



FLASH NEWS ISSUE N.3 AFRICAN ROOTS AND TUBERS

This newsletter provides information on the FAO project “Strengthening Linkages between Buyers and Small Actors in the Roots and Tubers Sector in Africa” (ART) project which may be of interest to you. The newsletter is a core tool for knowledge sharing among members of the project.

Welcome

Welcome to the second issue of ART Flash News, a quarterly newsletter to keep you updated on the ART project. Check out the previous issue: www.fao.org/3/a-i7139e.pdf.

In this issue you will find:

- Results from the field in Malawi, Benin and Ivory Coast;
- Shekina Enterprise: a case study from the roots and tubers industry;
- Establishing collaboration with the FAO Multi-Partner Program Support Mechanism (FMM) Project;
- Upcoming events
- Introduction to Lead Technical Officer for Climate Risk Management.

Enjoy your reading! *ART Team*

Results from the field

Supporting linkages Farmer Organizations – Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and SMEs - Buyers of High Quality Cassava Flour in Malawi

In Malawi, the project supports linkages between farmer organizations and Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and between SMEs and buyers of High Quality Cassava Flour (HQCF). Through the services provided by Farm Concern International, the project has piloted the wet cake supply to Universal Faming and Milling Limited, which

recommended one farmer organization for its capacity and adherence to standard operating procedures. The organization has already constructed a working shelter for the commercialization.

Thus, the sun-dried HQCF processing has been scaled out by supporting 12 entrepreneurs in trainings and exposure visits, and establishing working relationships with farmers to increase the fresh cassava supply base. Two entrepreneurs purchased processing equipment using personal funds while eight others worked with a financial institution to access capital investment loans.



Representative of UFML outside Nkula processing house discussing with FO members ©FAO/Margherita Bavagnoli

Key areas of achievements between 2016 and 2017 include: expansion of supply base for both FOs and SMEs recruited under the project by at least 43 percent; establishment of 22 demonstration plots were established where farmers learned about two new improved cassava varieties; 24 plots where farmers around the



3 FOs learnt about performance of two new improved cassava varieties, 24 private seed multipliers were trained and engaged in seed multiplication, of whom eight have been certified by the Department of Agriculture Research Services as suppliers of good seed; and 12 SMEs received training in practical business plan writing.

Training on inclusive business models in Benin

In Benin, the ART project supports the cassava and yam value chains. These markets are subject to large fluctuations, the pricing mechanisms in the market are often unilateral, and the information networks are not very functional. Establishing sustainable and profitable business relationships among all actors in the yam and cassava sectors is necessary to improve the incomes and food security of the actors operating in these sectors.

In this context, the project provided a four-day training on *Inclusive Business Models* to strengthen the capacities of actors involved in promoting the cassava and yam sectors in the country. Specifically, the 40 participants includes staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of commerce, national and international NGOs, leaders of farmer apex organization, development project active in the country.

The training provided tools and the methodological approach to the participants for implementing and promoting inclusive pathways. The methodological approach emphasized the links between the producer/processor and the buyer. The event combined presentations, group work, panels, interactive discussions between producers/processors and buyers, and field trips. Case studies on inclusive business models were also presented and analysed. It included also a field visit that permitted the participants to practice and apply the tools and knowledge acquired over this 4-day intensive training.

During the training, the Director of Rural Legislation, Support for Professional Organizations and Agricultural Entrepreneurship of the Ministry of Agriculture and focal point of the project for Benin, Mr. Maxime Gounse, pointed out that "the inclusive business model can be seen as a guarantee for

increasing the income level of the activities, improving the living conditions of the various players, and positioning them better on the market".

Increasing access to financial services in Ivory Coast

In order to identify measures to strengthen linkages between value chain actors, particularly cassava, and financial service providers in Ivory Coast, the ART project contracted the international NGO Positive Planet to conduct an assessment of the agricultural financial market in the country.

Findings of the study – covering the rural areas of Dabou (South), Yamoussoukro (Center), Bouaké (North) and Abidjan – showed that the main barriers to accessing financial services relate to the very limited means or resources of individuals and groups, leading to "fear of credit". Other constraints include: concerns over the conditions for access to credit; issues on land titling; and lack of collaterals

The main recommendations for facilitating the access of cassava actors to financial services (credit or savings) were as follows:

For groups and associations operating in the cassava sector: Strengthen the capacities of players and groups in the sector, especially the organization and structuring of groups, which have not yet been juridically recognized and most of the organizations do not operate as a group.;

For individual actors operating in the cassava value chain: Facilitate communication between the actors of the sector and the suppliers of financial services. In addition, train the value chain players on financial and management education, irrespective of age and income. Trainings should be adapted to the needs of three groups: producers; processors and traders.

