

FAO Regional Office for Africa (RAF)

A photograph of a woman with dark skin, wearing a teal headwrap and a colorful patterned top. She is carrying a large, dark, rectangular basket on her head, which is overflowing with harvested rice. The rice stalks are golden-brown and some are still green. The background is a blurred, dry, outdoor setting.

Programme Review

May 2012

Foreword

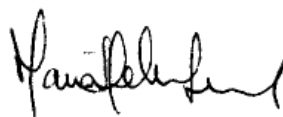
As witnessed during the recent crisis in the Horn of Africa and the unfolding emergency in the Sahel, development agencies such as FAO have a key role to play in strengthening the resilience of vulnerable rural communities in addition to providing short term humanitarian assistance.

Supporting the transition from emergency to development is particularly pertinent in Africa where several member states are emerging from periods of conflict and the cycle of food crises. FAO is actively engaged in supporting governments in making this transition a success. This edition features an update on FAO's joint emergency response in the Sahel alongside project interventions in Liberia, South Sudan and Northern Uganda which focus on rebuilding livelihoods within troubled rural communities.



In line with FAO's promotion of sustainable development, FAO in Africa have worked in partnership with government and UN partners in the promotion of conservation agriculture which works to ensure the efficient use of natural resources while meeting the needs of a modern productive agriculture sector. Here we go to Tanzania, Burkina Faso and South Africa to see how FAO is supporting farmers to access new technologies and farming methods.

As 2012 is being celebrated as the Year of the Cooperatives, FAO is scaling up efforts to promote the contribution of producers organizations to rural development. In this edition we look at FAO's capacity building projects targetting farmers groups in Sierra Leone, Senegal and Kenya.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Maria Helena Semedo'.

Maria Helena Semedo
FAO Assistant Director-General
Regional Representative for Africa



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Acronyms

ABC	Agri-Business Centers
ALREP	Agricultural Livelihood Recovery Programme
CA	Conservation Agriculture
CILSS	Comité permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
EAFF	Eastern Africa Farmers Federation
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
EVI	Extremely Vulnerable Individuals
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FBOs	Farmer Based Organization
FEWSNET	Farmer Field Schools
FFS	Famine Early Warning System Network
FSCA	Food Security through the Commercialization of Agriculture
FSNAU	Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit
IASC	Inter Agency Standing Committee
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services
NCATFs	National Conservation Agriculture Task Forces
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PROPAC	Plateforme Regionale des Organisations Paysannes d'Afrique
SACAU	Southern Africa Confederation of Agricultural Unions
ROPPA	Reseau des Organisations Paysannes et producteurs de L'Afrique de l'Ouest
SCP	Smallholder Commercialization Programme
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United National Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Funds
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United State Dollar
WFP	World Food Programme

Contents



		Famine over in Somalia but 2.3 million remain at risk	16
		FAO backs Smallholder Commercialization Programme in Sierra Leone	17
		Strengthening Farmers organizations and cooperatives for better market access	19
FAO partners with UN agencies to tackle growing crisis in the Sahel	6	FAO-EC Project to promote climate-smart farming in Malawi and Zambia	21
Women at the center of FAO's efforts to improve food security in Senegal	8	FAO South Africa supports smallholder communities through conservation agriculture	22
Supporting farmer's organization in post conflict states – the case of Liberia	10	Scaling up conservation agriculture in Southern Africa: The role of advocacy	23
Building community based development in South Sudan	12	Reversing land degradation through innovative technology in Tanzania	25
Promoting sustainable agricultural production in Burkina Faso	14	Rebuilding agricultural livelihoods in Northern Uganda	27
		Finance	29
		FAO Offices in Africa	30

FAO partners with UN agencies to tackle growing crisis in the Sahel



Inhabitants of the nearby village of Zangon, Niger standing in line at a cereal bank

It is estimated that more than 18 million people in the Sahel are food insecure and over 1 million children are at risk of severe acute malnutrition following sporadic rainfall, insufficient local harvest and persistently high food prices. Trapped in a cycle of recurrent crises, vulnerable households in areas affected by lower agro-production in Burkina Faso, Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger, Senegal and Chad need urgent support.

Since the end of 2011 and in view of the expected food, nutrition and pastoral crises in the Sahel, FAO has supported action to strengthen preparedness and coordination at the regional level, in preparing in collaboration with humanitarian partners of the regional Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the strategic document "Preparedness for a Food and Nutrition Crisis in the Sahel and neighbouring countries".

Within this broader IASC strategic framework, FAO with support from national governments, and in collaboration with other humanitarian agencies operating in West Africa and the Sahel, has prepared a strategic response framework entitled "The food and nutrition crisis in the Sahel: urgent action to support the resilience of vulnerable populations".

