Meeting of the Advisory Committee of Farmers Fighting Poverty with the General Assembly of AgriCord
Montpellier, 13 November 2013, 9.00 – 15.30
Agropolis, Montpellier, France

Co-chairs
Piet Vanthemsche and Nadjirou Sall

Participants

General Assembly of AgriCord

FNSEA (France) Karen Serres; Laure Hamdi (Afdi)
LTO (Netherlands) Albert Jan Maat, apologized; Kees Blokland (Agriterra)
FWA (Belgium) Daniel Coulonval; Alex Danau (CSA)
AGPB and Unigrains (France) Henri de Benoist, apologized; Anne Panel (Fert)
Boerenbond (Belgium) Piet Vanthemsche, president of AgriCord; Lode Delbare (Trias)
LRF (Sweden) Anniqa Nygård; Jakob Lundberg (WeEffect)
UPA (Québec) Marcel Groeleau, apologized; André Beaudoin; Paul Langelier (UPA Di)
Asprodeb (Senegal) Nadjirou Sall
AFA (Philippines) Sophal Uon, apologized; Ireneo Cerilla; Marlene Ramirez (AsiaDHHRA)
MTK (Finland) Antti Sahi, apologized; Seppo Kallio; Tiina Huvio (FFD)
DBV (Germany) Willi Kampmann
CIA (Italy) Giuseppe Politi (Italy), apologized
UPA (España) Lorenzo Ramos Silva (Spain), apologized
AgriCord secretariat Ignace Coussement, Estelle Gallot, Paula Hokkanen, Laura Jalasjoki

Farmer leaders from developing countries, members of the Advisory Committee of Farmers Fighting Poverty

AFA Raul Socrates Banzuela (Asian Farmers Association)
EAFF Césarie Kantarama (East African Farmers Federation)
PROPAC Gustave Ewole Medzeme (Plateforme Régionale des Organisations de Producteurs de l’Afrique Centrale)
ROPPA Kalilou Sylla (Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs de l’Afrique de l’Ouest)
SACAU Ishmael Sunga (Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions)
UMAGRI Fatma Ben Rejeb (Union Maghrébine des Agriculteurs)
UNICAFES Genes da Fonseca (Uniao das Cooperativas da Agricultura Familiar e Economia Solidaria)

Observers, donor representatives, partners supporting Farmers Fighting Poverty and special guest

AFD France Marie-Cécile Thirion
Afdi Gerard Renouard
DGDBelgium Gaëlle Jullien
DGIS Netherlands Aaltje de Roos, apologized
EC EuropeAid Barbara Dequinze
FAO CFS Chair Gerda Verburg, apologized
MFAF Finland Sara Stenroos
IFAD Jean-Philippe Audinet
IRPAD Mamadou Goïta
SDC Switzerland Alexandre Ghélew, apologized
Piet Vanthemsche, Boerenbond, Belgium and President of AgriCord chaired the meeting and presented the agenda. The Advisory Committee meeting builds on last year’s meeting in Stockholm, the specific theme being the farmers’ organizations’ and AgriCord’s approach to monitoring and evaluating the impact of their work and conclusions for Farmers Fighting Poverty.

Mamadou Goita, IRPAD, updated on the process of harmonizing approaches of the five African regional FO networks’ work on impact. It still relies on the same perceptions as a year ago: 1) Analysis and harmonization on what is understood by impact (particularly in relation to social change) needs to be done; 2) Each RFO has the need to create instruments to track impact; and 3) All RFOs are supportive of defining a coherent approach to impact that also recognizes their diversity.

Principal work done by all RFOs during the past year has related to creation or updating of their strategic frameworks. Little has been done to create instruments to measure impact or harmonize them between networks. AgriCord’s support has resulted in some exchanges with SACAU and EAFF on shared initiatives and instruments, and similar exchange is scheduled for ROPPA and PROPAC. It is to be noted that most RFOs do not have sufficient human resources and capacity to do institutional monitoring and evaluation work. More work and resources are needed to develop their M&E. At the same time, the focus should not be on the weaknesses of RFOs, but in trying to connect their strengths for example for developing indicators.

Marlene Ramirez, AsiaDHRRA, gave an example of a tool that allows for measuring changes at the household level. “Farm Planning and Design” is used as a tool to provide FOs with the capacity to accompany farmers in planning that combines immediate needs with long-term planning. Short-term planning, or lack of planning, disables smallholder farmers to connect to local market dynamics and value chains. The tool is based on a 3-step concept of farm development: subsistence – self-sufficiency – surplus production. Indicators of impact at household level include: housing; security of tenure; farm diversification; income; food security, etc.

For measuring impact, the baseline information is important to have, though often difficult to establish or update regularly. FOs need support to arrive at baselines at household level, and the profiling tool should be modified for this end. Also, farmers’ capacities to measure impact should be increased. The capacity to do farm planning and design at farm level is necessary to reach impact.

