Evidence of Impact, 2013

FARMERS FIGHTING POVERTY
• Evidence of Impact 2013 is the fifth in a series of reports prepared each year for the General Assembly of AgriCord. It presents some impacts of the Farmers Fighting Poverty programme, based on evidence collected during the previous year. Reports are available in www.agricord.org.

• Throughout this document, the term ‘farmers’ organisation’ is used as shorthand for a broad range of membership-based 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, aquaculture or forestry.

• Agro-info.net (AIN) is an online database that covers all relevant aspects of the Farmers Fighting Poverty programme. It describes each project and gives information on targets, how the project is financed, the approval process and progress. The database can be accessed at www.agro-info.net 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.

• Evidence of Impact 2013 was written by Julie Harrod from material provided by the AgriCord agri-agencies. She is an Oxford-based writer and editor with a long interest in natural resources and sustainable development. With degrees in environmental science and forestry, she has lived and worked for more than 20 years in different developing countries (including Nepal, Kenya, Zambia and Malawi). She works for many organisations, including UNICEF and the World Bank. Her association with AgriCord dates from 2009.

The production of this publication has been supported by official development aid from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.
Farmers Fighting Poverty has been operating since 2007. Between 2007 and 2011, almost 260 farmers’ organisations in around 60 developing countries have been supported in a framework of 640 projects. Projects are estimated to have reached more than 4.5 million people, of which 39% were women.

Most of the projects are active at national (34%), sub-national (28%) and local (23%) level. However, some regional or international farmers’ organisations (such as ROPPA, EAFF, SACAU, AFA and ACCU) are also involved.

Just over half of the projects operated in Africa (mainly in East and West Africa) and almost a quarter were in Latin America. A little over 20% of the projects were in Asia, with a small percentage (5%) in Mediterranean countries such as Moldova, Armenia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Projects are based on long-term relationships between agri-agencies and farmers’ organisations. Contracts are, where possible, multi-annual.

Farmers Fighting Poverty is supported by the governments of several OECD countries (Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Sweden), by IFAD and by the European Commission. Agri-agencies and the farmers’ constituencies of AgriCord also mobilise funds from membership subscriptions, from the general public and from other private sources.

**AgriCord has the following members:**

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<th>Farmers’ organisation</th>
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<td>Belgium</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
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<td>LRF Federation of Swedish Farmers</td>
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<td>Italy</td>
<td>CIA Confederazione Italiana Agricoltori</td>
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<td>Spain</td>
<td>UPA Union de Pequeños Agricultores y Ganaderos</td>
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<td>Belgium</td>
<td>FWA Fédération Wallonne de l’Agriculture</td>
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<td>Asia</td>
<td>AFA Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development</td>
<td>AsiaDHRRRA</td>
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Foreword from the agri-agencies

AgriCord’s member agencies are united in their belief that the best way to invest in smallholder farmers is via their membership organisations.

**Afdi**

L’investissement dans le capital humain est le premier facteur de réussite. Ce type d’actions contribue à renforcer la capacité des paysans et de leurs organisations à mobiliser les ressources nécessaires pour les investissements matériels. Dans cette optique, il faut accompagner le travail de lobbying des OP pour la mobilisation de fonds, et renforcer la capacité des agriculteurs familiaux à être de réels acteurs des politiques publiques qui les concernent et renforcer ainsi leur reconnaissance au sein de l’agriculture mondiale. Les lois d’orientation agricoles, par exemple, permettent la reconnaissance, par les pouvoirs publics, de la place importante que devrait avoir l’agriculture familiale.

Gérard Renouard, président d’Afdi

**Agriterra**

Family farming is the foundation of food security in many developing countries. It is of utmost importance to social and economic welfare. Investment in agriculture, especially in farmers through their organisations, is acknowledged to be an absolute necessity. There has been renewed interest recently among donors, industry and governments in the role of farmers’ organisations in rural development. However, we still see a massive gap between initiatives by third parties and the needs of smallholders. The increasing interest in family agriculture is a positive sign, but this interest has yet to be translated into better strategies to help farmers succeed.

Albert Jan Maat, President of LTO Nederland

**AsiaDHRRA**

Investment in agriculture that goes directly to farmers’ organisations is the most effective way to change the lives of farmers. It is a concrete recognition of the important role played by farmers’ organisations as institutions of people who are inspired and empowered to work together for their common good. Capacity building is best done through applied action with built-in reflection processes so that future action is guided by experience and solidarity can be shared with other grassroots sectors. Farmers’ organisations have to strengthen themselves for better bargaining power in the market place and be able to participate more effectively in public programmes and investments, where the bulk of development finance is channelled. This is the right track to sustainability, especially for family farmers.

Dr. Wen-Chi Huang, Chairperson of AsiaDHRRA
Asprodeb

Le mouvement paysan sénégalais a mis en place un système de suivi des exploitations familiales et de veille sur les politiques publiques, qui permet aux OP de mieux comprendre le vécu et l’évolution des exploitations familiales. Les conseils et les stratégies des OP donnent aux exploitations familiales des opportunités de mieux adapter leurs activités pour assurer leur sécurité alimentaire, et pour gérer l’avenir de leurs unités de production. Pour nos organisations-membres, il s’agit d’un moyen pour construire leur plaidoyer et alimenter la concertation et le dialogue avec les pouvoirs publics sur les orientations des politiques et programmes agricoles.

Ndiawar Diop, président de FPA

CSA

Les exploitations familiales doivent pouvoir compter sur des organisations s’intégrant dans des réseaux et qui puissent défendre leurs intérêts et leur apporter les appuis aussi bien techniques qu’en matière de renforcement du pouvoir de marché des exploitations agricoles. Les échanges avec les organisations agricoles d’autres pays lui apportent une ouverture sur plusieurs plans. Comprendre les contraintes mutuelles et rechercher des alliances et des compromis permet d’être plus fort lors de négociations internationales. Sur le plan technique enfin, s’ouvrir à d’autres méthodes que ce que l’on fait chez soi permet d’innover.

Yves Somville, secrétaire général adjoint de la FWA

Fert

Les organisations de producteurs ne peuvent naître et se consolider que dans une interaction permanente entre des réalisations concrètes apportant des services durables à leurs membres (actions techniques, commerciales, financières...) et l’animation associative de ces membres. Ainsi, la structuration des producteurs autour de filières agricoles (lait, fruits et légumes, volailles ...) permet de tester des innovations (essais variétaux, nouvelles pratiques culturales, outils de transformation ...) pour lesquelles le surcoût d’investissement et la prise de risques ne peuvent être assumés en totalité par les agriculteurs. Il est essentiel de trouver le bon rythme et le bon équilibre entre investissements en capital humain et investissements matériels et financiers.

Henri de Benoist, président de Fert
FFD

Successful participation in an agricultural or forestry value chain requires investments. Although equipment, seeds, fertilizers and post-harvest handling are necessary investments that require a large share of funds, we shouldn’t neglect the importance of building up human capital. There is a need to educate, train and coach people who take care of these value chains at both individual and organisational level. Changing working habits and techniques requires information and knowledge, and support from other actors too. Intensive twinning between professional organisations is a powerful tool to coach people through development processes.

Juha Marttila, President of MTK

Trias

By joining forces, farmers can make a difference. Coordinated action can deliver better services to farmers, so that small operations have a little more breathing space. Training programmes pay special attention to the most vulnerable groups, especially women and young people. Training and investment in leadership is a way of ensuring a long-term future for farmers’ organisations. And by focusing on access to loans, farmers are enabled to invest in their own business.

Piet Vanthemsche, President of Boerenbond

UPA-DI

Mettre agriculture familiale et agro-industrie en opposition est une fausse prémisse. Le vrai débat est celui de l’accès au marché. L’agriculture familiale est aussi performante que la grande entreprise, pour peu qu’on lui donne les moyens d’atteindre les consommateurs et d’obtenir un juste prix.

Marcel Groleau, président d’UPA

We Effect

Our vision is a sustainable and just world free of poverty. As most of the world’s poor live in rural areas, we believe that farmers’ organisation representing poor small-scale farmers, both women and men, are key actors for rural development and strategically positioned to address our vision. Aligned to the ‘help to self-help’ principle, we provide financial and technical support to enable our partner organisations – farmer organisations representing small-scale farmers – to defend the rights of the rural poor.

Anniqa Nygård, Vice-President of LRF
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Farmers Fighting Poverty has been a framework for action by agri-agencies since 2007. It operates through a fund managed by AgriCord and supports a great many farmers’ organisations across the developing world. This *Evidence of Impact* report brings together brief case studies showing where support under Farmers Fighting Poverty is changing the lives of smallholder farmers, and is particularly significant given that 2014 has been designated the International Year of Family Farming.

In a recent publication, FAO experts described five types of investment useful for smallholder agriculture, and *Evidence of Impact* presents cases illustrating each of these in turn. This year, more than 25 countries are included, from Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America.

**Investment by smallholders themselves**

It is difficult for poor farmers to make cash investments, especially if they are operating close to subsistence level. But support from effective farmers’ organisations can help them to create surplus income by using their land and labour assets more productively. Improved productivity can be attained through awareness of (and training in) better farming methods, as shown by an example of women fish farmers in Nepal who now have better diets as well as higher family income. Training coupled to small grants has helped farmers in Senegal, Benin and Haiti to make significant increases in their income. Cases show that, once farmers are producing a surplus, they are able and willing to invest in productive assets such as agricultural machinery or more land.

Another facet of self-investment is choosing production models suited to the local environment. This can be as simple as installing a pump to allow irrigation or it might be more complex, such as a case in Madagascar where a farmers’ organisation provides detailed information to help farmers decide how to optimise their resources.

Reducing drudgery is key to unlocking the productivity of small farmers (especially women). Smallholders need access to tools and equipment at the correct scale for their operations – they can buy these as individuals or have access to them via their farmers’ organisations.

**Collective investments to overcome limited assets**

An individual farmer can do little to affect the wider landscape or environment, but collective efforts can make big changes in the way small farmers are able to operate. Natural resources can be managed wisely to support higher productivity, and infrastructure projects offer the promise of better access to markets or bring irrigation water within reach. Well-run farmers’ organisations are ideally placed to take an active part in such investment, being aware of their members’ needs, familiar with the specific local environment and able to disseminate new ideas.

Land reclamation and soil stabilisation, as described in cases from Senegal and the Democratic Republic of Congo, are prime examples of collective investment bringing wide benefits. Building irrigation canals and grain stores, as described in a case from Burkina Faso, are other large-scale projects that required investment beyond the power of the individual farmer. But some collective investments are small, such as equipment bought by farmers’ organisations that is then made available to members. In another case, coffee growers in Peru decided to invest profits into the cooperative itself, so that their coffee could be more professionally marketed.

**Investment to manage risk**

Risk is inherent in agriculture, stemming from the uncertainties of climate, disease, fluctuating markets and political instability. Managing these risks can be done first by diversifying activities and then by investing in best practice so that production is maximised and losses minimised. Farmers’ organisations have key roles here, to inform and train their members in efficient methods suited to small-scale production. They can also provide services such as veterinary expertise, and facilitate access to improved livestock and crops.

In one example, farmers in Benin have diversified from cotton into soybean production. They are also diversifying the end-products to include tofu as well as soya milk, and are selling the waste millings to poultry farmers. In another case, members of a dairy cooperative are benefiting from their organisation’s active veterinary service. Guinea pig producers in Ecuador have healthier animals as a result of better husbandry,
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and poultry farmers in Tanzania are now vaccinating more of their flocks against disease.

Investing in enabling markets

Access to markets is crucial for smallholder farmers, and this includes being able to buy inputs at a competitive price. Farmers’ organisations can make products and services more available to their members by wholesale buying to sell in an ‘input shop’ or by encouraging the development of local enterprises selling seed and fertiliser. A case from Vietnam highlights the savings for farmers when a forestry cooperative procures tree seedlings in bulk. A Tanzanian organisation is in dialogue with the government about shortcomings of the input voucher service, and a farmers’ association in Moldova has established producer groups for different commodities which can procure inputs at wholesale prices.

Smallholders also need markets – not too far away and with good facilities – to sell their produce. Adding value at farm or local level is also important. Of course, collective selling via a cooperative is one of the best established mechanisms by which small farmers can access markets, illustrated here by a dairy coop in El Salvador. Adding value by turning potatoes into crisps is the strategy adopted by an organisation in Rwanda. A case from Ethiopia shows how a farmers’ organisation is helping pole producers keep more of their product’s value by cutting out middlemen. Women flower producers are showcased as an example of seizing a niche local market; in contrast the onion farmers of Niger are breaking into the international market for onion seed. And farmers in Brazil are now accessing institutional markets such as schools.

A final part of the marketing picture is the need for financial services, especially small loans, for farmers. Sometimes loans need collateral such as title deeds to land. Cases here show guinea fowl producers taking out small loans to improve their poultry houses and general husbandry. And several producer groups in Uganda now have good access to loans through savings and credit cooperatives associated with their farmers’ organisations.

Investing in enabling institutions

Agricultural policies are often designed with scant attention to their effect on family farmers, despite the potential of such farmers to significantly increase production in most parts of the world. When farmers’ organisations are involved in policy-making, there is a better chance that the concerns of family farmers will be taken into account. Such organisations can also speak up for rural populations as a whole, lobbying for improvements in public services and transport links.

Gathering evidence to support policy positions is the first step – not always easy for organisations whose members are widely spread and not necessarily literate. Cases here show how organisations in Senegal are trying to find out more about the lives of their family farmer members. Bolivia’s umbrella federation of farmers has finally succeeded in getting legal recognition and funding from the national budget for farmers’ institutions. The national farmers’ union in Vietnam has trained its leaders to be more effective in defining policy, and a farmers’ organisation in Burkina Faso has developed a vision for the further progress.