The proposed interventions are developed to meet the immediate needs of the current year by providing emergency assistance to targeted vulnerable populations. The second phase of the programme, currently being developed, will target the recovery needs for 2013, as well as longer-term needs for 2014 and 2015.

Immediately planned FAO support includes:

- helping farmers with the delivery of food crops and vegetable seeds in time for the main planting season, which begins in May 2012;



Beneficiaries of FAO emergency assistance in Niger.

- increases in off-season irrigated crop production
- drought-related assistance to herders, including the distribution of animal feed, use of cash vouchers to rehabilitate natural pastures and water points ;
- production of animal fodder; livestock destocking, and veterinary inputs ;
- Provision of integrated nutrition practices through agriculture, livestock rearing, school gardens, and nutrition education for women with children ;
- support for reinforcement of food security-information, early-warning systems and coordination.

FAO's emergency and rehabilitation projects in the Sahel before the crisis amounted to USD 25.4 million. More than 79 additional million are required to support almost 6.2 million people, or 39% of affected population. While almost USD 22 million have been mobilized, a funding gap of USD 57 million remains.

"If we are to avoid yet another disaster, the humanitarian and livelihoods responses must be funded and applied on a scale that ensures protection of all vulnerable communities before they are forced to shed their assets," FAO Director-General Mr. José Graziano da Silva explained.

Mr da Silva added that regional and local leadership, supported by UN coordination, will be crucial to the success of a twin-track approach. This approach aims to ensure that critical, short-term hunger needs are met, while action is taken to protect the assets and livelihood systems of farmers and pastoralists and build resilience in the long term.

FAO is working with regional institutions (the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel-CILSS, the regional System on the Prevention and management of food crises -PREGEC, the Food Crises Prevention Network in the Sahel and West Africa (RPCA), to respond to the crisis, as well as with WFP and other involved UN agencies, and national governments. FAO is providing support as well to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in order to further strengthen its capacities to intervene in potential humanitarian crisis.



Women fetching water from well in southern Niger

Women at the center of FAO's efforts to improve food security in Senegal



Women water vegetable gardens in Missira Dantila, Senegal

The combined threat of drought, high food prices, displacement and chronic poverty is affecting millions of people in 2012 as a new food crisis emerges across the Sahel Region.

In Senegal, the cereal production is on average 36 percent lower than last year. In the Kédougou region of South East Senegal rates of malnutrition and levels of food and nutrition security are of particular concern.

Faced with the threat posed to rural livelihoods, FAO mobilized assistance in the region over several months to support vulnerable household by increasing vegetable and rice production.

FAO support has reached 63 associations of women farmers working in vegetable production covering 2232 members spread across 50 villages.

Following the distribution of production inputs including seeds and fertilizer, farmers groups have already harvested their vegetable produce, enriching their basic food diets. Farmers were also able to supplement their incomes by selling surplus produce to the market.

Fatou, President of a women's group in the village, Samecoute Dantila, is enthusiastic about progress achieved by the project, 'Thanks to FAO I could cultivate my vegetable and use them to feed my children. I can also earn a little money by selling them to the market'.

In addition to technical training organized by project partners, beneficiaries have made exchange visits at the beginning of 2012 to learn about best



Farmers cultivating cabbage seedlings in Thiaye Senegal.



A woman carrying water to irrigate a cabbage patch, Thiaye Senegal

practices on running market gardens managed by women's groups in Kolda. Visits have focused on best practices in technical and managerial areas.

The exchange visit was a learning opportunity for the majority of participants, as the majority of whom have never travelled so far away from their home village.

Participants were able to achieve a better understanding of the importance of post harvest activities including storage, processing and marketing. Moreover the exchange created the opportunity to witness first hand methods to improve production alongside the benefits of pooling together group resources.

Women from Kédougou looked forward to replicating the farming models they had learnt about during the exchange.

In addition, farmers were able to reflect on the decision making process with a particular focus on female leadership and the importance of strengthening communities in order to support development partnerships.

Aside from support to vegetable production, FAO will also assist 1,600 vulnerable farmers in Kédougou with the distribution of certified rice seeds and fertilizer in May 2012.

Across these range of different activities FAO has protected livelihoods and strengthened food access in the short term while making a longer term contribution towards food security.

Supporting farmer's organization in post conflict countries – the case of Liberia



FAO workshop participants trained on Business Management Photo in Ganta City, Liberia

Strengthening farmer based organizations is one of the core outcomes of seven West African projects called “Food Security through the Commercialization of Agriculture (FSCA)”, funded by the Italian government. The project focus on increasing productivity, marketed output and incomes of project beneficiaries, leading to improved livelihoods and food security.

