



# Empowering smallholder farmers in markets

Experiences with farmer-led research for advocacy

Giel Ton • Felicity Proctor



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Experiences with farmer-led research for advocacy

Edited by  
Giel Ton and Felicity Proctor

## Colophon

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# About the authors

**Dossa Aguemon** is agronomist, a graduate of Abomey-Calavi University (1998). He obtained his Master's degree in 2007 (Académie de Louvain). He has 16 years of professional experience in research and development and support to local administrations and farmer organisations. Currently, he works for the National Platform of Farmers Organisations and Agricultural Producers of Benin (PNOPPA-Benin) and for the Federation of Producer Unions of Benin (FUPRO-Benin). Dossa is preparing a PhD-dissertation on local governance and development policies in Benin.



**Jean-Francois Le Coq** is an agro-economist at the Environment and Society Department of the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD). After obtaining his PhD on analysing the impact of liberalization reform on agricultural dynamics in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam, he focused his research on producers' organisations and their role in governance of commodity chains, provision of agricultural services to smallholders, and policy processes. Now posted to the National University of Costa Rica (UNA), he has been involved in support programmes for producers' organisations and research programmes on the integration of environmental services in value chains and public policy.



**Bart Doorneweert** is a graduate (in Dairy Science) of Larenstein Agricultural College in Deventer (the Netherlands). At LEI Wageningen UR, he works on various projects related to research and design of business models addressing basic challenges in agriculture and development. He has gained expertise in value chain entrepreneurship in agriculture by co-founding a farmer-led cotton processor in India, and advising a range of other start-up companies.



**Ninoska González Herrera** is liaison officer for grass-roots entrepreneurship at Agriterro (the Netherlands). Ninoska graduated as an Agronomist specializing in agribusiness from Talca University in Chile and holds an MSc in Management of Agricultural Knowledge Systems from Wageningen University and an Advanced Masters in International Development Studies from the Centre for International Development Studies (CIDIN) of the Radboud University Nijmegen. Since 2011, she has been working with leaders and managers of farmer organisations in Peru, Bolivia, Indonesia and Nepal to make their organisations sustainable and orientated towards stimulating farmer entrepreneurship.



**Christian Goüet** is an international consultant who worked in Chile directing extension programmes and was CEO of a smallholder-owned company. Based in Paris, Christian holds an MSc in Management of Agricultural Knowledge Systems and is currently completing his PhD in Communication and Innovation Studies at Wageningen University. Since 2000, he has worked with Agriterro and other agri-agencies to advise farmer organisations in Africa, Asia and Latin America. He also helped the International Labour Office (ILO) to develop training modules on cooperative management and acts as a senior trainer of trainers. Christian was the Development Programme Manager for IFAP (International Federation of Agricultural Producers, 2007-2009).



**Karin de Grip** graduated in Tropical Agriculture (BSc) and obtained an MSc in Management of Agricultural Knowledge Systems from Wageningen University. She worked in Indonesia, Mali and Kenya as a livestock development advisor. Between 2000 and 2004, she was employed at Wageningen University and worked on research projects related with the monitoring of innovation programmes for sustainable agriculture. In 2009, she joined LEI to work on projects related to agricultural entrepreneurship, sustainability in agricultural value chains and the assessment of capacities in farmer organisations.



**Bette Harms** obtained an MSc in Applied Communication Science from Wageningen University and has particular expertise in multi-stakeholder processes, farmer organisations, smallholder farmers, biodiversity, sustainable production and processes of societal change with respect to natural resource management. She has experience in Africa and Asia on connecting local farmer capacities in natural resource management to other stakeholders -public or private, local or global - in order to enhance local resilience and sustainable development.



**Henri Hocdé** is an agronomist at the Environment and Society Department of the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD). He was posted in Nicaragua (1986-1990) and Central America (1990-2000), where he worked with the National Agricultural Research Systems as a researcher and broker between smallholders, extension workers and researchers. His focus is on strengthening farmers' innovation capacities through action-research in partnership.



**Frédéric Lançon** is an economist at the Environment and Society Department of the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development. Following his PhD on market functioning and food supply for West African cities, his work has focused on the drivers of competitiveness in staple food systems and commodity chains in developing countries. Based at CIRAD headquarters in France, he was posted in Indonesia within the United Nations Organisation and in West Africa as a policy economist for the Africa Rice Centre, working on the competitiveness of the West African rice economies.



**Gerdien Meijerink** is an economist at LEI Wageningen UR. Before joining LEI, she worked for the CGIAR at ISNAR (International Service for National Agricultural Research). Her recent research has focused on the consequences of high food prices and economic risk management. She has published extensively on this topic, and has presented her work to various audiences, from Unilever to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She now heads the International Policy group at LEI, which mainly works on food security and the biobased economy, but also on various other topics such as the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union.



**Augustine Mwendya** is an Agriculturist by profession, with over 38 years' of experience working in the agricultural sector in general and the farming fraternity in particular. A graduate of Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, he holds a Post-Graduate Diploma in Integrated Rural Development, from the Pan-African Institute for Development in Cameroon. He is the Chief Executive Secretary of the Uganda National Farmers Federation, an umbrella organisation of Farmer Associations in Uganda (UNFFE). Before joining the UNFFE in 1998 as Chief Executive Secretary, he worked at the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries for 24 years.



**Gideon Onumah** is an expert in agricultural economics and development finance. He had over 10 years of work experience in central banking and rural, informal micro-finance, before joining the Natural Resources Institute. His focus is on commodity trade and finance, including commodity market liberalisation in Africa, and institutional frameworks for inventory credit. He is currently leading a team collaborating with African farmer organisations in promoting market-based farm risk management tools.



**Helena Posthumus** is an interdisciplinary academic with an interest in rural development and natural resource management. In 2005, she obtained her PhD on socio-economic aspects of soil conservation in Peru. Between 2005 and 2009, she worked at Cranfield University on land and water management, agricultural policy and economics in the UK. Since 2009, she works as a senior research fellow at the Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich, on various applied research projects, including value chain development, conservation agriculture, agricultural innovation, and impact assessments. Since 2013, she also works at the Royal Tropical Institute (the Netherlands).



**Felicity Proctor** has worked in international development throughout her career, with bilateral and multilateral agencies of the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the World Bank, among others. In 2007 she established a consulting company. Her career has focused on rural and agricultural development including agricultural diversification. Specifically relevant is her work in horticultural development including technical and organisational aspects of export development, postharvest technology, marketing and value chain development.



**Ted Schrader** is a development sociologist specialized in rural economic transformation processes, capacity strengthening of farmer organisations and institutional change for agribusiness development. He currently works for the Centre for Development Innovation (CDI) of Wageningen University and Research centre (WUR). He adopts multi-stakeholder and innovation-system perspectives to understand socio-economic dynamics in rural areas and to develop policy and practice for sustainable agricultural development. Ted Schrader has more than 25 years of professional experience in Sub-Saharan Africa, including long-term assignments in West, East and Central Africa.



**Giel Ton** graduated from Wageningen University as an agricultural economist. He worked in Nicaragua from 1989-1996 with a farmers' association in Condega, and between 1998-2004 for the national coordinating platform of economic farmer organisations (CIOEC) in Bolivia. Since 2006, he has been at the Agricultural Economics Research Institute (LEI Wageningen UR), as a senior researcher in diverse research projects on innovation grant systems, inclusive business models, collective marketing arrangements, certification programmes and private sector development. Giel Ton coordinates the Empowering Smallholder Farmers in Markets (ESFIM) programme. In the academic field, he has published on the design of impact evaluations of complex change processes and on organisational social capital in agricultural value chains.



**Bertus Wennink** holds an MSc in Ecology from Wageningen University. He joined the Royal Tropical Institute (the Netherlands) in 1994. He is a specialist in multi-stakeholder approaches for local economic development and value chain development, the management of demand-driven agricultural services, and capacity-strengthening of farmer-led enterprises and producer organisations. He has additional expertise in the design and implementation of approaches and tools for action-research and capacity building and is an experienced trainer and workshop facilitator.



# Preface

A central principle of the reform of agricultural research and innovation systems, as advocated by stakeholders in the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), has always been that innovation systems should have the needs and concerns of smallholder farmers at their core. At the same time, there is a strong awareness that farmers themselves have always been innovators and should be recognized and involved as such, and therefore not relegated to the end of a technology pipeline.

That farmers are innovators themselves has been recognized for many years, in particular through the pioneering work of individuals such as Robert Chambers, whose book 'Farmer First' did much to set a new farmer-centred agenda for agricultural research. However, despite this, fundamental challenges remain in the way in which many innovation systems currently operate. It is not enough just to strengthen and create new forms of research partnerships. The scale of the challenges we face also requires the development of capacities throughout the Agricultural Research for Development (AR4D) system, from farmers to research, recognizing that we are combining two forms of knowledge and innovation. Alongside this, greater attention should be paid to the role of those who broker agricultural knowledge and technologies for development, in particular the farmers' own organizations.

Despite the enormous challenges we face in continuing to ensure food and nutrition security, viable livelihoods for farmers and the sustainable intensification of production, agricultural research and innovation have been grossly neglected in recent years. Governments have only recently woken up to the need to ensure food security as a cornerstone of national stability and progress. Moreover, resource-poor smallholders are usually last to benefit from any interventions or can even be further disadvantaged. The acceptability of agricultural technologies itself requires a common understanding and trust between farmers and consumers, which have often broken down as research has become further removed from its intended beneficiaries. We urgently need to strengthen and reform systems of agricultural innovation, reconnecting agricultural science with society.

Smallholder farmers comprise the majority of the world's farmers and most of the world's poor live in rural environments or have migrated to cities in order to escape rural poverty. 'Knowledge is power' resonates strongly in agriculture. Smallholder farmers are true entrepreneurs. In moving into more formalized markets, they become exposed to national and international markets that are determined by factors beyond their immediate control. Smallholder farmers face many challenges, including knowledge and technology-based decisions: in accessing markets; in infrastructure, storage and transport; in production scale, assuring frequency and quality of supply; in access to land, inputs, credit and insurance; and in negotiation with traders where they face many additional hurdles beyond those facing large-scale producers. Effective and equitable engagement in market systems means empowering farmers by breaking down these knowledge and technology-determined barriers. Long-term market access can be made viable by creating favourable trade policies, recognizing market demands and providing smallholders with knowledge-based bargaining power in the relationships involved.

There is a huge amount of information on knowledge, technologies and markets worldwide. Much of this information is constrained, however, by a host of barriers: Who wants to share it and with whom? Is it in the right medium, in the right language? Is it accessible? Can it be understood and used by farmers? Are our own institutions creating walls that prevent information from being shared because doing so would represent a loss of power, rather than an added value to be esteemed? Breaking down

these walls requires development-centered thinking, with the various sectors learning and innovating together. This necessitates institutional reorientation, changed values and a convergence of research and development, education and business policies, and resources.

GFAR stakeholders have pioneered a range of actions directly empowering farmers in agricultural innovation. The ProInnova programme (Promoting Local Innovation) has mobilized and shared ecologically-based research led by smallholder farmers and civil society organizations. The DURAS programme pioneered research processes explicitly requiring the involvement of both farmer innovation and that of formal research in identifying and addressing agricultural challenges. The ESFIM programme reported in this book has taken the best of these considerations and brought them directly into addressing the constraints faced by smallholders, in accessing and benefiting from markets around the world.

Clearly, more needs to be done to empower resource-poor smallholder farmers to equip themselves and enable them to enter markets competitively. Discussions and development of case studies among GFAR stakeholders around this theme laid out a structured approach for tackling these problems. Concerted efforts among a broad range of GFAR stakeholders, including those by CIAT, CIRAD, FAO, The World Bank and Regional Forums around the world gave rise to new thinking on the needs and constraints in linking smallholder farmers to markets.

Arising from these findings, the ESFIM Global Partnership Programme became a Community of Practice, built from the bottom up, in the spirit of GFAR's principles. The farmers themselves, through their (former) global body the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) called for direct attention to be paid to their own role in innovation and research towards better market access and benefits.

With the support of the AGRINATURA network of European research institutes on agricultural research and capacity building for development, the Empowering Smallholder Farmers in Markets (ESFIM) programme was established. With financial aid from IFAD, Agricord and the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, this programme has been led directly by national farmers' organizations around the world and supported by local researchers and with technical backstopping from the AGRINATURA network and staff.

Through the ESFIM programme, the power of farmers' organizations themselves to articulate and address their needs, to work effectively with research organizations and to advocate for change has become very clear. The activities described in this book offer excellent examples of what can be achieved by national farmer organizations in shaping their own roles and advocacy and in developing the knowledge and innovation required to effectively and equitably access markets.

Drawing on a range of farmer-driven programmes from around the world, ESFIM has been truly pioneering in many ways. Bringing together collaborative research driven by national farmer organizations, comparative research between diverse country contexts and the sharing of learning to enable actions, the programme has shown the real value of linking farmer organizations and research to resolve challenges facing smallholders in engaging in markets. Furthermore, it has clearly also empowered farmer groups to challenge existing norms in how innovation systems have been operating within the countries concerned and demonstrated new paths to more enlightened partnerships.

Of particular note also are the analyses undertaken through the programme of the contribution it has made to changing the behaviour and efficacy of farmer organizations themselves. ESFIM has helped measurably to build their self esteem and willingness to shape their own destinies by addressing significant barriers, either through their own research or by making better use of technical knowledge available elsewhere.

This book is well written and the authors are congratulated on how well they have set out their case and the value of the ESFIM programme. I have no hesitation in commending it to its readers. I trust that it will in turn inspire many others to actively link farmers and research in addressing the challenges of agricultural innovation and enterprise, to give smallholder farmers real opportunities to grow their incomes and livelihoods, and thus give them a better future.

Dr Mark Holderness

*Executive Secretary of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR)*





# Introduction

## Strengthening the advocacy capacities of national farmer organisations through collaborative research

GIEL TON AND FELICITY PROCTOR

Generally, policy instruments and institutional arrangements emerge from a political arena in which smallholders have limited power compared with other interest groups. Even when smallholders are positioned to represent their interests in these policy arenas, they often lack the information and capacity to play this role in a pro-active manner (Bosc et al. 2001; Carney 1996; Hussein 2001). Currently, many countries have an agricultural policy and poverty reduction strategy that explicitly supports the inclusion of smallholders in markets. In many countries, it is therefore not the policy– the set of laws, as such– but the budgetary, technical, administrative, implementation arrangement and governance aspects of the

specific laws that falls short and needs to be adjusted to generate positive impact for smallholders (Ton 2008). Evidence and creative thinking is needed in the policy design of effective rules and regulations and working institutional arrangements to empower smallholders in markets.

Research has a role to play in feeding this creative and pro-active thinking, supporting the advocacy of smallholders with information and analysis. However, most of the current research and discussions about enabling policies and innovative institutional mechanisms for smallholder market access takes place within international donors, specialised universities and the international research centres working on rural development. These debates and findings, as good as they may be, are however scarcely used in the national farmer organisations (NFOs) internal processes of learning and deliberation, and are seldom reflected in their proposals for policy change.

In spite of the intentions -e.g., as documented in the report of the first 2010 Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GFAR, 2011)- there is still too little done to bridge the gap between the research community and farmer organisations. There is a willingness on both sides to cooperate but there are few instances in which this really happens. There is a need for a flexible and effective interface between farmer organisations and national and international researchers to help farmer organisations obtain more accurate and timely evidence on policy proposals and topics that matter most to them and their members. Support to farmer organisations in the selection of key issues and upgrading their advocacy methods can help these organisations to be more effective campaigners for the interests of smallholders.

NFOs are often not seriously involved in consultation processes, be it as a result of neglect by policy makers or as a result of their own limited capacities, skills and experiences in engagement with national policy processes and in the formulation of advocacy strategies. The capacity of NFOs in developing countries to interact with researchers and collect and process information is generally quite weak. To address this problem, the Empowering Smallholder Farmers in Markets programme (ESFIM) started as a pilot project to help bridge the gap between NFOs on the one hand and the research community on the other. The ESFIM programme sought to strengthen the capacity of NFOs to use evidence in their farmer-led advocacy processes. In this paper, we present the experiences with this specific modality of research support piloted between 2007 and 2012, and reflect on its impact on the advocacy capacities of NFOs. To do so, in this introductory chapter, we first detail the background of the programme and describe the intervention logic that forms its rationale. Then, we present the key issues prioritised by the NFOs and we give illustrations of the dynamics around the related research and advocacy processes. We finish with some lessons learnt from the ESFIM experience to fine-tune future research-for-advocacy support to national farmer organisations.

## Background

The Empowering Smallholder Farmers in Markets (ESFIM) programme was born in 2006, in response to a call for proposals by the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) to the European Consortium of Agricultural Research and Technology (ECART, which later merged into the European platform of research institutes AGRINATURA. During the inception phase (2007), an inventory was made of key relevant research and policy-focused programmes that complemented and reinforced, or could be reinforced by, ESFIM activities. At that time, amongst the most important other programmes identified in a preparatory study by Proctor (2007) were the 'Regoverning Markets Programme', led by IIED (Vorley et al. 2007) and the work projected by the Global Forum on Agricultural Research in its Linking Farmers to Markets programme. Important insights had been gained already by organisations that take part in this forum, including FAO, CIAT, CIRAD and the World Bank (Shepherd 2007; Markelova et al.

2009; Bienabé et al. 2004; Hellin et al. 2009). IFAP was represented in the GFAR Steering Committee and insisted that research had to be more farmer-focused to resolve problems in production and marketing (Wilkinson 2006). In 2007, the farmer organisations represented by IFAP considered that the GFAR was in need of on-the-ground pilot experiences to put this policy discourse into practice. IFAD supported this initiative with a grant to AGRINATURA to assist IFAP in finding a way doing so. AGRINATURA developed a concept note for such a programme, which was assessed during the ESFIM International Workshop held in Tunis in October 2007. The backbone of the ESFIM programme was defined in three components: collaborative research in pilot countries; comparative research on some priority issues; and learning for action to make research outputs useful for smallholder farmers (see Table 1).

The tentative selection of NFOs for the collaborative research partnerships was made during the ESFIM Inception Phase in 2007. This was based on the quality and smallholder focus of the membership organisations, their ability to lead the process in their country and their commitment and experience to engage in advocacy for pro-poor policy development. This led to a selection of countries for which the contours of a research partnership were explored: Benin, Costa Rica, India, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Peru, the Philippines, South Africa, Uganda and Uruguay. Most of these organisations were supported by Agriterra in the Farmers Fighting Poverty Programme. As such, ESFIM support could build upon the organisational capacities and staff in these NFOs, and focus on research support and advocacy needs only. In 2008–2009 the ESFIM programme, with funding from IFAD and AGRICORD, started the collaborative research component with a round of participatory national workshops to define the issues for improving market access of smallholders and to influence related policies and institutions. Based on these prioritised research needs, a follow-up three year process of research-for-advocacy started in 2010, with co-funding from IFAD and the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, led by the farmer organisations and supported by thematically specialised local researchers and with technical backstopping from AGRINATURA staff.

TABLE 1 OBJECTIVES OF THE ESFIM PROGRAMME

<b>Goal</b>	Strengthen the capacities of farmer organisations in developing countries to empower their smallholder members in markets, create an enabling policy and regulatory environment and effective economic organisations.
<b>Objective</b>	The overall objective is to generate demand-driven action research supporting the activities undertaken by farmer organisations in proposing changes in the institutional and legislative context, in order to strengthen their economic organisation and institutions and the power of smallholder farmers in markets.
<b>Specific objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assist a number of national farmer organisations in developing countries with formulating feasible, evidence-based propositions for changes in key elements in the institutional environment that will enable effective marketing strategies for smallholders. COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH</li> <li>2. Support farmer organisations with information and learning processes on innovative and replicable policies and institutional arrangements that empower smallholder farmers in markets through the study of relevant market empowerment initiatives drawn from both industrialised and developing countries. COMPARATIVE RESEARCH</li> <li>3. Facilitate learning of national farmer organisations in both developed and developing countries to enable them to use evidence-based information to increase their capacity to influence the lobby agendas and policy and market processes related to smallholder farmers' access to markets. LEARNING FOR ACTION</li> </ol>

Source: ESFIM Concept Note (2008)

## Collaborative research activities

The elaboration of the precise research priorities for their lobby agenda and marketing strategies is the responsibility of each of the NFOs leading the research in their respective country (see Table 2). They used participative workshops with their constituents, together with government officials and NGOs and supplemented with contributions from national researchers, who presented existing and emerging research outputs. Each workshop aimed to identify key issues related to the empowerment of smallholder farmers in markets. A follow-up participatory process was essential to refine the themes in the research partnership. In each country, an ESFIM country co-ordination team has been established to supervise and co-ordinate the research process. The process of priority setting and activity planning is cyclical, whereby research proposals could be amended when progressive findings/developments alter the research priorities.

TABLE 2 NATIONAL FARMER ORGANISATIONS PARTNERING IN THE ESFIM PROGRAMME

COUNTRY	NAME OF LEAD PARTNER ORGANISATION
Benin	Fédération des Unions de Producteurs de Bénin (FUPRO)
Bolivia	Coordinadora de Integración de Organizaciones Económicas Campesinas de Bolivia (CIOEC-Bolivia)
Costa Rica	Coordinadora de Mujeres Campesinas de Costa Rica (CMC)
India	Federation of farmer organisations in Andhra Pradesh (FFA – AP), India
Kenya	Kenya National Federation of Agricultural Producers (KENFAP)
Madagascar	Coalition Paysanne de Madagascar (FTM/CPM)
Malawi	National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi (NASFAM)
Peru	Junta Nacional del Café (JNC), Perú
Philippines	Federation of Free Farmers (FFF), Philippines
Uganda	Uganda National Farmers' Federation (UNFFE)
Uruguay	Cooperativas Agrarias Federadas (CAF), Uruguay

Research support to harness and analyse the issues and to refine their proposals with technical and evidence-based research was provided by AGRINATURA and local research consultants. Local research institutes and independent consultants were subcontracted according to the thematic issues that emanated from the workshops and provided their research support under terms of references drawn up by the NFO with AGRINATURA support. Contracted local research and participatory workshops were funded through a €30,000 grant to each NFO.

The experiences of the ESFIM programme in Table 3 are described in detail in the different chapters in this book. They serve to illustrate the diversity of issues that the national farmer organisations identified as research priorities to determine their advocacy agendas. In different ways and with varying levels of impact, each activity served to support the particular national farmer organisation as they took forward their prioritised agenda to public policy debate or private sector development.

