

Food Security through Commercialization of Agriculture



A word from the ICC...

This article was written by Mr. Daniele Salvini, former Inter Country Coordinator (ICC) of the FSCA Programme, before taking up duties to a new post in the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. The editorial team takes this opportunity to thank Mr Salvini for his continued contribution to this Newsletter and wishes him plenty of success in his future endeavors.



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A word from ICC

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After-action of the midterm review

Here we are, the first midterm reviews of some FSCA projects have just been completed. It has been quite successful having the beneficiaries, the project staff and the Donor to exchange ideas, provide clarifications or comments and finally give clear information about how the rest of each project's implementation will be in order to achieve the objectives stated in the original documents. So now it's the right time to look back and take stock of this experience in order to improve the midterm reviews of the next countries. We have been lucky that the very Chief of the Italian Cooperation Office II, Dr Mauro Massoni came to Dakar to personally participate in the two reviews. His suggestions and comments were fully reflected in the final document that from now on will accompany the implementation of the seven projects until their completion. However, we also have to highlight a few issues that could have been better addressed for the success of the review. Many friends complained that the review authorities, especially Dr Massoni and Dr. Lucci Chiarissi (TCSF) did not have sufficient time to visit more field activities and exchange with beneficiaries. That's a real point, but we knew it would be hard for "the Chief" of Office II of the Italian Cooperation to be available for a longer time. To alleviate this problem, my suggestion is to prepare a short "professional" video that could

provide more "background information" to Dr Massoni in order to facilitate his understanding of the situation where the project is working, the type of beneficiaries, their problems, their "daily life". It would also be quite good if each project could prepare a sort of "photographic album" which could be consulted by the midterm review members when needed. The power point projections used to illustrate each project activities and results were not "always" well done. It is suggested that the NPCs send his/her presentation to the ICC in time so that some suggestion and improvement can be provided before the review. An important part of the midterm review was the "Beneficiaries' Evaluation". Unfortunately, due to several delays, the preparation of this part was not completed in time. It will be done "later" and the results will be incorporated and reflected in the work plan of each project. It is important now that the next reviews could be organized after the Beneficiaries' Evaluation is completed. A specific training has been organized in Dakar and in Banjul in March. By now all the projects have recruited the consultant/ enterprise to run the Beneficiaries' Evaluation so that the exercise can be timely conducted according to the guidance provided by TCSF.

ComDev training workshop plays crucial role in promoting the use of communication tools for agricultural development

Silvia San Marco, Communication for Development Consultant, FAO Rome

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For four days between 11th and 15th April 2011, the Food Security through Commercialization of Agriculture (FSCA) Communication for Development team lead a ComDev training workshop in Dakar, Senegal. For the first time ever national project coordinators, communication consultants, field officers and representatives of partners and farmer-based organizations from Senegal, Mali, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau and The Gambia met to share their knowledge and experiences about their projects. They were joined by Mr Daniele Salvini, FSCA Inter-country coordinator, and Mr Yannick DeMol from the DIMITRA project.



Mr Ouattara, FAO Representative in Senegal, gave the opening speech to welcome the participants to the workshop.

The idea of a ComDev workshop stemmed from the recommendations received by individual country projects and from the third FSCA Regional Workshop held in Mali in 2010.

The workshop's objective was to enhance the communication skills of project staff and key stakeholders.



The Sierra Leone team during a group activity.

The training provided an overall view of ComDev theories, techniques and methodologies along with more practical sessions on communication tools such as the use of participatory video, rural radio, web and photography. Emphasis was placed on participation, interaction, peer-to-peer exchange and consensus building through dialogue. The participatory nature of the event was enhanced by a stimulating environment which encouraged all participants to freely express their ideas.



The Mali team mapping communication flows in the project.