Paula Hokkanen, AgriCord, presented the Evidence of Impact 2013 publication. Its focus on the organizations of smallholder family farmers is very actual in the light of 2014 being the International Year of Family Farming. The publication is structured following the five areas of investment in smallholder farming presented by the UN High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition in an 2013 report Investing in smallholder agriculture for food security. These areas of investment are 1) Smallholders’ investment in their farms; 2) Collective investment; 3) Investment to manage risks; 4) Investment in enabling markets; and 5) Investment in enabling institutions. The publication presents strong evidence that smallholder farmers’ organizations contribute to all of these areas of investing in smallholder farming.

AgriCord’s impact measurement approach needs to serve the information needs of farmers’ organisations themselves, agri-agencies and different external stakeholders including donors. It needs to be flexible to serve for the variety of producer organisations, take into account different perceptions of impact, and describe social development and income at farmers’ and household level. AgriCord seeks to work with regional platforms of farmers’ organizations, which are in an excellent position to contribute to the development of shared approaches for impact monitoring and measurement, and to build capacities of national farmers’ organizations.
Ireneo Cerilla and Raul Socrates Banzuela, AFA, told that a happy, healthy and empowered family farming community is the shared goal of AFA’s and its members’ work. Impact is localized at the farmer level and traced for example through regional workshops where farmers from different countries and organizations concretely explain what in their current farm situation makes them happy or sad. Indicators of happy, healthy and empowered farmers are thus based on farmers’ subjective experience of their living conditions. The farmer organizations can enable the smallholder farmer to dream realistically.

On the basis of AFA’s experience, AgriCord’s work / Farmers Fighting Poverty should take into account the following challenges and potential:

- Investment in FOs’ human resources and organizational development is a priority
- More long-term view of project cycle needed
- Farmer-to-farmer approach has been proved very efficient among members
- Flexibility in projects needed to adjust to crises and changing circumstances
- Synergy can be sought between AgriCord’s work and national and regional partners of AFA
- More projects could be regionally coordinated and nationally implemented.

Césarie Kantarama, EAFF, gave an overview of EAFF’s recent work. The new strategic plan 2012-2020, prepared in a consultative manner by EAFF members, guides the organization’s work. The key axes of the plan are economic service delivery, a proactive role of EAFF and its members in policy processes and agricultural programs, institutional development and sustainability of EAFF, and Knowledge Management and communication. Further, the issue of aging of the farmer population is to be addressed. A key message from the consultations for the strategic plan is that farmers need to join forces and take leadership to integrate in the agro-industrial value chains where their presence so far has been weak.

Kalilou Sylla, ROPPA, explained that ROPPA has launched a regional Observatory of Family Farming as a central instrument of its impact evaluation. The guiding principles of the Observatory are its rooting in farmers and their organizations, evolution in pace with ROPPA’s members, and subsidiarity. The working methodology will be based on a common questionnaire to be used in the 10 covered countries. The national-level work will be coordinated by national committees with ROPPA’s support missions to each country. The governments will be informed and involved in the process. For the time being the methodology as well as the questionnaire have been validated, other regional networks have been engaged in the work, and the preparations with informing the governments have been started in Niger and Burkina Faso. Next steps are to build a common framework of indicators, launching the questionnaire and evaluating its results.

Genes da Fonseca, UNICAFES, stated that in Brazil, 80 percent of farmers are family farmers but they manage only 25 per cent of agricultural land. Farmers have requested differentiation of family farming and first public program to support family farmers started in the 90es. Nowadays family farmers benefit of several targeted programs and for example of a policy defining purchasing quotas for family farmers’ produce for school feeding programs.
UNICAFES promotes family farming within the cooperative movement. It collaborates with several other actors for policy work. A current challenge is to update Brazilian legislation to distinguish between private enterprise and small cooperatives, as well as ensuring family farming and sustainable development. UNICAFE needs national and international partners to address such policy challenges.

Land grabbing's impact on rural population in general, the food exportation to Africa and the criteria to identify family farmers by the authorities were some of the issues discussed by the audience.

**Gustave Ewole, PROPAC**, summarized that recent years' institutional developments in PROPAC include development of strategic tools, staffing, growing recognition by partners, and increased capacity to defend small farmers' interests. PROPAC's national members are increasingly participating in public projects and are able to position themselves better in value chains. Women's and youth participation in the national FOs has increased. At the farmer level, farmers witness increased income thanks to increased production and commercialization.

PROPAC is currently putting in place a database on FOs' activities. A Monitoring and Evaluation system is also being developed, as well as a strategy of mobilizing internal resources with support from UPA DI.

**Ishmael Sunga, SACAU**, underlined that M&E has to be recognized as a key driver to organizational development, but this requires a certain capacity. The capacity to do quality M&E is linked to the level of development of the FO. Orienting M&E exclusively on projects rather than the whole organization may represent a risk to the sustainability of the work done. There can be creative ways of combining the M&E needs of singular projects and the organization. The work should start from catalyzing on the existing information and data by structuring it to add value. There is also a lot to be done tracking impact backwards, to trace what has not been captured in time-limited project M&E.

A key question orienting the monitoring of impact is whether the FO is seen as a way of reaching the farmer, or the objective of the development itself? However M&E can be combined to cover impact at both farmer and FO levels, as in the end FOs' capacity to provide services impacts farmers. FOs' ultimate aim is growth at farm level and this should also be measured. One valid indicator is whether farmers are capable to invest in their farms. The challenge remains, how to systematically document the impact beyond project activities.