TABLE 3 KEY THEMATIC FOCUS IN ESFIM IN EACH COUNTRY

NATIONAL FARMERS ORGANISATION	KEY THEMATIC FOCUS IN ESFIM PROGRAMME
FUPRO-Benin	Maize sector policy; Value chain development support programmes
CIOEC-Bolivia	Law for preferential policies for collective marketing organisations
CMC-Costa Rica	Farmers' markets; Food sovereignty legislation
FFA-India	Innovative market linkages and collective marketing
KENFAP-Kenya	Impact of input subsidies; regulations for Warehouse Receipt Systems
CPM-Madagascar	Rural service provisioning
NASFAM-Malawi	Seed supply systems; Market information system
JNC -Peru	Taxation policies; Investment funds; Government procurement
FFF-Philippines	Electronic Commodity Trade
UNFFE-Uganda	National rural advisory system
CAF-Uruguay	National innovation policy

## Outcomes of the research and advocacy process

In Benin, FUPRO took an active role in leadership and coordination of the local researcher activities and was central to the identification of challenges and to the development of option for innovative action and strategic research topics. FUPRO organised debriefings, regional workshops, exchange visits, and a writeshop and strategic workshop. The federation also recruited local researchers for thematic studies in a transparent manner, including facilitation of their connections to the field, and coordinated systematic member consultation. The work provided an evidence-based foundation for FUPRO's dialogue with the government on better governance within the maize sector. However in 2012 the Dutch Embassy, which was to fund a maize value chain development project, had a change in personnel and political priorities. The maize project was discontinued and replaced by a new project with FUPRO to improve the uptake of research results by farmers. This latter project is a follow-up of ESFIM activities, as essentially the same partners are involved in support to FUPRO; ESFIM activities were seen as the prime reason for taking these partners on board.

CIOEC-Bolivia identified the need for a re-launch of their advocacy on a Law on Rural Economic Organisations (OECAs). The essence of the OECA Law initiative, developed by CIOEC in 2004 and approved in Parliament in 2008, was the recognition of OECAs as organisations having both economic and social objectives, and thus calling for preferential policies to stimulate the sector and trigger inclusive rural economic development. Due to major political turbulence between in 2008-2009, the OECA Law did not result in implementation. With ESFIM support, the proposal was put into place as a fine-tuned and effective advocacy process. The OECA Law was accepted onto the agenda of Parliament in August 2012, approved in parliament in November 2012 and enacted on 26 January 2013. This is a tremendous advocacy success for CIOEC and ESFIM.

In Costa Rica, a dialogue was conducted within the platform of NFOs in 2010. The rural women's organisation CMC had a central role in this process. The main approach to advocacy was the realisation of forums in the national assembly to promote the theme of food sovereignty. The mobilisation of a large number of producers for a demonstration and the alliance with a national parliamentarian directly influenced policy and resulted in a law on food sovereignty. Moreover, this mobilisation led to the creation



of a new structure - the farmer Platform for Agro-Food. Whereas alliances with powerful organisations were somewhat lacking during the ESFIM programme, this new specialised platform now provides a good opportunity for future follow-up activities.

In India, after a promising start, the ESFIM process was disrupted and finally the partnership terminated. FFA/CIFA showed leadership and charisma in national and international advocacy but lacked the structure to commit to and manage an adaptive research process within the framework of ESFIM. This experience shows the importance of having a minimum threshold of organisational capacity within the farmer organisation for partnering, especially where a mutually agreed and transparent implementation responsibility is required.

KENFAP commissioned four studies. The first study involved an assessment of Kenya Government's interventions in agricultural input (maize seed and fertiliser) and output markets (maize grain). Its aim was to determine the impact and sustainability of the interventions involving delivery of subsidised fertiliser and certified seeds to smallholder farmers. KENFAP presented a formal resolution, which reflected the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report, to the President of the Republic of Kenya in June 2011. KENFAP initiated a second set of policy research studies on the role of the Warehouse Receipt System (WRS) in improving produce marketing, and the role of financial services in improving produce marketing, both focusing on smallholders. The studies provide evidence to support contributions made by KENFAP in the on-going consultation process with the government, although external credibility was somewhat reduced due to the fact that all studies were implemented by KENFAP staff.

In Madagascar, the proportion of smallholder production sold on markets is very low due to infrastructural constraints (roads) and, therefore, the ESFIM process was hampered by the lack of interest of farmer groups to invest time and money on advocacy to the government, as changing the 'rules of the game in the market' would not necessarily increase the demand for their products. With transportation a major constraint, any alternative institutional arrangement such as forms of collective marketing or innovative policies to empower smallholders in markets did not resonate as much as issues related with infrastructure, extension and credit. This was aggravated by the institutional context in which CPM operates, with a very weak government. The studies drew attention, however, to the fact that development NGOs and international donors tend to define rural development priorities, whereas the views of farmer organisations in the policy dialogue are almost and markedly absent.

In Malawi, two local consultants were commissioned by NASFAM to develop proposals for case studies to be carried out under ESFIM, one on Market Information Systems (MIS) and a second one on smallholder seed multiplication systems. The aim of the case studies was to gather information that could be used by NASFAM for policy advocacy. NASFAM was active in different fora where these studies could have been used, for example the multistakeholder policy initiatives around MIS and the Agricultural Commodity Exchange launched by Auction Holdings Limited. The distance between NASFAM and the consultants, however, limited the potential impact of the studies.

In Peru, JNC knew that many policies that affected the coffee sector had to be tackled through an intersectoral platform, the *Convención Nacional del Agro Peruano* (CONVEAGRO). Therefore, JNC used ESFIM activities to articulate the voice of these economic farmer organisations and to develop a pro-active advocacy agenda. This had an unexpectedly large effect on the advocacy strategies of the sector, when in November 2010 several of these economic organisations were elected to the board of CONVEAGRO, including its presidency, and could use its networks and reputation to take their agenda forward. To do so, JNC and CONVEAGRO combined evidence-informed advocacy to key persons in government and parliament with street demonstrations to put the issues on the political agenda. For example, JNC addressed the decision of the fiscal authorities to tax internal transactions between the organisation and its members. This would have severely affected both the cooperative banks and the coffee cooperatives. It took several years of advocacy to ultimately release the cooperatives from such fiscal constraints.

The focus of the ESFIM collaborative project in the Philippines was defined during a two-day workshop organised in February 2009. This workshop decided to do the collaborative research on a single objective: the implementation of an Agricultural Commodity Exchange System (ACES) to improve market transparency and efficiency. A joint assessment by the National Food Authorities (NFA) and other agricultural institutions, including the FFF of the shortcomings of previous initiatives concluded that it was necessary to open and share the formulation and the design of the ACES with all the stakeholders involved in agricultural marketing (agro-food industries, traders, farmers and NFA). In order to support and trigger discussions between the various stakeholders, NFA and FFF asked consultants to develop a simple game simulating how the system operates, including how transactions would be set up. Through these activities, FFF was also able to bring farmers' views and concerns into the ACES steering committee debate and provided key inputs on the potential impact of the projected ACES.

The National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) was established in 2001 by the Government of Uganda. It became part of wider policy reforms at the end of the 1990s, which aimed to alleviate widespread poverty by transforming the country's agriculture into a market-oriented, commercialised sector. UNFFE decided to undertake a survey to audit the effectiveness of legislation and policies that affected farmers, with specific reference to NAADS. Farmer groups that participated in NAADS, as well as some that did not, were interviewed about their experiences with NAADS during so-called 'fire-place meetings'. On the basis of these results, the consultant and two UNFFE members drafted a proposal ('A Green Print for NAADS reform'). UNFFE discussed this proposal with the Minister of Agriculture. The Minister assured the UNFFE that NAADS will revert to a focus on the provision of extension and advisory services. In addition, the Minister appointed UNFFE to the committee which is planning a new project under NAADS called 'Agriculture Technology and Agri-business Advisory Services'.

The focus of CAF was on the Innovation Policy that forms the backbone of Uruguay's support to the development of the private sector. The relevance of this theme was evidenced by the rapid development and growth in the Uruguayan agricultural sector. Uruguayan economic policies have innovation as their core objective. The board of CAF hired two senior consultants in July 2011, who undertook a range of interviews with the key persons in Uruguay's innovation system, assisted by an advisory board with delegates from CAF, ANII/INIAA and AGRINATURA. They selected three sector experts to conduct research on the innovation obstacles affecting cooperatives in agriculture, dairy, and livestock. Each sector has particular characteristics in terms of relative competitiveness of cooperatives and logistical

challenges in their value chains. The research made CAF-staff and the cooperatives aware of the value of their practices as innovation processes. As a result, innovation became prominent in CAF's public relation activities. In 2012, two high-level advocacy events were held, during which the cooperatives and CAF discussed the findings from the reports.

## Monitoring change

In the last chapter of the book, we present the results of an exercise to assess the outcomes and impact of the ESFIM collaborative research support, using a theory-based evaluation method (Weiss 1997; Ton et al. 2011). As advocacy on market access issues in developing countries takes place in a dynamic and complex social environment and the participative process is inherently adaptive to changes in this environment, the monitoring and evaluation system had to be tailored to cope with changes and uncertainty (Morell 2010). In each country an initial 'logic model' for the ESFIM support was established. These models indicated how the research support inputs was expected to translate in terms of outcomes and impact and helped to discover the key assumptions in this causal reasoning. These logic models were adjusted regularly to reflect on-going dynamics in each country. The changes were reported to the project management to make sure that the planned dynamics still fell within the general objectives of ESFIM.

The ESFIM programme played its role in bridging the gap between the research community and national farmer organisations (NFOs) and specifically in providing research support to NFOs that strengthened their capacities to formulate feasible, evidence-based propositions for their focussed advocacy on smallholder market access. The programme delivered tailored outputs on issues prioritised by the NFOs. The work also contributed to learning on workable institutional mechanisms to bridge the gap between the different institutional cultures of research and NFOs.

ESFIM used this country-specific logic to design a system to track the impact of its activities in the future. We developed a graphic representation of the intervention logic that reflects the expectations of how the ESFIM programme impact on smallholder market access was realized. Advocacy activities benefit the economies of smallholder households indirectly. In the intervention logic it is assumed that advocacy will enable non-traditional marketing arrangements to emerge and expand (e.g., contract farming, niche marketing and collective marketing), bringing economic benefit to smallholder farmers. The ESFIM action sought to enhance social capital and to strengthen the capacities of farmer organisations and their networks, specifically in the context of organising market access for smallholders. To do so, ESFIM dedicated resources to research that sought to enhance the capacities of NFO partners to influence and shape a more conducive institutional environment. As such, partner NFOs will become more closely involved and proactive in contributing to the creation of public policy, research agendas and donor community programmes.

## Ways forward

The ESFIM programme played its role in bridging the gap between the research community and national farmer organisations (NFOs) and specifically in providing research support to NFOs that strengthened their capacities to formulate feasible, evidence-based propositions for their focussed advocacy on smallholder market access. The programme delivered tailored outputs on issues prioritised by the NFOs. The work also contributed to learning on workable institutional mechanisms to bridge the gap between the

**BOX 1**

We developed a framework for funding four components that together can institutionalise and follow-up ESFIM collaborative research:

- **Participatory processes of policy generation.** Budget for NFOs to facilitate the elaboration of research proposals based on their advocacy needs, including the necessary participative processes of policy generation and targeted advocacy.
- **ESFIM Research Support Fund.** The fund has to be managed by an advisory team in each country, comprised of independent experts proposed by the national farmer organisation, the regional network in which they participate, and include at least one representative of a national research institute. The advisory team will review the quality and eligibility of submitted research proposals.
- **Backstopping.** International and national researchers can support the NFOs in the discussion on and drafting of the proposals submitted to the Research Support Fund, provide professional/technical backstopping to the funded research assignments, and help to link NFOs with relevant research outputs, networks, programmes and expertise.
- **Dialogue with the research community.** Through workshops and meetings with researchers and farm leaders, the NFOs need to link up with the wider on-going and relevant research undertaken by the national research system and locally represented international research institutes.

different institutional cultures of research and NFOs. The experience in ESFIM shows the positive value of linkages between farmer organisations and research to resolve challenges in smallholder engagement in value chains. It also provides lessons to fine-tune the modalities of farmer-led research.

To make collaborative research effective, the NFOs need to value the role of research to validate and refine their policy proposals. Organisations that already had an extensive trajectory of advocacy provided better conditions to focus the research activities than the organisations that had little experience in doing so. Through the ESFIM programme, all NFOs increased their experience with managing research assignments, articulating their research needs more precisely and discussing research outputs. They gained experience working with a wider group of researchers and consultants, and strengthened their relationships with the ones that have gained their trust and respect. We consider that ESFIM has been successful in triggering and facilitating these processes. These institutional arrangements require a sufficient time frame to build the confidence of both the researchers and NFOs in the synergy between research and evidence in the research community, as well as between advocacy and learning in the farmer community.

The experiences of ESFIM, documented in this book and presented in international fora like the Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD 2012), has drawn attention to the need for similar farmer-led collaborative research approaches in other research and development programmes. The ESFIM experience points to the need to earmark separate funding for NFO-led contracted research and for participatory processes, including planning and advocacy. For the former, we recommend the establishment of a Research Support Fund as a country-specific competitive fund, eligible to farmer organisations only, and to be used exclusively for contracting research support for them. The principles that guide this ESFIM follow-up, as highlighted in Box 1, may guide farmer organisations, development partners and research institutions to take forward their work in supporting and linking evidence based research with farmer-led advocacy to empower smallholder farmers in markets.

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# Benin

## FUPRO-Benin: preparing the ground for value chain links and sector policies

TED SCHRADER, DOSSA AGUEMON AND BERTUS WENNINK

FUPRO-BENIN is a multi-layered organisation composed of primary cooperatives and associations, district unions (UCP) and regional unions (URP). FUPRO is at the interface between the farmers and the community of stakeholders in development on the one hand and between farmers and the State on the other. It participates on behalf of farmers in the development and implementation of agricultural development programmes as well as in Benin's agricultural policy dialogue. FUPRO takes the lead in representing and defending the interests of its farmer members. Areas of intervention include information dissemination, communication and training services, and the mobilisation of external resources for financing programmes and projects in rural areas.

*“Maize is the most important food crop in Benin and is produced in all regions of the country, although under varying conditions.”*

## Development challenge

Maize is the most important food crop in Benin and is produced in all regions of the country, although under varying conditions. The southern part of the country is densely populated, farms are small, and there are two crops per year production. In the north of the country, farms are much larger but there is only a single production season. For a long time, agricultural policies in Benin favoured the cotton sector, which was the main recipient of public investment and intervention. Recent agricultural policies are, however, more open to agricultural diversification, with maize being a priority crop. The Government’s ambition is to double maize production (to 1.9 million tons in 2015), aiming to improve both food security and stakeholders’ incomes. The Benin cotton sector crisis and soaring food commodity prices triggered the call of District Producers’ Unions (UCPs) for agricultural diversification, with an explicit focus on maize. Maize was not only to enhance food security but also to become an alternative “cash crop”.

It was in this context that the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Benin (EKN Benin) asked the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV Benin) to prepare a concept plan for a maize and cereal crop development programme for Benin. This resulted in a proposal to invest in Action-Oriented Research (AOR) to underpin the preparation of a new programme. Considering their representation in all regions of Benin, it was proposed that the Federation of Unions of Agricultural Producers of Benin (FUPRO) be entrusted with implementation of this AOR programme. Another reason to put FUPRO in the driver’s seat was that producers’ perspectives were seen to be lacking in the assessment of maize value chains, which had already been initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (MAEP). The objective of the proposed Action-Oriented Research (AOR) programme was to deepen the knowledge and understanding of the maize sector through an analysis of challenges and opportunities in various maize value chains, as identified by sector stakeholders in general and farmers in particular. The AOR programme was explicitly oriented to the formulation of a future development programme for promoting competitive, sustainable and inclusive maize value chains in Benin. For this reason the AOR programme was also referred to as the Maize Programme Pre-Project (*“Avant Projet Maïs”*- APM). The basic aim of the AOR programme was to work on strategic levers and to identify institutional and practical options for change that were based where possible on the experiences of innovative actions by farmers and other stakeholders, both in Benin and in neighbouring countries.

The AOR programme was made possible through funding from the EKN Benin; Agriterra who specifically provided support to regional workshops and exchange visits to Burkina Faso; and the ESFIM programme. The action research team was composed of researchers of FUPRO (at national, regional and district levels), SNV Benin, Agriterra, the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) and the Centre for Development Innovation of Wageningen University and Research Centre (CDI-WUR), part of AGRINATURA. Agreements were signed between FUPRO-BENIN and all other partners. All partners are also members of Agri-ProFocus, which is becoming an increasingly important network for the promotion of farmer en-

trepreneurship and which is represented in Benin through the AgriHub Benin. The five partners worked as a team. The diagram below shows the roles of the different parties, as defined in the APM proposal.

TABLE 4 MEMBERS OF THE RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP

<b>FUPRO</b>	Management and coordination of the AOR project; Organisation of the AOR process; Mobilisation of the farmers and their organisations at different levels; Ensuring communication of research process and results and links with Ministry of Agriculture and other important stakeholders.
<b>SNV</b>	Advisory services to FUPRO concerning its management and coordination tasks; Technical and methodological support for AOR process.
<b>Agriterra</b>	Valorisation of experiences of other African FO's through the organisation of exchange visits; Capitalisation of experiences of maize producers in Benin at local and grassroots levels.
<b>KIT and CDI-WUR</b>	Provide specific support to the action research strategy and programme including Elaboration of research protocols; Moderation of multi-stakeholder workshops; Capacity strengthening of FUPRO and SNV staff and of sub-contracted local researchers; Organisation of Writeshops; Advisory inputs for the formulation of a programme for maize value chain development.

## Collaborative research process

In December 2010, EKN Benin agreed to a ten-month contract with FUPRO and SNV, the intention being that the AOR would lead to a full proposal for the development of maize value chains in Benin. The programme became operational in April-May 2011, after the recruitment of a FUPRO AOR coordinator and agreement on the design of the action research process, facilitated by KIT and CDI. Activities were thus concentrated in a period of six months.

### Desk studies

The desk research focused on collecting and analysing information on the dynamics surrounding maize value chains in Benin and in neighbouring countries, as well as identifying market opportunities including comparative market advantages. This research, conducted by consultants hired through a tender call, highlighted possible innovations in specific maize value chains in Benin and in the West African sub-region. This led to an inventory of potentially interesting ways to promote maize value chains and the identification of possible destinations for (farmers') exchange visits.

Results of the desk research were validated during a workshop organised by FUPRO. The workshop, which was characterised by a strong participation of actors in the maize sector, including many farmers and FO's, confirmed the priorities for maize value chain development: white maize for the local market; white maize for the regional market; yellow maize for animal feed for the local market; maize grits for brewing; and improved infant maize flour. The findings were in line with conclusions from the MAEP. Information from the desk studies contributed to a discussion on challenges and possible actions, as well as to the selection of study themes. This was also evidence of the iterative nature of the action research process.

*“What are the levers and options for making maize value chains more competitive, sustainable and inclusive, in order to contribute to food and nutrition security in Benin and to improve producers’ income?”*

### Identification of challenges, options and research subjects

In the early stages of the research process, CDI and KIT had extensive meetings with FUPRO to discuss the challenges farmers face in the maize sector. A conceptual framework (RISE; rural innovation systems and entrepreneurship – Schrader, 2011a) was used to systematically seek drivers for maize market system change and also for discerning options to improve existing value chains, especially to the benefit of (smallholder) farmers, other local entrepreneurs and labourers.

The overall research question of the AOR programme was formulated as follows: *‘What are the levers and options for making maize value chains more competitive, sustainable and inclusive, in order to contribute to food and nutrition security in Benin and to improve producers’ income?’*

This process led to the identification of ten challenge areas: (i) food security; (ii) producers and their organisations; (iii) production and productivity; (iv) storage and conservation; (v) processing; (vi) commercial relations and price transmissions; (vii) product development and marketing; (viii) regional trade and competition; (ix) institutional context; and (x) technical and financial support services. These ten topics were also considered to form the basis for identifying practical actions having the potential to contribute to answering the overall research question.

Based on the identified challenges and options, the literature review and FUPRO’s strategic analysis of the maize sector, 12 subjects for action-oriented research were identified within the same ten challenge/performance areas. These subjects were validated during the AOR programme planning meeting of the team (May 2011).

### Methodological guidance workshop

This workshop focused on the methodology of AOR and the planning of action-oriented research. The workshop was guided by a document suggesting a step-wise approach for systematically conceiving and planning an action research programme (*‘Cadrage méthodologique: une approche participative et itérative pour les organisations paysannes nationales pilotant les activités de recherche-action’*). The following steps were taken during the workshop:

- Definition, intervention logic and result chain of action research
- Establishment of conceptual framework - Rural Innovation Systems and Entrepreneurship: perspectives on value chains and market actors
- Analysis of concerns and priorities mentioned in action research proposals (APM and ESFIM)
- Structuring the action research activities (based on challenges and options as identified with FUPRO and explained above)
- Formation of central questions for the action research programme and delimitation of action research subjects
- Discussion of methodological approaches, i.e., methods and tools
- Structuring and presentation of desk study (according to ten action research areas)
- Discussion on necessary profile of researcher.

With hindsight, FUPRO and SNV realised that the APM document did not explicitly define what action research is, and how it differs from other traditional approaches for the identification and the formula-

tion of agricultural development projects and programmes. For this reason, the methodological guidance workshop at the beginning of the process was considered to be both an eye-opener and a crucial step in the process.

The initial approach mainly mentioned desk research and capitalisation workshops. The AOR programme placed more emphasis on thematic priorities and case studies of promising innovations. The start of activities was delayed among others by difficulties in establishing collaboration with the intended research partners at the Faculty of Agronomic Science of the University of Abomey-Calavi (FSA/UAC). To prevent further delay, it was decided to use the budget allocated to FSA/UAC to contract consultants for eight studies and use the ESFIM budget for another four studies.

## BOX 2 Selected study themes

The twelve subjects for action research were the following:

1. Institutional and practical options for improving farmers' access to quality inputs at affordable prices
2. Options to improve access to quality seed for different maize value chains
3. Using or not using storage and conservation techniques and consequences for losses, quality and economic results
4. Warehouse receipt system: factors determining success and failure
5. Organisation of women for processing and marketing of maize
6. Possibilities for direct sourcing of dried maize from organised farmers by large private and public buyers
7. Collective marketing: strengthening negotiating power of farmers through collective action
8. Promoting yellow maize value chains for supplying animal feed industry
9. Transparency of cross-border trade: analysis of transaction costs
10. Functioning of maize agribusiness clusters
11. Institutional and practical measures for improving collaboration between producers and local public technical service providers
12. Institutional and practical measures for improving credit provision for economic activities of farmers and their organisations

The thematic approach – underpinned by case studies - was chosen for various complementary reasons: desk studies (including previous MAEP studies) had already analysed specific value chains; farmers stressed cross-cutting issues (such as access to seeds, inputs and credit, quality extension services); farmer organisations had a specific interest in options for collective action (collective procurement and marketing, contract farming); and maize farmers do not target specific value chains when responding to market opportunities and may operate simultaneously in several markets and value chains. Ultimately, only two thematic studies (6 and 8) were specific to certain value chains. The other studies all pertained to cross-cutting issues that were of common interest to several or even all maize value chains.

For each of the research subjects, detailed Terms of Reference were prepared by FUPRO, with support from SNV, CDI and KIT. These knowledge institutions provided a toolbox with possible research methods and stressing the importance of triangulation.