In 2012, Liberia's economy after 20 years of civil war still only operates at about one third of its pre-war level. Over 50 percent of the population lives in extreme poverty and almost half of the population has never attended school. Years of internal insecurity for ordinary people have undermined their ability to engage in productive activities.

FAO has supported the post war peace building process by re-establishing of farmer based

organizations (FBOs) who play a critical role in boosting the country's agriculture sector.

Despite the enormous challenge for the project implementation team in Liberia, great progress has been made in re-building FBOs, strengthening management and organizational skills, improving the ability to deliver services to their members. Activities have included enhancing production, processing and marketing skills. The project has worked with 108 FBOs in three project sites, all located well away from larger agriculture markets.

Capacity development activities have included training of trainers in marketing, business skills and organizational skills. Farmer Field Schools were set up to support better agricultural practices.



Farmers receive support for vegetable production in Niegbién village, Liberia

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Participants take part in training session on farm commercialization in Ganta, Nimba County, Liberia

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Building community based development in South Sudan



Cattle resting at the Rual Dinka cattle camp near Rumbek

Food insecurity and poverty are widespread across the newly independent South Sudan, linked to decades of civil conflict, the disruption and loss of economic activities, displacement of a significant portion of the population, lack of basic infrastructure and the erosion of livelihood options. This has had a devastating effect on human development in the country, with a particularly negative impact on women and children.

Though women in South Sudan constitute the majority of subsistence farmers and perform most of the agricultural tasks, their access to knowledge and training programmes regarding effective farming practices and crop production, and linkages to resources and markets is very limited.

In response, FAO is working in partnership with UNIDO to promote sustainable peace in South Sudan

by enhancing food security of women, men, youth and children living in Jonglei and Upper Nile, two of the most food-insecure and conflict-affected states.

The collaboration between FAO and UNIDO will allow the development of an intervention strategy that addresses the several causes of food security, such as low farm productivity, market access, skill levels among vulnerable groups and lack of employment opportunities; and conflicts such as restricted access to and control of livelihoods resources.

Key project objectives include improved agriculture productivity, increased household employment opportunities and productive skills and to ensure equitable access to water resources for pastoralist and agriculturalist communities.



Cattle resting at the Rual Dinka cattle camp



A cattle worker milking a cow at the Rual Dinka cattle camp

Target beneficiaries range from female headed households engaged in agriculture, underemployed youth in rural areas, herders who will receive support in the areas of agribusiness, marketing and extension. More than 160 FFS Groups with roughly 4650 female and male household members will be targeted for intensive extension support to increase their farm production, productivity and income.

More than 3,300 youth and women will be trained in different practical skills including manufacturing of farm tools, basic business skills and farm and off-farm enterprises to increase their income and address their food security and livelihoods needs.

Project activities focus on achieving reduced water-related conflict incidents disrupting food security among target communities in Jonglei, increasing food production and incomes for youth and women and diversifying increased incomes among targeted households.

The project will address strengthening community institutions through a variety of workshops and exposure visits. By working closely with existing village development committees and those developed during the project, as well as with local and state level authorities, the project aims to ensure that local groups take responsibility for ongoing project results beyond FAO and UNIDO's involvement.

Promoting sustainable agricultural production in Burkina Faso



A farmer been shown how to properly loosen the soil around plants in a farmer field school training field

Despite its high productivity potential, the current agricultural land use pattern in the moist savanna zone of Sub-Saharan Africa and its development prospects for livelihoods and sustainability are beset with serious constraints such as poor soil health, low soil productivity and poor integration of livestock in the production system.

Experience has shown that amongst good farming and crop management practices that can make a significant contribution to meeting these implied needs are practices such as Conservation Agriculture (CA) and integrated pest management (IPM) disseminated through Farmer Field Schools (FFS) approaches.

The fact that CA is now practiced on almost 100million hectares worldwide implies that the principles on which it is based are recognized by

farmers as one of the major potential alternative for enhancing soil fertility and for sustainable agricultural intensification internationally and in Africa.

An FAO project in Burkina Faso has been established to introduce farming technologies adopted by farmers which have enabled them to enhance the productivity potential of the land, and achieve more sustainable increases in agricultural production.

Furthermore the project has supported natural resources conservation and environmentally sound farming practices, leading to improved food security and higher farm incomes. As a result the project has contributed significantly to the attainment of better and sustainable rural livelihoods.



**A farmer family with harvested corn stalks
Banzon, Burkina Faso**



**Beneficiaries of FAO urban gardening and training
project Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso**

The project field activities were set up and implemented in five pilot locations in south western Burkina Faso (Karaba in Tuy Province, Klesso, Bama/Banaroudougou in Houet Province, Kounséni/Banzon and Dandé in Kenedougou Province).