All the training sessions were designed so as to inspire the full engagement of each participant. A number of innovative approaches and techniques were used to motivate participants such as: Open Space – to determine the agenda or discussion topic; Mind mapping – to graphically illustrate the relationships between communication issues and SWOT analysis - to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a project.



Mr Monibah, ComDev consultant, presenting the Liberian SWOT analysis.

A Social Reporting Team, consisting of various project staff, was tasked with the drafting of key messages arising from the event, and dissemination to a wider audience through audio interviews, still images, uploading posts and short videos on the FSCA website. All the participants fully contributed to the event creating an interactive forum where practical lessons could be learned and emerging communication issues could be shared and discussed.



ComDev consultants during a cross cutting lunch.

All contributors found it extremely valuable to network and strengthen collaboration with peers from other projects. The workshop was also a fantastic relationship building opportunity and many of the participants plan to develop their programs by visiting each others' projects in the near future.



An image of workshop participants.

Senegal: The Queen of Sipo

Ibrahima Sané, Communication for Development Consultant, Senegal

Fatou Mané is simplicity itself, living in a small hut, which is not much to look at. She is the queen of Sipo, a small island in the Saloun delta, in Senegal. The delta is a vast area crossed by *bolongs* (creeks), at the mouth of the Saloum River. It is there in the region of Fatick, in the centre-west of the country, where the sea inextricably interlaces the continent, creating dozens of tiny, mostly uninhabited islands. A group of rural farmers will welcome you just as they welcome the tourists here – with hope and enthusiasm.



A bolong in Sipo island

It is this situation that upset the heads of CISV, an Italian non-governmental organization (NGO). “The tourists leave nothing on the island”, explains Emanuel Camara, the head of the local branch of CISV. “They come, take photos and then leave.” What CISV wants to develop is what Mr Camara calls “responsible tourism”. The tourists should be able to come and discover another culture while contributing to local development.

Following an analytical study, CISV therefore decided to support the construction of a restaurant there, which would be managed by the *Association pour le Développement de Sipo* (ADS), representing all the inhabitants of the island. Sensing an opportunity for development, the Food Security through Commercialization of Agriculture programme (FSCA) joins this effort. Ibrahim Faye, the National Coordinator of FSCA Senegal, explains, “If tourism must be brought back, it might just as well be with local products. This is why we have decided to support development of a market garden perimeter where ADS will produce vegetables and tomato, and set up a fruit juice processing unit, which will provide added value.”



A family living in Sipo island

ADS has just been established; it is a collection of a mosaic of ethnic groups coming from different backgrounds. Sipo is inhabited by people coming from Guinea Bissau, Casamance (south

Senegal), Sine, Salou (centre of Senegal) and Mali. They are Mancagnes, Mandjaques, Diolas, Mandingues, Sérères and Bambaras.

The lingua franca is Mandingue, which some have yet to master. After all, we are only the second generation of inhabitants.



Children at school

The French school has only been established recently. There are only two primary classes. Most of the inhabitants therefore have never been to school. The glue that holds this community together is Fatou Mané, the Queen of the island. Tourists come especially just to see her. She is always sitting at the entrance of her garden. And she enjoys speaking to everyone. Her son is the chief of the village, which his deceased father founded.

The President, Moussa Bagayoko, is young, just 30 years old. He explains that he relies extensively on young people, particularly for community works where youth plays a major role.

The Vice President of the Association is a young

woman. For her “sisters”, she asks for training in dye-making, dress-making and a literacy centre.

The project has visibly awakened the Sipo inhabitants' capacity to dream.



The Queen of Sipo welcoming a tourist.

Guinea Bissau: the radio in rural communities

Pedro Quade, Communication for Development Consultant, Guinea Bissau

In the rural areas of Guinea Bissau, local communication is still the most used method for transmitting messages that should lead to change. As in other West African countries, the rural areas of the country have a high illiteracy rate and have very little access to the media: the printed press is lacking due to the inexistence of distribution networks, and television is practically not watched.