Because of the action-oriented nature of the research activities, specific attention was given to case studies of farmers' and farmer organisations that already had some experience with innovative activities and collaborative relationships with other stakeholders. This enabled the identification of realistic and feasible options for action. The idea was to build a programme for maize value chain development that was based on current circumstances and existing entrepreneurial dynamics.

### Capitalisation workshops and exchange visit

Six regional workshops were organised to harness the experiences of farmers in maize value chains. The workshops were attended by producers from municipalities within the department hosting the workshop but also by representatives of other departments, and they concentrated on sharing experiences on maize storage, conservation and marketing. The workshops documented the experiences of value chain shareholders in terms of management, achieved results, strengths and weaknesses, sustainability, and thoughts on possible improvements. The discussions also helped to identify cases for the study themes and goals for the exchange visit.

This part of the AOR programme reflected the focus on current innovative practices as a stepping stone for more comprehensive maize value chain development and the out- and up-scaling of good practices.

The exchange visit to Burkina Faso applied the same philosophy of identifying innovative practices and solutions. The visit allowed participants (maize farmers and some other actors in the maize sector) to learn about various topics in the promotion of maize value chains in Burkina Faso, such as warehouse receipt systems, contracting with maize millers, and access to inputs.

### Member consultation

The objective of the member consultation was to review the situation of maize-producing family farms and maize cooperatives, in order to better understand the constraints and opportunities they face. This would allow the prioritisation of policy issues and identify options for practical action based on the actual situation and objectives of maize producers and their organisations. The consultation allowed farmers and their primary organisations not only to state their opinions on the issues at stake but also to share their objectives and suggestions to develop the value chains to the benefit of other producers. For FUPRO, the organisation of a member consultation was relatively new and much appreciated as a tool to reveal the situation and aspirations of the maize farmers and maize cooperatives in the country and as a means to enhance the representational role of FUPRO.

A methodological guide (*“Methodology for systematic member consultation: a guide for researchers”* CDI, August 2011) was used to organise the survey: sampling; research methods; various questionnaires and Excel files for data entry. FUPRO led the member consultation process after the methodology had been pre-tested in Natitingou. The pre-test also provided practical, on-the-job training for FUPRO leaders and staff, who subsequently trained and coached the interviewers.

The survey team included FUPRO staff that trained and monitored the member interviewers as well as the six sub-contracted interviewers. Leaders and staff of the regional and district level farmer organisations facilitated the successful implementation of the inquiries. The workload of the survey was 20 days per region and totalled 120 days.

The main elements of the survey were the following: focused group interviews with cooperatives, interviews with individual farmers, self-assessment of the maize cooperatives and establishment of profiles of maize farmers. The survey was conducted among 24 maize cooperatives and 360 individual maize farmers. The cooperatives were selected through stratified random sampling from the existing maize cooperatives per region (4 cooperatives; 6 regions). The sampling of respondents reflected the partici-

pation of male and female farmers. The farmer profiles included 36 farmers (6 per region; 3 men and 3 women, of which 2 per region were not members of a cooperative). The table 5 presents results from the main subject areas, working methods and outputs of the member consultation.

TABLE 5 COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

MAIN SUBJECT AREA	WORKING METHODS	OUTPUTS
Description and analysis of maize producer organisations (PO)	Interviews with the POs (focus group meeting with 3 board members and 12 members-at-large)	24 brief descriptions of POs (4 per region) 24 Excel files
Systematic collection of members' opinions on the internal organisation and service provisions of their organisations	Self-assessment of the organisations by their members (FORCE Tool)	24 self-assessments (4 per region) 24 Excel files
Basic data on family farm enterprises	Survey - Basic data collection on family enterprises	Basic data on 360 producers (60 per region) 24 Excel files
Description and analysis of the activities undertaken by the PO, use of economical information and economic objectives	Interview with the PO (second part)	Basic data on 24 cooperatives (4 per region) 24 Excel files
Debriefing and discussion on the self-assessment results and of important points on production, storage and marketing	Debriefing sessions with research teams and FUPRO regional and local offices	24 debriefing sessions, 4 per region 24 finalised debriefing reports
"Family picture": Profile of 36 producers from different regions of Benin (6 per region)	Case studies of maize producers; use of the database on agricultural enterprises (Interview 3) to sort out quantitative indicators	36 qualitative profiles of family enterprises (24 PO members and 12 non-organised)

This systematic member consultation resulted in an important database with information on maize cooperatives and maize farmers in various parts of the country. The findings were summarised in three reports (Schrader et al., 2011a – 2011c). In addition, the farmer profiles (1-2 pages) resulted in a gallery of maize farmers in the country.

The database highlights major differences among farmers and farmer groups and also between production zones. The ambitions of various farmer groups differ significantly in terms of their goals, ambitions and entrepreneurial capacities.

One important set of findings was the mapping of strategic orientations and economic objectives of the maize cooperatives. Producers have clear economic objectives, which can be the starting point for a national programme to improve the performance of maize value chains. The producers pointed to the possibilities for a significant increase in white and yellow maize production, and to the importance of processing, storage and collective marketing. This demonstrates that member consultation can provide both baseline data and helping to set SMART objectives and define medium-term milestones. The study also reinforced that exchanging information among farmers having different experiences can boost innovation.

### Peer-review workshop

Towards the end of the AOR programme in September 2011, a peer review workshop was held to evaluate the research results. This workshop also generated short articles on the main themes using Writeshop methods. These articles, comprising key messages, were prepared to inform decision-makers involved with future maize value chain development programmes. This phase also resulted in the production of summary documents ('thematic information sheets') for the previously-identified challenge areas and validated the relevant options for addressing the challenges. At this stage, the number of challenge areas was reduced from ten to eight, as some areas were merged and reformulated.

### Strategic workshop

As a follow-up to this preparatory meeting, a strategic workshop was held in October 2011 that brought together the different stakeholders in the maize sector, farmer leaders and MAEP executives. FUPRO made efforts to identify participants having in-depth and practical knowledge of the maize sector as well as a vested interest in the sector. In spite of the efforts made, private sector representation in the workshop remained limited. The workshop allowed for validating the key findings of the AOR programme and identified strategic options for action with government and sector-specific policies. Furthermore, participants discussed the institutional set-up of such a future programme, which requires good coordination of activities as well as delegation of responsibilities to stakeholders. A basic principle that was agreed upon was that public and private service providers should follow demands of private entrepreneurs (producers, processors, traders, etc.) in the maize sector. This was a fundamental change from the usual approach, whereby project owners (i.e. the public sector) defined the objectives.

*“Three components were seen as crucial: promoting rural entrepreneurship, prioritising topics that support innovation, and sharing evidence-based knowledge and experience.”*

In addition to the definition of principles and programme strategies, the workshop prepared the terms of reference for a small group of experts to be responsible for preparing the first draft of the programme for maize value chain development. A steering committee was nominated to discuss and ratify the programme proposal. The use of a team of experts for the preparation of the programme proposal was necessary in view of the extremely short time between the last stages of the AOR programme and deadline for submitting the proposal to the Netherlands Embassy in Benin. The deadline for submitting the proposal was not renegotiated, because FUPRO wanted to demonstrate its credibility as a reliable partner. However, the short time available and the fact that the consultants writing the proposal was not sufficiently up-to-date with the outputs from the AOR programme led to an insufficient uptake of AOR results in the formulation of the programme proposal for maize value chain development. This resulted in an under-utilisation of strategic insights, 'grounded' options and innovative ideas for the implementation modalities of the programme for maize value chain development. Several new ideas for future development work on the subject of maize value chains were also shared with EKN Benin. These included the development of agribusiness clusters around specific maize value chains, combined with the cross-cutting learning from the thematic areas that emerged from the AOR. Work on value chains could combine production-push and market-pull dynamics. Support to agribusiness clusters would focus on stakeholder collaboration and give a central role to companies, farmers and their organisations and be especially interesting for financial service providers and quality advisory services. Three components were seen as crucial: promoting rural entrepreneurship, prioritising topics that support innovation, and sharing evidence-based knowledge and experience.

## Partnerships

FUPRO actively took up its leadership and coordination role and was central to the identification of challenges, options for innovative action and strategic research topics. FUPRO organised debriefings, regional workshops, exchange visits, the writeshop and the strategic workshop. The federation also recruited local researchers for the thematic studies in a transparent manner and facilitated their connections to the field, and coordinated the systematic member consultation. FUPRO used ESFIM and Agriterra budget strategically in order to effectively implement a coherent AOR programme. Communication concerning planning and budget respected hierarchical lines, whereas with content-related information, there was horizontal and direct communication between researchers and team members. Throughout the process, FUPRO stressed time management in order to respect the deadline for the submission of the programme proposal for maize value chain development. FUPRO showed a high level of pragmatism in managing the multiple partnerships and in the use of the available human and financial resources.

At the outset, there was hope that links with formal research structures in Benin could be established. The action research proposal envisaged an important (and remunerated) role for the Faculty of Agro-nomic Science of the University of Abomey-Calavi (FSA/UAC). Although a coordination meeting with UAC took place in April 2011, collaboration did not materialise. The FSA showed little genuine interest in collaboration and tended towards inertia, which posed risks for the action-oriented research programme. After the methodological guidance workshop and the identification of action research themes, the funds initially budgeted for FSA/UAC was used for hiring local experts/advisors to carry out the studies. This allowed for a more flexible mobilisation of experts, a wider diversity of disciplines (in addition to agronomy) and proved to be cost effective. The drawback was that no institutional relationship with the University was established.

## Lessons learnt

- Having information on various sectors and a comprehensive database on farmers' realities, experiences and objectives is essential for any national farmer organisation to be taken seriously as a partner in policy and programme development. The action research process and results allowed FUPRO's members' voices to be heard by the institutions in charge of elaborating agricultural policies and development strategies. The wealth of information that was collected and analysed could still be better utilised, for example in a final layout of thematic studies, finalisation of member consultation reports, and the finalisation and publication of articles. Some documents and articles



from the AOR programme have not gone through the final stages of validation, editing, lay-out, and publication. Although AOR programme results were not fully used in the programme proposal as originally intended, the wealth of information is available at FUPRO and could therefore still be used by other interested parties.

- The systematic member consultation was particularly important in making FUPRO fully aware of the situation and aspirations of their membership base, the maize farmers and maize cooperatives in the country. Such a sound knowledge of constraints, perceived opportunities and options is necessary in order to represent the maize farmer population, which is an important function of FUPRO, being a national federation. It was an eye-opener to FUPRO that it is possible to know thousands of members by taking a representative sample.
- FUPRO established a library with relevant documents on the maize sector. To be a partner in policy dialogue, and as a strategic supporter of their associated organisations, FUPRO need and value such materials. Thus the outputs from this AOR programme have contributed to the FUPRO knowledge base. Nevertheless, the action research results were ultimately insufficiently reflected in the new programme proposal for maize value chain development. This was mostly due to the extremely short time between the last stages of the AOR process and the drafting of the programme document. Despite the high level of interaction between the team that was made responsible for the drafting of the programme document and the AOR team, the results of the action research have not been capitalised to a satisfactory level. This was seen by the AOR team as a missed opportunity. Notwithstanding this sub-optimal use, the submitted programme on maize and cereal crop development programme for Benin was still quite innovative, as it ‘talked business’, focused on specific value chains, stressed multi-stakeholder collaboration, suggested important areas for innovations and placed farmers at the heart of maize value chain development.

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# CHAPTER 3



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## Bolivia

### CIOEC-Bolivia: successful advocacy for legal recognition of the sector

GIEL TON, CHRISTIAN GOUËT AND NINOSKA GONZALEZ

Bolivia is the poorest country in South America. The majority of Bolivians are indigenous (mainly Aymara and Quechua), accounting for at least 60-70% of the population and for an even higher proportion of the rural population. This indigenous population constitutes the vast majority of the poor and extremely poor in Bolivia. Bolivia is a country that bridges two major regional blocks, in a geographical and political sense: the *Comunidad Andina de Naciones* (CAN) and the *Mercado Común del Sur* (MERCOSUR). It is the first country in which structural adjustment programmes were implemented (in 1985) and agricultural policies have been shaped accordingly for two decades. Most producer-support instruments in agriculture (tariffs, price regulation and credit subsidies) have been discontinued since

*“CIOEC favoured market-facilitating institutions but opposed state enterprises and interventionist policies such as food price control when these negatively affected the collective marketing activities of their members. After 2007, CIOEC became increasingly marginalised in policy decision making.”*

1985. Moreover, until 2005, only a limited number of ‘new instruments’ for agricultural development and innovation were introduced beyond pilot experiment levels, with the exception of substitutes for coca production. This political situation has changed quite dramatically since 2006, when the Morales government not only re-introduced several rural support instruments that had characterised the pre-1985 period, such as soft loans and direct interference by the state in agricultural markets, but also developed a range of new policies to benefit smallholders in agriculture.

## Advocacy challenge

The current Bolivian political situation is characterised by the government’s policy emphasising indigenous identity, market regulation and endogenous growth, which contrasts with the open-market policies of preceding governments. The sector of producer associations represented by the Bolivian Coordinating Platform of Economic Peasant Organisations (*Coordinadora de Integración de Organizaciones Económicas Campesinas Indígena y Originarias* - CIOEC-Bolivia) had a problematic relationship with the Morales government. As most smallholder producers are inhabitants of rural areas, there is broad support for a government that, more than ever, tries to revert investments from urban to rural areas and from the private sector to state enterprises. However, in political discourse and practice, a differentiation is made between communitarian, village-oriented organisations (*sindicatos, ayllus*) and functional market-oriented organisations (*Organizaciones Económicas Campesinas* - OECAs). This debate influences governmental policies on rural economic development and defines the political space for CIOEC in relation to other farmer unions. *Sindicatos* are territory-based, village organisations that represent all households in the village and defend the interests in relation to land rights and social investments, and that support an interventionist role of the state in markets. OECAs have a more restricted and better defined membership of self-selected smallholders in one or various villages and direct their demands especially to the facilitating role of the government in creating market access.

CIOEC opposed the neo-liberal doctrine of free markets and private entrepreneurship and was quite successful in doing so in 2000-2006. After 2006, their political influence weakened. In 2006, during the political campaign of Evo Morales they refused to explicitly support the MAS, the political party of Evo Morales, and were therefore not included in the coalition of unions supporting the new government. Although CIOEC had several delegates from OECAs in the governing party MAS, they did not hold key positions. Also, CIOEC favoured market-facilitating institutions but opposed state enterprises and interventionist policies such as food price control when these negatively affected the collective marketing activities of their members. After 2007, CIOEC became increasingly marginalised in policy decision making.

### BOX 3 CIOEC-Bolivia

The Bolivian Coordinating Platform of Economic Peasant Organisations (*Coordinadora de Integración de Organizaciones Económicas Campesinas Indígena y Originarias* - CIOEC-Bolivia) is the national platform of economic farmer organisations, including cooperatives, associations, smallholders agricultural corporations (CORACA's) and farmer-led enterprises. It is an apex organisation that comprises more than 250 economic grassroots organisations organised around collective marketing and processing through 9 departmental organisations and 7 sectorial organisations. Since its foundation in 1991, CIOEC-Bolivia advanced from providing organisational and administrative support to its members, to being the national representative of OECA's with a more political and advocacy-oriented profile.

CIOEC's Organic Statute was renewed in April, 2002, with the intention of accomplishing major sectorial integration and participation, and CIOEC-Bolivia changed its elected board structure from an organisation with direct membership and an executive board, to a second-tier organisation. Hereby was introduced an extended board (*directorio ampliado*), with representatives from each of the nine departments and from the major commodity-based apex organisations (coffee, quinoa, wheat, dairy, honey, handicrafts, and rural tourism). Both boards are elected by the general assembly of members.

## Collaborative research process

Due to this altered political situation, coupled with changes in board and staff members, CIOEC had entered into an organisational identity crisis, deviating from the objective for which the organisation was created. A self-evaluation by the CIOEC-executive board in May 2012 indicated that CIOEC was well aware of this identity crisis. They indicated that their advocacy capacities were in decline compared to three years earlier, and that a new vision and action plan was needed to regain their role as a representative organisation in the political arena. This 're-invention' of the role of CIOEC was initiated by a process of strategic planning. From 2010 onwards, CIOEC had been working on a new strategic plan, without too much success, however. An event that accelerated the process was a workshop from 25-27 October 2011, held with the support of Agritererra, a Dutch agri-agency for development cooperation. Agritererra applied a specific methodology to generate policy proposals in a participative manner, *the Farmers Advocacy Consultation Tool – FACT* (Gouët, 2013). This workshop, with national and departmental farmer leaders, aimed to strengthen CIOEC's capacity to formulate policy proposals and strategies, to improve its business planning and to intensify its member consultation processes. At the end of the workshop, participants defined three follow-up work-plans.

- To generate a follow-up to the OECA Law that had been approved in 2008 in Parliament but had never been regulated and implemented due to the reform of the Bolivian Constitution in 2009.
- To formulate an internal policy and mechanisms for internal articulation, especially with a view to the superposition of responsibilities of elected board members and contracted professional staff in operational decision making.
- To integrate the departmental divisions of CIOEC into the national strategy of CIOEC-Bolivia, in response to the increasing autonomy of the departmental divisions both financially and politically.

The first point became the priority of ESFIM research support. The work plan for the assignment consisted of a first phase to check the status of and observations made on the OECA Law in Parliament and parliamentary commissions. In a second phase, legal norms that covered the same or similar issues as those of the 2008 OECA Law were analysed. In a third phase, the outputs of both inquiries were discussed in several regional workshops, involving both CIOEC departmental board members and several grassroots organisations. Finally, based on this feedback, a new proposal for an OECA Law was to be written and placed on the agenda for parliamentary discussion (CIOEC-Bolivia, 2012). The budget for these advocacy activities (US\$ 34,700) was covered by Agriterra (30%), ESFIM (37%) and CIOEC-Bolivia (33%), with ESFIM covering the costs of the legal expert, the national workshop and publishing of the outputs. The first planning included the steps presented in Table 6.

TABLE 6 ACTION PLAN THAT RESULTED FROM THE NATIONAL WORKSHOP

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS
<p><b>“FORMULATING A FOLLOW-UP OF THE OECA LAW AND HAVING IT APPROVED AS A LAW”</b></p> <p>Emphasis placed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organic and functional composition of OECAs</li> <li>• Access to government procurement programmes</li> <li>• Tax regulations with preferential treatment for OECAs</li> </ul>	Collect observations regarding the OECA Law in various Ministries and list these in a document that proposes a way to influence relevant political actors (including a ‘power mapping’, stake-holders analysis, SWOT analysis)
	Identify other regulations that are closely related to the OECA Law (this information is to be included in the document produced in step 1).
	Consultations with membership (a)- Informing/consulting opinions: Gather information on the status of OECAS Law from the national level to the departmental level and consult members on their opinions, needs, etc.
	Consultations with membership (b)- Informing /getting feedback: Communicate the status of OECAS Law at the grassroots level of OECAs: departmental coordinators to send the document and a questionnaire to OECAs and collect feed-back.
	Consultations with membership (c) – Validation of the draft proposal: Organise a workshop with each departmental CIOEC on the OECA Law, to analyse the proposal.
	Write a final (SMART) proposal based on the consultation and the workshop results.
	Advocacy activities based on stakeholder mapping and lobby analysis: towards Ministries, Parliament and the Pacto de Unidad, the coalition of peasant unions; systematise the results and the lessons learnt

After some months of delay due to administrative contracting issues, CIOEC received the ESFIM budget and contracted two consultants in March 2012 to review the status of the OECA Law that had been presented in 2004, with support of the Ministry of Agriculture, to the Parliament. One expert, financed by ESFIM, was contracted to assess the legal situation, analyse the legal observations of the former OECA Law, and design a viable alternative proposal. The second expert, financed by Agriterra, was contracted as an advocacy officer to provide follow-up to the process, organise the internal discussions and discuss the advocacy strategy with the board members of CIOEC-Bolivia.



## Advocacy process

The essence of the OECA Law initiative, submitted in 2004 and approved in Parliament in 2008, was the recognition of the specific characteristics of OECAs as being organisations having both economic and social objectives. The aim of the law was to generate preferential policies for the sector. However, the text of the 2008 OECA Law had been reduced to the extent that its essence had disappeared, according to the law's creators. It only consisted of a system of registration, whereas all support policies that had been part of the proposal had been deleted by a parliamentary commission. Moreover, due to significant political turbulence (the forced resignation of President Sanchez de Losada in 2004 and President Mesa in 2006, and the victory of Evo Morales in the 2005 elections and the subsequent modification of the Magna Carta in 2009), even this meagre result of the OECA Law of 2008 had never been implemented.

Another major complication resulted from the *Ley 144*, enacted by the Morales Government in July 2011 (Government of Bolivia, 2011). This law, *Ley de la Revolución Productiva Comunitaria Agropecuaria*, had created the legal context of OECOMs, Communitarian Economic Peasant Organisations. These were modelled after the *sindicatos* and *ayllus*, with entire villages as members. CIOEC felt that *Ley 144* incorporated several objectives of their original law initiative, but applied it deliberately to another sector of organised producers in order to curtail any influence that CIOEC may have still had. CIOEC had been involved in some of the discussions on this law and could integrate OECAs in certain articles of the law, but was side-lined in the governance structure of the bodies that were appointed to implement the policy, especially with respect to decision making on public investment priorities.

*“There is only one article that mentions OECA, the part about financing instruments, and the rest discriminates against us, placing the community organisations at the forefront instead of the producer organisations. (...) However, the Law includes many aspects that CIOEC had worked on for years, such as insurance in agriculture, support to rural development, technical assistance, etc. These were issues that CIOEC had already included in their three Agendas, between 2000 and 2008, and that were part of the original proposal of the OECA Law in 2008. It seems that they were copied from our original proposal. (...) However, we think that reforming some of the articles in Law 144 is not sufficient. There is an essential discrepancy. The Ley 144 does not differentiate the communitarian, social partner from the productive partner.”*  
(Maria Luisa Antezana, policy adviser to CIOEC-Bolivia, interviewed August 2012)

*“The success of the advocacy process was largely due to the review of previous lobby work, skillful management of key stakeholders and the participatory process in designing the new proposal.”*

The strategy for the lobbying activities was prepared in consultation with legal experts and included a mapping of all the relevant actors that were in some way related to the process of discussion for a Law in Bolivia, from presenting the proposal to approval in Parliament and Senate. CIOEC then followed a strategy of approaching them according to their role in the discussions on the Law and managed to align most of them around a proposal for a complementary law. As this could have been interpreted as an assault on the *Ley 144*, it was necessary to carefully negotiate the proposal with the farmer unions of the *sindicatos* and *ayllus*. The new proposal for an OECA Law was made attractive by including several other issues that were important for farmer unions but had not been included in the *Ley 144*. Thus, the new proposal (CIOEC-Bolivia, 2012) emphasised family agriculture and gender and generational issues, and it received the support of women’s organisations, especially the Bartolina Sosa Movement, which represents rural women’s interests.

