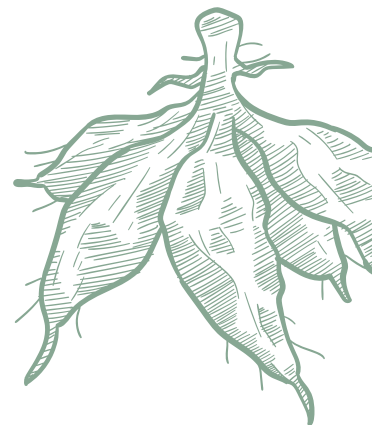




Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



MALAWI

Strengthening linkages between small actors and buyers in the roots and tubers sector in Africa

The main staple crop in the lake shore districts, cassava is the second most important staple crop after maize in Malawi. Becoming commercially important, its production has nearly tripled in ten years and small scale farmers and food enterprises, though strong contenders for regional and domestic market opportunities, have difficulties entering the value chain. To unleash their potential, the African Roots and Tubers project sought to: (i) increase and intensify sustainable market-led production and (ii) strengthen farmers' cooperatives; (iii) improve access to climate change risk management tools and access to finance; and (iv) develop business models throughout the value chain in which farmers and enterprises play a key role.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED

In terms of production compared from the recent season of 2016–2017 to 2013–2014, total cassava output increased to 5 100 000 m from 4 800 000 m; area coverage increased 15.7 percent, now 232 000 ha from 200 000 ha; and productivity increased to 25 m from 15 15 m/ha. The number of cassava farmers increased as well to 252 000 from 120 000, and the uptake of improved varieties nearly doubled – to 18 000 from fewer than 10 000 farmers.

National meteorologist now receive datasets on cassava and agro-meteorological messages have been developed and disseminated to those farmers and small value chain actors through information systems. In collaboration with the World Food Programme and the Malawi National Meteorological Agency, approximately 5 000 farmers, processors and small value-chain actors receive ten-day weather advisories and updates. About 3 200 farmers and 23 processors on a regular basis receive information on inputs and credit costs, and market prices. Additionally 1 600 farmer registered to 35 newly formed farmer organizations, with guidance by 25 cassava farmer leaders, including 24 seed multipliers.

To date, over 60 contract farming agreements signed between producers (e.g. individuals, groups, associations) and buyers

(e.g. small food enterprises, trader associations, shops) and five new bank accounts opened by farmers and processors. The members of Tiyanjane Cooperative are making relevant margins from their processed cassava products and reinvesting profits to build other infrastructure to expand their business.

The stable and consistent supply of cassava provided by farmers, combined with enhanced processing skills of local producers, allowed one relevant processor of High Quality Cassava Flour (HQCF) in the Nkhosakota District to increase HQCF volumes to 10 tonnes per season in 2018, from 0.5 tonnes per season in 2009. The availability of HQCF in the local market has stimulated the introduction and commercialization of four new food products: scones, cakes, donuts and biscuits, which are composed of 50 percent by HQCF, 50 percent by wheat flour.

HOW IT WAS ACHIEVED

The African Roots and Tubers project Farmer Field School (FFS) programme provided an integrated package of on-farm and off-farm solutions to minimize losses as well as improve quality and safety, resulting in higher productivity and better prices. The 10 FFS mobilized more than 3 000 farmers and equipped them with good planting materials and best agronomic practices, business and marketing management, as well as pests and disease control. In cassava processing, 68 processors trained and 48 awarded with the Malawi Bureau of Standards certificate of cassava products, and 52 extension officers trained as para seed inspectors and 24 farmers trained in seed multiplication.

Cassava though considered a climate change – resilient staple, it still produces less yields as other staple crops effected by erratic rainfall, floods and recent droughts. As cassava is consumed more by households, fewer surpluses are available for urban markets and processing industries. As such in studying the level of impact climate change has on the sector, the project

assessed the gaps in the provision of climate information and risk management strategies. Main issues identified are the weak provision of weather information at farmer level, and the lack of insurance schemes for cassava farmers. To address these issues, collaboration with WFP and the National Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services has enabled the establishment of a sustainable weather and climate information system, scaled up to include all Malawian cassava producers across the country.

The main bottlenecks preventing big buyers from purchasing cassava from farmers and small flour producers emerged from a market and value chain study procured by the project. As such three Farmer and Processor Organizations were selected to pair with one large scale buyer, who provided training on wet cake processing to 60 farmers. The project also supported capacity development of small food enterprises in

processing and packaging techniques that are environmentally sustainable, food safety standards and hygiene practices as well as business skills that can increase procurement from farmers.

In terms of access to financial services, the main challenges for the supply of financial products in Malawi are high degree of risk perception of the cassava subsector, the lack of collateral and high financing costs and interest rates. The project thus organized dialogues and trainings tailored to financial institutions and small value chain actors (farmers, small food enterprises and processors) in Agricultural Value Chain Financing, provided information and data on the potential of investing in the cassava sector. As such one commercial bank is now appraising the request for equipment loans from seven small food enterprises identified as profitable business opportunities; the bank is working with FAO to identify the most feasible financial product to serve this clientele.

Cassava farmer and processor supported by the project, Malawi



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AFRICAN ROOTS AND TUBERS PROJECT

Agricultural Development Economics Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

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