As a result, radio represents a very strong means of communication, at the local level (community radio) and long distance (national radio) for male and female farmers of the country, including for those who benefit from the project in the regions of Oio (north of the country) and Bafata (in the east).



Radio Sol Mansi in Bissau

The radio, the communication channel that is particularly appreciated by the public, is listened to by most of the agro-silvo-pastoral sector. Nevertheless, it is necessary to have a good understanding of access to it by different

categories of the population, as well as their interests, needs and expectations with respect to selected subjects and broadcast time. Therefore, a survey conducted on the field within the framework of drafting a communication strategy for developing the DIVA project has made it possible to create a profile, with respect to radio, on the different actors and beneficiaries on the project sites. The first observation was that, above all, it is the men and youth who listen to it. Women practically do not listen to it, in particular because they lack of time as a result of their great workload, have difficulties in understanding the languages in which the radio is broadcast, and often they don't even own radios.



Women selling coal

With respect to the subjects covered, men listen in particular to the programmes on traditions, death notices, and various messages sent by relatives living far away, as well as

advice on life in general and to agricultural work. These programmes are successful because they are broadcast in local languages (Pular, Mandingue and Balanta), as opposed to other programmes, which are mainly broadcast in Creole (the most understood national unity language) or in Portuguese (the official language, which is not well known in the rural areas).



Radio Bafata building

Youth are a distinct radio audience: they prefer mostly, listening to music and sport news, and are neither interested in the DIVA project nor involved in the implemented activities, feeling that their specific interests are ignored.



Radio Sol Mansi in Mansoa

Despite radio's potential as a means of communication, it has not

yet been exploited by the project. With the implementation of the next phase of the communication strategy, this situation should soon change. Indeed, numerous activities have been planned for the community radio, especially awareness-raising programmes on local agricultural products and product processing procedures; coverage of events such as meetings between producers, organizing on-air debates or news and information on agricultural issues and perspectives of rural development. It is an enormous challenge to face, but worth pursuing.



Sweet potatoes sale on the road

Mali: The issue of milk in Ménaka

Guimba Kamissoko, Communication for Development Consultant, FSCA Mali

Situated in northeast Mali, the Circle of Ménaka covers a surface area 79 685 km². Not far from the Mali/Niger border, Ménaka is 1 502 km from Bamako. Its population consists of Touareg, Arab, Haussa, Derma and Fulani, whose economy is culturally linked to livestock farming. With a Sahelian climate and an average rainfall of 250 mm per year, the circle's economy is largely driven by livestock farming and related activities.



Cows coming back from grazing

Theoretically, the population of the Ménaka Commune would not be able to consume all of its own milk production. Unfortunately, having good milk in Ménaka today is a big question mark for several reasons. Due to its dependence on fluctuating rainfall, the animals lack pastureland. From 2009 to 2010, the circle of Ménaka only recorded a few rainfall events, which prevented it from regenerating pastureland. The result was a considerable lack of cattle feed. Consequently, many livestock farmers transhumed towards neighbouring Niger. Those who remain are always

lacking in feed. The population no longer has pure milk, even for family consumption. Due to a good rainy season in 2010, upon the return of transhumance, most of the animals perished en route. Livestock farmers like Mr Assalim, 52 years old, father of eight children, finds it hard to feed himself and his family.



Mr Assalim under his tent

Mr Assalim: "I left in transhumance with several hundred heads of animals, mostly cattle. Upon return from transhumance, all the animals died, exhausted from hunger. Today, only nine sheep and two donkeys remain. All around me, there are a dozen families living in the same conditions, not knowing what to do. We must get by somehow. What I do to survive, together with my family, is to collect wild fonio, which has now become our staple food. We often work for others." Usually, the nomads of Ménaka do not sell their milk. They limit themselves to own consumption – most of them preferring to leave the calves suckling their mothers – perhaps not

knowing the benefits that could be derived from selling milk. Indeed, milk production and sale could be an alternative to the development of cattle farming in Ménaka.