Finally, investment can be made in the research that small farmers need to increase their productivity. A case here describes how farmers’ organisations in the Great Lakes region are sharing best practice so that all the members can benefit from improvements made elsewhere.
Introduction

The spotlight will fall on smallholders’ next year, as 2014 has been declared the International Year of Family Farming, and member states of the United Nations are invited to encourage family farming in their national development programmes. This Evidence of Impact document, the fifth in an annual series illustrating how smallholders in developing countries benefit from support to farmers’ organisations, is of particular relevance in this context.

What is a smallholder farmer?

Although precise definitions vary, it is easy to recognise smallholders: they are farmers, pastoralists, forest keepers and fisher-people who work small plots of land. They have a family-focused, usually labour-intensive approach and much of their production is used within the household. ‘Small’ generally means smaller than 10 hectares (ha), but many farms in the developing world cover less than 1 ha.

Family farmers are increasingly recognised as critical contributors to global food supply: they manage 80% of the farmland in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, and provide up to 80% of the food supply in those regions. In China, 20% of the world’s food is produced on only 10% of globally available farmland – by roughly 200 million smallholdings. Family farmers also play an important role in conserving local ‘landraces’ – varieties of plant and animal suited to particular environments – of wide genetic diversity, in contrast to the narrow range used in large-scale commercial agriculture.

Smallholders have the potential to increase their productivity by investing in new techniques in sustainable agriculture and becoming more business-oriented. After all, having few other options to improve their livelihoods, they have every interest in making best use of their limited assets – land and labour. But it is difficult for poor farmers operating just above subsistence level to make such investments, especially in remote rural areas where infrastructure may be lacking and government policy may focus on the needs of bigger players. Without action by governments and donors to provide appropriate policies and public goods, smallholder investment will be suppressed.

For many reasons, smallholders are more likely to succeed if they are members of active rural cooperatives or farmers’ organisations. Well-run organisations are widely recognised as playing a key role in empowering small agricultural producers, especially women farmers. And the strength in numbers offered by a group leads to market efficiencies (cheaper inputs bought in bulk, joint sales to reach larger markets) as well as enabling access to services and business development advice. Groups can lobby for a better policy environment, giving voice to the concerns of the small producer. And the mere fact of running a member-based organisation on democratic, inclusive principles has wider implications for democracy and gender balance in society.

Given the undeniable value of farmers’ organisations in promoting their members interests, building capacity in these organisations is an excellent way for donor and partner institutions to invest in smallholder farming. The Farmers Fighting Poverty strategy, through which farmers’ organisations in the developed world offer tailored support (using farmer-to-farmer methods) to their counterparts in the developing world, is proving an effective means of channeling this investment. Support is provided under four key themes: developing organisational strength; creating networks; lobbying and policy-making; and developing business opportunities. It also provides cross-cutting support, particularly in the fields of gender and the environment.

1 In this document, the terms ‘smallholder’ and ‘family farmer’ are used interchangeably.
2 By a general resolution of the United Nations.
3 FAO (2012) Factsheet on smallholders
4 IUED, Vorley (2011). Under what conditions are value chains effective tools for pro-poor development?
This focused investment is gradually paying dividends in terms of small farmers’ living conditions. As in previous years, this document presents some of the impacts resulting from support to farmers’ organisations.

This year, the examples are arranged to reflect the various specific routes by which investment in smallholder agriculture can be made: in every case, farmers’ organisations have a significant role. In this approach, the publication is loosely following the structure of the recent FAO report Investing in smallholder agriculture for food security. For each type of investment, we highlight projects under the Farmers Fighting Poverty approach that show an impact at organisation- or farm-level. The report is structured as follows:

1. Investment by smallholders themselves (usually with some support) in their own farms
2. Collective investment to overcome limited assets
3. Investment to manage risks
4. Investment in markets
5. Investment in enabling institutions.
Focus 1

Investment by smallholders in their own farms

It is difficult for poor family farmers to invest in their own productive assets, primarily because of their poverty. They have few assets to spare, face many risks (including unpredictable weather and periodic ill-health) and whatever income they may have is usually needed simply to satisfy basic needs. But investment, often in a range of areas, is needed to unlock their potential. In most cases, farmers will need training – this might start by raising awareness, so that farmers have an insight into the types of worthwhile investment, before moving on to specific technical training. Training in how to keep financial and business records is also important (and can be particularly challenging for farmers who do not find it easy to read and write).

The examples given below show that individual investment is generally inseparable from wider collective investments through farmers’ organisations and other interested parties. But with the support of their organisations, family farmers are certainly able to make worthwhile investments in their own enterprises.
Investing in higher productivity and resilience

Increasing productivity, whether in yield or value, is especially important on the small land holdings typical of family farms. Although there is rarely scope to increase the land area of such farms, the ‘economic size’ can be increased by better management. This can be achieved in many ways, such as by irrigation, improving soil fertility or diversifying the cropping pattern. Typically a range of improvements will be needed, but in each case the technology must be affordable and locally available.

Increasing the yield of a crop may be easier than increasing its value, because the latter depends on the costs of inputs (fertiliser, machinery etc.) relative to the fluctuations of the market for the end product. Nevertheless, unless the value does increase, family farmers will not continue to invest. This adds weight to the argument that technology must become less dependent on external inputs, and that farmers need training in more efficient production. The role of farmers’ organisations is key here, providing training and extension services to their members. They can also help with joint infrastructure such as warehouses and market facilities. This part of the investment picture is discussed in more detail below, in focus 2 (collective investments).

Diversification is an important part of increasing the productivity of family farms, especially as it also helps develop resilience. Growing a mix of crops for subsistence and to sell is a good insurance policy. And including dairy cattle, short-cycle livestock such as poultry, or fish farming in the mixture can provide a regular income throughout the year (a great help in the long interval between arable harvests) as well as improving household nutrition.
Fish farming investment brings better diet and higher income – RIDS, Nepal

In this example, on-farm investment has taken the form of fishponds and a more efficient production system particularly applicable to family farms. Labour requirements are fairly high, especially for digging out the ponds and later during harvest. But the productivity is higher than traditional fish-farming, the by-products (small fish) provide important supplement to the family diet, and the incorporation of irrigation ditches means that a wider variety of vegetable crops is also grown.

In Chitwan, with its warm temperatures and abundance of water, fish-farming is an attractive proposition, being very productive on small areas. It has the potential to increase household income and create employment opportunities, and the dense local population provides a ready market. Until recently, though, fish farming practice regarded as ‘weeds’ the small indigenous species (SIS) of fish that grow alongside farmed fish. It is now known that these small fish (less than 5 cm long) are actually richer in vitamin A, calcium and iron than cultured fish, so a new system has been devised to take advantage of this fact. So-called ‘carp-SIS polyculture’ has already proved itself in Bangladesh, with the small fish being harvested frequently for family consumption and the carp (which take up to a year to mature) sold to provide cash income.

In a twinning arrangement with the Rural Integrated Development Society (RIDS) and the Finnish Fish Farmers’ Association, three women’s groups have been formed, involving 300 households.\(^6\) They are using the carp-SIS polyculture technique, and boosting production further by installing bamboo substrates to the fishponds to produce nutrients for the fish. The fishponds (each about 100m\(^2\)) are often integrated with a system of irrigation ditches for growing vegetables. Women have been trained on the correct rate of feeding – rice bran and mustard oil cake – and fertiliser use to maximise fish growth, and a manual on fish polyculture has been produced. The Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science, and the District Agriculture Development Office provide technical support.

Now that the small fish are readily available, household nutrition has improved, with participating families now eating about twice as much fish as the Nepali national average. The carp are easily sold, with buyers often coming to the farmers’ houses at harvest time, so fish farmers’ income has increased, allowing them to afford school fees and other household expenses. Leadership skills are being fostered by project activities such as training and field trips, and the farmers are taking a more active role in managing their own water supplies.

The women’s groups are functioning well, with the membership fees (NRs 10-50 per member per month)\(^7\) used to disburse low-interest loans (1-2% per month) to the most needy members. A women’s fish cooperative is being set up too.

Small grants invested in family farms – UGPM and FPA, Senegal, Benin and Haiti

As part of a wide-ranging project in three countries to encourage small farmers to become more professional and assertive, farmers attended part-time training courses. An intrinsic part of the training was making small grants available for individual farmers to invest in a particular enterprise on their own farm. The Farming as a Profession initiative resulted in higher yields, diversified production, lower production costs and better living conditions for the participants, at least half of whom were women.

The Farmers’ Knowledge (Les Savoirs des Gens de la Terre, or LSGT) programme started in Senegal and has been running since 2004.\(^4\) The concept of LSGT is to build on farmers’ practical experience through training, applied research and farmer-to-farmer exchange. LSGT was tested in Senegal with two farmers’ organisations.\(^5\) In 2007, four new groups were added and the programme was taken to Benin with two new

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\(^6\) AIN 5749, FFD

\(^7\) 50 Nepali rupees is less than 40 euro cents

\(^8\) UPA-DI Senegal, Benin and Haiti

\(^9\) The union of farmers’ groups in Méckhé (UGPM) and the federation of self-directed schemes (FPA)
Two years later, LSGT was started in Haiti, where the programme had to take into account the specific environmental challenges in the country and the absence of strong farmer organisations in the target areas.

LSGT particularly supports the development of small farms, by training farmers and peasants at the bottom of the development ladder and encouraging them to engage in farm enterprises to increase income levels. The programme also supports farmers’ associations, unions and other groups to provide services to their members, lead strategic thinking on agricultural policies, and contribute to overall food security while protecting environmental resources.

Under the Farming as a Profession initiative, farmers receive broad-based training (two days’ training per month over a 15-month period) during which each participant develops a plan to improve animal or plant production on their family farm. For this they are granted a development fund of US$500-1,000 (depending on the average size of family farms in the particular country).

Farming as a Profession – some results:
• Senegal – the annual incomes of 346 families increased by over 60% to US$920, equivalent to the cost of school fees for 4.6 children per family.
• Haiti – 118 families increased their annual income by 44% (to US$543).

After completing the course, farmers had better control of production processes and management tools, their yields were higher, they had diversified their production and had better access to markets. Their families had better living standards as a result. Higher family incomes create new demand for goods and services, which in turn affects the economic activities of the whole community. Overall, the synergy of actions under LSGT, including the investment to improve the productivity of family farms, has helped local populations to have better access to local quality products at fair prices.

Recognising the important role played by women in agriculture, UPA-DI requires a minimum participation of women in the training programmes. This was initially set at 20% but has now been increased to 25%. In fact, women’s participation has been above 50% in all activities, and most of these women also receive the development grants to invest in family farm improvements. Women are currently active in many agricultural enterprises and claim to have gained influence in family farms, village groups and organisations. In 2008, FPA rules were changed so that 20% of elected positions are reserved for women and 30% of representatives in the General Assembly of the FPA should be women.

Higher income, higher investment – ZNFU, Zambia
Eremiah Chikatula, former chairman of Katete District Farmers Association in Zambia’s Eastern Province has seen a steady improvement in income and productivity from his small farm since 2009. During the 2011/2012 season, his income from the sale of maize, oranges, assorted vegetables and sweet potatoes was over US$8,000. Because of income made during the past three years, Mr. Chikatula has been able to purchase assets worth almost US$23,000. He bought two grinding mills, maize shellers, a light truck and 8 ha of farmland. He has also embarked on fish farming a venture to diversify his sources of income.

10 The federation of producer unions (FUPRO) and the association of farmers (CEA)
Adopting production models suited to the local environment

Given that family farmers’ main assets are natural resources, it is vital that their farming activities do not deplete – ideally they should augment – the local environment. Investing in labour-intensive agro-ecological models of production makes sense for smallholders, as they often have plenty of family labour available.

Small farmer making innovations – Kimakiki Farmers’ Group, Tanzania

Here, investment in a small pump, plus education and training, has made a great difference to a farmer in Tanzania.”

Peter Urion’s small farm extends to about 1.6 ha in an area of poor rainfall. He is 39, married, and has three children. As the youngest son himself, he had to take care of his parents too. Always interested in new ideas, Peter has been involved in the local Kimakiki Farmers’ group since it was created in 2000. The Agricultural Development Project in Arusha and Kilimanjaro (known as Adepak) has been working with his group since 2009, offering training courses on poultry and vegetables, and exchange visits to other production areas. Peter also attended a big agricultural event in Arusha, which gave him new ideas on organic farming.

Like other farmers in the area, Peter used to cultivate mainly maize and peanuts, but the dry climate allowed only low yields: water scarcity is the main issue for agriculture in this dry area. But the project helped the Kimakiki farmers’ group to invest in a water pump and generator, and now Peter and his wife manage the equipment on behalf of the other members and local villagers. They also manage a demonstration plot, supported by Adepak, on which they grow organic vegetables, having tested different growing techniques suited to water scarcity.

Training courses and exchange visits helped him to diversify into poultry production (hens and turkeys) for both family use and the market. The poultry manure makes valuable high-nitrogen compost for the
vegetable plot. The next idea for diversification will be dairy goats.

Peter points to three concrete improvements in his welfare – he is self-sufficient in meat and vegetables for the whole family, he can afford school fees and he has begun to build a new house. Peter is often visited by other farmers in the region and by students from Tengeru College. He is seen as an example of how family farmers can be helped to achieve autonomy. He himself says he benefited hugely from the education offered by the project, and that he could not have developed his enterprises without investment in the water pump.

