specific issues like their training units and their financial and administrative capabilities. These units have gained a lot of capacity and currently operate without any external technical support.

Donor support for better productivity by irrigation and seasonal marketing by warehousing
FPFD appreciates highly the various donors for their financial support that enables them to hire experts to improve the performance of the FPFD staff, to extend the irrigated area, and construct other agricultural infrastructure. Recently a big warehouse was constructed for potato storage, which allows FPFD to better widen their commercial market and thus influence market price setting better.

5. Impact in terms of strengthening of the FOs

After initial support to capacity improvement, FOs can network successfully and find partners
All four FOs have benefitted from both financial and technical support from agri-agencies and, except for FPFD, the financial support was rather important compared to the contribution of the member FOs. The technical support was comprehensive covering nearly all aspects of the organizations, particularly during their first years of existence. The agri-agency was their sole or key partner and had staff within the FO, except for the tandem LOFEPACO/Agriterra. This overall support has strengthened the various capabilities of the FOs and they have succeeded in attracting new partners, either other development agencies (FAO, international NGOs, IFAD, etc.) or other stakeholders of the agricultural sector (research institutions, financial institutions and traders) or both.

FOs have skills to provide market services and price negotiations that are crucial for members
During the field visits it became clear that all organisations had developed capabilities to deliver satisfying services to their members such as access to inputs, to agricultural advice, to credit, to irrigation or mechanisation, and to maintain and improve these services either towards higher quality or better cost effectiveness. The number of their members (organisations) is growing continually. However, as seen with the decline of services for onions and tomatoes by the FPFD, and problems encountered by LOFEPACO to recover their loans from rice growers (who had been obliged to sell their harvest before prices went up due to the lack of storage facilities), show the importance of a good market that stimulates farmers to invest both in quality and in quantity. This makes the involvement of the FO in (collecting, storing, processing, selling) or (negotiation with traders/providing market information) crucial in order to improve price setting of the agricultural products.

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10 National company for the management of irrigated agriculture in the Niger basin.
11 Bilateral project PACCEM (Mali-Canada) implemented by UPADI
11 UPADI for Faso Jigi, AFDI for AOPP and Agriterra for LOFEPACO
**FOs’ improved management capacity to run business confidently and find solutions**

Technical assistance by agri-agencies has allowed all four FOs developed leadership and management capacities that enable them to run their businesses in a way that gives and maintains confidence. This attracts new financial partners. Some of the FOs have successfully overcome internal crisis. They are able to identify key constraints for farmers and find adequate solutions with the help of specialised people. They have been able to organise or at least influence the organisation of the value chain in a positive way for the concerned commodity which is crucial to make agriculture profitable for farmers.

**FOs cooperate with government and crop financing institutions**

FOs make efforts to cooperate closely with governments institutions. However, in the cases of Guinea and DR Congo, this remains problematic because these institutions do not have independent financial means to operate properly. Only with the financial help (and understanding) of their partners, the FOs can develop and maintain such a cooperation, which is crucial for a smooth organisation of the commodity value chains. Bilateral and multilateral donors can thus play a determining role in developing close cooperation between government institutions and FOs by involving all parties equally from the very first stage of a new agricultural development program. If the FOs have the capacity to fully understand the different elements of the value chain and to suggest realistic cost-effective improvements, they can become reliable players/partners for the other stakeholders. For some of the commodities, the four FOs clearly have that capacity.

### 6. Existing initiatives of farmers’ organizations (self-evaluation)

All the visited FOs, which are more pro-active than average, have ongoing activities (cf.2i) in data collection and management, which can develop into a convincing basis for self-evaluation and impact monitoring.

**FOs collect data of the progress of their activities and run their own capacity building programmes**

All the FOs (3 federations and a union) are building internal capacity within the different layers of their organisation (farmer groups, unions, federation). All FOs have developed and strengthened (with the assistance of agri-agencies) their own training programs (for leadership, technical and management capabilities). Some of them have developed procedures/mechanisms to evaluate/measure the results of their trainings and the different capabilities at the level of their member organisations. FPFD has developed a number of “tools”:

- The performance of the member Unions is discussed at the annual assemblies of these Unions (and since last year also at the level of the local FOs/co-operatives). Information is provided on both the technical performance (yields per ha/ total production, diseases/pests) and the financial/economic performance (credit obtained/refunded, quantities of inputs bought and distributed, quantities of produce marketed and resulting profit). Representatives of the federation attend these assemblies.
- Every two years, the federation categorises the unions and “co-operatives” according to their strengths and weaknesses, which forms the basis for further training programmes. There are 3 categories: Basic, I, and II.
- Recently also FPFD leadership made a diagnosis of the unions using criteria like: maintenance of infrastructure, financial management, regularity in meetings and record keeping and refunding of the allocated credit, etc.
- The federation has delegated a technical staff member in each of the unions for “being the eyes and ears of the Federation”.
- Every month, the Management Board members meet with the technical staff of the federation to discuss the report on the past month’s activities and the programme for the coming month.
- There is a general assembly 3 or 4 times a year to inform/discuss the preparation of the new agricultural season, to evaluate the past season and to inform/discuss about new programmes.
- Recently, with the help of an international consultancy firm, FPFD started to develop a system to monitor the implementation of its strategic long term plan and its annual work plans.\(^\text{12}\)