*“We organised meetings and a key workshop to which we invited women from various OECAs. CIOEC is part of the National Alliance of Bolivian Women’s Organisations (..) This has been important for CIOEC, because not only did women producers of OECAs participate, but we got a broader view of the situation of rural women: it helped to open doors for us (..) From there, we developed a close relationship with the woman who is the president of Parliament and has a personal commitment to the law; she said to us “-it’s my law, it’s our law, and I will take it forward-.” (María Luisa Antequera Guerra, policy adviser to CIOEC-Bolivia, interviewed August 2012)*

The OECA Law was approved in the House of Representatives in November 2012, with ample support from all political parties. After this successful step the proposal was passed to the Senate for discussion and final approval. Interestingly, at this later stage, the process of negotiating the contents of the proposal with other farmer organisations became heavily influenced by elections in the Bartolina Sisa women union in October 2012. The out-going president of Bartolina Sisa had been CIOEC’s key supporter when the proposal was being discussed in the House of Representatives. However, the newly elected president took a very critical stance in the follow-up process and almost caused the proposal to become stranded in the Senate. In December, the village-based farmer unions tried to intervene and convince the Senate that the OECAs were a threat to the unity of the village and that CIOEC was an instrument of neo-liberalism. The political movement of farmer organisations, aligned with the government ‘Pacto de Unidad’ indeed managed to stop the process, calling for a process of re-negotiation. After fierce negotiations, the law was also approved in the Senate in December and President Evo Morales proclaimed the law on 26 January 2013 (Government of Bolivia, 2013). The main change made was the incorporation of other civil society organisations as beneficiaries of the Law.

In this process, however, topics such as preferential tax issues were removed from the Law, as these require a modification of clauses in the general tax law, which was too dangerous to tackle at this moment. The most tangible point that was maintained in the Law was the inclusion of the OECAs as beneficiaries of the Law 144 and the recognition of CIOEC as their representative body. This allows CIOEC to participate in the various national and regional rural planning councils. Another major result of the Law is the fact that the legal recognition of the OECAs makes it easier for international donors, such as the World Bank, IFAD and Swiss Development Cooperation, to target programmes and funding to this more innovative and market-oriented rural sector.

## Partnership

The ESFIM research support to develop the content and advocacy strategy for the OECA Law proved exceptionally timely and resulted in a tangible advocacy result in a relatively short time. The contacts with CIOEC on collaborative research started in September 2011, the contracted research support started in March 2012, the Initiative Law passed parliament in November 2012 and was proclaimed as Law 338 on 28 January 2013 by President Evo Morales.

The success of the advocacy process was largely due to the review of previous lobby work, skillful management of key stakeholders and the participatory process in designing the new proposal. The support from Agriterra and ESFIM worked in synergy to support this process. Agriterra supported CIOEC-Bolivia with capacity building and advice. Their support was continued in 2013 for the design of a proposal for administrative implementation of the law.

CIOEC-Bolivia entered the collaborative research programme at a very late stage and with a reduced budget. In 2011, Agriterra had already supported CIOEC through a consultant who had previously worked at IFAP, and knew ESFIM very well. It was, therefore, quite easy to link with the participatory process that CIOEC had already put into practice with support of Agriterra. The activities were concentrated in a short period (three months). The AGRINATURA researcher already had a close relationship with CIOEC. Between 1999 and 2004, he had worked in this organisation as a policy advisor and had been engaged in research and advocacy support during the HPIC II National Dialogue and its aftermath, the Bolivian Poverty Reduction Strategy. In fact, the research and advocacy process in CIOEC provided the basic format for the design of the ESFIM methodology in 2007-2008.

## Lessons learnt

- CIOEC-Bolivia had made a proposal for an OECA Law based on the content of a series of lobby agendas, from 2000 onwards - '*Agenda para el Desarrollo Estratégico de las OECA's*' (CIOEC-Bolivia, 2000)- and had experience in commissioning research to support these advocacy priorities. ESFIM was not a novel approach but a welcome opportunity to implement a specific research-advocacy priority. This previous experience proved vital for the successful implementation of the ESFIM research, even when the AGRINATURA support was very limited.
- The strategic planning process to strengthen the operational internal structure of CIOEC and its services to their members, facilitated by Agriterra, was highly functional in generating and embedding ESFIM-type activities in CIOEC-Bolivia, and vice versa. This indicates the synergy that it is possible to achieve when ESFIM activities are set in the context of wider organisational support to national farmer organisations.
- As board members and farm leaders change every two to four years, the memory of the organisation needs its advocacy strategies systematised. The current board and technical team had lost control over the OECA Law that was proposed in 2004 and approved (partially) in 2008. The consultancy to define the status quo and to review the observations made to the original proposal proved very important for re-launching the OECA Law in 2012. The successful advocacy proved vital to recovering faith in CIOEC-Bolivia as an influential political representative body for economic farmer organisations.

- The key moment to influence and upgrade the research support process was in the formulation phase, when the terms of reference for the consultants were defined. Follow-up communication with and back-stopping of consultants that were hired by the national farmer organisation proved difficult, as contracting was fully in the hands of CIOEC. The consultants and experts were, therefore, accountable to CIOEC and not necessarily inclined to link-up with the European-based researcher. In the collaborative research, the time-span allowed for obtaining results was very short and the consultation process very intense and concentrated in time, thus the AGRINATURA researcher had little influence on actual content of the proposal. The AGRINATURA researcher discussed the Initiative Law in August 2012 with the advocacy officer just before the national public launching event, and in December 2012, CIOEC contacted the AGRINATURA researcher to reflect on the comments received during the negotiation process with the other farmer unions. Due to the eminent political character of the proposal, the farmer leaders and board members were important in shaping the political space for the proposal, together with the technical support by the team in the CIOEC office and lawyers working with the various parliamentary commissions.

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# CHAPTER 4



## Costa Rica

### CMC-Costa Rica: women take-up a role in the national advocacy platform

JEAN-FRANÇOIS LE COQ

In Costa Rica, the focal National Farmer Organisation (NFO) for the ESFIM programme is the Peasant Women's Coordinating Committee (*Coordinadora Mujeres Campesinas* - CMC). This organisation was established in 1995 as a sub-committee of the National Peasant Platform (*Mesa Nacional Campesina* - MNC), which became an autonomous association in 1999. This organisation aims at supporting economic and social initiatives for women in rural areas. The CMC is actually an affiliation of 42 active women's organisations throughout the country, representing approximately 700 women involved in productive projects.

*“Small-scale farmers have trouble obtaining resources for investment and reaching markets with their products in good condition.”*

Costa Rica is characterised by good democratic functioning of its government institutions. Although the power of the State and public institutions are still important, they have been gradually reduced in the last 20 years. The CMC as well as other small and medium producers' organisations have been engaged in a rather complex and difficult political struggle to defend their interests since the 90s, when Costa Rica shifted towards more liberal policies. The resulting orientation of the country regarding agriculture has been towards the promotion of agricultural export. Small-scale agriculture has received only minor support from agricultural institutions. Moreover, Costa Rica underwent an economic transition in the 1990s, with the development of a service sector and the reduction of the agricultural sector's share of the GDP to less than 10 per cent. Hence, Costa Rican agriculture is characterised by the coexistence on the one hand of highly intensive, generally large farms oriented towards the export market and small and medium family farms on the other. Small-scale farmers have trouble obtaining resources for investment and reaching markets with their products in good condition.

Representation of small and medium farmers has been fractured since the 90s, with the creation of several organisations having different leaders, orientations and strategies. The quality and intensity of dialogue between these farmer organisations and the Ministry of Agriculture has fluctuated greatly during the last decade, depending on the government's focus. Even though new strategies for dialogue have been developed, the position of small and medium farmers on the whole has been very marginally taken into account during the past decade.

## Development challenge

The challenge for small and medium farmers to access markets has been identified through various activities. First, a national congress with more than 50 representatives of farmer organisations throughout the country was held in 2005 to consider small-scale farmer issues. Then, in 2007-2008, a National Farmer Organisations' Platform (NFO-P) was consolidated within the framework of the Costa Rican component of the “Regional project to support rural business organisations in Central America”, implemented by CIRAD under supervision of the Regional Unit of Technical Assistance (RUTA). This platform, denominated “Plataforma de Organizaciones Rurales y Empresariales (PoryE), helped to identify development challenges. A research agenda to investigate the issue of small farmers' access to markets was detailed during the first ESFIM phase, in 2009, and especially during the workshop that took place March 24-25, 2009. During this workshop, in which representatives of national and regional organisations participated, the issues and obstacles hindering small farmers' access to market were defined, and three areas for action were identified (CMC, 2009): 1) organisational support, 2) bolstering negotiation capacity, and 3) policy lobbying.

Based on the results of this workshop and taking into account the current policy process, a dialogue was conducted within the NFO-P in 2010. This NFO-P is an open platform of farmer organisations for the entire country. During the ESFIM project, members of the NFO-P included representatives of na-

tional organisations such as CMC, ANAMAR (*Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Agro-industrial Rurales*), MNC (*Mesa Nacional Campesina*), JNFA (*Junta Nacional de Feria*), UPA National (*Unión de Pequeños y Medianos productores agrícolas*), CORFOGA (*Corporación para el fomento ganadero*), and grassroots organizations such as AFAR (*Asociación de Familias Agricultoras Ramonenses*) and ACOAGRO (*Asociación Cotoabreseña de Agricultura*). In October 2010, two initial study themes were identified in consensus between the NFO-P participants: 1) an assessment of information on market in Costa Rica; and 2) an assessment of small farmers' limits and constraints to access international markets. These two first research activities were launched in early 2010.

During ESFIM phase II (2011-2012), the research goals were updated in the period from August to October, 2011 to take into account the evolution of local needs and policy developments. Specifically, four elements were included. First, it became apparent from grassroots interactions in different regions that it was necessary to study the new food safety regulations and its implementation in rural areas. Second, following the demand of local organisations in the south of the country, the reactivation of regional markets was considered. Third, the importance of farmers' fairs (*Ferias del agricultor*) as a way for small farmers to access markets and the debate around the JNFA management programme led to research on farmer fairs. Finally, with an emerging opportunity to develop a lobbying process on food sovereignty jointly with national assembly parliamentarian, a study of food sovereignty regulations appeared as an important new research subject.

The process of choosing the research themes was discussed in the NFO-P meeting. The choices were transparent and there was broad consensus among the participants. The main criteria were the concerns of grass root organisations and the opportunity for reviewing policy processes.

A coordinator was assigned to the project to help prioritise activities in ESFIM phase II, which were more oriented towards broadcasting information than conducting real research. In addition, CMC leaders and AGRINATURA representatives (WUR, CIRAD) adjusted plans and terms of reference of the activities in order to strengthen their research nature. One of the main difficulties in defining the thematic and research agendas was to reduce the number of possible research activities, as there were many topics and potential obstacles for policy process.

## Collaborative research process

The structure of the NFO-P was used to monitor the entire process of ESFIM phase II. Regular meetings of the NFO-P (at least once per month during the 2010-2012 period) ensured dissemination of information about current policy situation and issues, progress on the various research topics, preparation of the workshops and future plans. The composition and participation of the NFO-P was relatively stable during the whole process. While certain groups were involved in only some aspects of the project, depending on their agendas and the specific theme, permanence of the process was ensured by the consistent and dedicated involvement of six members of national and local organisations.

A total of six research proposals were identified during ESFIM phase II (Table 7).

During the first phase (2009-2010), two research proposals reflected obstacles identified in the workshop that had taken place during ESFIM phase I:

- Availability and accessibility of market information in Costa Rica for small farmers.
- Assess barriers keeping small farmers from accessing international markets.

For the second step in 2010-2012, four new assignments were defined which were more in line with evolution of the policy agenda and identification of local needs:

- Assess the operation of the SENASA law in Costa Rica: this was defined as a priority, as it affected a large sector of small farmers (raising cattle throughout the country). There was evidence that farmers had an unclear understanding of this new law, making it difficult to implement it and enforce compliance.
- Study the condition of regional markets and how to improve them, with particular reference to the development of the southern region, following the request of the representatives of farmer organisations from the south.
- Evaluate the impact of regulations on the Farmers' Fairs (FF), as FF are an important means for farmers to access markets (as shown by the results of first study on market information). The discussion centred on the five-year policy planning of the national board of the farmers' fairs, as well as the demand of local participants such as the Heredia regional committee.
- Food sovereignty was considered as a possible flag theme for the various small and medium farmers organisations. Moreover, there was the possibility of an alliance with a national parliamentarian to address this subject.

TABLE 7 ASSIGNMENT AND METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH FOR ESFIM PHASE II

	TITLE OF THE STUDY	PERSONS AND ORGANIZATIONS RESPONSIBLE	METHODOLOGY
1	Accessibility of market information in Costa Rica	Shirlene Chaves Carballo (CMC)	Desk review + qualitative interviews
2	Assessing barriers keeping small farmers from accessing international markets	Shirlene Chaves Carballo and Vilma Herrera Chavarria (CMC)	Desk review + qualitative interviews
3	Assessing operation of SENASA law in Costa Rica	Adriana Flores Gonzales (junior consultant)	Desk review + qualitative interviews + 3 regional workshops
4	Studying regional markets and how to improve them, in particular the southern region,	CEDAR (consulting firm of senior consultants)	Desk review + 1 regional workshop
5	Evaluating the impact of regulations on Farmers' Fairs	Shirlene Chaves Carballo (CMC)	Desk review + direct interviews (200 farmers, consumers, and traders)
6	Studying food sovereignty legislation	Colleagues of NFO platform	Desk review, NFO meetings and fora discussions

The research studies were mainly assigned to (internal) CMC technicians but also to consulting firm or individuals (Table 7). At the beginning of the process, the first two research assignments were given to CMC technicians, in order to strengthen the structure and capacity of CMC on these two broad topics. Thereafter, the assignments were extended to include consultants. Because of work load and policy context, no researcher was specifically assigned to revising the sovereignty law. Until now, discussions on this topic have been carried out within the NFO-P.

When it became evident that the CMC technician was overworked, resulting in delays in the first two assignments, it was decided to expand staffing to include a non-CMC technician. Moreover, the specificity of a theme such as the SENASA law justified the use of an external consultant. Finally, CEDAR, a firm of

senior consultants, was engaged at the request of a local organisation and this was justified by the fact that these consultants already had accumulated knowledge on this topic.

It is worth noting that: 1) the NFO-P was reluctant to appoint an academic (a professor or student from one of Costa Rica's four universities), as farmers' representative within the NFO-P consider that academics are not able to produce sound and intelligible products for them; 2) the assignment of too much research work to one person at the CMC led to overwork and delays; and 3) hiring external consultants (especially senior ones) led to tension and difficulties among the farmers representatives of the NFO-P.

The national farmer organisation (in this case CMC) had a central role in the research process, as the CMC employees were directly and fully in charge of three of the six projects. For the other one (in particular the one on SENASA law), they were greatly involved in preparations for the regional workshop.

The role of the AGRINATURA was important in the design and definition of the research studies (especially with respect to refining the research question and the research breadth). Their role in the methodological design and implementation, on the other hand, was limited to regular interactions with the CMC employee and consultants during the NFO-P meetings and progress reporting.

With respect to methodology, the studies were mainly based on desk reviews and some qualitative interviews. For all the studies, and especially for the analysis of the SENASA law, there was a participatory process to collect and discuss information.

The quality of the studies and their outputs were generally satisfactory but uneven (Table 8). The studies on market information (#1) and barriers for export (#2) were both of good quality, resulting in a broad synthesis of very scattered information on the two topics. In both cases, they indicated the learning potential for farmers, which have been rather underestimated to date.

TABLE 8 QUALITY AND OUTPUT OF THE RESEARCH STUDIES OF ESFIM PHASE II

	TITLE OF THE STUDY	QUALITY	OUTPUT
1	Accessibility of market information in Costa Rica	large review process good final report	a good synthesis of very scattered information poor results in terms of learning process of farmers and policy process
2	Assessing barriers keeping small farmers from accessing international markets	good revision process good final report	no results in terms of learning process of farmers and policy process
3	Assessing operation of SENASA law in Costa Rica	good revision of the material and didactical product large process of consultation, and very good participation of farmers in regions good final report	very good generation of information for learning process of farmers creation of a room for consultation between farmers and civil servants lack of valorisation for policy process
4	Studying regional markets and how to improve them, in particular the southern region,	poor technical analysis (too general) good participation in workshop (due to involvement of NFOs representative) poor final typo-report	poor learning process (very large amount of information) good output regarding policy process with the reactivation of a local platform to address market issues
5	Evaluating the impact of regulations on Farmers' Fairs	intensive data collecting in process	creation of innovative and easy-to-replicate method for other farmers' fair assessment good output potential for improving management of farmers' fairs
6	Studying food sovereignty legislation	in process	strong potential for incidence of policy process

*“The main approach to advocacy was the realization of forums in the national assembly to promote the theme of food sovereignty.”*

The study on SENASA law (#3) provided a good, original insight into the perception of farmers on the law and the difficulties they encountered. The process of data collection was linked to a process of information diffusion. The analyses of the results were good. The process of information and consultation initiated with the ESFIM project has been finally followed-up by an inter-professional body on animal husbandry (CORFOGA), which is planning to organise information workshops at the request of producers.

The study on regional markets (#4) was very poor, as the consultants have limited their analysis to a very general motivational speech presented during a workshop held in the region. The added value of this study for the learning or policy process has been very limited. However, the main output of this research was the reactivation of a local platform to promote the creation of a marketplace, which was mainly the result of the previous work of one of the members of the NFO-P, a grassroots organisation in the southern region.

The two other studies (#5 and 6) were finalised in August-September 2012. The analysis of farmers' fairs has generated new information and an easy-to-replicate methodology using the situation of one fair, San Isidro, as a potential teaching tool for organisations involved in Fair management. A final meeting was organised to present these results to a large group of participants from local fair management organisations and representatives of national fair management group. The studies on sovereignty laws were more a deliberation than research and we cannot make judgments on their quality. In general, the study helped some of the members of the national platform to get a better understanding of the scope of laws concerning the issue of food sovereignty. It also encouraged active participation in lobbying activities at a national level to put the food sovereignty issue on the political agenda.

## Advocacy outcomes

During the research process, there was no evidence of the formulation of evidence-based, formal recommendations for a change of policies and institutions. However, the various studies allowed for the identification of certain possible changes in policy or institutional environment that could be made, but these have not yet been worked out. The national platform existed before the implementation of the present collaborative research project was consolidated with ESFIM, especially regarding analysis and lobbying capacities.

During the ESFIM phase II, various methods of advocacy were used by the NFO-P. The main approach to advocacy was the realisation of fora in the national assembly to promote the theme of food sovereignty (two fora were held, in October 2011 and May 2012). The other method was encouraging participation in events organised by platform members.

The limited use of media, policy briefs and formal notes during the process were noteworthy. These techniques could have been further developed in the last phase of the project, but this was not feasible due to time constraints. At the final ESFIM meeting of the farmer organisation platform in August 2008, a plan for valorising the results of the various studies was defined. This plan will be implemented according to the available human and financial resources of the CMC and NFO-P members after the ESFIM project. During this process of advocacy, various board members of CMC were involved depend-

ing on their availability, in coordination with the technical unit of CMC. Because the ESFIM project was managed within the NFO-P, the advocacy process was also supported by representative national farmer organisations, in particular ANAMAR and MNC, in both the local and international arena. Grassroots organisations were also involved, though participation of the NFO-P.

The main constraint to lobbying activities, especially during the second step of ESFIM II, was the limited interest of this subject in the national assembly, where debate was concentrated on the reform of tax laws (*plan fiscal*). Furthermore, at that time the leading coalition in the national assembly was also unstable. The programme was able to adapt to this constraining factor by rescheduling activities in the first semester of 2012. However, this has led to postponement of the study on food sovereignty legislation.

Another constraint worth mentioning was the limited time available on the part of the Technical Unit (TU) of CMC. The TU of CMC consisted of two persons working part-time, who were in charge of all CMC activities, as well as the monitoring of ESFIM activities and the direct implementation of the research studies. The resulting work overload led to some delays in research activities, limited interaction with the local AGRINATURA researcher, and limited use of research results in the advocacy process. The lack of interest in CMC activities on the part of the administration were another constraining factor. For example, the participation of civil servants in the workshops was minimal, in spite of convocation efforts made by CMC.

Two main driving factors could be identified in the process. First, the willingness of a parliamentary group to develop the theme of food sovereignty in the national assembly was an important driving force, as it gave an opportunity to the NFO-P for advocacy lobbying. Two main advocacy events were organised- the two food sovereignty fora in the national assembly. Furthermore, the support and mobilisation of representatives of other organisations within the NFO-P has been an important driving factor for the ESFIM project and CMC's advocacy process. It was regrettable, however, that certain representatives who may have had more skills and strength in lobbying participated poorly.

Because changes in policy are multi-factorial, it is difficult to define a specific outcome in terms of institutional policy change during the duration of this phase of the project. Nevertheless, ESFIM II has helped influence the NFO-P in certain ways.

Firstly, ESFIM phase II has stimulated dialogue between farmer organisations and has highlighted in particular the importance of the theme of food sovereignty within these organisations. Indeed, the importance of this subject grew dramatically during the last month of the ESFIM project. The mobilisation of a large number of producers for a demonstration and the alliance with a national parliamentarian directly influenced policy and resulted in a change in the law. Moreover, this mobilisation led to the creation of a new organisation, the farmer Platform for Agro-Food (*Mesa Agro-alimentaria*). Key players in this new group are some organisations of the NFO-P supported by ESFIM. Whereas alliances with powerful organisations were rather lacking during the ESFIM programme, this new and specialised platform could provide a good opportunity for follow-up activities.

Secondly, ESFIM phase II brought about the collaboration of key local actors in reactivating the work on local and regional markets. Indeed, following the workshop organised in the south by ESFIM, a committee of implementation of the regional market (*Comisión ejecutadora del mercado regional*) was created, with the vice-minister of agriculture as president. Some financial resources were granted by the development fund of the south (Judesur) to conduct feasibility studies of a new regional market. The committee has been working rapidly and regular meetings are scheduled to lead and monitor the process, which also included other organisations such as the agro food market integration programme (PIMA).



Other outcomes have been obtained with this project. For example, ESFIM enabled the CMC to reactivate their work on policy advocacy, which had been dropped in 2006 following an organisational crisis. It also helped CMC and their affiliated members to promote commercial activities through fairs organised around the forum and the workshop. ESFIM strengthened the existing NFO-P, giving it more substance, and helping to reactivate dialogue between representative organisations of small farmers that were increasingly segmented during the last 20 years. Finally, it helped to establish the importance of the National Fair Board (*Junta nacional de ferias*) as an important tool for small farmers to access markets.

The main limitations on the influence of the project were time constraints, policy advocacy being a long-term activity. A further limitation was conceptual: policy decisions depend not only on research and technical evidence, but also on many social factors, such as interactions of policy planners and representatives of farmers groups; these factors were not really addressed in the project design. It would be interesting to develop a method to analyse the policy process by studying stakeholders, interest groups, arenas, and forums in each country according to topic. This kind of scientific analysis of policy decisions could help farmers' representatives to understand the policy process of their country. During the project, the development of direct links with and participation and interest from policy makers and leading representatives of government and institutions (MAG, CNP, and PIMA) has been very limited, though in the last phase and the follow-up phase of the programme, some links have been established, in particular with the MAG authority and PIMA concerning regional markets in the south, with the parliamentarian in the food sovereignty campaign, and with civil servants of MAG and donors (FAO) within the initiative around the International Year of Family Farming 2014.