Field activities included the on-farm testing of technologies for crop diversification and intensification, including fodder and feed development for livestock intensification, the application of technologies for CA involving crop rotation and cover management for sustainability and intensification. New crops in the rotation included Brachiaria, mucuna, soybean, dual purpose cowpeas, pigeon pea and cassava.

Benefits and outcomes

According to Sawadogo Salem Lassana, a proud Burkina farmer who participated in the Mucuna seed processing technology, “ the project produced highly significant positive innovations and changes not only to the individual lives of rural farming families but also provided new directions in the patterns of rural community life development”.

There is no doubt that the introduction of CA technologies and practices offer enormous potential to simultaneously rebuild and enhance soil fertility, land productivity and agricultural output and farm income.

More recently there is growing evidence of successful soil health and fertility management for agricultural intensification on both large and small-scale farms using CA practices in Africa from countries as diverse as Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa and Uganda, covering a range of agro-ecological and socioeconomic conditions.

Famine over in Somalia but 2.3 million remain at risk



FAO Director-General Jose Graziano da Silva visiting a banana and lemon plot belonging to a local farmer in Dollow, Somalia

The United Nations has declared an end to famine conditions in Somalia, but recently warned that with recurrent droughts in the Horn of Africa hunger remains a threat unless long-term measures are taken to restore food security.

According to a new report by the FAO managed Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) and USAID's Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWSNET), the number of people in need of emergency humanitarian assistance in Somalia has dropped from 4 million to 2.34 million, 31 percent of the population.

"Long-awaited rains coupled with substantial agricultural inputs and the humanitarian response deployed in the last six months are the main reasons for this improvement," FAO's new Director-General José Graziano da Silva told a press conference in Nairobi after visiting southern Somalia.

As part of its emergency response, FAO distributed seeds and fertilizers to Somali farmers. In the regions of Bay and Shabelle they took advantage of rains and the inputs provided by FAO and other agencies to double their production of maize and sorghum, their highest harvest in years.

FAO also rehabilitated 594 kilometers of irrigation canals and treated 2.6 million livestock at risk of diseases and infections associated with drought.

Since the onset of the famine, FAO, UNICEF, WFP and international NGOs have also operated cash-for-work and food-voucher programmes, instead of relying only on food and input handouts. The cash allowed families to buy food locally and remain in their home areas while also stimulating economic recovery and helping rehabilitate local infrastructure for agriculture and herding.

FAO backs Smallholder Commercialization Programme in Sierra Leone



Programme Implementation Support Officer, David Mwesigwa, standing in front of a just completed Lambayama ABC in the Kenema district.

As a response to global food price volatility, in 2008 the Government of Sierra Leone approved a five-year Smallholder Commercialization Programme (SCP) as a flagship programme helping to transform Sierra Leone's rural landscape to achieve increased productivity, improved commercialization of agriculture and value addition.

A core objective of the SCP is to intensify and diversify agricultural production through training of farmers based on the Farmer Field Schools approach. With the support of FAO, farmers are helped to organize into Farmer Based Organizations (FBOs) and establish Agri-Business Centers (ABCs).

In the last two years, FAO has supported the government to construct and equip a total of 193 ABCs operated by 490 FBOs, involving a total of 14 700 farmers, 30 percent of which from are female-headed households.

ABC's operate as farmer owned multi-purpose facility providing rural communities with a place to process their agricultural produce, buy inputs and sell products as well as a centre that provides an interface between farmers and rural service providers as well as serve as hub for social interaction.

Each ABC is designed to deliver services to around 400 smallholder farmers including micro-credit, sale of inputs, rental of agricultural tools and equipment, storage of agricultural produce, transportation of harvest to markets, access to communication and information technology.

The injection of improved agricultural inputs and machinery into the national market, combined with the project's provision of extension services



Mammy Gbanie, 49, Head of the Magbenyani farmer organization



A young man operates machinery at Lambayama ABC center, Kenema

to farmer organizations all over the country, has certainly played an important role in boosting agricultural production and productivity.

Mrs. Muskuda Jalloh, Chairlady of the Ladeka ABC in Makomp Bana in the Bombali District, said the centre had made a huge difference in her community. As a result of the extra income generated by farmers through transactions at the ABC, most of the community members eat well, can send their children to schools and colleges, and can afford good clothing, unlike before the war.

Communities that have ABCs have begun to see economic benefits while those without, still faced huge difficulties in terms of economic growth, access to farm inputs such as fertilizers, seedlings and other essentials needed to facilitate farming.

Mr. Hassan Gbow Conteh, chairman of the Mafunday ABC in the Tonkolili District described the ABC in their community as a blessing, providing key services to farmers such as rice milling, cassava grating and crop storage.