\(^{12}\) The technical assistance is provided within the AFD support to FPFD
FOs use data banks for important business information
Faso Jigi has developed a data base containing its operations with its members during the agricultural season: the farmer’s commitment to deliver a given quantity of grains, the farmer’s credit (in kind = seeds/fertilizer etc. or in cash) before production, the credit for delivering the grain in the local warehouse, etc. A local technical committee of the co-operative with the help of a technical staff member delegated by the Union oversee the operations between the members and the cooperative. They transmit the data to the Union where it is processed into the data bank.

Also AOPP has developed an information system for seed production by its member organisations in order to have a clear view on the production (quantities for each of the crops/varieties in the different localities) when dealing with interested buyers.

FOs’ motivation to gather information
The financial and economic interdependence of the federation and its member FOs motivates both parties to follow-up closely the performance of the other actor. The mutual relations are controlled either by using tools/data/criteria (federation) or by asking explanations/protesting during General Assemblies (member FOs). The relations can be influenced if necessary by refusing to comply with the regulations of the umbrella organisation if protests are not taken up (Faso Jigi in 2008). For umbrella organisations, whose role is mainly “lobbying and advocacy”, the performance of its member organisations is not that important. For lobbying influence, large membership is very important to confirm the representativeness of the federation towards Government or other stakeholders, but the quality of that membership matters less.

FOs look at their performance in terms of quality of services to members
The information, as gathered in a more or less systematic way by the FO’s visited, shows that these FOs are mainly interested in the level of performance of the services they (or their member organisations) provide to the member farmers, thus in level of satisfaction of the members, and in the financial management performances in order to meet the internal regulations or to comply with the conditions set by partners. Information about the eventual further impact of their performances in terms of improved livelihoods at farmer level, global economic development and fair income distribution in their region, as well more democracy in institutions, that are of no direct concern to the FO, seems not be an issue as such for these FOs with mainly economic functions.

7. Way forward to develop a FO impact assessment method

FOs to capitalize their own achievements in performance and impact assessment
The impact of the four FOs is evident and undeniable, although different from one to country to another due to various factors. Although convinced of their impact, FO leaders and staff sometimes lack the ability to clearly point out the various levels of that impact and substantiate it with reliable figures. Their first concern is to satisfy their bosses (Board for the staff members and General Assembly for the leaders) and secondly to meet the requirements of their different partners. Thus when talking about impact of their FO in more general terms, the leaders and staff mainly stress the effective services they provide to their members and not the eventual impact of these services on the livelihoods of the members and their family.

Need for additional information
The FOs involved in this first inventory of impact, have developed, each one at their own level, tools and systems to gather information about the performance of their member organizations and their different services, in order to know in time if there is a need to adjust the current way of operating. However the capitalized data does not enable partners and back donors to have a clear (substantiated) picture of the various forms of impact that resulted from the services provided by the FOs. Data collection by other actors (like government services) or specific surveys carried out in the project or FO working area could provide such information. This requires additional institutional cooperation beyond the bilateral cooperation between FOs and their main partners.
Farm management as a source of information for outcome assessment

In this search for data to measure both the performances of the FO services (for management decision making purposes at FO level) and the broader impact of these services on the livelihood of the members (for policy making purposes at government and donor level) a key actor or level of assessment is the member’s farm. The farmer is best placed to appreciate the services of his FO and to provide information about the effect of these services on his personal situation (his farm and his family). From the farmers’ groups involved in farm management advice it becomes clear that the farmers themselves are anxious to know how their crops, their fields, their animals are performing in order to make the right choices for the next agricultural season.

Way forward

The way forward is based on the assumption that it is possible to identify a realistic, feasible and credible approach (method) for the assessment of impact which

- takes into account the views and current practices of all actors involved: farmers, different levels of FOs, government services, other service providers, agri-agencies, donors...
- answers the needs of farmers, their organisations, agri-agencies and IFAD.

The following way forward is proposed:

1) IFAD and AgriCord identify 6 “reference” FOs (3 from East Africa and 3 from West Africa), that have satisfying practices with monitoring of (i) the outputs/outcome/impact of their work, and (ii) the strengthening of (the different layers within) their own organisation (March 2012).