## Partnership

The relationship between the AGRINATURA team and the CMC was very good. A horizontal relationship of mutual trust and respect was built up through regular meetings since 2007 and various events that were organized over time.

There has been interaction between AGRINATURA and the national research partners on three levels: the studies carried out by CMC personnel, the studies carried out by a consultant associated with CMC, and those carried out by the consulting firm CEDAR. With regards to the CMC personnel, the relationship was one of confidence. Nevertheless, insufficient time on the part of the CMC employees limited interactions with the AGRINATURA researcher on methodology and follow-up. The consultant associated with CMC worked on veterinary law, which was out of the scope of AGRINATURA specific expertise, but the relationship was nonetheless supportive. Liaison with the consulting firm CEDAR was more complicated. The group of senior consultants was appointed to study regional markets in the south, a topic that was proposed by a local farmer organisation. The difficulty in obtaining accurate results from this group created tension within the NFO-P and with the AGRINATURA team.

The objectives of the leaders of national farmer organisations and the NFO-P were more oriented towards information diffusion to grassroots organisations than implementation of research for advocacy. At the level of CMC, there were difficulties in managing the tensions between the research and advocacy objective on the one hand, and concrete demand for more pragmatic support arising from grassroots members on the other.

To date, there has been no clear evidence that the various partners learned to make innovative inquiries or generate new insights. However, some collective actions were achieved, such as the organisation of two fora in the national assembly with a large participation of grassroots organisations, and the involvement of the CMC in an international project on food sovereignty. Through their representation, there was cross participation in other programmes such as the Cedeco project on sustainable agriculture, the national committee on the International Year of Family Agriculture 2014 (linked with the rural world forum), and ultimately with other associates such as FAO and IFAD. Finally, ESFIM contributed to the positioning of CMC on the food sovereignty theme and the creation of new alliances. These included a political alliance with national parliamentarians, and a financial one with the Swedish Cooperative Center (*Centro Cooperativo Sueco*) supporting the food sovereignty campaign. Moreover, the CMC is contributing to a European funded project on capacity building in food and nutritional sovereignty at the Central American level.

## Lessons learnt

- The political context is an important factor for the output of the ESFIM project, as the lobbying process during the project (especially regarding food sovereignty) depended on the opportunity of alliance with parliamentarian groups. Moreover, the use of research products for advocacy process was limited by time constraints. The research reports were delivered late (between May and August 2012), thereby limiting their usefulness in the advocacy process. Adapting research material to the policy advocacy process is time consuming and needs careful planning. Moreover, the advocacy process can be managed without the development of specific technical material. For example, the important results in terms of advocacy output in the southern region were not obtained with high-quality research inputs, but rather with the activation of the important participants using the social capital of one farmers' representative.

- Several issues would need to be addressed in order to strengthen NFO-led research into advocacy processes. First, the interest that the national farmer organisation has in conducting research and advocacy should be more carefully assessed. In the case of the CMC, although there was an interest in market issues, there was no experience in advocacy on this subject. Therefore it would have been useful to develop a training course on public policy analysis and advocacy. Secondly, a project should analyse the workings of the various parties concerned with policy decision making, and this should be linked to capacity building. And finally, the time available on the part of the national farmer organisation to participate in the programme should be more clearly defined.
- There was no evidence of precise institutional change at the national farmer organisations, AGRI-NATURA nor at the national research level as a result of this project. This may have had to do with the fact that there were many different parties involved in the programme. Policy process and policy incidence are long-term processes that are affected by many variables and conditions. Technical studies are only one component of the process, and are usually not the key factors involved in new policy changes. To better grasp the relative importance of technical and other factors in policy process, it could be interesting to analyse a specific change in policy process with a monitoring and evaluation approach of advocacy support such as ESFIM programme.
- The future of research-based evidence for policy processes in Costa Rica will depend on the main objectives of the future programme. If the main objective is to obtain better research and advocacy results, the challenge will be to develop a stronger platform of national farmer organisations involving cooperatives that have greater advocacy power and more technical resources to define solutions. During the final phase of the project and its follow-up, this problem has been partially solved with the creation of the national Agro-Food Platform (*Mesa Agro-Alimentaria*). Nevertheless, as this is very recent, we are not certain about the sustainability of this platform. If the objective is the strengthening of capacity, the main challenge will be to strengthen the existing platform in terms of advocacy and research. This may be difficult, as research is not the main priority of these organisations. Moreover, a change in how academic researchers are viewed should be effected; there is much reluctance on the part of national farmer organisations to contract consultants and national academic researchers.
- There are several other lessons to be learned that could also be used in other countries. One is to create trust in the NFO platform. The human factor should also be considered. Organisation platform success not only depends on the organisations' interests but also relationships between their representatives. Hence, members of the platform have to develop from the beginning a level of trust and confidence that enables them to overcome conflicts and differences of opinions in an atmosphere of mutual respect. This is one of the keys to sustainable functioning. Another key is the proper selection of the members of the platform (regarding genuine motivation, goals, capacity and experience) and the theme to be developed.

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# India

## FFA-India: collaborative research needs more structure than just personal charisma

FELICITY PROCTOR AND BART DOORNEWEERT

The Federation of Farmers' Associations, Andhra Pradesh (FFA-AP), was identified as the preferred organisation with whom to build a partnership between the ESFIM programme and India. This decision was taken based largely on the advice of the regional Asia representative of the now defunct International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP). The FFA-AP is a unified and independent grassroots organisation aiming to support rural development. The organisation's premise is to make agriculture a profitable occupation, imparting farmers with dignity and social equality. The FFA-AP was founded

in 2000 and represents 1630 farmer associations operating at the local level in 19 of the 22 districts of Andhra Pradesh. The membership is estimated by FFA itself as 75,900 farmers.

FFA-AP is affiliated with the Consortium of Indian Farmers Association (CIFA) which is a national umbrella organisation of farmer federations and commodity associations as well as independent farmer organisations. The CIFA and FFA seek to lobby government by sharing knowledge on agriculture and farmer issues in part, but not exclusively, through the Parliament Members Farmers Forum. FFA-AP at the time of the ESFIM programme was also working in partnership with Agriterro on a programme entitled *Linking farmers to business and enhancing livelihoods and establishing a women's wing* (2011-2012). The key contact persons within FFA-AP were P Chengal Reddy, Hon. Chairman of the FFA-AP and N. Vijay Kumar, Project Director. The AGRINATURA institutions involved in this collaborative programme with India were the Natural Resources Institute and the LEI Wageningen University and Research Centre.

## Development challenge

Overall both the state and national level farmer organisations in India are weak. They lack broad-based ownership in particular by the small-scale farmer and are often financially insecure. For the majority of small-scale farmers, representation is inadequate. Membership-owned structures able to both lobby and support economic organisation are severely limited in number and geographic coverage, with the exception of the cooperative movement, most notably in the dairy sector and commodity based associations where the membership includes large-scale producers and agribusiness. Farmer organisations are in many instances politicised and institutional arrangements at the grassroots level, which should hear the voice of the small-scale farmer, are structurally bereft. *“Farmer organisations do not have sufficient resources because of the small farmers’ inability to contribute to membership”* (FFA May 16, 2012).

In order to inform the farming agenda, the government put in place in 2004 a National Commission on Farmers, chaired by M. S. Swaminathan. This advocated for pro-farmer policy changes and created a sufficient basis for farmers to engage with the State. Furthermore, with media focus turning to the plight of the farmers and debate emerging on a range of humanitarian issues related to the sector such as an ever increasing number of farmers’ suicides, the public was also broadly supportive of this engagement. The major causes of the distress that has led farmers to commit suicide in recent years include the unfinished agenda on land reform, the availability and quality of water, technology fatigue, access to and adequacy of institutional credit, and a lack of opportunities for an assured and remunerative market. Whether the momentum of the Commission, which completed its work in 2007, has been able to be sustained was not reviewed through the ESFIM programme. The UPA Government of India Report to the People 2007 in their strategy for inclusive growth included “to increase credit availability to farmers and offer them remunerative prices for their crops” as one of the key planned actions.

## Collaborative research process

The work programme for ESFIM was elaborated during the ESFIM programme launch conference held in India in 2009. An India country overview was undertaken by a joint team comprising an AGRINATURA researcher and an FFA-contracted consultant based in India. The methods used were a literature review and targeted key informant interviews. The report provided an overview of the policy background of small-scale farming in India, an assessment of key issues relating to market chain development in the context of small-scale farmer market participation, and an overview of the status of farmer-based

organisations in India. It also highlighted some key areas as potential starting points for action for the ESFIM-India programme. These are listed in Box 4.

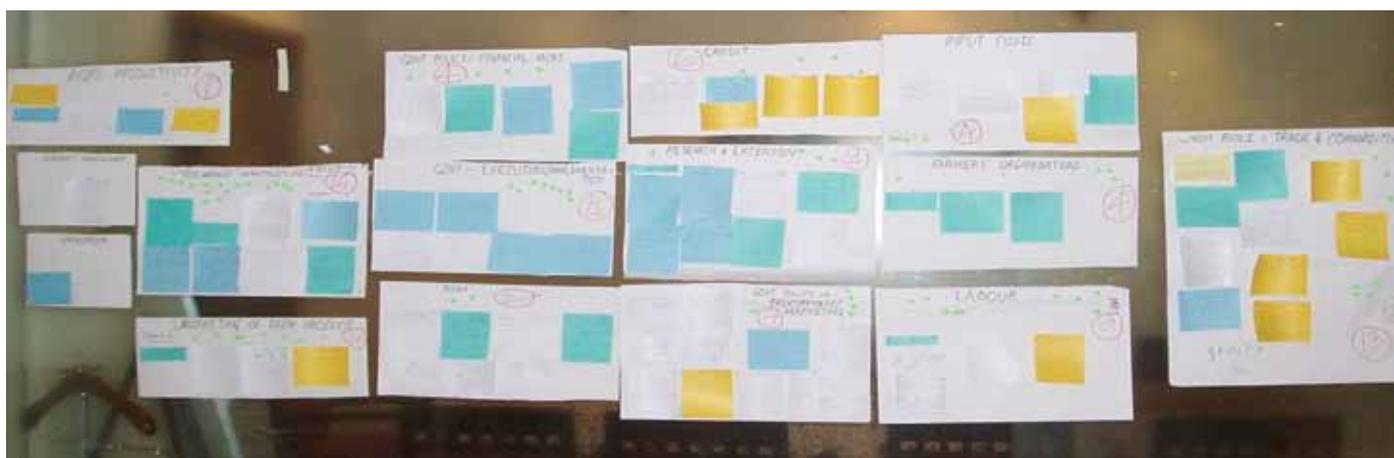
#### Box 4 Key issues for the empowerment of small-scale farmers in India

- Share models of what works in India and why? Specifically on good and innovative methods of empowering farmers in markets
- Evaluate existing models of self-help groups that have effective business processes for collective marketing
- Build platforms for dialogue at state and sub-state levels for (commodity) market chain planning and improvement of small-scale farmers market access
- Align national research to meet policy needs of farmers and develop techniques that can be adapted by the small-scale farmers (or are at least scale neutral)
- Improve systems of data collection and dissemination regarding crop production e.g. acreage under cultivation, relevant treatments (pesticides - organic or otherwise, fertiliser, manure, etc.) at different stages of production, and on market price information
- Synthesise and support the better use of data on agriculture and farming practices
- Develop new business models linking farmers to modern market intermediaries to improve market access for the poor
- Invest in a market-orientated agricultural extension to facilitate production market linkages
- Conduct research into the impact of specific market related policies and interventions on different categories of farmers
- Mobilise farmers and their organisations at regional and national levels for better advocacy
- Collectivise the farmers marketing operations in order to reduce the transaction costs
- Pilot innovation to link producer organisations with consumers and thus minimise the number of intermediaries
- Develop and share innovation to reduce the cost of insurance of commodity warehousing, institutionalise warehouse receipt systems particularly in the rural areas

Source: Srinivas and Proctor, 2009

The two-day conference entitled *Empowering Smallholder Farmers in the Market* was organised by the FFA on the February 3-4, 2009 and held in Hyderabad. Over 44 persons participated in the conference, including representatives of state and commodity-based farmer associations and organisations (26), civil society organisations (4), academia (4), public sector (3), private sector (4) and others (3). Presentations were given by at least ten of the participating farmer organisations as well as the private sector. The conference offered language interpretation, which enabled inclusive participation.

Day two of the conference was dedicated to a participatory process, which sought to identify key challenges faced by the small-scale farmer. All ideas generated by the participants were collated. These were mapped by the AGRINATURA moderator and FFA consultant and, using an equitable voting system, were prioritised as issues for action by FFA and to be supported by ESFIM (see photo next page).



*Mapping and prioritisation of key issues and opportunities for small-scale farmers in markets in India (February, 2009).  
Note: Coloured cards present issues and opportunities. Green dots indicate votes given as priorities for action.*

Based on the priorities selected, three themes were further debated in breakout groups in order to generate entry points for research and action. The three themes were: post-harvest technologies; government's role in trade and commodities; and marketing of farm produce.

Given the size and scale of the challenge of small-scale farmer empowerment in markets in India, the fact that some six states were represented at this conference is to be commended. However no information was available on how the representatives of the farmer organisations present at the conference obtained their members' views on farmer market links, specifically those at a grassroots level.

A joint FFA and AGRINATURA task team reviewed the outputs of the conference and developed further the priorities suitable for the future ESFIM programme. It should be noted that some of the ideas and proposals made were outside the scope of ESFIM's research on advocacy, yet were felt to be of key importance to the farmer organisations. The needs and demands therefore far exceeded the scope of ESFIM and its funding.

The conference in 2009 provided a valuable opportunity for participating farmer organisations and others to network and make new contacts, and to develop and share ideas and innovations – this was in itself a valuable output of the ESFIM process. The series of presentations made by farmer organisations at the conference 2009 enabled views and concerns relating to the small-scale farmer to be shared. These were not limited to “empowering farmers in the market” as FFA felt that it was important that all priority issues and concerns be heard. This took time, but was acceptable, given that there are few other such opportunities for sharing the wider range of issues. There are no formal or regular mechanisms in India that enable groups of farmer organisations (within and between states) to raise and debate systematically these issues, nor is there public sector or donor financing available to work with farmer organisations to address specific challenges in a systematic and transparent manner.

The participatory process used to draw out key issues and opportunities and to derive a work plan adopted within the conference and led by the AGRINATURA team was both useful and ultimately welcomed by all. There was some hesitancy at the beginning of the process on the part of the Indian partners in the use of such participatory tools - this was a successful breakthrough in terms of method and practice. The challenges facing farmer organisations in India go beyond “empowering farmers in the market”; it

*“The challenges facing farmer organisations in India go beyond ‘empowering farmers in the market’.”*

was necessary at the conference to balance ESFIM programme priorities with a wider debate, given the limited opportunities for such dialogue in India.

Activities continued in mid-2010 and an initial contractual agreement was reached between FFA and LEI in October 2010. To take this forward in line with the areas of work defined, a *Working methods paper - ESFIM India* was drafted. This was used to provide the background to deliberations at a series of planning meetings held in India in November 2010.

The November 2010 process included an open meeting with seven farmer organisations, representatives of commodity associations, research consultants and public sector representatives. Thereafter, closed meetings took place between the FFA, national researchers and the AGRINATURA team.

The open meeting provided the opportunity to discuss the planned ESFIM programme. The focus of the work - *to understand and foster small-scale farmer inclusion in supply chains including models of economic-based farmer organisations* - was revalidated. The outputs from the open meeting were: agreement on the key elements of the ESFIM methodology, and the identification of case studies on collective action of farmers in markets. Specifically, the farmer organisations’ representatives at the working meeting emphasised: the importance of understanding state level differences in relevant laws and policies on farmer group formation including cooperatives; the need to have a clear understanding of language/terminology used on aspects of farmer to market linkages and market chain development; the value of understanding market models and sharing them; and the importance of the work being evidence-based.

During the open meeting it was evident that people were keen to provide examples of innovative business models. Therefore the idea was put forward to secure and collate other such ideas through the setting up a “new business models marketplace”. A proposal was made to prepare a simple guideline/template to aid in the compilation of experiences and innovations of the parties contributing examples of business models. This information would be reviewed, made available on the FFA website and possibly become a separate ESFIM publication.

The first step agreed upon was a literature review of published material on the legal and institutional frameworks in India that support economic activity of farmer organisations in three focal states - Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Furthermore, a detailed study was to be made of six cases selected from within these three states, including related policy issues. It was also agreed that the programme would focus on extensive case studies and refrain from the preparation of multiple Policy Notes partly as a response to a reduction in the FFA-proposed budget, and partly to undertake a maximum number of possible case studies.

In closed meetings, the FFA and the AGRINATURA team identified how the research should be conducted, determined the work plan timetable and budget, and selected local consultants, including a review of curricula vitae submitted by FFA, as well as their terms of reference. It was agreed that the AGRINATURA team would help train the local research team and help with the first case study, as a training and pilot session.

Specifically the work plans included:

- A desk review of secondary information sources to elaborate the background of each case study. This research was to delve into relevant state and national reports relating to the (dis)incentives to organising the supply chain, legislation pertaining to the organisation of supply chains (e.g. contract laws, cooperative law), and relevant government policy programmes and subsidy schemes. This research stage was also to include material relating directly to the specific case study, such as the business plan, annual reports, evaluation reports, annual accounts, etc. in order to inform the assessment of the given case.
- Drawing up unique case-study material. This would come in the form of review of any written reports on the cases in question. The case-study material would include: a Participatory Value Chain Assessment with the multiple stakeholders to the case value chain; in-depth interviews with informants; consultative meetings with groups of farmers; and reports on all these activities.
- Case-study collation and lessons learnt. This was to be followed by an advocacy and outreach plan.

The working meetings were attended by some of the key persons whom FFA planned to place in an Oversight Committee for this work. The planned advocacy approach was to focus on the policy notes generated and feed the results into: the Confederation of India Farmers Associations' (CIFA) Annual Conference, provisionally scheduled for November 2011; the dialogue between FFA and the Planning Commission; the FFA website and hard copy distribution; and the CIFA pre-budget discussions on agriculture with the Finance Minister scheduled to be held in February 2012.

## Partnership

The outline work plan was subsequently completed and a start-up budget for the implementation phase was presented by FFA (February 2011). FFA also identified a steering committee to guide the work. However, the AGRINATURA team requested of FFA a full financial account of earlier activities as well as a response to queries on the work plan and budget for the planned activities, and, despite repeated requests to FFA from the ESFIM – AGRINATURA team to finalise these, a proposal from the AGRINATURA team to allow FFA to reassess the planned work with a view to restructuring if called for by FFA including limiting the work to a desk based study and review, no information was provided by FFA. The AGRINATURA team was left with the dilemma of whether or not to proceed with the research component of ESFIM 11, realising that the necessary planning may not have been done. The risks in terms of using development funds were seen as too great. The partnership between LEI-WUR on behalf of the AGRINATURA team and FFA was terminated in September 2011.

So why did FFA not follow through? It is difficult to know the exact reason however they include:

- FFA had very limited in-house staff to manage a research agenda, including the sub-contracting of researchers and thus decided not to proceed
- The challenge of managing including sub-contracting a fairly complex research agenda and research team may have been too high an expectation of FFA. FFA chose to sub-contract individuals rather than an institution. This option created opportunities as well as imposed limitations, as individuals (some six to ten persons were required) would require more management by FFA. In defence of this decision it was felt by FFA that a contract between FFA and a research institution would be very bureaucratic and increase overall costs, while at the same time devolving the overall manage-

ment. Whilst FFA has associated themselves with one of the CGIAR centres based in India, they have no experience of institutional contracts with national or other research institutions.

- FFA reprioritised the planned ESFIM partnership agenda. *“The activities of FFA and CFA over the years are not able to adhere strictly to programme or time schedule. This is mainly because farmers of different commodities and at different levels will confront problems which demands our attention to the newly surfaced problems”* (FFA May 16, 2012)
- The overall budget was modest, and meant limited financial gain to FFA in terms of overheads or commissions to support policy research, including external partnership and advocacy. Because of the presumably very tight internal FFA funding, the opportunity of partnering with AGRINATURA on ESFIM was no longer found to be attractive.

Face-to-face meetings held in 2009 and 2010 were essential to build relationships and strengthen mutual understanding. The open meetings with farmers were central to the setting of a farmer organisation-led agenda and there was clear agreement between FFA and AGRINATURA on priorities and, indeed, on the process. There was mutual agreement on the research approach, the work plan and the timetable. During the meeting held in 2010, the independent moderator and prospective FFA-identified research team leader played a helpful and enabling role. Tensions did emerge (during the November 2010 meetings) on how local consultants would be contracted and managed. Specifically, the question was whether the entire work programme should be contracted out, given the staffing limitations of FFA or whether FFA would hire a consultant to manage the sub-contractors. There were also discussions on the level of detail required for submission of the budget. FFA saw these details as “micro-management” on the part of AGRINATURA, whereas AGRINATURA saw them as key elements of an open contractual arrangement that needed to be understood by and transparent to both parties. It was generally felt by FFA that they did not need to share details on management issues with the AGRINATURA team and that the level of the budget breakdown was unnecessarily stringent.

## Lessons learnt

- The India partner FFA-CIFA has operated an advocacy and lobby agenda since its inception and well in advance of the ESFIM partnership – although this might better be described as a pressure group. Whilst the extent to which their on-going advocacy and lobby agenda is evidence-based might be contested, their voices are heard.
- FFA-CIFA recognised the value of evidence-based advocacy; however, the challenge was to get this realised within both the prevailing institutional structure of the FFA-CIFA and in partnership with national research institutions. There were no on-going and structured links between the FFA-CIFA and national institutions, although some ad hoc links had been forged with a CGIAR institution based in India.
- FFA-CIFA had very limited internal staff and financial resources. This potentially hampered FFA’s capacity to partner with other institutions and programmes. In addition, staff changes took place in FFA between ESFIM 1 and ESFIM 11 whereby the lead policy officer took on a secondment with an ACDI-VOCA programme in 2010, thereby reducing significantly the level of senior FFA staff available to ensure the implementation of ESFIM programme both in terms of management of the research and the follow-through on advocacy.
- FFA demonstrated its commitment to the ESFIM work through the mobilisation of participants to the 2009 conference and to the subsequent working meetings, the hiring of at least two local consult-

ants (ESFIM 1 and 11) and the submission of a progress report and work plan. Despite this, the full ESFIM 11 contract was not secured for the work and the AGRINATURA team were forced to close the arrangement with FFA.