Pastor Moseray Hinga Kallon, Master Farmer in the Kenema district was pleasantly surprised at impact that the ABC had had on his community which he described as a complete turnaround. He lauded the efforts of FAO and the Government of Sierra Leone saying the ABC in their community is gradually chasing away acute poverty which had engulfed the community after the war.

FAO will continue to support the government in the expansion of ABCs while paying close attention to capacity building of existing centers to ensure their sustainability in the long term.

Strengthening farmers organizations for better market access



Local villagers gather in Mutoko, Zimbabwe

Farmer organizations continuously look for new ways to improve the competitiveness of smallholders in agribusiness-led development through collective action such as bulk buying of inputs, collective marketing, negotiating credit and contracts and lobbying policy makers.

An important programme of work, supported by the EU during the past biennium, was developed in response to a call from Africa's four regional farmer federations, to support farmer organizations engage more effectively with the agribusiness sector. This work, carried out in collaboration with EAFF, ROPPA, PROPAC and SACAU, demonstrated that the provision of essential marketing services to members can strengthen the success of small farmers' participation in markets.

To this end, FAO developed regional capacity building programmes, delivered around key topics for integrating smallholders into value chains which

covered value addition and diversification, food quality and safety standard, financial services for small farmers, contract management and marketing, post-harvest practices and logistics.

During peer exchanges a number of success factors for farmer organizations and good practice principles for policy makers were identified.

Success factors for smallholder collective action and farmer organizations

Good governance: Good leadership with knowledge about target commodity markets, combined with transparent financial and management systems capable of delegating tasks to experienced staff. *High quality service provision:* In order to retain and recruit farmers, members must value their



Farmers attending a weekly IPPM training session in Thiaye, Senegal



Women from the Mutambara I Village de la Paix planting cassava

membership based on the provision of high quality services, such as the identification of market outlets, product assembly, training, technical assistance and advice, which the organization should be paid for.

Network membership: Primary level organizations need to be part of a wider network that links members to information on new technical ideas, markets and funding opportunities outside of their community.

Adding value: Farmer organizations can play an important role in adding value to their members produce through organizational innovations and support with activities such as sorting, grading, production planning and logistics, which do not require high cost capital investments.

Focus on core business: Farmer organizations need to firstly excel on their core function of supporting members to improve productivity, production planning and marketing, and secondly have acquired the appropriate marketing and management capacities, before diversifying activities and resources into capital intensive value adding agro-processing technologies.

Policy guidance principles for supporting market-oriented Farmer Organizations

The role of policy was considered critical in promoting organizations that are regarded as full partners by the state, with support for institutional capacity building. The following principles were identified as key for supporting the role of farmer organizations in linking smallholder to markets.

Creating an enabling environment for private sector investment: Targeted support should not distort local market condition or crowd-out potential private sector investment, with conditions created that allow farmer organizations to mobilize their own resources to invest in agribusiness.

Long-term public commitment with short-term interventions: Farmer based organizations learn and grow, sometimes fail and in many cases take a long time to mature. Organizations need to know that they have the long-term commitment of the public sector which is based on, when required, short-term sustainable interventions with clear exit-strategies embedded.

FAO-EC project to promote climate-smart farming in Malawi and Zambia



A farmer hoeing cassava plants in Malawi

FAO and the European Commission have launched a new €5.3 million project aimed at helping Malawi, Vietnam and Zambia transition to a "climate-smart" approach to agriculture.

"Climate-smart agriculture" is an approach that seeks to position the agricultural sector as a solution to the challenge of climate change and threat posed food security and sustainable rural livelihoods.

It involves making changes in farming systems that achieve multiple goals: improving their contribution to the fight against hunger and poverty; rendering them more resilient to climate change; reducing emissions; and increasing agriculture's potential to capture and sequester atmospheric carbon.

"This project will look closely at three countries and identify challenges and opportunities for climate-smart agriculture and produce strategic plans tailored

to each country's own reality," said former FAO Assistant Director-General for the Economic and Social Development Department, Hafez Ghanem.

The EU is providing €3.3 million to support the effort supplemented by €2 million in funding from FAO. FAO will take the overall lead on the project, working in partnership with national policy and research institutions, as well as global organizations such as the Global Crop Diversity Trust.

Working closely with agriculture and other ministries in each of the partner countries, and collaborating with local and international organizations, the three-year project will identify country-specific opportunities for expansion of existing climate-smart practices or implementation of new ones and study the constraints that need to be overcome to promote wider adoption of climate-smart agriculture, such as investment costs.

FAO South Africa supports smallholder communities through conservation agriculture



Couple weeding cabbage plot, Rietfontein, near Johannesburg

FAO South Africa has established partnerships with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), in promotion of Conservation Agriculture (CA).