For financial and non-financial players: Raise awareness and encourage greater financial inclusion among suppliers of financial services in rural areas, and offer technical assistance – e.g. partnerships with clusters, platforms, new technology solutions to collect savings and diversify distribution networks. The teams of financial institutions should be strengthened with specialized agricultural finance experts. In addition, a fund should be established to facilitate



access to credit for actors in the cassava sector, and the interest in micro-insurance linked to climatic hazards should be increased to combat environmental risks and their financial impact.

Implementing the Farmer Field School Programme in Benin

The ART project contributes to sustainably increasing market-led production through a combination of developing seed system strategies and farmer training.



Training activities on the Agro Eco System Analysis (AAES) of a farm
©FAO/Margherita Bavagnoli

In Benin, work has been done to develop programmes for implementing the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach to trainers in good agricultural practices and environmentally sound management of natural resources.

The first FFS Training of Trainers session for the cassava sector took place from 5 to 14 June 2017 in Niaouli. The event brought together 12 participants who came from the localities where the FFSs and the producers are located. Theoretical and practical training sessions equipped participants with technical skills to build the capacity of the cassava producers on the FFS approach to integrated management. A “Facilitators School Field for Practical Learning” was also set up and trainings were given to producers on new production techniques in order to improve their yield and quality of production, while keeping a lens on climate change considerations. As a result, 7 FFSs for cassava have been set up. A follow-up field trip carried out between 20 and 24 August 2017 certified that the facilitators have been able to build adequate capacities of producers on the FFS approach as a whole in the *communes* of Djakotomè, Savalou and Adja-Ouèrè.

A second Training of Trainers session was held from 21 to 29 September 2017, covering the principle of the Agro Eco System Analysis. Efforts are in place to duplicate this activity in the neighbouring regions of Northern Benin, targeting the yam sector.

From the roots and tubers industry: Case study: Shekina Enterprise, in Rwanda

Shekina Enterprise is a Rwandan food processing company. Though an innovative drying mechanism, it recycles waste cassava leaves, making a dried cassava product with a shelf life of two years that is easy to transport, easy to cook and less energy-consuming.

Shekina is also having a big impact on the community by addressing gender inequalities in horticulture work through the creation of new roles for women beyond unpaid or poorly paid labour at production level, which also has low social status. Shekina has a well-organized supply chain where farmers are grouped in cooperatives, each of them with a collection centre facility which reduces the distance farmers have to travel to deliver their produce. Women are appointed to liaise between the Enterprise and the farmers on the quantity of cassava leaves required, to match demand with supply. The decentralized collection centres allow leaves and stems to be separated before they are transported to the factory, thus reducing transport volumes and lowering costs.

Shekina’s dried cassava leaves are very successful on both the local and international markets.

News

Collaboration with the FAO Multi-Partner Program Support Mechanism (FMM) project

The FAO Multi-Partner Program Support project *Enabling women to benefit more equally from agrifood value chains* (<http://www.fao.org/in-action/women-in-agrifood-value-chains/en/>), contributes to expanding women’s economic opportunities and benefits from more efficient



and inclusive agrifood chains, triggering multiplier effects on food and nutrition security, education and health in several African countries. In Ivory Coast, the FMM project shares with the ART project the common objective of empowering and improving the livelihoods of women working in the cassava sector. The two FAO projects are collaborating to conduct trainings for these women on inclusive business models, processing techniques, hygiene standards, standardized qualitative and quantitative control systems (use of standardized and internationally recognized measurement units), and access to financial and risk management services. In November 2016, the projects contributed to the ceremony of the “Panafrikan Cassava Days”, initiating the set-up process for an Interbranch Organization for the cassava sector. Attending the ceremony was the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mamadou Sangafowa Coulibaly.

FMM and ART are also collaborating on a technical study on the cassava value chain in the country, which will be released soon.

Meet the Project’s Technical Expert on Climate Risk Management



Dr. Selvaraju Ramasamy is Climate Change Officer at FAO, Headquarter.

Dr. Ramasamy is involved in providing technical advisory services on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction to FAO member countries.

Dr. Selvaraju counts over 25 years of experience in applied climate risk management, mainly in the areas of climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, sustainable natural resources management, and climate information systems.

His work on climate information services in agriculture includes the establishment of user interface platforms and delivery of action-oriented climate information.

Events in the coming semester

- Regional Workshop on Climate Risk Management, from 28 to 30 November 2017 in Rwanda
- Regional Workshop on Seed Systems, from 5 to 8 December 2017 in Ghana

CONTACT

For more information visit:

www.fao.org/in-action/african-roots-and-tubers

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