- There can be no doubt that the need for the work to be done as identified in 2009 at the Conference still remains a priority for farmer organisations and their members in India. New ways should be found to build sustainable and longer term working relationships between key national and state level farmer organisations and national research institutions to address farmer organisation-led research agendas. Seeking to finance research via the farmer organisation may not have been appropriate in the case of India. Overall, the planned research was probably too ambitious for the FFA to manage, even though the outputs were clearly demanded and evidently needed.
- Optimise on available information. Given the limited overall budget, more could have been done in India to learn from existing research and grey evidence, including donor-funded programmes. This material itself would have been useful for the preparation of relevant policy notes for advocacy.
- There is a need to find mechanisms to keep administrative and financial management systems as straightforward as possible. The administrative demands, including financial accounting, may have been the key underlying reason for the discontinuation of the ECART-FFA partnership.

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# CHAPTER 6



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## Kenya

### KENFAP-Kenya: in-house research capacity to monitor government policy

GIDEON ONUMAH

The Kenya National Federation of Agricultural Producers (KENFAP) is the national partner in the Collaborative Research under the Empowering Smallholder in Markets (ESFIM) programme. ESFIM activities fit in and were anchored to KENFAP's strategic aim of "fostering the interests of smallholder farmers by stimulating beneficial policy changes through lobby and advocacy...". This objective requires the active engagement of KENFAP with the Government to create and maintain an enabling environment for agricultural sector.

*“Though tea, coffee and horticultural products dominate agricultural exports produced by Kenya, the production of maize - by far the most important staple crop - has significant food security and political repercussions.”*

KENFAP is a non-political, not-for-profit, democratic federation of Kenyan farmers. It is an umbrella association of farmer organisations representing the interests of over 1.8 million farming families. It was established in 1946 as the Kenya National Farmers Union (KNFU), which at that time represented only large-scale white farmers. In 1973, KNFU opened up its membership to smallholder farmers and consequently grew to become a powerful farmer organisation. Implementation of economic reforms in Kenya in 1980-1997 adversely affected the fortunes of many commercial farmers, hence weakening the Union. In response, the KNFU underwent institutional transformation in 2003, becoming a federation of farmer organisations (KENFAP), which operates through networks at different levels – local, regional and national. KENFAP membership consists of 36 apex Commodity Associations, 16 Co-operative Societies and other corporate farming entities. Its members are found in 43 of the 47 counties in Kenya. Smallholder farmers predominate within KENFAP, and many of these are mobilised around 5,000 farmers’ groups with an average size of 30 to 50 members.

KENFAP’s main mission is “to progressively influence change in the agricultural sector environments and promote agribusiness through targeted interventions”. Central to its pursuit of this mission are lobbying and advocacy on agricultural policy and providing services to the farm sector. It has developed internal structures and strategies to enable it to pursue this objective, including establishing a four-tier administrative structure that facilitates collection of data and information from its local, district and national level structures. KENFAP has also formed strategic alliances at national and international levels to enhance its advocacy role. It is a member of the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA), the Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF) and the International Land Coalition (ILC). The Federation has the following dissemination vehicles: a monthly magazine (The Farmers Voice); a bi-weekly E- bulletin; published profiles and brochures for particular events; and a website ([www.kenfap.org](http://www.kenfap.org)).

KENFAP was one of the few partner national farmer organisations (NFOs) to receive funding from Agriterra for Collaborative Research activities in 2009. Initially, KENFAP prioritised only one policy research issue, the assessment of government interventions in input and output markets for maize, the most important staple grain in Kenya. However, when the project funding situation improved through co-financing by the Netherlands Government, it was possible for KENFAP to broaden its agenda and include issues related to the development of warehouse receipt systems (WRS) as well as examine the challenges facing smallholder farmers in Kenya in accessing agricultural finance.

## Development challenge

The contribution of agriculture to Kenya’s GDP is low– it stood at 19.4 per cent in 2010, compared to other East African countries such as Uganda (23.9 per cent) and Tanzania (27.1 per cent). The services sector dominates the economy, accounting for 66.8 per cent of GDP in 2010. However, the agricultural sector accounts for 65 per cent of the country’s merchandise exports and 75 per cent of employment and is, therefore, of strategic importance in the pursuit of Kenya’s growth and poverty reduction goals. Although tea, coffee and horticultural products dominate agricultural exports, the production of maize, by far the most important staple crop, has significant repercussions for food security and internal politics. According to official data from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, maize output in Kenya was

steady in the 2000s but declined sharply from the 2008/09 season as a result of post-election conflicts (Table 9). Output has yet to recover to levels achieved in the 2006/07 season, implying that the country relies even more on imports to meet domestic consumption needs.

TABLE 9 OUTPUT OF MAJOR CROPS IN KENYA 2005-2010

CROP	TOTAL PRODUCTION PER SEASON (TONNES)				
	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Tea	295,791	375,226	328,216	327,713	377,927
Coffee	47,995	50,899	39,842	34,651	30,570
Horticultural products	186,356	218,848	261,039	245,618	248,664
Maize	2,935,193	3,153,931	2,879,712	2,429,757	1,800,000

Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, Horticultural Crop Development Authority, and the Tea and Coffee Boards.

Smallholder farmers account for over 70 per cent of the maize output in Kenya. They tend to be vulnerable to economic and climatic shocks and lack the means to mitigate these risks, except by adopting informal coping strategies such as diversifying their production and/or their sources of livelihood by engaging in non-farm rural economic activities. It is the vulnerability of these smallholder farmers to these setbacks, including policy-induced changes, which influenced the research priorities for KENFAP.

During the pre-planting period, most smallholder farmers lack access to financing or appropriately-packaged financial services. This makes it difficult for them to obtain inputs required to increase output and productivity. To address this problem, particularly after the post-election crisis, when there was a need to quickly promote increased grain production, the Government of Kenya introduced the National Acceleration Agricultural Inputs Access Programme (NAAIAP) under which subsidised inputs were distributed to smallholder farmers. Issues regarding the effective outreach to target farmers, as well as sustainability of the programme emerged, requiring an investigation of evidence-based views of farmers about the programme.

Smallholder farmers in Kenya also face major post-harvest difficulties. Unlike the well-structured formal marketing systems for agricultural export crops, the grain trading system in Kenya is fragmented and un-coordinated. The informal grain marketing system, which is accessible to smallholder farmers, lacks suitable grain storage facilities and, as a result, post-harvest losses tend to be high. Poor rural transport infrastructure adds to marketing costs for smallholder farmers. In addition, difficulties in assembling produce from a large number of farmers limits access to formal markets, which are more remunerative. The formal grain marketing system is dominated by the parastatal National Cereals and Produce Board (NCPB), in terms of grain storage facilities. Ad hoc intervention in grain markets is quite common in Kenya. The NCPB, which is responsible for managing the National Strategic Grain Reserves (SGR), is also considered as a “*buyer of last resort*”. The NCPB often faces funding constraints in its grain procurement programme, as it depends for a large part on financial support from the public treasury. The commercial banks which are engaged in inventory financing in Kenya appear unwilling to extend such facilities to NCPB.

The effect of inefficiencies in the grain output markets is that most smallholder farmers are often compelled to sell the bulk of their maize during the harvest season when prices are very low, as selling their produce is the only means by which they can obtain cash for household needs. It is estimated that over 50 per cent of maize output by smallholder farmers in Kenya is marketed immediately after harvest.

Furthermore, farmers are poorly organised, making it difficult to effectively bulk their crop production, which would enable them to meet the minimum volume requirements that prevail in more remunerative formal markets dominated by large-scale traders and processing companies. They also lack the capacity to carry out primary-level quality assurance, creating additional barriers in accessing formal markets. The consequence of these problems is a weakening of the bargaining position of most smallholder farmers. Consequently, farmers' margins tend to be constricted, thereby reducing incentives for them to invest in yield-enhancing inputs.

There have been efforts in the region, including in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda as well as in Kenya itself, to promote innovative market institutions such as warehouse receipt systems (WRS), with the aim of reducing uncertainty in crop output markets, especially for grains. The outcome of such initiatives across the region has been variable. It is therefore important that, in championing such innovations, KENFAP and other stakeholders representing farmers' interests should understand the context in which such systems can be successfully developed and also be accessible to smallholder farmers. Similar motivations underpinned the interest of KENFAP in studying developments in the financial sector in Kenya to identify opportunities to promote innovations which will enhance farmers' access to finance.

## Collaborative research process

Based on the core methodology for ESFIM-funded research activities, the following steps were to be followed:

1. National farmer organisations (NFOs) such as KENFAP were to mobilise their members and determine research priorities through a consultation process, the final phase of which involves organising a national workshops. This was done in Kenya.
2. KENFAP, with technical advisory inputs from the AGRINATURA research institute (NRI – Natural Resources Institute), was to define terms of reference (TORs) for the prioritised research topics. Again, this was done.
3. Local consultants, either individuals or preferably a local research institution were to be contracted by the national farmer organisation in consultation with NRI, to undertake the studies in accordance with the defined TORs. However, due to the funding constraints, the involvement of consultants in the study process was substantially scaled down. KENFAP staff undertook most of the research activities, including carrying out a desk review of existing literature, developing research instruments as well as collecting and analysing data. NRI provided advisory and editorial assistance to KENFAP. The involvement of local consultants was limited to facilitation of validation workshops and participation in workshops, during which they provided specific comments.
4. Validation workshops were to be organised to present the outcome of the studies to members of KENFAP and other key stakeholders for their views. Participants were to include representatives of KENFAP at different levels, policymakers, private sector players and local research organisations. This was done.
5. Based on the outcome of the validation workshops, the researchers were to revise their reports as needed, and then KENFAP was to prepare policy advocacy papers and engage in policy dialogue with Government using existing policy platforms. The position papers were produced by KENFAP, which continues to engage with Government on the identified issues.

Following a review of agricultural market dynamics in Kenya and in response to demand from its members, articulated during consultation meetings held in August 2010, KENFAP identified the following as the priority thematic areas to be supported by research under ESFIM:

- I. **An assessment of interventions by the Government of Kenya in maize input and output markets in the country.** The Government adopted agricultural development programmes, including NAAIAP, with the goal of increasing maize production in order to reduce food insecurity and rural poverty, as an effort to address the challenges posed by the post-election crisis in 2007. The Government programmes acknowledged that maize, the main staple food crop in Kenya, is produced predominantly by smallholder farmers and is the main source of livelihood in rural areas. The Government programme aimed at increasing maize productivity by improving access to low-cost fertiliser and other inputs. It also aimed at ensuring higher output prices to adequately reward investments by farmers. However, among farmers, there were major concerns about the certainty of government interventions. The aim of the study by KENFAP was therefore to determine the impact and sustainability of the interventions, involving delivery of subsidised fertiliser and certified seeds to smallholder farmers, and to outline relevant policy recommendations. It was expected that outputs from the study would allow for evidence-based reporting of the views of smallholder farmers on required policy reforms.
- II. **Improving produce marketing by smallholder farmers through developing Warehouse Receipt Systems (WRS), which are accessible to smallholder farmers:** The demand by members of KENFAP for an accessible WRS stems from difficulties they encounter in marketing grains, especially when there is a seasonal glut. Most smallholder farmers have no storage facilities and face significant cash constraints, which drive them to sell their produce at low prices. It was anticipated that the WRS would help address some of these constraints while also improving transparency and access to inventory credit, thereby enabling smallholder farmers to better manage the marketing of their produce. The Government of Kenya initiated a process to develop a WRS in response to these needs. Part of the process involved setting up a Task Force allowing for stakeholder participation in the design and implementation of the WRS. The responsibilities of the Task Force included advising on the appropriate legal and regulatory framework as well as the policy environment needed to support a viable WRS. While KENFAP members supported the proposed WRS, it was necessary for KENFAP, as a member of the Task Force, to produce a position paper articulating the interests of smallholder farmers, in order to influence the design of the WRS. The main purpose of the ESFIM-funded study was to produce the required evidence-based knowledge for this position paper.
- III. **Improving access by smallholder farmers to financial and insurance services and secure output markets:** Access to finance is cited by most smallholder farmers as the most binding constraint in efforts to adopt technology that increases farm productivity and output. However, most banks are reluctant to provide financial services to smallholder farmers due their low income, lack of information and high risks associated with farming. Moreover, financial services and products are not packaged in a manner that suits the needs of smallholder farmers and their typical household cash flow. In order to engage with Government and financial intermediaries in efforts to develop and promote innovative financial products that meet the needs of smallholder farmers, KENFAP prioritised the need for a study to identify specific impediments hindering smallholder farmers' access to financial and insurance products. The study will include reviewing existing programmes aimed at extending financial services to smallholder farmers and suggest ways of improving them.

In carrying out the study of maize input and output markets, the research adopted a low-cost and high-quality data gathering approach using practical cases. It was aligned to the KENFAP lobby agenda and market strategies geared to enhancing smallholder farmers' participation in markets as well as influencing the development of input and products markets in the country. The approach adopted by KENFAP was partly based on the 'Participatory Research for Policy Formulation' (PIPGA) under work area No.12 in the Farmers Fighting Poverty (FFP) programme developed by AgriCord. The study to underpin advocacy on the development of the warehouse receipt system (WRS) involved a cross-sectional survey to collect both qualitative and quantitative data from target stakeholders. The study adopted the Value Chain Analysis (VCA) framework to identify points where different types of interventions to promote inventory finance and structured commodity trade are feasible. The KENFAP field staff engaged focus groups (mainly drawn from the district-level structures of KENFAP) in discussions on the subject. Following these discussions, the study teams administered questionnaires to smallholder farmers and the other key respondents. The data collected was analysed by KENFAP staff at the head office. A similar approach was adopted in carrying out the study on financial services.

### **Case study 1: Government interventions in maize input and output markets in Kenya**

The study revealed that very few of the target smallholder farmers benefited from the programme, largely because of the scale of Government investment in the programme. Its coverage was also limited only to maize producers. Stakeholders were of the opinion that it was important that the programme be extended to cover other crops and even livestock farmers.

Evidence generated from the study showed that farmers who benefited recorded over 40 per cent increase in yield and output. This was attributed mainly to the application of inputs, which could normally not be accessed by farmers, mainly because they lacked the means to buy them. Furthermore, their overall cost of production was significantly reduced. This is not surprising, considering that the inputs were heavily subsidised. Despite the increase in yield and output of maize, the beneficiaries did not report a significant increase in household income. This was mainly because persisting inefficiencies in the maize marketing system meant that most of them sold their surplus crop at rather low prices during the harvest season, thereby reducing (virtually nullifying) the economic gains that the target households could have obtained. This finding demonstrated the importance of improving grain marketing systems if technology-driven gains are to benefit smallholder farmers and be sustained.

The study noted that the delivery of subsidised inputs to target farmers has the unintended consequence of undermining the development of private input-distribution systems in the country. Concerns were also raised about the sustainability of the input-distribution programme, particularly as the cost to Government was quite high. It was noted that if the Government's inputs distribution programme could not be sustained and also undermined the private sector distribution system, then access to inputs by farmers could become an even more acute challenge.

### **Case study 2: Promoting accessible WRS in Kenya – farmers' views on strategic options**

WRS pilots in Kenya were central to the review undertaken during the study. These pilots include the WRS being implemented by the Eastern Africa Grain Council (EAGC), which certifies participating warehouse operators. Other pilots involve community-based cereal banking schemes under which neither warehouses nor operators are certified. These are run by development agencies and NGOs such as SACRED Africa in Western Kenya, Farm Concern International in Eastern Kenya, Millennium Villages in Nyanza and USAID in lower Eastern Kenya. Though no legal and regulatory framework exists for the

WRS, it emerged that the EAGC had adopted rather stringent certification criteria. The EAGC certification process is also very elaborate and expensive (USD 4,400 per warehouse), making it very difficult for rural warehouses to be certified. Standard requirements include weighbridges and scales which have to be assessed on regular basis by the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS). No such certification process exists under the Cereal Banking System – making banks nervous about the security of their interests when they lend against stocks stored under that system. Even the more elaborate WRS system managed by the EAGC has had limited success in attracting financing from mainstream banks, mainly because of concerns about lack of a legal and regulatory framework. Currently, the main bank lending against EAGC warehouse receipts is Equity Bank.

There is evidence that if the system is well-run it can be financially beneficial to farmers. The total carrying cost (i.e., cost of storage and cost of financing) over a period of six months is estimated at about 18 to 21 per cent of the cost per 90 kg bag during the harvest season, the average increase in producer price over the same period being about 66.7 per cent. However, very few smallholder farmers' groups (representing only 10 per cent of users) have been able to access the WRS. The main beneficiaries (90 per cent) of the WRS pilot initiatives in Kenya were large scale farmers. Though the study found interest in WRS growing among the respondents, it was also apparent that access by smallholders was being limited by the following factors:

- I. Lack of awareness of the system and its potential benefits.
- II. Difficulty in complying with stipulated quality requirements. It was reported that a majority of the respondents (about 85 per cent of the farmers interviewed) could not meet quality standards, especially moisture tests stipulated for grains to be deposited under the WRS. The quality standards are set not only for purposes of minimising the risk of quality deterioration during storage but also to ensure ease of sale of the stored commodities as the standards have to reflect those applicable in the formal grain trade.
- III. Furthermore, most could not deposit the minimum required quantity of 10 metric tonnes for which a warehouse receipt can be issued. With average smallholder farm sizes being small, it is difficult for individuals to produce the volumes that meet the minimum stated above.
- IV. Lack of well-organised farmers' groups to facilitate aggregation and collective marketing. Such groups also require access to collection centres where bulking and first-line quality certification can take place. The collection centres need to have basic equipment such as moisture metres and well-calibrated scales to minimise cheating on quality and volumes deposited by individual smallholder farmers.

In addition to these, the study also found that the existence of parallel WRS pilots with different requirements sometimes creates confusion and suggested harmonisation of standards, including promulgating a legal and regulatory framework that will engender trust in the system. It was noted, however, that this could lead to the emergence of a system that will continue to favour larger-scale depositors. To address this problem, the study recommended investment in the development of collection centres that are accessible to smallholders. It was suggested that it will be worthwhile to further assess the potential of using the small-capacity storage facilities under the cereal banking schemes as collection centres for the larger WRS which is being proposed. Furthermore, it recommended promotion of collective marketing groups among smallholders and building their capacity to enforce quality standards in bulking produce from members. To minimise uncertainty in market prices, the study recommended reviewing Government interventions in the grain market, including clarifying the role of the parastatal NCPB in the grain market.



### Case study 3: Improving smallholder farmers' access to finance in Kenya – a review

The study revealed that, in an attempt to broaden access to micro and small enterprises, including smallholder farmers, some financial institutions and insurance companies have set up specialised agricultural business (Agribusiness) departments and units. Some of these financial institutions have been developing innovative products targeting the agricultural sector. For instance, the Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC) has several products including: Horticulture and Floriculture Loans, Seasonal Crops Loans, Machinery and Equipment Loans, Agribusiness Loans as well as Loan packages for livestock, water development, cash crops and oil crops. They have also developed the *Stawisha* Group Loans targeting smallholder groups. Other examples include the Cooperative Bank of Kenya, Equity Bank and Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB) which are marketing specialized agricultural finance products. In addition, Microfinance institutions (MFIs) and insurance companies have increased the number of financial products available to players in the farm sector, including those which are accessible to smallholder farmers.

However, it was observed during the study that very few smallholder farmers know about these financial and insurance products, thereby limiting uptake and utilization. The cost of borrowing also tends to be high. Though interest rates range from 10-18 per cent, there are additional costs such as upfront payment of loan processing fees as well as the cost of conveyance and insurance when required. These additional charges often increase the cost of borrowing to 21-24 per cent. The additional factor limiting uptake of some of these products is a requirement by some financial institutions for borrowers to make cash deposits which are used to secure the loans.

Based on the foregoing, the study recommended further research by banks, farmer organisations, donors and the Government to develop more accessible financial products for smallholder farmers. The study further recommended the adoption of more effective mechanisms to promote awareness of farmers about available financial products and services. It was noted that the Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) intends to undertake a more in-depth study of these issues in the financial sector. For that reason, it was proposed that KENFAP will collaborate with AGRA in undertaking that research and in disseminating its outcome, especially if it will further enhance access to agricultural finance with particular attention being paid to the needs of smallholder farmers.

## Advocacy outcomes

The results of the studies were validated during a stakeholders' workshops. The first one was about the interventions in the grain markets, held on 15 March 2011 in Nairobi (Box 5). On the whole, the reports raised significant doubts about the sustainability of the Government programme. The workshop participants endorsed the conclusions of the reports and resolved that the observations and conclusions should be brought to the attention of the Government of Kenya. They further resolved that Government should address the identified weaknesses in the existing programme before expanding to cover other crop sub-sectors.

### **BOX 5 Participating institutions at the KENFAP Validation Workshop on Kenya Government Interventions in Grain Input and Output Markets held on 15 March 2011 in Nairobi, Kenya**

Participants included members of KENFAP, other farmer organisations such as the Cooperative Alliance of Kenya (CAK) and the Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF) as well as representatives of private sector organisations such as the Eastern Africa Grain Council (EAGC), the MEA Fertilizer Company, Kenya Seed Company, and the Seed Traders Association of Kenya (STAK). Other participants were from policy organisations including the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), Tegemeo Institute of Agricultural Policy and Development (Tegemeo) of Egerton University, Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) and the Ministries of Agriculture and Finance, the National Cereals and Produce Board (NCPB), National Agricultural Accelerated Input Access Programme (NAAIAP) and the Agricultural Sector Coordinating Unit (ASCU). NRI was represented at the Workshop by Dr. Gideon Onumah. In addition, the KENFAP National Chairman held a one-to-one meeting with the Minister of Agriculture on the issues.

The report formed the basis of a presentation by a representative of KENFAP – Ms. Daphne Gatwiri Muchai – at a side-event on ESFIM at the third European Forum on Rural Development held in Palencia, Spain, between 29 March and 1 April 2011. KENFAP also presented a formal resolution, which in part reflected the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report, to the President of the Republic of Kenya in June 2011. The main platforms through which KENFAP is pursuing further policy advocacy action related to the issues raised in the report are the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) as well as the Prime Minister's Quarterly Round Table and the biannual Presidential Forum. In response to the resolution, the Ministry for Livestock Development met with KENFAP representatives to discuss issues pertaining to drought response and management in arid and semi-arid lands in Kenya. The Ministry of Agriculture has also scheduled a meeting with KENFAP to discuss issues related to programmes affecting grain marketing as well as input supply to resource-poor farmers.

The second validation workshop was organised in early November 2011 to discuss the two other studies. These studies resulted in insights on experiences and limitations of current WRS and financial services in Kenya and valuable recommendations for a more conducive policy environment as well as recommendations to further develop these services and the necessary capacity of the national farmer organisation to engage. Outputs from this work feed directly into the Government-supported process to develop an accessible and regulated WRS in Kenya. KENFAP takes part in the on-going consultation process with the government and the studies provide the necessary evidence to support their contribu-

tions. In July 2012, KENFAP hosted representatives of the National Smallholder Farmers Association of Malawi (NASFAM) and the Farmers' Union of Malawi (FUM) for a study tour on Warehouse Receipt Systems. From the perspective of KENFAP, the tour provided an opportunity to learn more about other parties providing MIS in the country and the need to collaborate with them in order to enrich the quality of information delivered to farmers.