Despite the donors not being eager to pay for these functions, it has been demonstrated that it pays to invest in 1) administrative capacity; 2) M&E (SACAU will soon recruit a person). Good governance and management of an FO impacts its credibility and thus the sustainability of the organization.

Lots of harmonization work remains to be done and professional advice is needed for this, as different interpretations of impact exist.

SACAU is undertaking membership surveys to monitor impact in the context of its strategic framework. It is planning to do the same regarding advocacy work, surveying SACAU's partners.

**The audience** discussed the farmers' interest and capacity to see impact beyond the farm level. Also, the ownership by farmers of the (regional) farmers' organizations was evoked.

**Fatma Ben Rejeb, UMAGRI**, told that UMAGRI has recently enlarged to Sudan and Egypt so it is no longer only Maghrebian network. In average, 45% of the population of the region is rural. UMAGRI is being restructured in 2013-14 in the context of SFOAP, with support from Fert. This process includes a mapping of POs at national and regional levels and formulation of a strategic plan, based on consultations. The axes of the strategic plan are organizational strengthening of
national and sub-national level FOs; creation of a regional observatory of agriculture; improvement of the quality and productivity of agricultural production; formulation of a marketing strategy; an e-platform for South-South exchange; and coming up with a strategy to make agriculture interesting for the youth.

**General Assembly members’ interventions** (DBV, MTK) concerned among other things the importance of Evidence of Impact publication for providing information on AgriCord’s results and achievements to partners. Discussion was also raised about differing contexts of organization of farmers in Europe and elsewhere.

**Donor representatives’ (AFD, DGD, EC, IFAD, MFAF) interventions** dealt with possible synergies between the M&E systems of different programs supporting the regional networks of farmers’ organizations, questions of aid effectiveness and gender.

**Barbara Dequinze, EC EuropeAid, inquired** about M&E synergies between FFP/Africa and SFOAP, that are both financed by the EC. For AgriCord, the priority process is each regional platform’s efforts to develop their M&E systems for their own needs, using different approaches. All FFP projects seek to find a balance between the FO and donor’s needs but the overall procedures and requirements of the FFP program are the same. SFOAP has already established its M&E procedures and dynamics where the regional platforms steer the process. To ensure synergy and transparency, AgriCord participates in the SFOAP Steering Committee and IFAD is invited to AgriCord’s Annual General Meeting. Certain initiatives such as the work of Mamadou Goita on the platforms’ M&E work are very synergetic.

**Sara Stenroos, MFAF,** noted that the synergy of agri-agencies work produced through working as a network is well in line with aid effectiveness principles. FFP in general corresponds very well to the requirement of ownership of development. A question on gender approach of FFP/ agri-agencies launched a discussion among participants, showing great differences between agri-agencies. In general AgriCord states an outreach of 40% of women in the FFP projects. WeEffect has decided that 50% of funding should be directed to women by 2014. FERT has specific targets on women and youth – though it is not easy to measure what is meant by youth. ASPRODEP stated that women are important as part of the family and thus their roles and responsibilities are identified and supported to reach a balance. It was indicated that sometimes it is more important to change the attitudes than focus on numbers. AsiaDHRRA has a project level quota of 30% for women participants. It will increase up to 50%. Empowering processes should be more sensitive towards women. Farm planning as a tool involves both men and women. Women empowerment needs to be taken care of also at the institutional level. FNSAE underlined that sometimes rules and quotas need to be established to push changes through.
Conclusions

1. AgriCord will actively follow the efforts of the RFOs to develop monitoring and evaluation approaches that go beyond the monitoring and evaluation of individual projects. Important progress has already been made on these approaches, with big differences existing, justifiably, between the approaches of the different RFOs. AgriCord will communicate transparently on its own efforts on the subject.

2. These exchanges should allow for identifying and sharing the impact indicators that are anchored in specific realities and in the subsidiarity between all levels from regional to national and households/farmers.

3. Regarding support to be mobilized, AgriCord will place specific attention on the establishment of monitoring and evaluation systems by FOs, on enhancing existing and new databases, and on knowledge management.

4. AgriCord will support, within its capacities, the use of existing information at the level of FOs and RFOs for the enhancement of their internal planning, internal governance, and credibility. In particular the method of tracing impact at household level, presented by AsiDHHRA, merits attention.

5. AgriCord has a strong interest in (i) making a distinction between “project” and “organization” levels in monitoring and evaluation activities, (ii) evidence of a direct relation between the existence of a FO and (economic, democratic) development and (iii) finding a balance between indicators showing impact at the level of a producer organization and at the level of a farmer.

6. AgriCord will continue its support to organizational strengthening of FOs, with special attention on the needs of daily functions, which is generally neglected by donors. AgriCord will support diversification of the “economic” work area of Farmers Fighting Poverty, divided in three parts: (i) services to farmers, (ii) cooperatives, and (iii) collective marketing.

7. AgriCord will ensure the coherence between Farmers Fighting Poverty and the programs coordinated by regional FO platforms.