In this partnership, USAID financed a project to enhance household and national food security while combating the potential impact of climate change by promoting sound and sustainable farming practices.

FAO in collaboration with DAFF and Provincial Departments of Agriculture where CA is piloted, provided smallholder farmers in rural areas with production inputs such as maize seeds, fertilizers and jab planters for promotion of CA.

Reports received indicate that land farmed by smallholder farmers practicing CA has reached above 100ha.

In addition CA has improved household food security for smallholder communities by enabling farmers to produce two or three crop in one planting season.

As part of taking the process forward, the National Conservation Agriculture Task Force (NCATF) composed of DAFF, FAO, Agricultural Research Council (ARC), commercial farmers, input suppliers, maize trust, land care provincial coordinators, and agricultural farmers organizations (NAFU, Agri SA and TAU), was established and mandated to undertake CA advocacy, coordination and information sharing activities within the country.

Three demonstration sites in different agrological zones of South Africa, located in Gauteng, Limpopo and Eastern Cape provinces, were identified. Smallholder farmers, community members and extension officers attended open days in pilot provinces where CA practices were also demonstrated.

Kenya's dairy farmers reap rewards from ICT market initiative



Traders meet at
Livestock market
in Garissa, Kenya

In Africa, strengthening capacity for information networks is at the heart of efforts to enhance food production and open market access. While the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in reaching smallholder farmers in remote and disconnected areas is becoming increasingly recognized.

In Kenya, FAO together with the Ministry of Cooperative Development and Marketing, the private sector and a range of other local partners developed and pilot-tested an open source licensed Member and Management Information System for Producer Organizations: Coop Works Business Management Information System for Producer Organizations.

CoopWorks was introduced to the Tulaga Farmers Cooperative Society (TFCS), a dairy co-operative in

North Kinangop with the aim to benefit member based enterprises through income generation and poverty alleviation.

The overall goal of the project was the development of a low-cost computerized information system for use by primary agricultural cooperative societies and emerging producer associations within Kenya to help strengthen their capacity to compete and mobilize capital in liberalized markets and, consequently, their capacity to improve the livelihood conditions of their members and communities.

The project supported the delivery of available up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive management information allowing for improved and faster decision-making, more transparency, accountability and increased profitability. As a result, beneficiaries had access to a low-cost, marketable software and



Livestock market, Garissa, Kenya



Pastoralist gather at Wajir, Kenya

hardware prototype, which served as a model for adaptation in other cooperatives in the region.

In addition enterprises were able to provide real time, accurate and accessible member information and information on the organization's business performance and market requirements leading to improved trust among members to management.

Through the Open Source approach in general and the growing CoopWorks Community of Users, Promoters and System developers in particular, it is expected that market information system will gradually and consistently improve through accumulating the experience of cooperative members.

Cooperative members witnessed an increase in the volume of business and the produce price paid to members. The cooperative also enjoyed an improved market performance, strengthening its milk market customer base from two processors before the project to five as well as several private milk buyers. The number of sub-stores and mobile services has also increased alongside a doubling of sales in cooperative run milk stores.

Following the end of the Project last year, The Ministry of Cooperatives Development continues to monitor the Primary coop Societies who had been provided with FAO assistance. Interest has already been received from private sector ICT companies who are keen to further develop the software created.

In line with the 2012 International Year of the Cooperative FAO Kenya is developing a Technical Cooperation Project on capacity development for producer organizations focusing on market information and agribusiness.

Scaling up conservation agriculture in Southern Africa: The role of advocacy



A study tour for policy makers in Zambia

Conservation Agriculture (CA) is widely identified by development practitioners as one of the land use systems with the greatest potential to sustainably increase agricultural productivity and production. In Southern Africa CA has contributed to improving the resilience of farming systems to climate-related disasters, especially drought.

FAO has been actively involved in promoting the adoption of CA among smallholder farmers for efficient use of key crop production inputs, while, at the same time, maintaining the natural resource base and reducing to the adverse effects of climate change.

Working with several national and regional stakeholders, FAO has actively promoted wide scale adoption of CA in the region by providing technical support, undertaking advocacy and communication work and facilitating coordination of CA activities at country and regional levels through the Conservation Agriculture Regional Working Group (CARWG).

The group supports coordination of CA work at regional level while working through National CA Task Forces (NCATFs) at national level. Group stakeholders include governments, NGOs, research institutions, private sector and farmer organizations that actively support CA promotional work in Southern Africa.

FAO activities in support of the CARWG focus on awareness raising, information sharing, training and advocacy, meant to promote and expand CA and associated impacts in the region.

The principles of CA are also in line with those of “Save and Grow”; a recent publication by FAO primarily targeting policy makers in advocating for Sustainable Crop Production Intensification (SCPI) to address the complex challenges of meeting food needs.