**Catalogue of services for fish farmers and potato growers – Fimpifi and Fimpao, Madagascar**

Sharing information is important if farmers are to make improvements in their enterprises. In this example from Madagascar, farmers’ organisations have catalogued the services available to members so they can make informed decisions about how to optimise their resources.13

Fert has worked with two producer groups in Ihorombe (the regional fish farming union, Fimpifi, and its sister potato growers’ union, Fimpao) to produce ‘service catalogues’ that document the range of services available through each organisation. Each service has clear objectives and activities. Some services take the form of practical demonstrations, showing new techniques to farmers who might otherwise doubt their usefulness. By cataloguing the services in this way, it is possible to share best practice in a structured way that allows farmers to invest in the optimum way for their own circumstances.

Farmers’ responses:

‘Apart from thieves and possible natural disasters, there is no risk of loss of fish. I have 6 acres of pond and in January 2011 I bought 200 fry at 200 Ar per unit, for a total price of 40,000 Ar (about 13 euros). In October 2011 I sold each at a price of 3,000 Ar, a total of 600,000 Ar (about 190 euros). If I must choose between fish and rice culture, I adopt fish farming, as a rice culture of 6 acres only gives me a maximum of 180 kg of yield, about 100,000 Ar (about 32 euros).’

‘I saw myself the demonstration plot and it really pushes me to grow potatoes. I am convinced that it can be adapted to our soil and climate conditions of our area.’

‘I participated in a national agricultural exhibition in 2011. I carried 40 large fish by car for 670 km (IvaroEst – Ihosy – Tana). With my knowledge of transportation technology, no fish died during the journey to Tana. On the way, we changed 3 times the water in the tank vent to prevent suffocation of the fish.’
Reducing drudgery, especially for women

If family farmers can invest in equipment of the appropriate (usually small) scale for their small farms, their labour productivity can dramatically increase. Tilling, weeding, harvesting, carting manure etc. can all be done with far less drudgery if simple machinery and tools are affordable and locally available. Since women are typically involved in many types of farm labour (as well as being responsible for fetching water and firewood, and most domestic duties), investment here can have far-reaching consequences for women’s lives. As mentioned above, farmers’ organisations can play a part in the collective acquisition of, for example, sprayers or small ploughs that are then available for the use of members. On an individual level, farmers may themselves be able to invest in small items such as improved harvesting tools (sickles and knives).
Small seed drill suitable for family farmers – Morocco and Mali

Direct drilling is an important technique in conservation agriculture, but the equipment designed for large-scale farming is not suitable for smallholders with limited financial resources and restricted plots. A small direct-drill designed under this project brings this technology feasibly within the reach of smallholders, enabling them to invest in improving their productivity.14

Soils in Morocco and Mali have become degraded over the last ten years, as farming practices based on ploughing, chemical fertilizers and monocultures have caused erosion and loss of soil fertility. New, environmentally friendly production systems are needed to protect the soil, but they have to take into account the modest financial means of local farmers as well as being economically efficient.

The obvious answer to the soil erosion problem is to shift to reduced-tillage systems. After all, conservation agriculture is a proven concept. But mulch-based cropping systems, which require seed to be sown directly into the ground, remain largely confined to big farms. This is because the seed drills that form the technological backbone of the system were designed for powerful tractors working in large fields. The cost and traction requirement puts such seed drills beyond the reach of small farmers.

Farmers in the Had Bouhsoussen region of the Middle Atlas Mountains in Morocco gave an enthusiastic welcome to early trials of a prototype direct-drill tested by Fert in late 2012. The drill was developed from an original concept that had been forgotten and then reconsidered a few years ago by Afdi in Mali. Based on the ‘wheelbarrow’ principle (being easier to push than to pull), the seeding unit is a disc, inclined at 30° to the vertical, fixed to the end of an arm. As it does not require significant weight to penetrate the ground, the drill can be pulled by small tractors, making it useful in small fields and affordable by smaller farmers. The model tested in Morocco was manufactured in France, in close partnership with Moroccan farmers and technicians.

The new seed drill is not the only aim of this project, which is also introducing new crops into the rotation and keeping the ground covered with vegetation as much as possible. But if the prototype proves its worth and is able to be manufactured locally (at a cost that local farmers can afford), this will be a significant step towards Moroccan and Malian farmers being able to invest in their own enterprises.

Tractors and ploughs improve productivity – ZNFU, Zambia

Most small-scale farmers still use labour-intensive cultivation, so the Zambia National Farmers Union (with FAO) launched the tractor mechanization project. The project has so far distributed 18 tractors and 180 ox-drawn implements to farmers practising conservation farming. The farmers were able to cultivate larger areas, and the usual seasonal shortage of cultivation implements was avoided.15

14 Afdi and Fert
Focus 2

Collective investments to overcome limited assets

Collective investments are often prerequisites for individual investment by family farmers. Such investments focus in part on the wider landscape – the environmental assets – that small farmers are exploiting. Natural resources are, apart from labour, the main assets of family farmers and, wisely managed, they can be improved to support higher productivity. Collective investment can also be made in infrastructure projects such as construction (roads, bridges, communication systems) and irrigation schemes. Direct cash investment is also possible, as happens when a farmer’s organisation puts resources into setting up a formal cooperative.

This type of investment includes several activities: water harvesting at landscape level to allow soils to collect and hold more moisture; using trees and shrubs (often including leguminous species) to stabilise soils; and irrigating drought-prone areas. Such activities involve more than technical expertise as, to be effective, they also require in-depth knowledge of local communities and their specific regimes of ownership and rights. In such situations, the potential contribution of farmers’ organisations is particularly relevant, as these groups are (by their nature) of and for the people. Well-run farmers’ organisations are democratic, and they provide services and training for the benefit of their members. They are well-placed to explain the utility of new ideas, and later to help bring them into practice, often tailoring them to specific local conditions.
Group action to reclaim eroded land – Asprodeb, Senegal

Years of clearing forest to make way for agriculture has left much of Senegal vulnerable to soil erosion. Heavy rain has created deep gullies, and valuable topsoil is washed down to the sea. There is a compelling argument for collective efforts in the reclamation of such large areas of degraded land, and in this example local farmers are involved in both technical and financial aspects of a series of projects coordinated by Asprodeb. Local resources were used wherever possible, and the activities were supported by Senegal’s Rural Council.

This sustainable land management project was part of a wider programme financed by the Global Environment Facility of the World Bank which ran for two years from January 2010. It supported 36 sub-projects implemented by farmers’ organisations and the training of 200 farmers’ leaders on land management and policies.

Before land reclamation could begin, a survey was needed to establish the extent and nature of soil degradation. Information campaigns raised awareness of the project via local workshops supported by the Rural Council, and each rural community catalogued their own land degradation problems. Local farmers reported enjoying this process, particularly the fact that their own concerns could be reflected in the diagnosis. The results were used to create a map for each community showing a matrix of degradation and setting priorities for establishing sustainable land management. The participation of farmers and local technicians at this stage ensured that priorities for action were seen to be fair.

Following this mapping exercise, local training workshops were held to identify constraints in terms of resources, feasibility, relevance, urgency and available skills as well as environmental impact. Constraints were serious, as many farmers reported their inability (as individuals) to fight water and wind erosion, given the level of deforestation and their own lack of education.

To overcome the lack of technical knowledge on sustainable land management, more than 3,300 farmers attended short training sessions. These covered a range of subjects including agroforestry, organic compost, gabions and bunds (to stabilize sloping land) and improved cooking stoves (to reduce demand for charcoal and slow the rate of deforestation).

Putting into practice what they learned through training, project beneficiaries report clear impacts, including the reclamation of 352 ha of degraded land through the use of appropriate planting and soil protection measures. Fifteen ha of land in Latmingue Zone has been reforested with salt-tolerant plants over two years, and 4 ha of land once abandoned because of erosion has been recovered by using gabions. Altogether more than 7,700 gabions and 560 bunds have been installed.

Soil fertility has also improved, with farmers in the rural area of Touba Darou reporting improved yields as a result of using phosphate and organic manure. Production has increased, with millet production in Touba Boggo Zone almost tripling as a result of using organic manure.

Grass cover has been restored in Keur Ndiangane where gabions have been installed, and cattle routes to the grazing land are better protected. A more nutritious type of grass (ngokk) is replacing the unpalatable wild herbs, partly as a result of reforestation and spreading peanut cake in the village of Ndoss Mbadiock.

Farmers in Zones Beel Toubia and Touba Bogo report that living conditions have improved in other ways too. Improved stoves have cut fuel costs to only a third of former levels. Homes are also cleaner and safer for children. Repairs to a dam in Sanghai have restored fresh water supplies for both people and animals in that area, for at least three months after the end of the rainy season.

Changes in attitudes and social impacts have also been noted. Having a local convention and a monitoring committee to reinforce the initial awareness-raising means that the importance of trees and grass cover in soil protection is widely recognised. Communities have become adept at mobilizing resources and there is said to be better social cohesion through meetings and sharing experiences. The techniques of sustainable land management are widely understood, production is on the increase, and forests are now protected against illegal cutting.

16 World Bank Global Environment Facility, via Asprodeb
Farmers become more professional and productive – Cefades and Unitu, DRC

Training and other support offered to members of 21 organisations in North Kivu has allowed farmers to increase agricultural and livestock production.\textsuperscript{17} Although wider investment in building terraces and soil improvement has been difficult to achieve, members of farmers’ organisations are more likely to adopt new techniques to prevent soil erosion in this generally hilly, high-rainfall area.

Fert has been working with the Catholic University of Graben for more than 20 years. In 1995 they established an agricultural training centre (known as Cefades) in North Kivu and in 2002 the union of farmers’ groups (Unitu) was created. This particular three-year project, running from 2009, focused on strengthening Cefades and Unitu to better support local producers. The training centre and the union together support 21 farmers’ organisations (about 400 members in total) in four agro-ecological zones in the territories of Beni and Lubero. Under the project, the training centre offered courses to help farmers become more professional. These made use of the good teaching infrastructure for agricultural training at Cefades, which produces breeding stock (rabbits, goats, pigs and poultry) and organises demonstration plots showing different management techniques.

Having field schools at three different sites gives Cefades the flexibility to organise training for research and demonstrate cropping regimes to suit each locality. As well as training farmers directly, agricultural instructors are also trained so that they can offer advice to farmers as necessary. Unitu has been coordinating the different training needs of Unitu farmers, pilot farmers in field schools and agricultural monitors. Young farmers have benefited from monitoring during their practical training. Other union activities under the project included marketing, processing agricultural products, improving the structure of lower-level farmers’ organisations and monitoring small projects.

This joint approach via both union and training centre gave good results – 52% of interviewees (a sample of 150) reported improvements in both agriculture and livestock production, with higher incomes as a result. This allowed them to invest in housing and educating their children. Several people have acquired plots and everyone is better cushioned against small economic shocks. Some women have set up rabbit breeding enterprises, the income from which is available when there are sudden demands for cash, such as for healthcare or school fees.

Almost a quarter of respondents had invested in their home or farm, 10% had acquired new land and 10% had invested in the education of their children. For 37% of respondents, the most significant change was the increase in agricultural productivity. Farmers are becoming more professional, and better aware of the importance of new agricultural techniques and good quality inputs. Forty per cent of respondents attributed their development to increased levels of professionalism.

On the other hand, some farmers were less willing or able to apply new-found knowledge to the wider environment. Farmers are well aware of the importance of maintaining soil fertility, but this knowledge does not necessarily lead to action. There are various reasons, not least the issue of security of tenure – if a plot does not belong to the producer, he or she has less incentive to invest in terraces or soil fertility. In some cases, farmers are not satisfied with the quality of available seed, so they refuse to adopt new varieties. But an interesting benefit of belonging to an organisation was seen in the adoption rates of new techniques – only 45% of respondents apply new techniques, but for those who are members of a farmers’ organisation, the figure was 58%. This suggests that belonging to a formal producer group may give farmers the confidence to invest collectively, to the greater good of the local community.

Investing in irrigation and grain stores – FNGN and UGCPA-BM, Burkina Faso

The investment described here was implemented in a 22-month project under the European Union’s Food Facility framework.\textsuperscript{18} It involved significant expenditure on an irrigation scheme to support small vegetable producers; the other infrastructure cost was building grain stores.

In 2008, following the sharp rise in global agricultural prices, the European Union provided a billion euros in aid to countries affected by the food crisis. Having worked on food access issues for many years, Afdi

\textsuperscript{17} Fert

\textsuperscript{18} AIN 5647, Afdi
Evidence of impact, 2013

(a French agri-agency) was ideally placed to monitor this scheme in Burkina Faso.

The project set out to develop cereal and vegetable crops to mitigate the effects of the food crisis, through partnership between AFDI and two farmer organisations.¹⁹ Their actions covered four main areas: securing access to means of production (including setting up market gardens and improving seed storage), offering technical and economic advice, bringing producers into the regional political dialogue and providing certified seeds.

Almost 211,000 euros were spent on the construction and rehabilitation of 80 ha of market gardens irrigated by 11 km of canals. And farmers can now store their seed in better conditions, thanks to three stores they manage and maintain.

This was a short, intensive project that aimed for quick results to encourage producers to continue implementing what they had learned. Nearly 500,000 people were made aware – through local radio and other media – of the importance of certified seed. More than 28,000 farmers received technical data sheets and witnessed, through demonstration plots, the clear benefits of using such seed. Sixty-six elected members of farmers’ organisations (including 10 women) were trained to intervene in the political debate and to defend the interests of local producers.

This level of intervention would not have been possible except through the network of farmers’ organisations under the two umbrella federations. Continuing support is needed so that the organisations can continue to serve their members and provide the back-up they need.

¹⁹ The National Federation of Naam groups (FNGN) and the Union of Farmer Groups for the Commercialization of Agricultural Products in the region of Boucle du Mouhoun (UGCPA-BM)

Potato growers invest in shared equipment – Farmers’ groups in West-Kilimanjaro, Tanzania

In an area of government forest reserve in West-Kilimanjaro, roughly 1,400 poor farmers were cultivating 600–1,000 ha of potatoes, but until recently they operated individually and their yields were low. Field visits to the village of Matadi in Siha District identified a group of 180 potato-growers, half of them women, to take part in this project. The local authorities were interested and were able to allocate plots for farmer organisations to set up demonstration plots as well as find some of the resources needed to build storage barns.

