**SESSION P3: PARTNERSHIPS FOR LIVELIHOOD IMPACTS**

**Sub-Session P3.2: Turning Innovations into Market Opportunities**

**Innovations from the Empowering Smallholder Farmers in the Markets (ESFIM) Programme**

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<th>Context – the problems being addressed</th>
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<td>Institutions and policy matter. They shape the room of manoeuvre for smallholders to benefit from markets to gain a decent living. The development of public and private sector policies and institutional arrangements that enable smallholder access to and participation in markets are key to advance the wider objectives of economic growth, poverty reduction, food security and nutrition.</td>
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Such policies and institutional arrangements have to be designed in a way that responds to the real problems and are adapted to the contextual specificities. Farmers’ organizations have a key role to play in providing information on the underlying issues, including the contextual challenges and in advocating for improvements in policies and institutional arrangements to ensure that such arrangements meet the needs of their constituents. There is a need for strong farmer organizations that can present and represent the interests of smallholders versus more powerful economic groupings in society. However, farmers’ organizations often lack access to the information and evidence needed to develop pro-active proposals to influence these policies. They are often not seriously involved in consultation processes, be it as a result of neglect by policy makers or be it as a result of their own limited capacities, skills and experiences in the processes of engagement with national policy processes and in the formulation of advocacy strategies.

In spite of the intentions documented in GCARD 2010, there is still very little done to bridge the gap between the research community and farmer organizations. There is willingness of both sides to partner but there are few experiences in which this really happens. There is a need for a flexible and effective interface between farmers’ organizations and national and international researchers to help farmers’ organizations get more accurate and timely evidence to reflect on policy proposals and to provide research results on topics that matter most to them and their members. Support to farmers’ organizations in the processes of selection of key issues and to upgrade their advocacy methods can help these organizations to be more effective advocates in the interests of smallholders.

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<th>Current activities presented and discussed in the Session</th>
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<td>The <em>Empowering Smallholder Farmers in the Markets</em> (ESFIM) programme seeks to generate demand-driven research supportive of the policy priorities and activities undertaken by farmers’ organizations that strengthens the advocacy capacities of national farmers’ organisations. This five year programme (2007-2012) is undertaken by AGRINATURA in partnership with ten national farmer organisations (NFO).</td>
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1. Submitted by Giel Ton, ESFIM Programme Manager, LEI Wageningen University and Research Centre, Netherlands
2. ESFIM is co-funded by IFAD, the European Alliance on Agricultural Knowledge for Development European Economic Interest Grouping (AGRINATURA-EEIG), the Dutch Ministry of Economy, Agriculture and Innovation, Agriterra and CTA - the ACP-EU Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation. ([www.esfim.org](http://www.esfim.org)).
3. Coalition Paysanne de Madagascar (FTM/CPM), Madagascar; Cooperativas Agrarias Federadas (CAF), Uruguay; Coordinadora de Integración de Organizaciones Económicas Campesinas (CIOEC), Bolivia; Coordinadora de Mujeres Campesinas de Costa Rica (CMC), Costa Rica; Fédération des Unions de Producteurs de Bénin (FUPRO), Bénin; Federation
The innovation: ESFIM creates a space for learning-by-doing on institutional modalities to bridge the gap between the research community and national farmers’ organizations on issues relating to smallholder market access. It generates research-informed proposals for change in the enabling/disabling policy and institutional environment and it supports the capacities of NFOs to engage in related advocacy activities.

Key lessons learnt in ESFIM include:

Linking research with advocacy activities of national farmer organisations (NFOs) requires a level of flexibility in research institutions that is not common. The need to respond to changing dynamics in the given country and in the partner organization conflicts with the need for longer term research planning and the tight terms of reference that researchers work with. NFOs in contrast require a mix of “just in time evidence” to respond to a particular advocacy moment, with longer term studies that improve their foresight and knowledge of likely policy alternatives. Such needed research also call on capabilities in and willingness of researchers to synthesize and communicate research in non-peer-reviewed (= low status) output formats and an ability to make oral presentations in workshops and instances where farmer organizations are present.

Context matters: there was significant diversity in the priority themes identified by the NFOs and their memberships, ranging from research on modalities of collective marketing to the generation of evidence on the impact of seed programs, the design of market information systems and electronic trading systems, to the legal and administrative hurdles that prevent smallholders from selling to government procurement programmes.

The nature and type of involvement of NFO staff in the discussion and further development of the advocacy issues varied significantly. There were wide variations between countries on how NFOs preferred to use the research funds ranging from use of funds to sustain existing internal NFO staff to use of funds to exclusively contract external consultants for research product delivery. No NFO showed preference to have a framework contract with national research institutions. All preferred to work with researchers on an individual basis.

Through a self-assessment among the board members of the NFOs on advocacy capacities, ESFIM helped to highlight areas and capacities that needed strengthening for example their capacities to interpret research findings, to organise timely policy discussion workshops, and to structure consultative processes with their constituency to reflect on their advocacy priorities. The NFOs indicated that their advocacy capacities have been strengthened. Whilst this strengthened capacity can only be partially attributed to ESFIM activities, it is an indication that ESFIM contributed in this process. The self-assessment also proved valuable as an internal learning tool for the NFOs.