Plots farmed using CA techniques in Zambia



Farmer tending to maize plants grown alongside CA crops

CA is already being practiced to varying degrees in Angola, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. However, scaling up adoption of CA to reach many more farmers as well as expand the areas of those already practicing remains a challenge. The key constraints affecting the up scaling of CA include poor access to markets, resource constrained extension systems and inadequate training on CA. It is also evident that some of the stakeholders are not sufficiently aware of the environmental, social and economic benefits of CA.

Recognizing the importance of advocacy work for promoting scaling up of CA, FAO has facilitated engagement of policy makers through CARWG as a way of enhancing stakeholder understanding and appreciation of the benefits of CA and increased CA integration into national and regional programmes on food security and natural resources management. As a result, a number of interventions targeting policymakers have been supported by FAO at regional and national levels.

At the regional level, the support has included FANRPAN's policy work assessing friendliness of regional policies and programmes for CA scaling up alongside the development of FAO's CA strategy for SSA. FAO assistance was also provided for the development and implementation of COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Climate Change Programme.

FAO assistance at national level through interventions implemented by the NCATFs has contributed to the coordination of several study tours for awareness creation among policy and decision makers as well as the production of a scoping study by FANRPAN on assessing CA policies in Angola, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa. The development of CA strategies and investment frameworks have already begun in Malawi, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Mozambique and South Africa following FAO support.

These activities are seen as key in institutionalizing CA and entrenching national ownership required for sustained efforts in promoting wide scale adoption. In addition, these activities serve as a good foundation for the mainstreaming of "Save and Grow" in government programmes.

Reversing land degradation through innovative technology in Tanzania



Farmer in Tanzania practicing with tilling equipment

Smallholder farm mechanization in sub-Saharan Africa relies heavily on manual labour and the hand hoe is used as the main farming tool on 80% of arable areas. Less than 10% of the land area in SSA is cultivated by tractor powered systems. Although, farmers perceive advantages with mechanized tillage operations mechanization can lead to damage to soils and the environment in the form of soil erosion and eventual yield reduction

Conservation agriculture (CA), based on minimum soil disturbance, crop residue retention and rotations has been proposed to reverse this degradation and support the sustainable intensification of cropping systems while reducing the labour burden on humans and livestock that carry out most of the land preparation.

The CA-SARD Project following FAO assistance was innovative in introducing a new set of implements for reduced tillage and direct seeding in Tanzania.

Such equipment was rarely known and available in East Africa as it comes mainly from southern Brazil. The two main farming tools introduced were the hand jab planter, a tool that allows farmers to place both seeds and fertilizer into the soil simultaneously and the animal drawn direct planter, which uses a vertical disc to cut through residues and unprepared soils.

Both of these tools allowed small farmers in the project area to considerably reduce ploughing and hoeing which has helped to avoid hard cover soils and at the same time allowed for better surface cover with crop residues and cover crops.

The other aim of the project was to facilitate the development of a local supply chain for these planters. Through study tours and training support it was possible for a small number of manufacturers to start producing farming tools for the local market in Tanzania.

Rebuilding agricultural livelihoods in Northern Uganda



Bicycles loaded with plantain, Uganda

The war affected communities in northern Uganda are highly dependent on farming for food and income security. However, the diminished coping strategies of the local population coupled with the effects of climate variability and emerging fragile land tenure and conflict have led to increased household food insecurity.

The absence of alternative income generating activities to boost the farmers' purchasing power, limited access to animal traction technologies, lack of quality farm inputs, pest and disease management capacity in absolute terms have been major constraints for the resettling population to effectively resume productive activities. Moreover, the traditional seed system of conserving and preserving local varieties with greater

resistance or tolerance to pests, diseases and drought broke down during the time of encampment. FAO's project on restoring agricultural livelihoods in Northern Uganda contributes towards minimizing the risk of conflict re-emerging groups and to support a sustainable peace process by reviving the agriculture sector.

Within the broader framework of the Livelihoods and Local Economic Recovery component of the Peace Building Fund, project activities aim to strengthening agricultural extension, enhancing crop productivity, up scaling the village saving and loan (VSL) mechanism, improving access to market information and income generating activities as core components.



Young man carrying load of animal fodder, Uganda



Potatoes for sale in baskets made from bamboo, Uganda

The project will support 230 farmer groups comprising an average of 30 members each, targeting an estimated 6,900 households, equivalent to 41,400 people. The establishment of the FFS groups build on lessons learned during previous projects and are streamlined with the EU funded Agricultural Livelihood Recovery Programme (ALREP) project to be implemented in the same region.