To help the farmers increase their yields at the same time as learning the benefits of group membership, hands-on technical training ran in parallel with group establishment. Training was offered one day per week, covering 11 different modules including land preparation, weeding, pests and diseases etc., and four demonstration potato plots were set up. There were also four sessions on poultry production. Pilot farmers, supported by a field officer, learned how to keep the technical and financial records vital to effective farm management, and to calculate gross margins before and after training. Exchange visits to Zanzibar and Lushoto showed the West-Kili farmers their place in the potato value-chain: Zanzibar is a major market for their potatoes, while Lushoto is an important source of seed potatoes.

As formal producer groups had not existed before the project, the concepts of such an arrangement had to be explained and demonstrated. Leaders were elected and the new groups now cohere under the objective of increasing their potato production. At strategic meetings of the groups it was recognised that they could access quality inputs at lower prices than they could as individuals. Shared concerns were also noted: farmers needed sprayers to protect crops against pests and diseases, and better weighing equipment and storage facilities; they needed market information to help

²⁰ AIN 5748, FERT with support from MTK
decision-making; and ongoing technical training and advisory services. In the longer term they would like to create a formal cooperative structure for market information, transport, price negotiation and technical support. Other concerns included the quality of seed, the need for entrepreneurship training and good governance.

As service-provision is an important role of a producer group, often providing much of the impetus needed to hold a group together, equipment (sprayers and weighing scales) was provided by the project. Groups organised a rota for sharing sprayers (one between four farmers) on payment of a small contribution towards maintenance costs. Non-members could also use the sprayers, but they paid more.

Six groups (with a total of 193 members) now conduct regular meetings, and there is a permanent secretary for the groups. Although they are not yet formally constituted as coops and do not have bank accounts, this process is under way. They already have access to credit via Umoja savings and credit cooperative, and with Fert’s support they continue meeting and learning together, sharing sprayers, selling potatoes and buying inputs. The groups are so successful that more farmers want to join, but there is a risk in letting individual groups get too big, so these farmers will be supported to start their own groups.

### Farmer producing higher yields

Swahele Kingazi is a 42-year-old farmer from Matadi village in West-Kilimanjaro. Head of a large family (he has eight children), he is also considered one of the best farmers in the area. As chairman of the Upendo Matadi group, he came across Fert in 2011, when the agri-agency began to assess work in West-Kili.

Mr Kingazi started to grow potatoes whilst in Lushoto in 1988, with little technical knowledge. Yields were low and his production was at subsistence level. In 1994, he moved to West-Kili in search of better land and a larger plot. He now owns a small farm of about an acre. As well as growing maize, beans and vegetables for family consumption, he produces potatoes as cash crop to pay for school fees and other family expenses. He also rears about a dozen hens and has six goats. The potatoes grow on a rented plot (1,600 m²) in the forest reserve.

Before the project, poor husbandry meant his harvest of potatoes was only 10 bags. But training courses and the example of a demonstration plot taught him about proper spacing, the importance of weeding and how to spray appropriate pesticides and fungicides at the proper time. His harvest grew to 16 bags, and he hopes for still greater increases as he continues to benefit from continuing training.

As a pilot farmer, he records his expenditure and income carefully, supported by the field officer to calculate profit. The higher yield resulting from the training has increased his income from the forest plot by 300,000 TSH (about 135 euros).

He also expects a higher income through better selling prices through the direct selling to wholesalers in Zanzibar. And buying inputs with the members of his group (in coordination with other groups) means that his costs are reduced too.
Oro Verde (‘green gold’ in Spanish) is a farmer cooperative operating in North-eastern Peru with more than 1,000 members who produce mainly coffee and cocoa. The coop has ambitious plans for growth, encouraged by rocketing sales income in 2011 (up by 73% compared to the previous year) to 4.3 million euros, thanks to high coffee prices on the international markets. Operational profit tripled, and the coop members voted at their annual meeting to reinvest a large portion of this into the cooperative. Capital growth was boosted by over 200% to 850,000 euros. Steps were also taken to involve a private company in the coop’s business activities, but Oro Verde remains the majority shareholder.

An Agriterra local agribusiness advisor guided Oro Verde in preparing a long-term financial and marketing plan for its ground coffee. In 2012, Oro Verde featured in a social marketing campaign by a well-known brand of coffee, Banco Continental, which then provided substantial working capital for the coop (about 750,000 euros). Through a Lima marketing agency, Oro Verde began negotiations with the Plaza Vea supermarket chain, and the supermarket has been selling Oro Verde coffee (under another brand) since March 2012. The coop hopes to develop its own-brand coffee, and plans for a factory that will process coffee beans to export standard are in an advanced stage.

Other enterprises that may be possible under this investment plan is an Oro Verde ecological centre. With the support of Agriterra, a Peruvian student at Wageningen University is drawing up a business plan for this centre, where tourists could learn more about organic production of coffee and cocoa, sample local dishes in a restaurant and perhaps even stay overnight. By diversifying into a form of ecotourism, the coop will be less affected by fluctuations in international coffee prices. The proposed centre will offer local employment opportunities too.
Focus 3

Investment to manage risks

Agriculture has always been a risky business, and farmers contend with the vagaries of the weather, outbreaks of disease and fluctuating market prices every day of their lives. In some parts of the world, political instability adds another layer of uncertainty. And some farmers do not even have secure tenure rights over their land. A poor harvest one year or low market prices can be disastrous for a family farmer, and they may have to sell assets – if they have taken out loans to make investments, they may be forced to sell assets at below cost-price even before they have finished paying for them.

Given the inherently risky nature of farming, formal insurance is prohibitively expensive. But risk management can take many forms, diversification being one of the most useful. By growing a range of crops and rearing livestock too, the farmer’s investment ‘eggs’ are not all in one basket – except in the case of catastrophic incidents (earthquake, widespread flooding or extreme drought) it is unlikely that all production would fail at once. Better agricultural practices are also a form of insurance, as healthier plants with adequate soil moisture and nutrients are more resistant to pests and diseases. Using seeds particularly selected for disease-resistance and vigour, and suited to the specific growing conditions, also helps. For animals, regular vaccination and anti-parasite programmes are important preventive measures.

Farmers’ organisations have roles to play in all these strategies, by informing and training their members in efficient, diversified farming methods suited to small-scale production. They may also be involved in veterinary support programmes and in the supply of improved seed varieties.
Diversification and new processing methods boosts women’s income – UCP-Z, Benin

In Benin, a country that used to rely heavily on cotton production, privatisation coupled with tight regulation saw prices to farmers drop. Moving away from reliance on a single crop has proved beneficial, especially for the women in the Zogbodomey town producers’ union (UCP-Z). The development of a mechanical press for more efficient production of soya milk and high-protein cheese has consolidated these gains. And the soya millings after milk production are a valuable poultry feed.

Benin’s cotton sector has been restructured over the past decade and the results have not been entirely beneficial to small farmers. Prices paid to farmers dropped, and payment became irregular. In response, many farmers’ organisations have been diversifying into other crops such as soybeans.

Over three years, production of soybean in the 70 villages belonging to the municipality of Zogbodomey increased from 200 tons to over 1,000 tons, which allowed the establishment of a new industry to replace cotton. Since 2010, a bundling device for sales gives producers the means to negotiate better rates, especially at the end of the year when cash needs are high. Soybeans have long been processed in the area to provide milk for children, but women members of UCP-Z have developed the traditional processing methods and diversified into cheese production so this food (an excellent source of protein) is now consumed by all ages.

More than 200 women now generate income from processing soybean. Their work is less arduous and more productive now that they use mechanical presses developed jointly by Afdi Gironde and a local blacksmith. After only a year, productivity (and average income for the women) is up about 30%, because – compared to a hand press – the mechanical presses yield more milk and a higher concentration of protein, and the process takes only about half the time.

Investing in a new press is difficult for an individual farmer, but the union has bought 10 of the new presses and 10 mills specifically for grinding soybean (grinding is the first stage of soya milk production).

Women can pay a portion of the price of the tool – between 50% and 60% – at the time of delivery, and repay the remainder within a year. Having the right equipment for food processing is only part of the story though: producing food that is safe to consume requires high standards of cleanliness. The union therefore offers training in correct hygiene practices – 20 members have so far taken this course.

For some women, soybean processing has become their main activity. Odile, for instance, has her own mill and processes 10 kg of soy per day (to yield 35 litres of milk), 5 days per week. She sells cheese from her home, and local customers flock to buy: some arrive early to make sure they can buy enough.

Diversification goes further than simply growing soybean to replace some of the cotton crop. A study trip to Togo showed some members the potential of other products that can be manufactured from soy: the commercial development of recipes using tofu is now one of the priorities of the group. And the last aspect of economic diversification is that poultry farmers can use the ‘milling’ (soy grains after processing), so the processors are drawing up contracts to supply this byproduct to raise more income.

Budget guides for different enterprises – ZNFU, Zambia

Small-scale farmers may find it difficult to plan new cropping regimes, as they do not know the specific costs involved. This makes them reluctant to diversify their enterprises. To guide such farmers to adopt new crops, the Zambian National Farmers Union publishes enterprise budget booklets every year. Copies usually sell out quickly, and are used as a planning tool by farmers seeking to diversify.

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22 AIN 5785, Afdi
Dairy union has active veterinary service – Rofama, Madagascar

There is growing demand for milk in the High Matsiatra region of Madagascar, owing to rapid population growth, and production has doubled between 2008 and 2012 (to 2 million litres per year). Demand still outstrips supply. Dairy farmers belonging to the Rofama union are benefiting from this growing market, and the risk of losing production through animal ill-health is reduced by having access to their own veterinary service.

Rofama is a union of four cooperatives with a shared point of sale and veterinary service. It had almost 90 farmer members in 2012 and its activities account for 6% of the regional market. The union was formed in 2005 by farmers who had been involved in a breeding programme to develop the Pie Rouge Norvégienne breed. Since 2009, Rofama has been in partnership with Afdi Nièvre to build technical capacity (better herd management, milk collection, processing conditions and packaging) and improve the working of the union (by drawing up management and strategic plans).

Rofama’s membership increased by more than 30% in 2012. One attraction of becoming a member is having access to Rofama’s veterinary service. Members now understand the importance of herd behaviour, and have learned how to prevent mastitis, fevers and difficult calvings. The success of this service is attributed to the commitment and skills of the professional staff – despite the isolation of some cooperatives, there are weekly meetings in each coop, and farmers can reach a vet in an emergency.

There is of course more to the union than a veterinary service. The dairy outlet is also important – it now sells (profitably) over 240 litres of milk per day (about 5% of the regional capital’s market), despite a difficult start.

RALIAO AOIChoe, breeder and Rofama vice-president:

‘When we started milk production, it was first to ensure a daily income for our family and for our own consumption. If the start was difficult, especially learning about herd behaviour, we now see that the investment in a dairy herd can be really profitable: our cows produce manure with which we use on our plots and we can save on inputs. Calves give us meat, and milk selling allows us to have cash in case of problems.’

Rakotozafy Théophile, breeder and Rofama president:

‘The advantage … is that we can exchange knowledge with farmers and professionals of the industry who advise us directly. In addition, we have an Afdi technician with us here in Fianarantsoa, the relationship is simple and we, elected members, are in direct communication with all stakeholders of Afdi.’

‘We still have lots of challenges such as strengthening internal management and profit sharing. We need to better understand the challenges of the industry and … we need to develop our technical services: insemination, diet and health of animals. Finally, we must uphold the protection of improved breeds and access to investment.’

AIN 5943, Afdi

24
Growing chickens to reduce risk – Shuihe Cooperative, China

The mantra of the Shuihe coop in Yunnan is ‘established by farmers, owned by farmers, managed by farmers and benefits for farmers’. The coop started in the tea trade with seven member households. Now there are 112 households involved (456 individuals), and the coop has moved towards organic tea growing and introduced poultry to diversify its activities.

There have been two positive effects: the chicken manure provides fertilizer and keeps the tea bushes healthy; and having a second enterprise means that the unpredictable fluctuations in the tea market are balanced by the extra income source. 25

Mrs Da Lu is one of the members of the Shuihe coop. She says a lot has changed over the past decade. ‘Now we have more money for housekeeping, food, drink and other necessary things, because the government invests in a better living standard for us.’ The cooperative too has contributed to the changes. She explains, ‘We have grown tea for generations, but since becoming members of the cooperative we receive a better price.’ The cooperative buys the tea from its members and sells it collectively.

She recently started to rear chickens under the tea plantation, at the suggestion of the coop. People in Yunnan are becoming more interested in green, pollution-free food. Eco-tea and eco-chicken are very popular in the domestic market, so demand and prices for it are high. Da Lu continues: ‘When we were only growing tea, our income was very unstable, as the price of tea was changing every year. Since we grow chicken, we have a more stable and extra income.’

Better management keeps guinea pigs healthy – Señor Cuy, Ecuador

Guinea pigs are ideal livestock for smallholders in areas where they are a common part of the diet. They can be reared on small plots, reach maturity young and can provide a continuous income stream for producers. In order to safeguard this vital source of income, investment in good husbandry is good risk management. 26

La Corporación Señor Cuy de Chimborazo is a cooperative of 142 producers growing guinea pigs for meat. As a result of better husbandry, productivity is increasing – for every 100 female guinea pigs, there are currently 70 animals for sale every month. This has been achieved through training and technical assistance, covering the range of activities needed to keep small livestock healthy. For instance, sheds must be cleaned and disinfected regularly, bacterial diseases treated as necessary, and parasites kept under control. Animal health must be monitored throughout the production cycle, so that only healthy animals reach the packing plant.