## Lessons learnt

- The use of KENFAP's internal system of data-collection made it possible to get quantitative evidence on the impact of the input voucher scheme in a cost-effective manner. The presence of such a data-collection system within farmer organisations is an asset that empowers farmer organisations to influence policy with evidence-based advocacy.
- The external credibility of the impact study could have been enhanced if external researchers had conducted or supervised the research design. The impact evaluation cannot be considered as an external evaluation, as KENFAP had been involved as one of the suppliers of inputs in exchange for the vouchers, through its commercial branch KENFAP Service Ltd.
- The activities of AGRINATURA-NRI to provide access to experiences in other countries on WRS and MIS were well received by KENFAP. Also the gathering of stakeholders from governmental or regional entities to the workshop on WRS was facilitated by the networks and long-standing activities that AGRINATURA-NRI had in East Africa.
- KENFAP played a key role in establishing the East-African Farmers Federation (EAFF) that used the experiences on ESFIM research in their regional meetings on farmer advocacy, and to link ESFIM to the knowledge platform developed with IFAD-EU funding in the Support to farmer organisations in Africa Programme (SFOAP). EAFF and KENFAP facilitated access to three important international workshops where experiences on ESFIM collaborative research could be presented and discussed: the CTA Value Chain Conference on 6-9 November in Addis Ababa; the Second Global Conference on Agricultural Research on 18 October – 1 November 2012 in Punta del Este, and the Farmers' Forum on 18-21 February 2012 in Rome.

## Acknowledgements

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# CHAPTER 7



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# Madagascar

## CPM-Madagascar: rearticulating farmer groups in a weak state

FREDERIC LANÇON

The Coalition Paysanne Malgache (CPM) was selected and recommended by IFAP as the Malagasy partner for the implementation of the ESFIM collaborative component. This is a relevant choice, as CPM was established on January 2002 as a platform for supporting and strengthening Malagasy Farmers Organisations' (FOs) actions for advocacy. It was originally co-founded by five major farmer organisations (FEKRITAMA - Confederation des Agriculteur Malgaches, SCAE - Solidarité Coopérative des Agriculteurs et Eleveurs, KPI/FIKRIFAMA - Comités de gestion Communautaire des eaux potables, TITEM - Mutuelle d'Epargne/Crédit Agriculteur, FMTK - Mouvement des jeunes ruraux catholiques malgaches), with the support of Agriterra. CPM's vision of the rural development process is based on reinforcing rural institutions such as Chambers of Agriculture, supporting farmers' integration into

*“While agricultural development and smallholders’ inclusion in markets are constrained by structural factors, they are also suffering from the political instability and uncertainty that has marked the last decade.”*

markets through the promotion of fair marketing mechanisms, and the sensitisation of the rural population on environmental issues. CPM’s position in the agricultural institutional setting has evolved as a result of various administrative changes. Its role as a platform for the voice of Malagasy farmers was contested by the former administration, which established Chambers of Agriculture at the national and regional level to fulfil a function resembling that of the CPM. Furthermore, major farmer organisations became more reluctant to channel farmers’ claims through the CPM, arguing that this institutional setting was too costly, and that they also preferred to remain more autonomous in formulating their own advocacy priorities. Thus CPM gradually developed an hybrid status, combining the role of an apex body and one of a classical farmer organisation, formed by the direct subscription of local farmers groups as direct CPM members and not through another Farmers Organisation. As of 2011, the organisation was composed of 244,000 individual members and 2,648 other farmer-organisation members. It has a classical organisational structure, with a National Bureau elected by a General Assembly and regional entities. CPM is a functional institution with headquarters located in Antananarivo, having administrative (clerk/accountant) and technical capacities (project manager) operating under the supervision of a General Secretary.

## Development challenge

Madagascar ranks among the poorest countries in the Human Development Index (151 of 187 in 2010). Like other least-developed countries, Madagascar is characterised by a large rural population (70 per cent of total population), thus agricultural production plays a crucial role as a source of income. Most of the agricultural production, however, is geared towards home consumption, especially the major staple, rice. Beyond the immediate utilisation of food and other natural resources by rural households, the local urban market is the second outlet for agricultural products, although marketing opportunities are limited by the small share of the urban population in the country. The third outlet for agricultural production is the world market, with agricultural exports representing approximately 20 per cent of the agricultural GDP. Even though the export share of the total agricultural production remains rather low, this outlet has historically played a catalytic role in connecting subsistence-based agriculture to a market-driven economy, through expanding export of certain crops (e.g., coffee, cloves, and vanilla). However, the growth in agricultural exports has been slower than the growth recorded for other major exports (textile, clothing), resulting in a continuous decline in the share of agricultural products in the total value of export.

This relative stagnation of agricultural exports is an illustration of the challenges faced by the development of Malagasy agricultural marketing systems for linking producers to end users. Agricultural marketing development is hampered by a number of constraints, including low productivity, little access to capital, market inefficiency, etc. Moreover, one major obstacle faced by Malagasy agriculture to

expansion of its market is inadequate transportation infrastructure. While government and donors have prioritised the renovation of main roads, feeder roads are often lacking. According to the transport division of the World Bank, Madagascar has one of the lowest Rural Access indices in Sub-Saharan Africa; only 25 per cent of the rural population is within 2 km (or about 25 min walking time) of an all-weather road (the average Sub-Saharan rate is at 36 per cent, 59 per cent for South America and above 80 per cent for Asia).

While agricultural development and smallholders' inclusion in markets are constrained by structural factors, they are also suffering from the political instability and uncertainty that has marked the last decade. The recurring political crises do not provide an enabling environment for implementing agricultural development strategies requiring continuity. The latest phase of political instability started in 2009, at the time that the inception phase of the ESFIM collaborative component in Madagascar was planned. After consultation between International Federation of Agricultural Producers (which is now defunct), AGRINATURA and local partners it was eventually decided to pursue the implementation of the programme.

It is important to underline that the political crisis and its development did not directly affect the implementation of the Malagasy ESFIM component. However, the context was particularly challenging for achieving the objectives pursued by the programme, as lack of political stability meant a lack of adequate incentives for developing a strategy for advocacy. More precisely, the formal state and public decision-making mechanisms were and are still in place in spite of the political transition, but it is obvious that the capacity to implement and enforce any decision is rather weak. This failure, or interruption, of the public decision-making process not only becomes evident in a lack of public resources (the political crisis has resulted in a sharp reduction of foreign aid and economic stagnation), but also exacerbates the incursion of a hidden political agenda into the policy debate, including the one addressed by ESFIM. Furthermore, this lack of public capacity in leading the policy debate places donor institutions (multilateral, foreign and NGOs) at the forefront of the policy dialogue, which can in turn induce other potential distortions or biases in the policy agenda because of the donors' priorities. However, it should be noted that in spite of these adverse conditions, the public servants forming the intermediate layers of the administration (officers, heads of technical department) have always participated actively in the ESFIM process.

## Collaborative research process

In May 2009, a workshop on issue identification was organised, including 40 participants. Approximately 30 participants were members of major farmer organisations in Madagascar, whereas the others came from two ministries (Agriculture and Commerce), the National Agricultural Research Systems, and representatives of major rural development projects (such as the IFAD-funded project: Programme de Soutien aux Pôles de Micro-Entreprises Rurales et aux Economies Régionales PROSPERER). It should be noted that participants from local research institutions did not play a major role in the discussion (there was no participation from the University), illustrating not only the weak links between CPM and research institutions, but also the limited interest of research institutions for collaborating with FOs. Following presentations on key agricultural marketing issues in Madagascar, the workshop combined parallel and plenary sessions to gradually select and rank six priority areas associated with various actions to support the policy dialogue.

TABLE 10 RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY AGENDA

RANK	PRIORITY AREA	PROPOSED ACTION
1	Rural business development services	Desk study and workshop
2	Market organisation – collective marketing	Study tour and workshop
3	Market information systems	Field study
4	Access to credit	Desk study
5	Management of agricultural product quality	Desk study and workshop
6	Strengthening the role of the CPM in the policy dialogue for rural development	Support to CPM

Among the challenges encountered by participants during the workshop, one was to minimise the tendency to make a “shopping list”, which would lead to an excessive list of priorities. Another challenge was to clearly explain the nature of the project, focusing on the process of understanding issues and defining priorities for action and advocacy, rather than supporting the actual implementation of institutional arrangements. The delay in funding, ultimately proved beneficial. It pushed CPM to revise its list of priorities and to have a more focused agenda. Funding limitations did not allow for the convening of a new broad meeting to reduce the priority list. This was done during a meeting of key representatives of CPM, who had contacted other farmer organisations beforehand to obtain their views on the priorities.

Three priorities were identified based on the initial list and taking into account their relevance with respect to ESFIM thematic priorities and the need for up-to-date information. The three selected and reformulated themes were:

1. Support to farmers in decision making on the marketing of agricultural products
2. Market Information Systems
3. Collective actions for marketing

In terms of actions, it was decided to carry out one study for each theme and to organise one common workshop to discuss the outcomes and to develop goals for advocacy. The translation of the three selected priority areas into feasible terms of reference was done by CPM with the support of an AGRINATURA scientist. Eventually, in order to limit the cost of management and supervision, it was decided to gather the two first themes (i.e., farmers’ capacities in marketing decision making and MIS) into one, as they are closely related. The finalised ToRs were widely disseminated among the community of consultants in Madagascar through CPM and AGRINATURA networks. It should be noted that the project did not succeed in linking CPM and farmer organisations to research institutions per se; neither researchers in rural development at the University of Madagascar nor scientists from the national agricultural system responded to the call. On the research side, this outcome may have been due to the lack of interest of local research institutions to develop links with farmer organisations because government institutions funding agencies and foreign research institutions remain their privileged partners. This lack of interest could also reflect the preference of local research institutions in allocating scarce resources to other thematic areas and the limited importance of this type of issue in current academic curricula. From the side of the farmer organisation, academic and research institutions were not considered as potential partners because more emphasis was put on implementing “ready-made” solutions rather than reflecting on the most viable and promising development options.

The selection of the consultants was done by the CPM National Bureau, the AGRINATURA scientist having advised on the quality of the various technical submissions. However, the AGRINATURA scientist was directly involved at the inception phase of the two studies for finalising the methodology. Both studies combined various sources of information: a review of the existing literature, interviews of key players on the development side (NGOs, projects managers, central and local administrative officers) and discussions with farmers and representatives of farmer organisations in selected areas.

In September 2011, the preliminary conclusions of the two studies were presented and discussed in a workshop with approximately 30 participants, mostly representatives of various farmer organisations and CPM members, and a limited participation of stakeholders in order to minimise a potential bias towards non-farmers' opinions in the dialogue.

The major insights from the three studies can be summarised as follows. With regards to farmers' decision making capacities, the study underlined the lack of continuity in the actions implemented by various stakeholders (NGOs, development projects). Furthermore, the study did not come to any clear conclusions regarding the relevance and benefit for farmers of the various types of training provided throughout the country. With respect to the multiple agricultural market information systems implemented in Madagascar, the consultant highlighted farmers' views on the complexity induced by the multiplication of sources of information (area- or product-wise). The study on collective action for marketing stressed the weakness of most of the farmer-based marketing institutions identified, when support is no longer provided by development institutions.

Both studies provided a fair review of the various actions implemented in Madagascar in the three selected domains; the material gathered and processed offered a good and comprehensive base for supporting in-depth opinions. However, the complexity and the magnitude of the challenge faced by farmers in Madagascar to improve their marketing position made it difficult to translate these outputs into straightforward and clear claims for advocacy.



*“Market access is physically limited, as most Malagasy farmers live in rather isolated environments and economic access to markets is limited because the volume of the domestic as well as the foreign demand remains small.”*

## Advocacy outcomes

The difficulties faced by CPM and the representatives of farmer organisations to clearly formulate lobby issues to be defined within the policy dialogue are due to several constraints that bring into question the expected impact of the ESFIM paradigm (i.e., strengthening the efficiency of farmers’ advocacy on marketing issues through research).

The first challenge in formulating a relevant advocacy proposal on marketing is the overwhelming problem of access to markets. Market access is physically limited, as most Malagasy farmers live in rather isolated environments and economic access to markets is limited because the volume of the domestic as well as the foreign demand remains small. In such a context, it makes sense that farmers place no emphasis on marketing. One striking discussion about the outcomes of the studies revolved around “cultivating for production” or “cultivating for marketing”. When transportation remains the major constraint, any alternative institutional arrangement to private marketing for reducing market asymmetry has a rather limited attractiveness. Changing the rules of the game may not necessarily increase the demand for agricultural products. Difficulties faced by farmers’ representatives in identifying and formulating a clear policy proposal in this domain is most likely due to their inability to assess the advantage of any change made.

Another set of challenges relates to the institutional context in which Malagasy farmer organisations operate. They face institutions (NGOs or donor projects) that have more means to shape the farmers’ institutional environment than the farmers themselves. Each study has revealed a perception of “unfair competition” between farmer organisations and the so-called Financial and Technical Partners (FTP), who define the rural development priorities, while the FOs’ views in the policy dialogue are negated and made to adapt to the FTPs ideas. This weaker position of farmer organisations illustrates the constraints in the endogenous capacity to shift from a “traditional” rural society to a more dynamic and modernised rural social and political life. The FOs’ capacity for increasing their ownership of this process of transformation, or at least increasing their influence in the decision-making process, is still very limited.

The last, but not least obstacle to making the ESFIM paradigm operational is the policy context, in which there is a lack of active and reliable public partners in the policy arena. The deadlocked political situation does not provide the right incentive to farmer organisations for investing in advocacy, nor does it give them the hope that formulating any specific advocacy activity on agricultural marketing could have any results.

Following the discussions during the 2011 workshop, farmer organisations eventually decided to follow up the field Market Information System, for which the studies provided pragmatic and tangible elements for action. The representatives gathered agreed on the formulation of one advocacy issue, to centrally and widely broadcast pricing information on the public radio network. They decided that the collective marketing issue would require additional internal discussion among their constituencies, in order to come up with a position that would be more consistent with farmers’ practices and priorities.

In January 2012, the CPM bureau also took the initiative to convene a one-day meeting with other major farmer organisations as a follow-up to the September workshop, to present the major results of ESFIM to their main partners (NGOs and development agencies).

Given the rather short period of the project implementation and the overall context, it is rather difficult to assess to what extent the ESFIM process led to a durable change in the perception of CPM with regards to using research-based evidence for building advocacy strategies. CPM members did acknowledge the need for having a more rigorous assessment of their policy positions, backstopped with an analysis of the pro and the cons of any policy recommendations. Along this line, the ESFIM process did reinforce the awareness of the bureau of the need for strengthening their analytical capacity. However, the ESFIM impact in terms of strengthening links between researchers and farmer organisations in Madagascar has been limited.

While CIRAD, the AGRINATURA institution in charge of backstopping the ESFIM collaborative component in Madagascar, has a rather extensive experience in collaborating with farmer organisations and doing research on empowerment of farmer organisations, its previous partnership with Malagasy farmer organisations focused more on technical issues and rural credit. The collaboration between CPM and the CIRAD scientist assigned to the task was rather fruitful and educational with respect to learning to understand each other's ways of thinking. In terms of local partnership, CPM stressed that the ESFIM project offered a tangible opportunity for the organisation to fulfil its task and mission of stewarding the policy debate among FOs. ESFIM also did provide an opportunity to establish links between CPM and the faculty of agro-management of the University of Madagascar through CIRAD. The short duration of the project did not allow this first contact to develop into the formulation and implementation of a research agenda.

## Lessons learnt

- The first lesson learnt from the Malagasy case is that the ESFIM paradigm is less operational in a context in which the public policy formulation process is idled. The Malagasy case also illustrates the need to adjust the thematic area that could stimulate collaboration between farmer organisations and research: farmers' empowerment in markets might not have the same level of relevance across countries.
- In terms of collaboration, it is not easy to define the farmer organisations and research institutions' rationale and objectives: farmer organisations naturally look for research outputs that could easily be put into operation, while research institutions might not have the same priorities. Similarly, research outcomes do not necessarily lead to a clear agenda in terms of action or lobbying, and farmer organisations may have some difficulty in considering such outcomes as useful or practical.
- ESFIM provided an adequate framework to build up and strengthen interactions between the Malagasy farmer organisations and research institutions. The capacity given to farmer organisations to define the research agenda was key to ensuring their involvement in the whole process. However CPM ownership and mastering of the project was hampered by the human capacity available within the organisation, which was not adequate enough to fully exploit the volume of knowledge accumulated in the studies. In future, it could be valuable to include in such a project a training component for farmer leaders on how a scientific approach and research outcome can improve their position in the policy dialogue. The contribution of research to the FOs' capacity may not be limited to the formulation of a research agenda for the organisation as a whole but may also be relevant for feeding a debate within the farmer organisations about key issues that may not be mastered enough to formulate a claim at the policy level.

## Acknowledgements

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# Malawi

## NASFAM-Malawi: ownership of the research process influences its use in advocacy

HELENA POSTHUMUS

The National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi (NASFAM), founded in 1997, is the largest independent, smallholder-owned membership organisation in Malawi. NASFAM is organised into a unique extension network to support its membership of over 100,000 smallholder farmers. The smallest operational unit of NASFAM is the Club, made up of 10 to 15 individual farmers. Clubs combine to form Action Groups, which are the key points in the extension network for dissemination of information to members, and for the bulking of members' crops. Action Groups combine to form NASFAM As-

*“Unstable marketing policies and regulations restrict private investments, and the lack of agro-processing and value-addition activities hamper a steady growth in the agricultural sector.”*

sociations, of which there were 40 in 2007-2008. NASFAM Associations are legally-registered entities, member-owned and managed by farmer Boards. The Associations are grouped by geographical location into 14 Association Management Centres (AMCs). These provide management and operational support to the Associations in terms of production, marketing and community development. The AMCs are in turn supported by the NASFAM Regional and Head Office structures. NASFAM functions are split into Commercial and Development activities. NASFAM commercial activities include the marketing of inputs to farmers and produce from farmers. NASFAM development activities deliver community development and capacity-building services to members. NASFAM Commercial and Development operations are governed by a Farmer Board, which is elected democratically by the membership each year.

NASFAM’s policy and advocacy is guided by its Policy Platform. The Policy Platform is developed in a participatory manner with NASFAM members. Issues that hinder smallholder farmer development are discussed and root causes determined. The issues are then grouped into four pillars (access to markets; agricultural commercialisation; access to financial services; and infrastructure development). The process of generating evidence based on secondary data or even commissioning research studies then begins. The findings thereof are used to develop policy position papers/ briefs that are used for various advocacy and lobbying initiatives.

## Development challenge

Agriculture contributes 34 per cent to the GDP of Malawi and the sector accounts for over 80 per cent of Malawi’s export revenue. The total labour force in Malawi is about 4.5 million and almost 84 per cent of this is engaged in agriculture. Malawi’s economic short-term growth is closely linked to strong agriculture performance, particularly tobacco, which accounts for 60 per cent of the country’s exports and half the Government’s tax base. Agriculture will therefore remain the mainstay of the Malawi economy for the foreseeable future. Past policy biases towards maize and tobacco have pushed other potential high-value crops and staple-food crops to the periphery and have thereby limited the export potential and food production capacity of the country. Unstable marketing policies and regulations restrict private investments, and the lack of agro-processing and value-addition activities hamper a steady growth in the agricultural sector. Other constraints in the agricultural sector include poor market infrastructure, lack of reliable market information systems, lack of storage and assembling points, low capacity and poor coordination by Farmer Organisations (FOs) to effectively engage the Government in policy formulation (Nakhumwa and Peiris, 2009).

## Collaborative research process

Following the diagnostic country review, a stakeholder workshop was organised by the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) and NASFAM in Lilongwe on 13 and 14 January 2009 to discuss and prioritise key issues that negatively affect farmers' access to markets in Malawi. Participants included the Farmers Union of Malawi (FUM), NASFAM, Grain Traders and Processors Association (GTPA), the Agricultural Commodity Exchange (ACE), the Centre for Agriculture Research and Development (CARD), the Coffee Association of Malawi, and the Malawi Bureau of Standards (MBS). The following issues were prioritised: policy and regulation; capacity building; and marketing infrastructure tied to quality standards. Participants identified the following activities to address the key issues:

- Participatory policy development, formulation and implementation (policy and regulation).
- Developing and managing tools for marketing, e.g., grain banks, warehouse receipt systems, storage and bulking (market infrastructure).
- Access to finance and business services (market infrastructure).
- Access to Market Information Systems and intelligence (market infrastructure).
- Improving capacity of farmer organisations for sustainability (capacity building).

In a post-workshop meeting, the ESFIM team (local consultants, AGRINATURA researchers, and representatives from FUM, NASFAM, and IFAP) determined the following research topics for the ESFIM country proposal: market information, quality and standards, and access to finance.

Two local consultants developed a more detailed research proposal for case studies to be carried out under ESFIM. Four case studies were initially identified: MIS, low productivity (smallholder seed multiplication), quality standards, and research on aflatoxin and groundnut sales. The aim of the case studies was to gather information that could be used by the farmer organisations for policy advocacy in the identified areas. The choice of these prioritised areas was based on an analysis by the responsible NASFAM staff member of the comparative position of the farmer organisations in influencing policy through organised lobbying and advocacy.

After the submission of the research proposal, its implementation was delayed due to uncertainties related to funding as well as staff changes at NRI and NASFAM. The project was picked up again in 2011. Because of budget constraints, it was decided to carry out only two of the four identified case studies: smallholder seed multiplication and MIS. Both case studies centred on desk-based research and interviews with key stakeholders. NASFAM contracted the same local consultant (Teddie Nakhumwa) who had done the initial country study. AGRINATURA researchers provided quality control. The findings of the case studies were presented during a stakeholder workshop in February 2012. In addition, a study tour to Kenya was organised in July 2012 to enable the representatives of the farmer organisation to learn about MIS in another country.

### Case study: Smallholder seed multiplication

Two models of smallholder seed multiplication were reviewed:

- The Association of Smallholder Seed Multiplication Action Group (ASSMAG) was established in 2001 by the Government of Malawi as an association for smallholder farmers in response to shortage of seed, especially of legumes and open-pollinated varieties (OPV) of maize. ASSMAG is involved in multiplication and distribution of seed and planting material for OPV maize, groundnuts, cowpea, soya beans, beans, cassava and sweet potato.

- ICRISAT is mainly involved in the development of (new) varieties and multiplication of breeder/foundation seed for groundnuts, pigeon peas, beans and rice. ICRISAT has also been involved directly in seed multiplication programmes in collaboration with other farmer organisations, particularly NASFAM. In this model, farmer associations are not involved in foundation seed production because of their limited capacity in terms of technical know-how and land holding sizes. In recent years, production of certified seed by farmers associations (for OPVs and legume seeds) has greatly increased due to the steady market created by the Government's Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP).

