

Selega Farmer's Cooperative Get Power Tiller...

EU/FAO Help Liberian Farmers increase Production

Women of the Selega Farmers Cooperative gathered around the power tiller provided by FAO with funding from the European Union Food Facility (EUFF). All eyes were set on one of the cooperative members, Lawrence Ballah, as he carefully mounted the machine, grasped the handlebars and began driving it into Selega town. Located three miles from the town of Voinjama in Lofa County, Selega is a thriving farming community and home to the 80 members of the Selega Farmers Cooperative.

Colleagues sitting in the attached trailer joined him heading home at the end of the day's training in power tiller operations and maintenance, a prerequisite before the Liberian government and FAO turned over the agricultural machinery to them, for ownership.

The EU supported project targets the rice producing areas of Bong, Lofa, and Nimba Counties. Besides the distribution of rice production inputs to 10 000 smallholder rice farmers, the project is equipping 20 rice farmers' groups with agricultural machinery to enhance their production and income generation capacity.



Selega Farmer's Cooperative members undergo Power Tiller operations and maintenance training

The support includes the provision of power tillers and implements for 10 rice producing farmer groups who are unable to fully utilize their agricultural lands due to the lack of labor and resources to rent agricultural machinery. FAO is additionally supporting 10 farmer's groups by providing them rice mills and threshers to improved their food processing and income generation capacity.

Besides farming implements and startup package comprising fuel, lubricants and tools, the Selega Farmers Cooperative also received rice production inputs, consisting of 80 bags rice seeds, 80 bags of NPK fertilizer, 160 bags UREA fertilizer and pest management supplies.

With lowland rice on nursery, readying for transplanting, the power tiller was a stitch in time, said Beyan S. Kanneh from Bakedu Town farmers' cooperative, who was also in Selega for the power tiller workshop. "I'm very happy with this machine, the training and the help we received from the UN."

“I have been in training for two days and I can tell you that I am ready to move this machine. We will grow more food here,” said Lawrence Ballah a training participant from Selega Farmer’s Cooperative. Richard K. Kollie another training participant from Selega cooperative appreciated FAO’s support and assured his group’s commitment to make the best use of the equipment “This machine will reduce labour which means we can cultivate more land and grow more food – we will benefit as a group”

The Lofa County Agriculture Coordinator, Mr. John B. Davee Sr, said: “In contemporary Liberia, farming with bare hands is no longer acceptable, therefore FAO’s support is very timely and relevant” When asked about the sustainability and effective use of provided equipment, the official said “The groups have to have their own management teams in place and the ministries of Internal Affairs and Agriculture will make sure these (power tillers) are well maintained by beneficiaries”

Speaking to the farmers in Selega, FAO’s Emergency Coordinator Abdul Razak urged them to take proper custody of the machine because “the equipment is a communal property. It should set the stage for expanding agricultural activities and improving incomes.” He suggested they embark upon a groups’ savings scheme for the proper usage and management of communal assets.

Website Link

<http://www.new-ag.info/focus/focusItem.php?a=1746>