General Assembly in Ménaka

Today, the livestock farmer cooperatives created around Ménaka try to produce milk from selected Azawakh Zebus. Unfortunately, they are faced with the problem of livestock feed. The defective conditions of the Ansongo-Ménaka laterite road, 205 km long, discourage a good number of transporters to take this route. One of the responses of the populations and their partners in the milk problem in Ménaka was the creation of two mini-dairies. With a very reduced capacity, they not only lack electricity to conserve production, but they also lack the means of transportation to collect milk from the livestock farmers in periods of abundance. Ménaka could be a possible exporter of milk, but at the moment, it consumes more milk powder than it imports.

This imported milk is essentially the raw material processed by the two mini-dairies where they produce curdled milk, yogurt and fresh pasteurized milk. It is clear that this issue must be addressed.



Visitors and workers of the Ménaka dairy

There is new hope on the horizon for re-launching milk production in Ménaka – the FSCA Programme in Mali. Indeed, the population highly depends on this project in order to teach livestock farmers to produce fodder and improve urea-treated straw. This will finally enable them to produce cow milk in a new dairy where electricity, no longer a luxury, will allow them to conserve their milk products.



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GUINEA : Representative of the FBO COOPAGRI

Hadja Ballou FOFANA



First name: Hadja Ballou

Last Name: FOFANA

Country: Guinea

Responsibilities: Farmer and representative of the farmer-based organization COOPAGRI.

A professional lawyer, Hadja Fofana initially worked in the public sector as Director General of Civil Rights in the Guinean Ministry of Interior, before resigning in order to start a security services company with her husband.

Seeking to diversify her experience and contribute to the social and economic development of her hometown, she set up in 2000 Fabik Farm. The farm covers an area of 72 hectares in Kondoyah (in the prefecture of Kindia), South East Guinea. The farm's activities consist of: the production of palm kernel grains, the processing of red palm oil, pineapple production, banana production and cattle and sheep breeding.

For the last three years, Ms. Fofana has been contributing to the revival of banana production in

Guinea through her collaboration with the Agronomical Research Institute of Foulaya. She has been involved with two research projects to determine which of the latest technological developments are most effective in the cultivation of eleven varieties of banana and plantain trees.

To encourage farmers in her region to become economically independent, Ms. Fofana founded in 2006 the Kondoya Agricultural Cooperative ('COOPAGRI Kondoyah' - 'Coopérative Agricole de Kondoyah'). Since its inception, she has enabled approximately twenty small-scale producers to start banana and pineapple production by providing them with tillers and agricultural materials (e.g. seeds and fertilizer) with a 0% loan.

In addition to her farming activities, Ms. Fofana founded The 'Association for the Agro-pastoral Development of Kindia' ('ADAKI' - 'Association pour le Développement Agropastorale de Kindia'). ADAKI's principal activity is to raise young people's awareness about their rights and responsibilities through a variety of activities including: assistance with the processing of marriage and birth certificates, the provision of legal advice on land contracts, improvement of literacy

skills, and the provision of advocacy services. She also promotes the use of post-harvest machines.

Ms. Fofana is also actively involved in a variety of food security and crop cultivation programmes in the region such as: the World Bank financed Emergency Food Security Programme (rice and corn production); the Fruit and Vegetable Project ('PROFEL' - 'Projet Fruits et Légumes dans les régions de Mamou et Kindia') and the Food Security through Commercialization of Agriculture (FSCA) programme.

During her ten years of experience in the rural world, Ms. Fofana has achieved considerable success in agricultural development. These achievements and her proximity to the reality of the agricultural world and its people mean that she is a valuable and important development stakeholder.

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

You are involved in the FSCA Programme and you would like to submit an article for this newsletter?

Any contribution and / or comment is welcome and can be sent directly to:

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