The experience gained through this innovative programme has laid the ground work for enhanced partnerships between farmer organizations and research within the wider framework of enhancing smallholder access to productive economic opportunity and markets. AGRINATURA teams provided support in facilitating the prioritisation process in the NFO, support on the research and study methods used, with ideas on ways that evidence can be used and options for advocacy processes. Complementary research work has been realized on topics of interest to many NFOs including on Incentive Structures in Collective Marketing, Market Information Systems, Risk Insurance, and Financial Innovation.

First-hand experiences with this innovative approach in four ESFIM partner NFOs are presented here. These illustrate how the NFO identified and used research evidence to formulate feasible, evidence-based propositions for changes in policies and institutional arrangements that empower smallholders and their organizations in markets.

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of Free Farmers Cooperatives Inc (FFFCI), Philippines; Junta Nacional del Café (JNC), Perú; Kenya National Federation of Agricultural Producers (KENFAP), Kenya; National Smallholder Farmers’ Association of Malawi (NASFAM), Malawi; Uganda National Farmers’ Federation (UNFFE), Uganda.
A group of farmers’ organizations engaged in collective marketing, led by the Junta Nacional de Café (JNC), Peru, managed to get a focussed lobby agenda that enabled CONVEAGRO (La Convención Nacional del Agro Peruano) to refocus and to address key issues that affect smallholders access to markets including: the problem of taxation of cooperatives that source from members that operate in the informal sector; administrative hurdles that prevent access to government procurement for school feeding programmes; access of farmers’ organizations to regional investment funds; and policies that define quality parameters and enable marketing strategies that differentiate on product qualities.

In Kenya, a critical assessment of government interventions in input and output markets under the National Agricultural Accelerated Input Access Programme (NAAIAP) was undertaken specifically to assess the voucher system for subsided maize seed and fertilizer and its impact on smallholder yield and income. Based on this work, Kenyan National Federation of Agricultural Producers (KENFAP) proposed changes to the NAAIAP policy through the preparation of a memorandum to the Government on food insecurity. It further sought to strengthen mechanisms to improve smallholder produce marketing through the use of the Warehouse Receipt System (WRS) and contract farming.

The Coordinadora de Mujeres Campesinas de Costa Rica (CMC) affiliates some forty active women’s organizations. CMC sought support to enable women to be mobilised for better market access and to strengthen the role of women interests in the coalition of smallholder organizations that is active to influence and shape government policy and laws. CMC and their affiliates prioritised a number of studies including the impact of laws governing livestock marketing on small-scale producers, the establishment and strengthening of the regional markets, a proposal for food sovereignty legislation, and a study to document the impact of the law of the Farmers’ Fair. The different studies enabled CMC and their platform of smallholder organizations to identify possible changes in policy or institutional environment and to take these forward. The work has contributed to building the capacities of CMC to organize and to take forward advocacy processes within an affiliated structure.

The Cooperativas Agrarias Federadas (CAF) de Uruguay prioritised the work on the innovation processes in the cooperative sector to improve their visibility in and access to the national innovation policy. With an advisory role by persons from the Instituto Nacional de Investigación Agropecuaria (INIA) and Agencia Nacional de Investigación e Innovación (ANII), CAF contracted a team of local consultants that undertook studies across key commodity sectors to analyse the possibilities and constraints for cooperatives to engage in innovation networks. Building on this work a key advocacy event was held in 2012 within Parliament that increased CAF’s exposure and visibility as representative organization of family farmers.

Intended outcomes

- NFOs identify and use research evidence to formulate feasible, evidence-based propositions for changes in policies and institutional arrangements that empower smallholders and their organizations in markets;
- NFOs and researchers develop an institutional modality (interface) where NFOs can get quality research support to their priority issues.

Commitments to collective actions in 2012-2014 (national, regional or international)

  i. With existing resources

Objectives: national farmers’ organisations (NFOs) have strengthened capacities to formulate feasible, evidence-based propositions for changes in key elements in the institutional environment that empower smallholder farmers in markets. Co-funded: IFAD, the European Alliance on Agricultural Knowledge for Development (AGRINATURA), the Dutch Ministry of Economy, Agriculture and Innovation, Agriterra, and CTA - the ACP-EU Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation. Lead institution: LEI Wageningen University and Research Centre, Netherlands for AGRINATURA

### ii. Immediate gaps to be filled

- Cross-site learning between national farmers’ organizations to reinforce their regional networks in their capacity and services to represent smallholder interest on food security issues at regional, continental and global levels and to enable technology uptake;
- New modalities developed to enable regional and national farmer organizations to call down on national research funds for priority research defined by farmer organizations and their members;
- Reinforce capacities of national and regional farmers’ organizations to participate in key decision-making processes on policies that strengthen the position of farmers, particularly smallholders, in the national and regional policy arenas.

### iii. With specific large scale programme investment

- Country-specific grant facilities in place that enable farmer organizations to voice their needs and play a greater role in defining and benefitting from the publically funded research agenda;
- Funds allocated to training and capacity-building programmes that enable NFOs and regional FOs to strengthen their advocacy capacity;
- Research is undertaken to understand better the national and regional policy processes including the different roles of national farmer organizations relating to smallholder agriculture and smallholder market access;
- Cross-site learning between national farmers’ organizations to reinforce their regional networks in their capacity and services to represent smallholder interest at regional, continental and global levels ;
- National and donor investment programme response to development interventions emerging from NFOs advocacy messages.