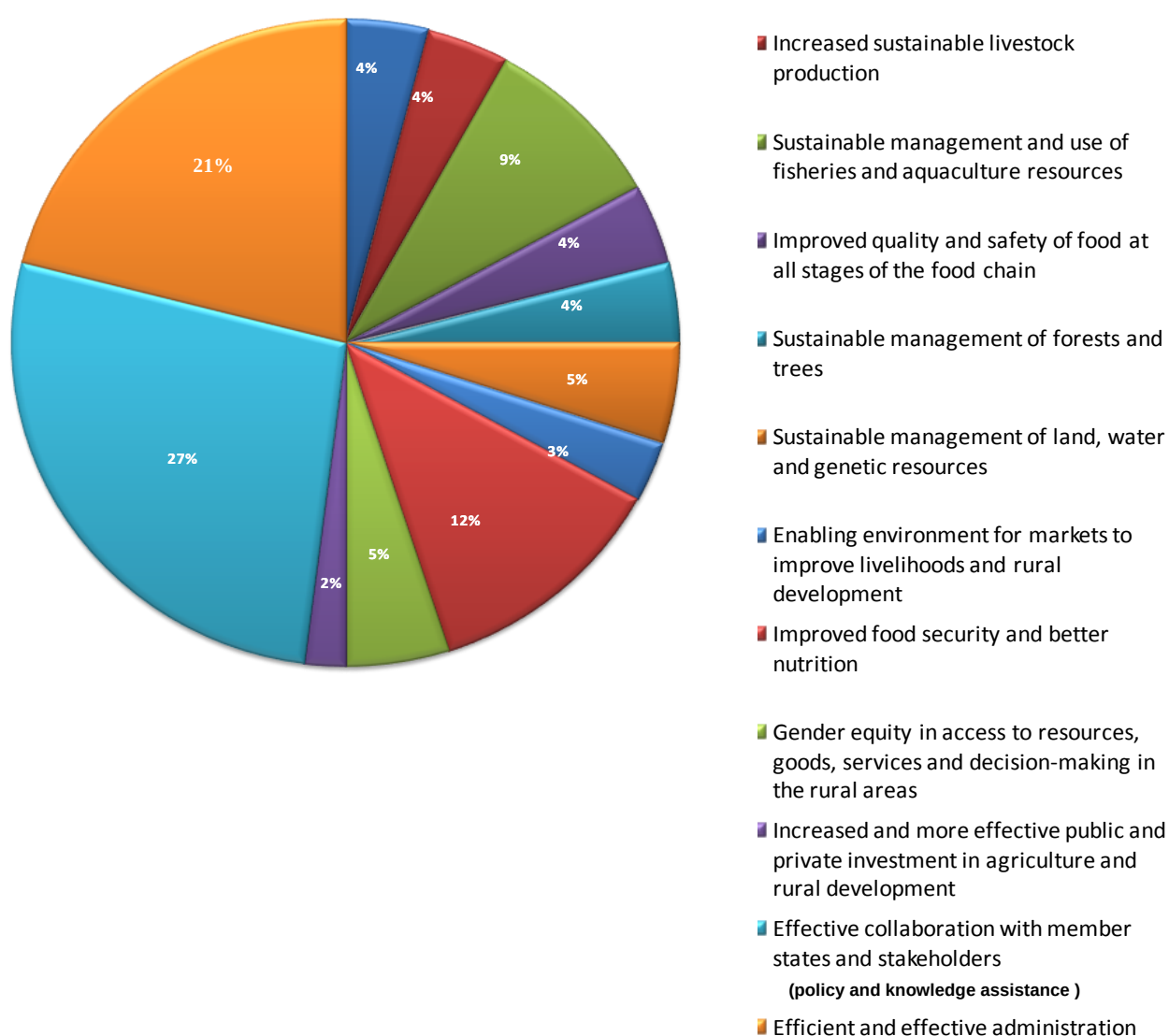
To address the gender mainstreaming, the composition of the FFSs to be established is least 50% women or child headed households and at least 25 percent young people between 16 and 25 years old. Around 10 percent of the target group include households of EVIs and ex-combatants.

The Farmer Field School (FFS) approach that has progressively been adapted by several Food Security and Agricultural Livelihood cluster members to the specific context of northern Uganda provides the guiding framework project implementation. Efforts have also been made to build linkages and synergy with the ongoing National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) programme.

The project is aligned to the National Development Plan (NDP), Peace, Recovery & Development Plan for Northern Uganda (PRDP) and the Development and Strategic Investment Plan (DSIP) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries."

The project is implemented by FAO in close collaboration the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF). Similarly, within the broader framework of the UN Joint Peace Building Fund project on Livelihoods and Local Economic Recovery, FAO will collaborate with other implementing agencies including IOM, UNCDF, WFP and UNDP.

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