To support its members in these activities, the coop has taken on a zootechnical intern from the Chimborazo Politecnico College. Other good management practices have also been applied: farmers have planted hedgerows with native plants that provide shade (to maintain grass moisture) and shelter from wind as well as guinea pig food. They are using biological controls for pests and diseases, organic fertilizers, and use fire (with care) to disinfect sheds. To avoid environmental damage by larger-scale production and its associated waste, farmers have been working to dispose carefully of items such as vaccine vials, antibiotics, and wormers.

The coop also provides transport to take animals from their production sheds to the collection centre. Collective marketing has proved effective, with 13,272 animals sold at a profit of US$12,241 in 2012.

25 AIN 5780, Agriterra
26 AIN 5586, Trias
Farmers protecting their own assets – Mviwamo, Tanzania

Efforts to increase the average size of smallholders’ poultry flocks in Tanzania have proved successful. Larger enterprises can be risky for small producers – losing a whole flock would be catastrophic for many family farmers – so they need support to adopt the best production methods. In this case, farmers were shown how to keep their poultry healthy by providing suitable housing and by appropriate vaccination and other veterinary care.27

Mviwamo is a strong middle-tier farmers’ organisation operating in the Monduli and Longido districts of Tanzania. It has more than 6,000 members – more than half of them women – and aims to bring small-scale family farmers into economic and social processes. Particular encouragement to join is offered to groups of small farmers and entrepreneur groups, and numbers are rising, from 188 groups in 2010 to 235 in 2012. This increase suggests that producer groups value Mviwamo’s services, especially micro-finance and technical assistance.

With Mviwamo’s support, poultry farmers are becoming confident to increase the size of their flocks. There are now more farmers keeping flocks larger than 50 hens (up from 121 in 2010 to 318 in 2012), and the average number of hens kept by each farmer has also increased (from 19 to 42) over the same period. Micro-finance loans tailored to these larger poultry farmers were introduced, through collaboration with a local savings and credit cooperative, and two thirds of them are meeting agreed repayment schedules.

As well as being able to access loans to meet the costs of raising larger flocks, farmers need to know how best to house them for optimum productivity. Under the project, demonstration hen houses have been constructed via practical ‘field schools’ at the premises of farmers who are already following best practice.

A hazard of keeping more poultry in close proximity is the risk of disease, so good housing and husbandry must be supported by appropriate vaccination. Eighteen para-vets have been trained to vaccinate hens, and they have helped villages draw up their own vaccination calendars so that all the farmers in the area can take action together. Vaccination rates are going up as a result – in Babati 95% of the hens are fully vaccinated (compared to a baseline figure of 25%). In Monduli there was a higher baseline of over 50% and this is now 72%.

To keep farmers abreast of new developments and give them confidence in their new ventures, Mviwamo runs sharing sessions where field officers, programme managers, district technicians and Trias advisors exchange information and best practice. One new development is training farmers in the best local hatching techniques so that farmers have better results without having to invest in costly incubators or day-old chicks. Study visits to professional poultry producers have also been organised.

27 AIN 5577, Trias
A successful poultry farmer

Salome is a middle-aged woman from Mto wa Mbu, a small town with 20,000 inhabitants in northeastern Tanzania. She owns a small piece of land on which she grows rice, maize and beans for family consumption – the small surplus is sold but the revenue is hardly enough to meet other needs, such as healthcare and children’s education.

To increase her income, Salome decided to keep hens. She joined Mviwamo and learned about poultry farming, and membership of the local savings and credit cooperative has given her access to small loans and a safe place to save money. Mviwamo has developed a revolving fund in collaboration with the local credit cooperative that offers members the chance to specialize in poultry farming. In February 2012, Salome took a loan of 200 euros to buy 50 chickens and feed grain at the local market. After six months, Salome was collecting between 15 and 25 eggs a day. These eggs were small and profit per box was only 3.5 euros, but as the hens matured and were given balanced feed, the eggs were larger and fetched a higher price. By October, Salome was collecting 35 to 42 large eggs a day.

At an average of 1 box per day, Salome has been earning 135 euros a month since autumn 2012. In November she repaid her loan in full and in December the credit cooperative granted her another 200-euro loan to invest in chickens.

Salome says the egg trade has provided her and her family with the financial security to meet the most urgent needs such as food, clothes and tuition fees, and that she has started saving money too.

Focus 4

Investing in enabling markets

‘Smallholder agriculture needs to be better linked to markets by reducing transaction costs, with better infrastructure and key public investment. An additional issue is how to invest and with which stakeholders to increase and keep more value-added at the holding and territorial level. In order to create favourable conditions, it might be necessary to develop new markets (such as ‘short circuits’ that reduce the distance between consumers and producers, and public procurement schemes) and to regulate existing markets differently. In particular, the efficiency of the domestic market can be improved, benefiting both producers and consumers through adequate strategies combining public and private investments.’

Improving smallholders’ access to inputs

It is often difficult for family farmers to access the inputs they need, because of poor infrastructure, high prices and products that are not suitable for their scale of operation. Farmers’ organisations can help make products and services more available to their members by encouraging the development of local enterprises such as seed and fertilizer suppliers. Small businesses tend to be adapted to the needs of local farmers, and they can be geographically close enough to be convenient for the farmer. In some cases a farmers’ organisation will set up its own ‘input shop’, passing on the lower prices of wholesale procurement to its members.
Cheaper tree seedlings help small forest farmers – Thua Thien Hue Cooperative Alliance, Vietnam

Forestry has much in common with agriculture, dealing as it does with growing a crop for harvest. But the longer time-scale from planting to harvest means that forest farmers need interim income to tide them over until the first revenue is produced. Cutting the costs of inputs is particularly important where revenue is delayed, and in this example the collective procurement of seedlings and inputs reduced costs to farmers by 20-30%.29

Vietnam has a new forest strategy and is handing over state-managed land to smallholders on 50-year leases, with the expectation that family forestry will provide extra income for small farmers. The country is in the top ten global producers of wood products, exporting 90% of its furniture production. But 80% of the raw materials have to be imported. Increasing domestic supply would benefit both the country and the tree growers, if the quality of local timber can be improved and certified as sustainable.

Acacia (mainly A. mangium) is the most common tree planted by smallholders. It finds a ready market at factories that produce wood chips for pulp production, but until recently middlemen were able to take most of the profit. Given that many small farmers are also active forest producers, it might be expected that forestry cooperatives would already be active – smallholder farmers in Thua Thien Hue province, for instance, benefit from services provided by more than 100 agricultural cooperatives. Yet until 2010, there were no smallholders’ forestry organizations in the region at all.

To remedy the situation, this project encouraged well-established agricultural cooperatives to broaden their range of services to include forestry. A twinning partnership with a Finnish forest producers’ association Savotta was established, and specialised forestry service groups were set up in three coops. A 10-day study tour to Finland was followed by a start-up workshop, and members later learned about tree production, nursery techniques and marketing. Demonstration plots were set up, and surveys of land and forest areas carried out. Training included how to manage household and cooperative forestry plots, the acacia value chain and timber certification.

One notable benefit of choosing to operate via existing cooperatives was that systems of collective procurement were already in place. Adapting these to the particular needs of forestry meant that the cost of seedlings and other inputs were 20-30% lower than smallholder foresters had been paying as individuals. The coops and the farmers themselves are becoming more aware of the business side of forestry. They know that logs fetch a much higher price than smaller stems that can only be used for wood chips. Prices are posted on the coop’s website so that members can keep an eye on the market, although it is a challenge for farmers to forego forestry income for the 8- to 10-year period before trees should ideally be harvested.

The initial one-year pilot was extended for two more years to give the coops more time to develop economically sustainable forestry services. More recently, there have been efforts to start collective marketing, with the goal of achieving Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification for the forest owners – countries importing timber products now require proof that the wood has been sustainably produced.

The private sector has a part to play

In Zambia, links between District Farmers’ Associations and private-sector companies are important throughout the value chain and one of the factors driving growth in the sector. Private companies are critical as providers of inputs and services, and as buyers of agricultural commodities.30

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29 AIN 5572, 5790, 5979, FFD
Speaking up on farm input subsidies – Mviwata-Manyara, Tanzania

Governments in developing countries often attempt control (by subsidy, supply or distribution) the supply of inputs such as fertilizer and seed. Smallholder farmers may be severely disadvantaged by these controls, which are subject to manipulation by more powerful players. In this example, a Tanzanian farmers’ organisation has spoken up for its small farmer members and is negotiating with government to improve the way farm input subsidies are decided and distributed.32

There is currently strong political demand in Tanzania for government to listen to smallholder farmers when drafting agricultural development policies. Mviwata-Manyara (a regional farmers’ organisation affiliated to Tanzania’s national farmer organisation) has seen its membership triple in recent years to over 2,800 – farmers in Manyara clearly feel a need to be represented. One reason for this is that Tanzania is undertaking a major constitutional review, which will certainly affect small-scale farmers, so Mviwata-Manyara is bringing farmers’ views to the government consultation process.

Of more immediate concern for small farmers are the subsidized farm inputs that are made available through a government voucher system. All farmers have the right to a farming subsidy for at least 1 acre. But few can access the system, inputs are often not appropriate to farmers’ needs (some farmers need seed rather than fertilizer, for instance), and in many cases the inputs simply arrive too late for the planting season. Mviwata-Manyara carefully documented the issues, listed all the farmers that did not receive inputs, and then attended government meetings to rectify the situation and help develop more suitable input packages.

Producer groups for ambitious young farmers – NFFM, Moldova

One of the aims of the National Farmers Federation of Moldova (NFFM) is to improve the business and marketing capacities of farmers. Apart from providing technical training and establishing model farms to improve the productivity of members, NFFM has established producer groups for different commodities. These groups are able to sign contracts for various inputs, which effectively reduced the price for individual members.33

Frunze Adrian, 29, lives in the village of Pelivan. He was already growing vegetables on a small scale when a big farmer from the region (who was leader of the NFFM vegetable growers’ group) suggested he turn his glasshouse horticulture into a proper business. Frunze learned more about horticulture at his mentor’s model farm and from NFFM training courses. Study visits to other specialized farmers in Moldova convinced him of the need to extend his greenhouses, which he did with technical and lobbying assistance from NFFM (he needed to negotiate with the local authorities to buy land for the extension).

‘We purchase inputs together with other vegetable producers from our producer group, and the prices are lower than buying as an individual. NFFM helped us to find markets to sell our produce. We signed contracts with two markets, in Chisinau and Orhei.

‘My knowledge as well as my income has increased since I joined NFFM. I am a professional now, with 2,700 m² of greenhouses and 4 ha of open fields. My father and brother help me and I employ seven seasonal workers. Production capacity this year is 40 tons of tomatoes, 30 tons of cucumbers, 30 tons of paprika and 100 tons of cabbage.’

Farmers appreciate local services – ZNFU, Zambia

Farmers particularly appreciate the new Agriculture Service Centres that offer inputs locally at good prices. Travelling long distances to access inputs effectively puts the price up, because of the cost (in time and cash) of making the journey.31

31 AIN 5576, Trias
32 Final Report on ZNFU Core Support Programme 2009-2013, SCC
33 AIN 5834, Agriterra
Developing markets that favour smallholders

FAO recommends giving highest priority to items suited to domestic markets, defined as the products that together make up the daily diets of low-income populations. As well as staple foods, these include vegetables, fruit, animal and dairy products, and fish. The growing urban markets are potentially ideal outlets for smallholder production. The physical infrastructure of markets needs attention – storage facilities, clean water, electricity, regulated weights and measures and, if possible, cold storage. And farmers themselves need access to market information and business advisory services. Farmers’ organisations are involved at all levels here, lobbying for better facilities in the market place, enabling groups of farmers to pool their produce and sell collectively (sometimes by providing storage facilities to prevent post-harvest losses), and providing business information and training as required.

The challenge of adding value at farm or local level is part of this issue. Smallholders are unlikely to compete directly with large-scale agribusiness producing commodities for the world market, but they can add value to their produce instead. Low-cost processing technologies, especially those (such as drying, cooking and juicing) that allow longer storage of food products, are very useful. Small farmers in rural areas often have traditional knowledge of local (often wild) produce, and their comparative advantage of labour availability means that, via cooperative networks, they can produce sufficient quantities to be worth taking to market. It is also recognised that market short-cuts, whereby producers and consumers (such as rural groups and urban shoppers) can meet directly, are worth encouraging.
Evidence has shown that more mature groups (already existing before a market intervention) with strong internal institutions, functioning group activities and a good asset base of natural capital are more likely to improve their market situation and take advantage of market opportunities.34

Collective milk-marketing restored – CCA, El Salvador

Dairy cooperatives in El Salvador were in danger of collapse, with small farmers selling out to big landowners after a process of land reform. But a project to support collective milk marketing is starting to show results. As profitability is increasing, a small percentage of the value of milk sold is put aside in a development fund to give added financial security to the milk-producing coops in case of production or market shocks.35

Many people hoped that agricultural coops formed after El Salvador’s land reform in the 1990s would enable the economic development of rural areas. This has largely not been the case, and most coops established at that time are disintegrating. Individual members are unable to make their land productive and see little alternative to selling out to new big landowners.

In contrast to this general failure, El Salvador’s central agricultural cooperative (CCA) has been working with UPA-DI since 2002 to consolidate viable peasant farmers’ organisations. CCA was founded in 1997 and represents more than 6,500 people via 10 affiliated coops. The cooperatives are well focused on different crops, including sugarcane, milk, sorghum, cattle and vegetable crops, but profitability has been precarious, as farmers had little technical knowledge and few tools, and their coops were poorly organised. Local and national markets were full of imported food and small farmers had a poor bargaining position in the market, so it was difficult for them to get fair price. The 2008 food crisis exacerbated these problems – expensive dairy rations reduced the profit margins of milk producers and output stagnated.