2) IFAD and AgriCord identify a team of 2 consultants. With these 6 FOs, and with representatives of IFAD and agri-agencies in each country (April-June 2012), the team will
   a. complete the inventory started and reported in the present document, focusing on existing practices and perceptions of farmers’ organisations, IFAD and agri-agencies;
   b. check and improve the summary and conclusions as presented below;
   c. formulate a proposal for a realistic, feasible and credible approach to assess impact of the work of FOs, including the impact of support to FOs.

3) IFAD and AgriCord submit a request to ROPPA to convene (with PROPAC, with UMAGRI), in June/July 2012, a workshop on “impact of farmers’ organisations”, focusing on observations and conclusions for West Africa and on the proposal made by the team of consultants.

4) IFAD and AgriCord submit to EAFF and SACAU a request to convene, in June/July 2012, a workshop focusing on observations and conclusions for East Africa and on the proposal made by the team of consultants.

5) Conclusions of both workshops are submitted to the Steering Committee of SFOAP and to the Advisory Committee of Farmers Fighting Poverty (2\textsuperscript{nd} half of 2012).

Annexes
(separate)

Country case: Fédération Paysanne du Fouta Djallon (Guinea)
Country case: Faso Jigi (Mali)
List of documents consulted.
Résumé et conclusions

Ce document de travail reflète la 1ère phase d’une démarche qui veut identifier, entre OP, agri-agences et FIDA, une méthode réaliste, faisable et crédible pour pouvoir rendre compte de l’impact du travail des OP, y compris l’impact des appuis fournis aux OP. Cette phase se déroule en 3 étapes (i) inventaire expérience de 4 OP dans 3 pays, et des agri-agences, sur base de missions Frans van Hoof, et d’échanges avec l’équipe suivi-évaluation d’AgriCord, (ii) discussion des conclusions de cet inventaire avec le FIDA, (iii) accord entre OP, AgriCord et FIDA sur le déroulement de la 2ème phase.

Nous avons observé:

1. Que nous avons à faire à un large éventail de types d’OP, de types d’activité de ces OP, et de types d’appui à ces OP. Et tout cela dans des contextes politico-économiques bien différents. C’est tout un défi: s’imaginer une méthode suffisamment compréhensive et flexible pour être applicable partout, tout en étant réaliste, faisable et crédible.

2. Que les documents et organisations (OP et agri-agences) consultées parlent d’impact à trois niveaux
   - au niveau du producteur agricole en termes de ses performances techniques et économiques
   - en termes de démocratie, croissance, distribution de revenus, ou bien sécurité alimentaire, sécurité alimentaire des plus vulnérables dans une région donnée
   - en termes de renforcement durable des capacités des OP.

3. Que les OP (économiques) sont plus occupées à satisfaire les attentes des membres et à mener des opérations rentables, qu’à vérifier l’impact au niveau de ses membres et de la région, même si beaucoup d’informations valables pour mesurer l’impact sont disponibles. Ces informations se situent à un niveau de résultats immédiats (output) ou (outcomes), mais sont de bonne qualité. Les OP visitées (qui ont d’ailleurs été retenu pour leur expérience pertinente) maîtrisent le suivi de ces activités et de ces résultats.


5. Que l’enregistrement de résultats immédiats et de (outcomes) sur agro-info.net (résultats immédiats = targets, outcomes = livrables) est cohérent avec et peut se baser sur le suivi que les OP réalisent dans leurs actions. Pour les OP, les changements qu’elles identifient (mais qu’elles ne mesurent que rarement) se définissent en des termes qui peuvent être connectés aux 17 livrables retenus et suivis sur agro-info.net. Ils sont donc plus proches des résultats et des effets, que des impacts.


7. Que les OP et les agri-agences parlent de compétences essentielles (key indicators) dans les mêmes termes. Mais les priorités ne sont pas les mêmes. Pour les OP, l’urgence est dans l’action et dans le souhait de voir des résultats concrets sur le terrain. Les agri-agences souhaitent y ajouter un suivi de l’évolution de ces compétences, dans un souci double (1) de montrer le résultat de leur travail sur ces compétences, et (2) de donner aux OP des arguments pour renforcer leur position.

We propose

(i) to define, with farmers’ organisations, ways to collect and to present information on relevant outputs and outcomes of their activities, to become common (realistic, feasible, credible) practice.

(ii) to define, with farmers’ organisations, ways to collect and to present information for a regular assessment of relevant key indicators or competences of their own organisations (of different layers within their organisations) to become common (realistic, feasible, credible) practice.

(iii) to compare, with agri-agencies, existing practices of assessment (profiling) of the capacities of farmers’ organisations, and to propose a (realistic, feasible, credible) approach, for FO’s and their partners, which will have enough flexibility to be adjusted to different types of FO’s.

(iv) to define, with farmers’ organisations, the information on farmers’ income and food security that a farmers’ organisation should register and follow-up, also in view of a relevant contribution to regional external impact evaluations.