A project to support collective milk marketing has been running since 2007, and the positive results so far are based on the longstanding partnership between CCA and UPA-DI, and their participatory approach. Profitability has improved as production costs have gone down, and the average profit per cow increased by almost US$270 from 2009 to 2010. Dairies have recovered from loss of output seen in 2008, and all coops now produce their own forage. Having established the best way to meet the protein needs of a dairy herd, farmers now systematically include legumes in the crop rotation. In 2007, only one coop recycled manure, but discussions on the value of manure led to purchase of muck spreader (one of very few in country) – in 2011 about 6,000 tons of manure were spread on fields to boost forage production.

Accounting procedures are much improved, and directors can see the cost of production and read the financial situation. Since January 2011, 0.5% of each bottle of milk sold is kept in an account to create a Development Fund which, by the end of 2011, was worth almost US$10,000. This careful accounting and saving money for development is increasing the trust between members of coop milk committees and between the coops and CCA.

Ramiro Salazar Henriquez, CCA milk committee president:

‘The greatest success of our approach of the last three years is that all of us, the members of the Milk Committee, have gained a little more personal confidence, and above all, confidence in our group. This is definitely our biggest asset for further work.’

34 IIED. Vorley (2011). Under what conditions are value chains effective tools for pro-poor development?
35 AIN 3715, 4931, 5069, UPA-DI
Turning potatoes into crisps to add value – Imbaraga, Rwanda

In the north of Rwanda, potatoes are the main agricultural product, but the country imports potato crisps (chips) from Kenya and Uganda to fulfil local demand. Crisps represent huge added value to a basic agricultural commodity, so the agricultural union Imbaraga brought in Dutch expertise to advise on starting crisp production in Rwanda.

Three Dutch farmers from the Hoeksche Waard region founded a company to make potato chips. They started seven years ago from scratch and did everything by hand – now the turnover from crisps (produced from potatoes grown on just 12 ha) exceeds the value of crops grown on their other 270 ha. Agriterra approached them to see whether they would share their knowledge and experience for the benefit of Rwandan potato farmers.

Although Rwanda’s culture and environment differ completely from the Netherlands, Henk Scheele of Hoeksche Chips was able to give Imbaraga practical advice on all steps in the production chain. For the processing he suggested using gas instead of charcoal and explained that crisps can only be made from floury (starchy) rather than waxy varieties of potato. He said it was not necessary to peel the potatoes but they should be cooked at a high temperature (160°C) to minimise cooking time and achieve a good texture.

There was also advice on packaging and the importance of sealing each bag, and the suggestion that for initial marketing the coop should employ a seller to distribute trial packages. Early sales should start at local stores where no crisps are sold, and sample bowls of crisps should offer a taste to consumers. Finally the Dutch farmer helped draw up a business plan for Imbaraga to follow.

Imbaraga’s training centre started with the production of 1,200 packets per week. And some 40 young producers (including members of a Congolese producers’ organisation) have started to produce and sell chips in their villages.

There is a real interest and potential for crisp production, the added value is significant and the market exists. Rwanda now needs to find a source of biodegradable bags.

Forest producers cut out middlemen – Zenbaba Union, Ethiopia

Eucalyptus trees were introduced to Ethiopia more than a century ago, as a fast-growing solution to the chronic shortage of wood. Smallholders appreciate their speed of growth, the fact that livestock do not eat them, and their ability to coppice (regrow from the stump) after being cut. Poles find a ready market for the construction industry and the market is booming. There is particularly strong demand for poles in Bahir Dar, Addis Ababa and in neighbouring Sudan.

Despite this buoyant market, farmers in Ethiopia do not market their timber to best advantage because they are largely ignorant of the timber trade. Most sell their poles through middlemen, who take the lion’s share of the value. To bring more of the benefit from eucalyptus trees to farm-level, a pilot project was set up in the Amhara region, in the north of Ethiopia. There is great potential for smallholder production here, and many of the 3.4 million smallholder farmers in Amhara are already growing trees on their farms. Trees are regarded as a form of savings or insurance, increasing in value until they are harvested.

With twinning support from the Finnish forest management association Kyyjärvi, the project trained key personnel of three existing farmers’ groups – Yibab Natural Resource Cooperative, Agunta Bee Products Development and Marketing Cooperative, and Ediget Behibret Natural Resource and Tourism Development and Marketing Cooperative – so that the organisations

36 AIN 5909, Agriterra
37 Imbaraga is a union-like, national umbrella organisation created in March 1992 and legally recognised since September 2006.
38 AIN 5570, 5742, MTK/FFD
could start to offer forestry-related services to their members. Commercial forestry differs significantly from agriculture in having a much longer production cycle. There are also different quality standards, and farmers need to understand the market demand for different products (poles of different dimensions, for instance, and the need for uniform size and quality). Farmers were therefore trained in various aspects of commercial forestry such as nursery seedling producing (mainly *Acacia decurrens* and *Eucalyptus spp.*), forest inventory and managing coppiced trees to grow straighter poles.

Having established during the feasibility study that smallholder tree growers were at a disadvantage when selling their products, project strategy was to involve the producer organisation directly in marketing. This would improve the profit margins of the producers by shortening the market chain, and would also improve the financial standing of the organisations by developing a pole business.

There was some bureaucratic delay in one of the coops changing its bylaws to allow it to buy and sell poles, but all three coops created timber yards — open areas for storing poles close to a tarmac road for ease of collection by buyers. Templates for marketing contracts and legal receipts were drawn up to formalise the selling process. There is the intention of setting up a marketing information system (MIS) for poles.

After such a short period (a one-year pilot, followed by a one-year transition), results are seen at coop-level. More than 400 farmers, 72 of them women, have received forestry training. Poles are being collectively sold more often and for increased profit. The target coops have seen their membership grow, suggesting that these services are valued by members.

**SMS trade and marketing information system — ZNFU, Zambia**

The ZNFU maintains a text-message-based trade and market information system (ZNFU 4455), which brings together commodity sellers and buyers. The system provides an electronic platform where sellers and buyers can carry out transactions, which reduces the cost for both parties. It is expected that, as more people use this facility, the overall cost of transactions in the agriculture sector will be reduced.

As well as creating market linkages, with farmers in outlying districts able to contact buyers and negotiate contracts (including pre-planting contracts) with full information on prevailing market prices, the system shows historical data that can be used to forecast trends and provide data for policy discussions. Many institutions also come to ZNFU seeking historical prices generated from 4455.

**Exploiting a niche market for flowers – FFA-AP, India**

Small producers may be well placed to exploit a new market opportunity. In this example, a new political movement began holding conferences in the Telegana region of Andhra Pradesh and there was a sudden demand for cut flowers. Two families who had laboured on a large flower farm for more than a decade were able, with the support of their farmers’ organisation, to respond to this new market and establish their own business.

In cooperation with Agriterra, the Confederation of Kisan Organisations has been raising awareness of the benefits (such as access to loans and technology) of mutually aided cooperative societies. There has been a parallel focus on training rural women to supplement their livelihoods. Both approaches are relevant to the women farmers described here.

Two sisters, Dargaya and Durgana, and their families live in the village of Tornala. Noting the increased local demand for flowers at political conferences (where...

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local people were presenting their leaders with garlands as a mark of respect), they decided to start their own enterprise and use the experience gained from years working on a flower farm. As they had no land of their own (and being of low caste), they turned to the Farmers Federation of Andhra Pradesh (FFA-AP) for support, and were eventually able to lease 1 ha of land and take out a loan of Rs 10,000 (about 120 euros) to start flower production.

The sisters can now pick 500-600 roses every day, and jasmine is in flower for eight months of the year. To add value, the flowers are arranged into bouquets and garlands, and the families take them to market to sell directly. Flowers now bring in a steady income of more than Rs 6,000 (about 70 euros) per month, which is twice as much as the sisters earned as labourers. They are paying back the loan on schedule and can afford to buy fertilizer and pesticides as necessary.

All family members are involved in the cut flower business – even the children spend some of their holidays and after school picking flowers. The extra income has enabled the children to continue with their education and allows the family to buy better quality food.

Reaching the international market for onion seed – FCMN Niya, Niger

Onions are an important cash crop in Niger – 10,000 ha are grown every year, and 65% of the production is exported. In one of the poorest countries in the world, this is a great source of income. Under a partnership with a Dutch onion company, more than 22,000 farmer members and the 123 affiliated cooperatives of FCMN Niya are improving their productivity and also gaining access to the lucrative international market in onion seed.

The Dutch company De Groot & Slot has been working with Agriterra since 2005 as part of its commitment to corporate social responsibility. These experts have been working for seven years to improve the productivity of Niger’s onion farmers. Hans van Leeuwen, an onion specialist, makes regular visits to Niger to give practical and technical advice to FCMN advisors. He also advises on the preservation and storage of onions and seed. In turn, the advisors share his advice through field trials and in training centres.

The scheme has been successful, and the production of onions and onion seed has increased considerably. In 2006, 4,800 FCMN farmers grew onions on 1,200 ha. This yielded 16,800 tons of onions, earning the farmers over 2.3 million euros (on average 480 euros per farmer). By 2011, there were more than three times as many farmers, harvesting 72,600 tons of onions from 3,300 ha. Average income per farmer had grown to an average of 670 euros.

The increase in onion seed production is even more impressive, with the harvest increasing more than tenfold (from 210 kg in 2006 to 2,741 kg in 2010). FCMN growers now produce high quality certified onion seed, which is in high demand in neighbouring countries. Fulfilling this demand offers significant potential to improve the revenues of farmers producing onion seed, which in turn should lead to better yields and quality of onions for consumption. FCMN is planning to establish a cooperative onion seed company, and is working with De Groot en Slot to decide how best to do this.

Women farmers bake tasty biscuits from yam flour – FEPA-B, Burkina Faso

Yams, which are edible tubers, are an important food in Africa where fresh yams are traditionally boiled, baked or fried. But the tubers can also be processed into flour or couscous, which can be stored until it is needed and this has provided a business opportunity for women belonging to the Leo village cooperative. Supported by the cooperative, they grow yams, dry them after harvest and later bake biscuits with the flour. Bags of biscuits find a ready market locally, at the coop union, and at coop meetings. When the raw material prices are high, they put fewer biscuits in each bag to keep the price the same.

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41 AIN 5804, Agriterra

42 AIN 5657, Agriterra
**E-transport to consolidate loads — ZNFU Zambia**

The Zambia National Farmers Union developed the E-Transport system as a web-based interactive information system that allows better use of vehicles. Registered transporters can post information about the availability of their trucks on various routes, and those seeking transport can post their requirements. By aggregating loads, or by making sure a truck can find a load for the return leg of a journey, overall costs are reduced. This system has not been established for long, but there has already been a slight reduction in the costs of transporting agricultural commodities from the production areas to the market.43

**Breaking into institutional markets — Unicafes-PR, Brazil**

Individual small farmers usually lack the capacity to produce the large quantities of uniform quality foodstuffs demanded by larger buyers (such as supermarkets). But by group selling, family farmers can access these valuable markets. In this case, a major farmers’ organisation in Brazil has been successful in agreeing contracts for school feeding, which increased gross revenue by 16.5% in the two years to 2012.44

Unicafes-PR is a union of more than 140 family farming cooperatives covering the state of Paraná in southern Brazil. It has more than 50,000 individual members. In 2012, the union created specific working groups to help its members in various ways, including accessing or increasing their sales within government programmes. The working groups helped coops to be more proactive in their marketing, by careful planning, organised production and better labelling.

With this support from Unicafes, member coops were able to access the national government programme for school meals, increasing sales to this institutional market to 4 million euros in 2012 (an increase of 240,000 euros from 2010). The success of this scheme suggests a mechanism by which Unicafes could gain financial stability – the union could retain from member coops a small percentage of the value of each contract. Most farmers’ organisations need to generate income (over and above the income derived from subscriptions) to providing the services needed to their members, or there is a risk that membership will cease to be attractive.

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44 AIN 5574, Trias
Increasing access to financial services

Traditional banks have a poor record in providing financial services to small family farmers. Such farmers have long been regarded as high-risk prospects, with their lack of collateral, risky livelihood and paucity of assets. But community-based providers such as savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs) have been established in many places to offer small loans at reasonable rates of interest. A SACCO is often an offshoot of a farmers’ organisation in any case, and builds on the social capital inherent in any group whose members share a common interest and are linked by community ties.

Of course, credit by and of itself has no direct impact on agricultural production – farmers need to invest wisely in assets that improve their operations and thus increase either profit or yield. By linking credit facilities to training and support, farmers’ organisations can nudge farmers into wise decisions on how and where to invest – perhaps in new equipment for food-processing, or better housing for animals, or labour-saving machinery.
**Using title deeds as collateral for loans — ZNFU, Zambia**

Land title deed is critical for farmers trying to take out loans, particularly if they wish to engage with commercial banks. Some district farmers’ associations in Zambia have carried out a joint survey that enabled them change the registration of their land from ‘traditional’ to ‘titled’ land supported by title deeds. Farmers who have done this (and thus effectively converted their land to commercial property) have been able to borrow money from commercial banks and undertake long-term agricultural investment. The ZNFU is continuing to pursue this important issue. 45

**Borrowing to invest in better guinea-fowl husbandry – GUIFFA, Ghana**

Small-scale producers of guinea fowl risk high losses during production because the birds need protection from inclement weather and predators. In this case, losses have been reduced and incomes have risen because farmers have been able to invest in their enterprises. Their organisation has helped them to obtain credit and offered training on good husbandry techniques and improved poultry housing. With contracts now in place between the producers and the catering trade, there is an assured market for the birds. 46

The Guinea Fowl Farmers Association (GUIFFA) has branches in all nine districts of the Upper East Region of Ghana. The Association aims to increase production (from the current 5 million to 20 million birds) and establish a sustainable value chain system – this requires significant improvement in farmers’ production and marketing skills. Under this four-year project, farmers were given access to small loans so that they could invest in better production techniques they had learned via training sessions and demonstrations.

By 2012, 774 guinea fowl farmers were practising better husbandry (compared to only 200 farmers in 2011). Training courses on improved production stressed the importance of clean, improved poultry housing, correct feeding regimes, and disease and pest control. More than 2,000 GUIFFA members have so far been trained, together with six extension officers from the Ministry of Food and Agriculture – involving ministry workers is a deliberate strategy to sustain extension service delivery after the project ends.

Over 100 farmers (96 men and 18 women) received loans in the form of natural incubators (broody hens and turkeys) to improve their production. Such investments are administered via a revolving scheme – beneficiaries repay their in-kind loan in cash, which is then used to acquire additional investments for other members. An affordable prototype brooder house where eggs could be incubated was also designed, and 19 were distributed to encourage wider adoption by small-scale producers.

Having assessed the differing needs for investment during the production cycle, Trias supported the design of four tailored loan products for the guinea-fowl value chain. 47 The loans were made through four selected rural and community banks. As most farmers fell into the ‘grower’ category, this type of loan was piloted first, with over 100 farmers. Disbursement amounted to over 116,500 Ghana cedis (about €46,800) and access to credit allowed the farmers to expand their scale of production. Repayments have just started, and will be monitored and evaluated in due course.

At the marketing end of the cycle, GUIFFA has signed contracts with 20 hotels, schools and restaurants in and around Bolgatanga to supply guinea fowls. This has created secure markets (particularly important for growers who have borrowed money) that will buy the guinea fowl just before Christmas when demand and prices are high. Three hundred farmers are benefiting from these contracts.

So far, members of GUIFFA have seen their average annual income increase from €140 in 2011 to €190 in 2012. This increase is due to several reasons, not least the significant reduction in guinea fowl mortality (from over 80% in 2010 to about 45% in 2012) seen as a result of better husbandry. Better access to markets and access to micro-credit have also contributed.

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46 AIN 5578, Trias

47 Four different loans to cover stages in the production process: hatcher/brooder; layer; grower; and processor/trader
Credit facilities for market-oriented farmers – Madfa and Mbadifa, Uganda

A series of related projects in Western Uganda has brought affordable loans within reach of producer groups. In each case, the groups have been established with the support of the district farmers associations (Madfa of Masindi and Mbadifa of Mbarara) to ensure that the groups have the internal capacity to begin group savings and take out loans responsibly.48

Madfa SACCO

Almost a decade ago Madfa, the district farmers’ association in Masindi, formed a savings and credit cooperative (Madfa SACCO) to give its members access to loans and develop a savings culture. In the period 2008 to 2011, MADFA SACCO tripled the size of its savings and loan portfolio. It is supporting farmer groups to increase investment in their agro-enterprises (mainly in maize and cassava) and helping Madfa improve its services to members.

In 2012, the SACCO portfolio grew from USh 600 million (roughly 184,000 euros) to USh 800 million (245,000 euros), and was used by 287 groups. Of these, 141 groups were able to access repeat loans for their enterprises. There are more than 6,700 individual members of the SACCO, and access was made easier in 2012 with the opening of another branch. Although credit capital was limited, Madfa SACCO continued, with Trias support, to engage with a private investor to invest in the SACCO (50,000 euros as a revolving fund).

The percentage of women assessing financial services remained stable with 39% of the active clients in 2012. The SACCO does not have a specific gender policy, but makes use of the gender-sensitive approach of the District Farmers Association, whose groups it is servicing.

Mwizi SACCO

This is another savings cooperative working with Mbadifa. It was established more recently than Ebo, and has already made a difference for farmer groups in Mwizi sub-county, who now have better access to financial services (via Mwizi SACCO) and Mbadifa’s business development services. Most of these groups have chosen Irish potatoes as their agro-enterprise and are marketing collectively, and the SACCO has developed a special loan product for this crop.

Despite a burglary in 2011 that caused significant lack of trust and necessitated changes in management and staff, the SACCO recovered well and has trained 86 groups, particularly on internal saving schemes. Fifty-two groups opened savings accounts and 15 of them have had repeat loans to develop their agro-enterprises.

One challenge for every SACCO is to keep a balance between the savings and loan amounts so that the institution remains solvent. In this case, the amount collected in savings from farmer groups was more than planned but even so the demand for loans from farmer groups consumed all the available funds.

Gender received particular attention in 2012. The SACCO consciously targets women’s groups, based on the premise that, due to the challenges facing most women, they resort to working together through groups. As a result, more women have accessed loans (53%) than men. This slight bias in favour of women is extended further in that individual households (husband and wife plus children where applicable) are encouraged to develop agro-enterprises. Forty per cent of the SACCO staff are women.

Good progress so far contradicts the belief that peasants are so poor that they cannot afford to save – these family farmers have certainly been putting money aside, both in their village groups and with the SACCO. Average savings have been growing (now about 100 euros per farmer), suggesting that poor farmers – with proper training and given appropriate incentives – are perfectly capable of saving.

Ebo SACCO

Ebo SACCO supports farmer groups to make savings and take out small loans in close collaboration with Mbarara District Farmers Association (Mbadifa). From 2007 to 2009 it doubled the size of its portfolio and, in the new project, it aims to support producer groups to increase their production and marketing (in this case mainly bananas).

The producer groups were established with the support of Mbadifa, which stressed the importance of clear internal regulation, strong leadership via an elected executive, and good record keeping. Groups selected a particular enterprise and investigated the available markets. The groups have already made savings with the SACCO and are now ready to take out a loan to set...
up the enterprise – the SACCO will make sure they understand the process of applying for and managing the loan. This extra training from Ebo in savings and loan management should ensure the safety of the groups’ savings and enable them to track their liabilities.

Additional funds will be made available through Ebo SACCO as a loan to the business wing of the farmers’ organisation (Mbafisa Enterprises Ltd.) to use as working capital for business activities as stipulated in the Business Plan. The funds cannot be used for fixed asset acquisition or recurrent expenditures.

In 2012, Ebo SACCO continued to increase its portfolio – from USh 2.5 billion (roughly 800,000 euros) to USh 3.4 billion (over 1 million euros) – and it reached 235 farmer groups. More than half (54%) of the people accessing financial services were women, and there are over 7,700 members, of whom just over 2,000 are women. Farmers’ groups are making more savings, and 87 groups made requests for repeat loans.

While this growth is good, the SACCO needs constantly to review its systems and procedure to control the challenges associated with growth. In particular, new ways are needed to handle and sustain the increased membership.

'The community agro-enterprise development programme shows early signs of impact and has contributed to improved food and income security… of the participating smallholders farmers. Almost all households interviewed showed higher food and income security indices.’

‘Agro-businesses started by farmers are profitable in all places where they are pursued.’

'The loans for the micro-finance partners are better than almost any other loan product in the market, certainly than any other product in this segment of the market.’

Credit scheme for farmers – ZNFU, Zambia

More than 4,000 farmers have taken out loans under the Zambian National Farmers Union LIMA credit scheme, which is run in collaboration with Zambia National Commercial Bank (ZANACO) and input suppliers. The unique feature of the LIMA scheme is the 50% cash collateral on all loans which farmers are required to deposit in an account with ZANACO.

Farmers in the scheme have raised cash deposits of US$1.8 million in the 2011/12 season, and the scheme has recorded a 100% recovery rate, an impressive rate for small-scale agricultural loans. The farmers see LIMA as one of the most important services provided by ZNFU, mainly because it allowed them to purchase inputs to supplement the small packages provided under the government farmer input support programme (FISP).

However, farmers consistently complain that the input credit is only for maize production and not for other crops or farming equipment. They find the interest rate too high in comparison with other financial service providers’ interest rates. Farmers would like a wider choice in terms of financing institutions. They also say that if they were able to gain the right to title deeds they could use them as collateral for small bank loans.

Focus 5

Investing in enabling institutions

‘Strengthening the collective voice of smallholders at various levels remains high on the agenda to improve investment capacities; the organizations themselves have to consider investments to serve their members within a market-led economy.

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Investing in public goods is essential for poverty reduction in the rural population as well as to reduce regional disparities. This includes specific attention to agriculture, through research and extension, for example, but also basic public goods for the rural population such as roads and communications, electricity, irrigation, education, health, water and sanitation. The family labour force is smallholders’ first and foremost asset. Undernutrition, lack of safe and accessible drinking water, diseases, lack of education, highly unequal gender relations, etc., all degrade the quality and quantity of the family labour force. Consequently, safeguarding basic needs is absolutely essential. Providing better services for smallholders would enable them to better invest – not only in farming, but also in non-farm activities that could provide a source of monetary incomes and remittances to invest in agriculture.’

Investing in policies

Policies and legislation dealing with a range of issues (such as agriculture, trade agreements and land tenure) can have far-reaching impacts on smallholder farmers. Despite this, policies are often drawn up with scant attention paid to their views. Indeed, the situation may be even worse, in that small farmers might be so isolated from the processes of government that they are not even aware that there are issues that might concern them. Here is another role for farmers’ organisations, to keep their members informed about wider issues, to gather their opinions and then speak up on their behalf to make sure that they are not ignored. In order to do this, farmers’ organisations need to have effective reciprocal communication channels between individual members, local organisations and their national federations.

Effective farmers’ organisations can also speak up for rural dwellers as a whole, lobbying for public services such as healthcare, education, drinking water supply and better roads. As the primary asset of a family farm is its labour, poor health and under-nutrition can dramatically reduce the quality of the labour force. And improvement in transport links makes it easier to take goods to market and access input supplies.
How can farmers’ organisations lobby on behalf of members without external support?

Financial sustainability in the sense of full self-financing of operations is unlikely to be achieved quickly by organisations whose members consist largely of poor farmers. But it is important that the organisations develop greater independence from external funding, and there are several opportunities for increasing incomes:

- Commodity levies paid by producers to the organisation
- Membership fees
- Service fees
- Investments
- Value addition to products
- Commercial sponsorships

To pursue these options, the capacity of organisations for entrepreneurship needs to be increased. Direct business mentoring and learning from the successes of other organisations are useful approaches here. 52

Farmers’ organisations now legally recognised – CIOEC, Bolivia

Outside investment can support lobbying activities that will lead to long-term gains. In this case, using the ‘farmers’ advocacy consultation tool’ and bringing in expert advice achieved a significant change in legislation. Farmers’ organisations in Bolivia now have legal recognition and are entitled to funding from the national budget. 52

The umbrella organisation CIOEC consists of more than 215 farmers’ organizations and represents almost 200,000 members throughout Bolivia. In 2004, it proposed to the government that farmers’ organisations should have legal status, which would give the organisations direct access to public funds for agriculture. It also proposed a fixed budget by establishing that 30% of the agricultural budget would be spent on farmers’ organisations. But despite many efforts, government did not accept the proposals and by 2011 CIOEC had given up hope that the new legislation would ever be passed.

Hope was revived when CIOEC took part in workshops exploring Agriterra’s ‘Farmers’ advocacy consultation tool’ (FACT). This consultation tool was devised to help farmers’ organisations find out more about their members so that they can better represent them. FACT provides a methodology for consulting members and carrying out participatory research. It documents the outcomes and turns them into proposals which can be negotiated with governments and the private sector.

During the first FACT workshop, one of the case studies was re-submission of the bill. CIOEC discovered that their efforts to date had been incomplete – they had failed to hire an expert to prepare the proposal and a lobbyist to make strategic decisions on which stakeholders it would be most productive to hold discussions with. Armed with this new knowledge and using the relevant experts, CIOEC went to work with a proposal for new legislation. By the end of 2012 parliament had finally passed the bill.

Bolivia’s farmers’ organisations are now fully recognised as partners in agricultural development activities and research. CIOEC is officially recognised as the overall representative. The law stipulates that the national budget must allocate funds for agricultural development and that the farmer organisations are the rightful executors of expenditure.

51 Ideas taken from SCC Final Evaluation of Farmers Organisations Fighting Poverty and Injustice (FOFPI)
52 AIN 5772, Agriterra
Effective lobbying by a strong national farmers union – ZNFU, Zambia

The Zambia National Farmers Union (ZNFU) has a strong influence on policies affecting the agricultural sector and is in constant dialogue with the government. Between 2010 and 2012, ZNFU successfully lobbied for 24 different policy positions including increased funding to the livestock sector, scrapping of grain levies by district councils, reduction of interest rates from 27% to 16.3% and funding for road networks in agriculturally productive areas. The period has seen a change of government but the positive dialogue continues. More recently, the Cotton Board of Zambia has been established to regulate the cotton sector. Other lobbying successes include the zero-rating of VAT on wheat and maize (which means that farmers can reclaim the VAT on the cost of inputs) and a reduction in the import tariffs on sprayers (making this equipment cheaper). 53

Getting to know family farms better – CNCR, Senegal

Policy positions need to be founded on evidence, which can be difficult to collect in the case of small farms in countries that have irregular or incomplete national surveys. In this example, a national organisation in Senegal is making efforts to scale up a monitoring system developed by one of its member associations. 54

In Europe, this type of information has been widely gathered, for the past 60 years and more, via national censuses and surveys. Few countries in Africa carry out such surveys, and those that exist may be incomplete, so CSA has been working on ways to establish monitoring systems for family farms. It has been looking at how to cover the costs of such monitoring and how to make sure that there are benefits to producers from the information gathered.

In Senegal, the CNCR (National Council for Dialogue and Rural Cooperation, a long-time partner of CSA) represents 26 rural federations. One of them, FONGS (which includes 30 producer associations), has been running a family-farm monitoring system for several years now. The system uses software developed by the organisation, a so-called ‘simplified balance sheet’ tool. Monitoring is also carried out by the grassroots associations and it is integrated in their activities.

To improve relations with producers and provide evidence for advocacy – on the basis that ‘it is necessary to know the family farm in order to defend it’ – the CNCR has decided to expand the FONGS system to include other member federations. This will eventually create a national monitoring system, and may feed into a regional system currently under discussion.

Leaders of associations that are members of CNCR see many potential benefits:

- Farming families would have a better grasp of their expenses and resources, which would allow them to react better to challenges.
- The farmers’ organisations would have a better understanding of the constraints of family farms, and would be able to provide better services accordingly.
- Agricultural research and advice would be carried out and provided according to the needs of producers.
- The legitimacy of the CNCR would be strengthened, as the monitoring would characterise and quantify the diversity of family farms represented.

There are still challenges to be overcome in expanding the existing system, because of the greater capacity required in terms of sampling, storage and data processing.

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54 AIN 5784, CSA
Giving more weight to family farming – CNCR, Senegal

In another effort to gather more data on family farming, CNCR has been surveying a range of small producers to determine how self-sufficient they are. One important finding was the complementarity between different small enterprises. Better methods of monitoring are being sought, to take into account social and gender issues. An international meeting allowed time for dialogue on the assertion that family farms are the main providers of food and wealth in West Africa.

For 20 years, Afdi has been working with the National Council for Dialogue and Rural Cooperation (CNCR) in Senegal to promote family farming as a way of supporting the socio-economic advancement of family farms.

Realising that understanding the reality and diversity of family farms is critical to effective support for such farms, CNCR carried out a dozen test surveys in October 2012, canvassing the opinions of herders, fishermen and farmers. Interviews involved the whole family and questions covered a range of subjects, to determine the degree of self-sufficiency of the family. The multidimensional nature of family farms – with complementarity between livestock, agriculture and fisheries – emerged clearly from these interviews. Survey results laid the foundation for a common understanding of family farms, and the CNCR is now developing permanent monitoring devices, including better investigative tools to take into account social aspects, in particular the role of women.

An international meeting based on the assertion that ‘Family farms are the main providers of food and wealth in West Africa’ was organised by CNCR in November 2012. (This point of view, incidentally, is not held by the Senegalese government, which currently favours private and foreign investment.) At the meeting, various arguments in favour of the assertion were put forward:

• The West African family farming is structured and can defend itself if its farmers’ organisations become stronger.
• Family farming is competitive and innovative, an example being the rice sector in Senegal where, in two decades, average yields increased from 1 ton to 7 tons per hectare and farmers’ organisations aim to double domestic production by 2018.

Family farming can provide raw materials for the agro-industrial sector: nearly 15,000 Senegalese growers produce tomatoes for processing. This system has been in place for 20 years and has created many jobs.

Training leaders to help define policy – VNFU, Vietnam

Lobbying and advocacy skills can be improved by training, especially if activities focus on constructive engagement rather than negative protest. In this example, farmers’ leaders learnt the importance of contributing to policy formulation and, more important, how to do this effectively.

The Vietnam National Farmers Union (VNFU) is a long-established institution, dating back to 1930. But farmers in Vietnam still face many difficulties and the rural policy environment is not yet fully supportive. VNFU has an important role to speed the process of policy reform, but most of its leaders directly involved in policy work have not received specific advocacy training. This project therefore focused on improving the capacity of VNFU leaders in this area.

The capacity-building workshops, which required full participation by those involved, were a new experience for VNFU staff, who were accustomed to passive classroom-style teaching. Nevertheless, they proved an effective means by which VNFU staff at national and provincial level were made more aware of the importance of active lobbying to shape policy.

An important realisation was that policy advocacy should be carried out at all levels within VNFU. Related to this was the recognition that lobbying could be done within a constructive framework rather than via negative activities such as public demonstrations and criticism. Leaders are now less passive than before, and actively comment on proposals where necessary. Local leaders and staff now know better when and how to intervene, and it is hoped that this impact will spread among local leaders, staff and farmers too. Indeed, ‘Policy advocacy’ is now a key task approved by the National VNFU Congress.

55 Afdi

56 AIN 5672, AsiaDHIRA
Developing a vision – FEB, Burkina Faso

Making investment in an organisation that seeks fully to represent the views of its members can be a good way to kick-start a lobbying process. In this case, Burkina Faso’s national farmers’ federation now has the evidence (in the form of a comprehensive vision document) to approach the government and seek changes in legislation that currently constrains the livestock sector.

In a process that took nine months, the Federation of Farmers in Burkina Faso (FEB) developed a vision document for the livestock sector. The process adopted was bottom-up and multi-institutional, and this method ensured ownership throughout the organisation of the goals and strategies agreed.

Throughout the development of the document, Afdi played an important educational role. The process was based on three pilot regions, with consultations continuing at national level. This methodology allowed the representation of members’ views at all levels, including the various actors involved in animal husbandry, and farmers became more confident to express themselves on issues of concern.

FEB has played a unifying and coordinating role in this exercise of collecting viewpoints. The organisation now has a clearly defined mandate to implement an action plan, which is the first step towards challenging the authorities on the necessity to remove the constraints on the country’s livestock sector.

Agricultural unionism: when Mali meets Madagascar – SOA, Madagascar

Agricultural strategies, development programmes, private investment – all these issues govern the daily work of Madagascar’s agricultural unions. To bring in a fresh perspective, the Union of Agricultural Organisations (SOA), supported by Afdi, organised for a Malian trade unionist, Faliry Boly, to visit his Malagasy counterparts.

There are parallel land grabbing stories to discuss – a Korean firm bought more than a million hectares of land in Madagascar in 2008, while Mali has sold 200,000 hectares to private investors between 2009 and 2010. This issue concerns farmers in both countries. The similarities quickly become apparent: opaque contracts between the states and international investors, wealthy urban ‘back to the landers’ and farmers who have limited legislative arsenal to defend their customary land rights. The union cultures diverge, but Malagasy and Mali agree on the importance of sharing their concerns and possible solutions.

A shared view emerges: farmers are guarantors of policy coherence and agricultural development programmes. In Madagascar, farmers have various established ways to access to finance, but their political orientation is unclear. In Mali on the contrary, farmers’ organisations have developed a comprehensive vision of support to agriculture, but practical support has barely started.

‘We do not seek to be liked, we seek to be respected,’ affirms Faliry Boly at the end of the meeting. In Mali, as well as in Madagascar, the status of the farmer is still not recognised.
Investing in research

Some would suggest that poor farmers have been offered only poor research and extension in the past. But the importance of family farms is being better recognised and, in turn, research priorities specific to this type of farming are being set. Areas of particular interest include responses to climate change, and agro-ecological approaches (that allow natural resources to be managed sustainably to provide ecosystem services as well as agricultural production). Most of the investments mentioned above (from improved seed to better machinery and soil management) could be fine-tuned by focused research relevant to local conditions, with the results disseminated by farmer-to-farmer approaches that have proved more effective than other means of sharing knowledge.

Setting these research priorities and raising awareness of new ideas are further roles for farmers’ organisations. They can also, where such transfer of knowledge would be useful, collate and share more widely the specific local knowledge developed over generations by farmers themselves.
Sharing best practice in the Great Lakes – Burundi, Rwanda and DRC

Research findings can take many forms – practising farmers themselves often find effective new ways of carrying out agricultural activities – but unless these experiences are documented and shared, other farmers do not have the chance to adopt better methods. In this case, the knowledge of small farmers in three countries is being systematically collected for sharing across the region.59

Since 2009, six farmer organisations from three countries in the Great Lakes Region (Burundi, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo)60 have taken part in a regional capacity-building programme to professionalize family farm operations, including activities to strengthen the role of women.

Farmers’ leaders have created a framework for the programme and to systematize the exchange of experiences and capacities. Farmers in this region have developed expertise particular to their experience, but this has not been systematically shared with other members or other farmers’ organisations. This lack of investment in sharing practical research findings is being rectified by consolidating lessons learned and distributing best practice. This process also has the incidental effect of strengthening local knowledge and forming closer bonds between farmers.

Each of the six farmers’ organisations is now recording the skills and experience of its members so these can be repeated or improved. This involves examining the way they currently keep records, and helps the organisations to identify best practice. After gathering the information, it will be consolidated into guidance documents such as fact sheets and handbooks. As well as via print media, these publications will be shared through video documentaries and radio broadcasts, allowing regional access to this practical information.

Policy and research papers – ZNFU, Zambia

ZNFU produced research papers on various subjects including the farmer input support programme (FISP), the marketing of agricultural crops, the livestock levy and national maize consumption. It drew up position papers on various issues relevant to the agriculture sector such as the effects on agricultural labour of minimum wage setting, the use of dollars for transactions and national budget proposals.61

59 AIN 5853, CSA
60 CAPAD (Confederation of Associations of Agricultural Producers for Development), FOPAC NK (Federation of Agricultural Producers’ Organisations of the Congo), FOPAK SK (Federation of Agricultural Producers’ Organisations of South Kivu of Congo), LOFEPACO (League of Women Farmer Organisations in Congo), INGABO (Rwandan Farmers Union), IMBARAGA (Rwandan Union)
Annex – Inventory of evidence used in the report

Farmers Fighting Poverty Programme has received financial support from the governments of Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, the Netherlands and Sweden, and from IFAD and the European Commission.

1 – Investment by individual farmers

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Farmers' Organisation and Country</th>
<th>Agri-agency</th>
<th>Level of support</th>
<th>Type of evaluation</th>
<th>Support period</th>
<th>Essence of story</th>
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<td>5749</td>
<td>Rural Integrated Development Society – Nepal</td>
<td>FFD</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>2011-2013</td>
<td>New type of fish farming improves family diets and income</td>
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<td>UPA-DI</td>
<td>Brochure</td>
<td>Since 2004</td>
<td>Training and small grants to invest in farm enterprises</td>
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<td>ZNFU – Zambia</td>
<td>SCC</td>
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<td>Final report</td>
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<td>Story harvesting</td>
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<td>Farmer invests in pump and manages demonstration plot</td>
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<td>Tractors and ploughs increase area under cultivation</td>
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2 – Collective investment to overcome limited assets

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<th>Agri-agency</th>
<th>Level of support</th>
<th>Type of evaluation</th>
<th>Support period</th>
<th>Essence of story</th>
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<td>Project self-evaluation</td>
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<td>Degraded land restored by collective efforts</td>
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<td>Investment in irrigation and grain stores</td>
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<td>Fert &amp; MTK</td>
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<td>Shared equipment – crop sprayers – provided by FO</td>
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<td>Coffee farmers invest in their own coop</td>
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### 3 – Investment to manage risks

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<td>Guidebooks on budgeting for different crops</td>
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<td>Dairy has own veterinary service</td>
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<td>Tea coop diversifies into poultry farming</td>
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### 4 – Investing in enabling markets

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## 5 – Investing in enabling institutions

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<td>SOA – Madagascar</td>
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<td>Report</td>
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<td>Various – Burundi, Rwanda, DRC</td>
<td>CSA</td>
<td>Poster</td>
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### Acronyms and abbreviations

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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>ACCU</td>
<td>Association of Asian Confederation of Credit Unions</td>
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<td>AFA</td>
<td>Asian Farmers’ Association</td>
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<td>Afdi</td>
<td>Agriculteurs Français et Développement International</td>
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<td>AIN</td>
<td>Agro-info.net</td>
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<td>Asprodeb</td>
<td>Association Sénégalaise pour la Promotion du Développement à la Base</td>
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<td>CCA</td>
<td>Central Cooperativa Agropecuaria (El Salvador)</td>
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<td>CIOEC</td>
<td>Coordinadora de Integración de Organizaciones Económicas Campesinas Indígenas Originarias (Bolivia)</td>
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<td>CNCR</td>
<td>National Council for Dialogue and Rural Cooperation (Senegal)</td>
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<td>CSA</td>
<td>Collectif Stratégies Alimentaires</td>
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<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
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<td>EAFF</td>
<td>Eastern Africa Farmers Federation</td>
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<td>FCMN</td>
<td>Fédération des Coopératives Maraichères du Niger</td>
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<td>FFD</td>
<td>Finnish Agri-agency for Food and Forest Development</td>
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<td>FNGN</td>
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<td>FONGS</td>
<td>La Fédération des ONG du Sénégal</td>
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<td>FPA</td>
<td>Fédération des Périmètres Autogérés (Senegal)</td>
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<td>FUPRO</td>
<td>Federation of Producer Unions (Benin)</td>
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<td>GEA</td>
<td>Association of Farmers (Benin)</td>
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<td>GUIFFA</td>
<td>Guinea Fowl Farmers Association (Ghana)</td>
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<td>IFAD</td>
<td>International Fund for Agricultural Development</td>
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<td>MTK</td>
<td>Maa-ja metsäloustuottajain Keskusliitto (Finland)</td>
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<td>NFFM</td>
<td>National Farmers Federation of Moldova</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>ROPPA</td>
<td>Réseau des organisations paysannes et de producteurs de l’Afrique de l’Ouest</td>
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<tr>
<td>SACAU</td>
<td>Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions</td>
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<td>SACCO</td>
<td>Savings and credit cooperative</td>
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<td>UCP-Z</td>
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<td>UGCPA-BM</td>
<td>Union of Farmer Groups for the Commercialisation of Agricultural Products in the region of Boucle du Mouhoun (Burkina Faso)</td>
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Evidence of Impact

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How to contact
www.agricord.org
A Minderbroedersstraat 8, 3000 Leuven, Belgium
P 0032 (0) 16 24 27 50
F 0032 (0) 16 24 27 55
E info@agricord.org