The Malawian Government uses the FISP to promote seed markets in the country; the seeds are procured and distributed by the private sector. To ensure shared responsibility in maintaining quality standards, only registered members of the Seed Traders Association of Malawi (STAM) are engaged in the FISP. STAM members distribute their seed through the agro-dealer network in the country, but most of these agro-dealers usually operate in urban and peri-urban market centres. Only 20 per cent of seed is distributed through ADMARC, which has a wider network reaching deep into the rural areas. Use of improved maize varieties and quality legume seed by smallholder farmers has increased in recent years due to FISP. Uptake of improved varieties by the smallholder farmers outside the FISP is hampered by the high prices of these seeds on the commercial markets.

The report contained detailed information on seed multiplication systems in Malawi, but the consultants did not focus on policy and regulatory issues that NASFAM should address. Despite comments and requests from AGRINATURA researchers to discuss the implications of the current seed multiplication system for smallholders' access to markets and recommendations for NASFAM's advocacy agenda, the consultants failed to address these. NASFAM indicated they were happy with the report and the information it contained, so there was no further follow up.

### BOX 6 Seed multiplication in Malawi

The seed law, commonly referred to as Seed Act, was enacted in 1988 and amended in 1996. The law defines the minimum standards for the regulation, production control, processing, sale, importation, exportation and testing for the certification of seed. The Seed Services Unit (SSU; under the MOAFS's Department of Agricultural Research Services) is the regulatory authority responsible for seed monitoring, inspection, testing and certification. The SSU works closely with the Seed Traders Association of Malawi (STAM), an association for all seed producers and seed traders in Malawi. The two bodies jointly ensure that all seed quantities declared for sale be certified as per requirements under the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA).

Three classes of seed are recognized in Malawi and these have different requirements for meeting international standards for certification:

- **Breeders' seed:** This is seed of a particular generation of an inbred line or variety that is produced under the supervision of the breeder or institution that developed the variety. It is the source for the production of basic/foundation seed.
- **Basic / foundation seed:** This is the progeny of breeder seed. It is handled in such a way that its genetic identity and purity is maintained to ensure quality.
- **Certified seed:** Certified seed is the progeny of basic seed. Production of certified seed should also conform to prescribed standards to maintain genetic identity and purity.

*Source: Nakhumwa T, Kaudzu G. 2011. Strengthening and replicating successes of the smallholder seed multiplication industry in Malawi: case study of ASSMAG and ICRISAT smallholder seed multiplication models. Draft report.*



### Case study: Market Information Systems

A desk study was carried out to identify institutions currently operating market information systems (MIS) for the agricultural sector in Malawi. This was complemented by information collected through interviews with key informants.

MIS in Malawi is still in the development phase. The market information is currently mainly used to help policy makers to monitor food security. Heavy reliance on ICT for the dissemination of market information means that the majority of smallholder farmers are not reached. Availability of market information on commodities is limited in terms of coverage, timeliness and accessibility, and there is a general lack of capacity to analyse the market data; the MIS data therefore has little relevance for smallholder farmers at present. Several useful observations emerged from the case-study:

- The capacity for most of the MIS institutions in Malawi needs to be upgraded so that they are able to analyse and provide reliable and informative real-time market information that would help producers and traders make well-informed production and marketing decisions.
- MIS institutions in Malawi are not financially sustainable and rely heavily on donor support. Farmer organisations can reduce the transaction costs of delivering market information using their internal communication systems and distribute information to their member associations. Farmer organisations can also use their economies of scale to negotiate for a competitive subscription fee.
- The initiative of the Agriculture Commodity Exchange (ACE) to enhance commodity exchange with warehouse receipt systems seems an important strategy to enhance smallholder farmers' access to short-term loans from commercial banks. It is also a financial risk-management tool that enables the smallholder farmers to wait until commodity prices have improved on the market. NASFAM and FUM need to engage with this initiative in order to safeguard the interests of the smallholder farmers.

### BOX 7 Market Information Systems in Malawi

The Ministry of Agriculture Irrigation and Water Development (MoAIWD) is the main institute that collects, analyses and disseminates market information from 80 designated markets across the country to all stakeholders. The Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) run by MoAIWD is coordinated by the Agro-Economic Survey section under the Planning Department.

The major limitation with AMIS is that smallholder farmers rarely access this market information system. FEWSNET (Famine Early Warning System) and MACE (Malawi Agriculture Commodity Exchange) utilize AMIS to access, analyse and disseminate the same market data to various stakeholders. FEWSNET focuses on providing early warning information on food security, whereas MACE's domain is to provide wholesale and retail price information to various stakeholders engaged in agricultural commodity trade. In addition, there is the National Statistical Office (NSO) which collects food price information from a basket of commodities with the purpose of computing the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

MACE seeks to make markets work better for poor farmers and lower the huge risks and transaction costs that inhibit market development. In practice, MACE operates more as a MIS house than a commodity exchange. MACE used to disseminate information through a radio programme, but this was stopped when donor funding ended. The Agriculture Commodity Exchange (ACE) is the only commodity exchange in Malawi that operates as a broker between farmers and buyers, but is still being developed.

*Source: Nakhumwa T. 2011. Promote farmer access to quality Market Information Systems (MIS). Draft report.*

The conclusions and recommendations of the report do not identify which issues NASFAM's advocacy strategy should address. Although it is recommended that NASFAM should engage with ACE at policy level, there is no detailed information about the issues that NASFAM should address in order to protect their members' interests. The absence of clear recommendations on the way forward for NASFAM makes the report less relevant, as was seen with the case study on seed multiplication.

In July 2012, representatives of FUM and NASFAM, and AGRINATURA researchers, went on a MIS study tour, hosted by the Kenya National Federation of Agricultural Producers (KENFAP).

The main objective of the study tour was to learn from the Kenyan experience in providing market information to smallholder farmers. The following institutions were visited: KENFAP, Ministry of Agriculture, East African Farmers Federation (EAFF), East African Grain Council (EAGC), Alliance for Green Revolution Africa (AGRA), and the Kenya Agricultural Commodity Exchange (KACE).

The study tour was useful for gaining a better understanding of how MIS operate in Kenya, the potential roles of farmer organisations, the challenges of making MIS operational and financially sustainable, and best MIS practices. Managing MIS so that it provides relevant and timely market information is costly, and is only financially sustainable if it provides additional paid services to specific stakeholder groups (e.g., linking sellers to buyers or providing historical price data to development and research institutes). But farmer organisations can play a role by analysing and repackaging the market information into relevant information on market trends for its members, and advocate for existing MIS to provide useful and timely data. With these insights, FUM and NASFAM concluded that a thorough needs assessment of potential users of MIS and a feasibility study need to be carried out, before taking further steps on improving or establishing MIS in Malawi.

The findings of the two case studies were presented and discussed at a stakeholder workshop in Lilongwe in February 2012. Key participants to this workshop were officials from the Government: Ministry of Agriculture Irrigation and Water Development and Ministry of Finance (Department of Economic Development); the MIS houses including FEWSNET, Agriculture Market Information System (AMIS-Technical Secretariat), Agriculture Commodity Exchange (ACE); Farmers Organisations (NASFAM and FUM); NGOs (The Hunger Project) and CGIAR (ICRISAT), members of the Seed Traders Association of Malawi (Monsanto, ASSMAG, STAM Secretariat). Following the presentations of the findings of the case studies, group discussions were held to identify follow-up actions. The stakeholder workshop revealed a number of practical issues concerning seed multiplication and MIS that require further consideration rather than advocacy plans. Although the discussions revealed further issues and action points, none of the participants assumed the responsibility of taking these forward.

Nevertheless, several months later NASFAM indicated that the research studies carried out under ESFIM generated evidence that is needed to advance its policy agenda. NASFAM plans to share the evidence generated by the ESFIM-commissioned studies with its existing networks such as CISANET (Civil Society Agriculture Network). Furthermore, both national farmer organisations (FUM and NASFAM) take part in many invited spaces dealing with smallholder production as well as development of various strategies including MIS. At the moment, the Auction Holdings Limited is launching an Agricultural Commodity Exchange and NASFAM is involved in the debates on its establishment and can make use of the outcomes of the research as well as the lessons learned during the study tour to Kenya.

## Partnership

NASFAM took responsibility for a leading role in project activities in Malawi, and AGRINATURA researchers from NRI and WUR provided quality control. Staff changes at NASFAM, NRI and WUR caused delays and interrupted the relationships and continuity of the ESFIM programme. Contacts were re-established in 2011, when ESFIM had guaranteed funding for the research activities, but knowledge about the first phase of ESFIM was lost. NASFAM's previous experiences with evidence-based advocacy plans had served as an example for developing the ESFIM approach of collaborative research, as NASFAM presented in the 2007 International Conference in Tunis their research and advocacy activities, especially the successful advocacy on tax issues (the transaction tax on farmer supplies to the procuring agribusiness). However, the ESFIM outputs during 2009-2012 were less than expected. The case-studies were limited to fact-finding studies and no other outputs or outcomes, such as technical (lobby or advocacy) propositions, policy and advocacy notes or training materials, were delivered.

It is not clear what NASFAM has gained from the activities and outputs. The monitoring and evaluation exercise with NASFAM showed that it is (still) a strong farmer organisation. Their weak point lies in the capacity to network, a capacity that has declined in the past three years. The limited success of the ESFIM research support is thus not a result of a weak NASFAM. Perhaps even contrarily. We think that the outcomes of the ESFIM activities did not meet the expectations for several other reasons.

## Lessons learnt

- The self-evaluation exercise showed that the NASFAM board members had little knowledge of what the organisation's management is actually doing on various aspects. For example, the board members were unaware of the ESFIM programme and they reported they had only been invited for the final workshop. This may be a reflection of limited dialogue, involvement and sharing of information between the board and management. Anyway, the board members were not engaged in the ESFIM process until the presentation of the findings.
- Compared to NASFAM's other operations and income streams, the ESFIM budget was relatively small. The limited availability of financial resources seems to have determined the selection of research topics rather than the urgency or priority of the issue. The fact that the board members were not aware of the ESFIM activities suggests that the programme was not a priority for NASFAM. This may explain why there was no immediate follow-up in terms of policy messages or the development of an advocacy agenda.
- The continuity of the ESFIM programme was compromised by delays and staff changes that affected the sense of ownership of the process by NASFAM and NRI.
- NASFAM contracted the same independent consultant to organise the workshops, develop the research proposal and lead the case studies. This consultant thus had substantial influence on the research proposal and implementation of the case studies. Because the consultants were contracted as independent individuals, there was no institute that carried the responsibility for the quality of the final outputs. Contracting research institutes or larger teams of consultants may have been more appropriate to help to assure quality outputs and generate advocacy plans for NASFAM. This would have had the additional advantage of strengthening NASFAM's relationships with the research community in Malawi.

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# Peru

## JNC-Peru: coffee cooperatives support a policy platform of the wider agricultural sector

GIEL TON

In Peru, the ESFIM programme was used by the Junta Nacional de Café (JNC) to strengthen a platform of economic farmer organisations. The JNC, representing 44 coffee cooperatives and associations, has a strong record in policy advocacy and had experienced that many policies affecting the coffee sector could best be tackled through an cross-sector platform. At the start of ESFIM, JNC was one of the most active members of such a platform, 'La Convención Nacional del Agro Peruano' (CONVEAGRO). The CONVEAGRO was created in 1994 and its membership includes a range of non-governmental organisa-

*“Even more important was the focus that JNC wanted ESFIM to have in Peru: to build a national platform that includes economic farmer organisations in all sectors, not only in coffee.”*

tions (NGOs), farmer organisations and research institutes. Currently, it has approximately 40 member organisations, half of which are farmer organisations.

When ESFIM started in 2008, Lucila Quintero, a board member of JNC, was also a member of the board of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP). Her role was to represent the Latin American members of IFAP and she felt that ESFIM was an opportunity to support her in sharing experiences between the four Latin-American countries taking part in ESFIM. However, even more important was the focus that JNC wanted ESFIM to have in Peru: to build a national platform that includes economic farmer organisations in all sectors, not only in coffee. In 2007, the JNC had taken the lead in exploring the possibility of forming a confederation of farmer organisations (*‘gremio de gremios’*) that could act on its own, independently of the NGO members of CONVEAGRO. They concluded, however, that there was a rather large difference between the policy perspectives of the economic farmer organisations dealing with collective marketing and quality issues, and that of the other farmer organisations and NGOs that did not have collective marketing activities. The JNC seized the opportunity created by ESFIM to further exploit this sector of market-oriented farmer organisations and develop a strategy to increase their advocacy capacity, within CONVEAGRO and/or independent from it.

## Development challenge

The development challenge that JNC hoped to tackle had, therefore, a strong political-organisational component and a focus on market-related policy issues that, according to them, had low priority within CONVEAGRO. The secretariat of CONVEAGRO is based in Lima in the building of the Centro Peruano de Estudios Sociales (CEPES), a non-governmental organisation. Although CONVEAGRO is technically independent of CEPES, the key role of CEPES is technical support and channelling donor funding from international donors to sustain the activities of CONVEAGRO. Farmer organisations were influential in Peru in the 1980s but suffered active obstruction by the Fujimori government until 2000. Fujimori abolished the levy on exports that funded most of their activities (*auto-gravamen*), and effectively weakened most of the commodity-based farmer unions. In the late 1990s, the role of CONVEAGRO became more important and visible than the role of the individual farmer unions that were member of the platform, with the notable exception of the JNC.

*“The ideological orientation of the Fujimori government was such that ‘farmer union group’ was synonymous with communism and cooperatives were associated with failure. In general, Peruvian society was dismantled, even the organisations of professionals disappeared. Most unions functioned on strong ideologies and as places for party-political action and not as genuine unions that have a structure of empowerment of their members. Thus, the structure of agricultural representation collapsed, with their economic structures and even with their paradigms. I would say the second part of the nineties, the unions were thinking about ways to survive. When they managed to survive, they started to develop again, like the coffee producers. The coffee producers benefited from their ample experiences in the eighties, especially in business organisation.”* (Interview with Lorenzo Castillo, June 2009)

At the start of ESFIM in Peru in 2009, the bigger farmer unions, such as the Confederación Campesina del Perú (CCP) and Confederación Nacional Agraria (CNA), were foremost dedicated to the struggle to protect the rights of smallholders and communities against the international companies that increasingly limited access to resources such as water (irrigation) and land to agro-exports. The major effort of CONVEAGRO related to water rights, free trade agreements and the ban on genetically-modified organisms. Less attention was paid to issues such as taxation policies, which at that time threatened to strangle the cooperative sector, or designing institutions and administrative procedures to facilitate public investment in collective marketing. In 2007-2008, CONVEAGRO had lost their battle against the bilateral Free Trade Agreement with the United States. One of the results of this agreement was the removal the tariff protection to cereal producers on US imports, which came into effect on 1 February 2009, and changes in intellectual property rights and regulations to facilitate foreign investment. Several government programmes were designed and implemented to compensate the domestic producers for this increased competition. For example, one of the new programmes was an innovation grant fund Programa de Compensaciones para la Competitividad (PCC) and some enhanced credit facilities through the agricultural development bank AGROBANCO. These new policies opened advocacy opportunities for economic farmer organisations such as the JNC, but they were felt to be held back due to the other priorities and sensitivities in the supporting NGOs.

## Collaborative research process

ESFIM started with a kick-off workshop in March 2009 to discuss the priorities for research and advocacy support. The workshop resulted in a work plan proposing to further interaction between the farmer organisations through a national workshop and field visits to successful grassroots organisations. The research support was especially dedicated to three priority issues: government procurement policies; quality standards; and management of collective marketing activities.

The research on government procurement policies started in October 2009. A study to scan the legal and regulatory environment was assigned by JNC to a lawyer in CEPES, while JNC staff collected information from organisations supplying to governments and nutritional programmes. A second assignment was initiated to establish quality standards for coffee production, especially concerning the production of high-quality planting material in nurseries.

The second ESFIM workshop took place on 9-10 December 2009 and was especially dedicated to the issue of government procurement. In an informal meeting the day before the workshop, a former manager of the Programa Nacional de Asistencia Alimentaria (PRONAA) explained the problem of reaching small holder producers resulting from administrative requirements on transparency. During the workshop, Carlos Paredes of the FDCC presented three examples in the Cusco-Puno region, where farmer groups indeed managed to supply to the local government. He considered these examples to be valuable learning experiences to prepare for a more demanding and competitive market. The local government is not necessarily an attractive market but more experience is needed, with a view to generating proposals for improving the access of smallholder organisations. For larger and more developed organisations such as those dealing with coffee and rice, however, other markets are perhaps better and more accessible. Also, a detailed study on the legal framework around government procurement was presented and discussed, and the political space provided in the law for farmer organisations to participate in governance and social control were discussed. The second day was used to exchange marketing experiences between the farmer organisations, with presentations from the coffee and alpaca sectors and the cotton cooperatives in Piura.

On 2-3 November, 2010, the third ESFIM workshop was organised by JNC in the offices of CEPES in Lima. Lima was chosen as the meeting place in order to facilitate the presence of government officials and



financing institutions. The first day of the workshop was used to present outputs of the on-going ESFIM research and to allow several farmer organisations to present their current activities and advocacy priorities. The research on government procurement policies and practices was discussed by Gilbert Bustamante of JNC and a policy brief was distributed among the participants. After this, the union of alpaca herders, Sociedad Peruana de Criadores de Alpacas Registrados (SPAR) explained their experiences in delivering wool for school uniforms, and their alliances with the garment industry (quality issues) and with the government (trade financing). The SPAR representative emphasised the importance of having producer interests more directly expressed in sector policies and international promotion campaigns, as margins tend to be accumulated by the garment industry through the manipulation of prices and quality measures. Victor Vazquez of the union of rice producers Comité Nacional de Productores de Arroz (CNPA) added a critical note on government procurement. He explained the perverse effects of the rice procurement system of PRONAA, which distorted the market and gave very little benefit to small producers. He explained CNPA's new strategy to develop an economic branch, in partnership with an international investor, to support the organisation's role in representing producers' interests.

The second day of the workshop was dedicated to trade-financing mechanisms, with the presence of various financial institutions (AGROBANCO, SOS-FAIM, SHARED INTEREST, FOROLAC-FR). Also, the policies around quality certification and export promotion were presented by Claudia Solano of the governmental agency PROMPERU. The issue of quality certification raised a lot of interest in the participating organisations, e.g., with relation to the special qualities of Piura-cotton, alpaca wool and native potatoes. JNC also took advantage of the opportunity to discuss the issue of fair trade certification by PROMPERU, beyond the usual certification schemes. It became clear that this initiative was only related to certification in the clothing industry.

The workshop ended with a detailed research plan to support the advocacy efforts of the associative sector in CONVEAGRO, considering the opportunities offered by the presidential election process in 2011 and the change of authorities due to the regional and municipal elections. Five issues were prioritised as key issues to be taken up by CONVEAGRO in the advocacy around the presidential election:

- Government procurement
- Regional guaranty funds for loans to productive investments
- Redirecting the grant fund PCC to its founding principle of supporting existing organisations
- Re-instituting the possibility of using sector levies in the Magna Carta (with CEPES)
- Collecting good practice case-studies of collective marketing through a national concourse, with premiums for the most interesting case-study and replicable internal governance mechanism.

This third workshop proved to have large effect on the advocacy strategies of the sector. The advocacy agenda served to empower the economic, market-oriented farmer organisations in re-directing the priorities in CONVEAGRO. Three weeks after the ESFIM workshop, elections were held for a new board of CONVEAGRO. Several of the persons that participated in the ESFIM workshop were elected to the CONVEAGRO board on 24 November 2010, and can take the agenda forward. Lucila Quintana of JNC became the new chairwoman of the board.

In 18 March 2011, CONVEAGRO headed the organisation of a major advocacy event with ESFIM support entitled 'Agriculture Decides its Vote' (El Agro Decide Su Voto), at which all presidential candidates in the election were invited to present their policy plans and respond to CONVEAGRO's proposals.

## Advocacy outcomes

In 2011, one of the priority issues of the platform of economic farmer organisations, that of the eligibility for receiving grants from the PCC, was resolved successfully following a change in the procedures. Several cooperatives and farmer associations were able to have their business plans approved. Some promising cases emerged on the issue of the regional funds (e.g., the Regional government of Ucayali), where funds were released in a formal credit system for smallholder producers of oil palm.

In 2012, AGRINATURA researcher Michel Dulcire synthesised the organisational trajectory of the cotton organisation COSTACH in Piura, and its experience of direct exports of quality cotton. COSTACH provided a promising model for strengthening the associative sector that engages in collective processing and development of specific quality parameters to gain a niche market for Piura cotton (see box 8). JNC and ESFIM helped COSTACH by funding part of the costs of the meetings with members that were necessary to prepare and evaluate the experience of the first direct export of cotton to Italy since the 1980s, which took place in September 2011.

Furthermore, with the support of ESFIM among many others, JNC developed a quality assurance system for coffee nurseries and prepared a manual on standards for the production and management of certified coffee plants. These standards have been implemented and practical assessments have demonstrated the competence of a number of seedling producers. In July 2011, 17 producers, technicians and workers received official certification that confirmed their ability to perform their work on coffee seedlings production- this was a first step towards achieving adequate productivity in coffee plantations. These growers were evaluated by the National Coffee Board (JNC) and Environmental Management for Agriculture (GEMA) and are now authorized by the Peruvian Institute of Evaluation, Accreditation and Certification of Quality (IPEBA). This consolidates a process that began in February 2010 as a pilot programme, supported by ESFIM, through which the JNC and IPEBA joined efforts to certify the skills of the producers of coffee seedlings.

In 2011, an old advocacy issue came to the forefront, more directly related with the interests of the coffee sector. JNC had been working for several years on the Cooperative Law, specifically opposing the fiscal authorities' placement of a value-added tax (VAT) on internal transactions between members and their organisations. Both the cooperative banks and the coffee cooperatives would be severely affected by such taxation. The taxes were to be paid retroactively over the last five years. Several of the coffee cooperatives had already been called to account for not paying these taxes and faced the threat of bankruptcy. Advocacy on this issue by JNC was impressive and successful. After years of lobbying the Parliament, in May 2011 the Peruvian Parliament restated the original intention and interpretation of the law to exonerate VAT on these internal transactions. In August 2011, however, one of the first policy interventions by the newly elected government of Humala unexpectedly and without notice rescinded the parliamentary decision on tax regulation that the sector (led by JNC) had managed to obtain in May.

### BOX 8 COSTACH Ltd: Partnering for quality and chain integration

The Cooperative of Multiple Services “Tallan-Chusis” (COSTACH Ltd.) is an association of producers of Pima cotton in the region of Piura, Peru’s north coast. At the moment, 5,600 small family farmers (producing 3-5 ha each.) are members.

The cradle of cotton in Latin America is in Peru, where pre-Columbian cultures used it to weave clothes. The Peruvian Pima has an exceptional fibre quality: fineness, strength and long staple length (40-45 mm). The demand for this high-quality cotton constitutes 2 per cent of the world production, and represents an attractive niche market with relatively high prices. In the past the “White Gold of Piura” was listed separately on the Stock Exchange. In the early 1970s, agricultural companies on the Peruvian coast became production cooperatives as result of a drastic land reform. But from the 1980’s onwards, these cooperatives were economically and institutionally strangled: there was a process of individual land allocation, and the state service providers to small family farmers gradually disappeared. Additionally, the reduction of import tariffs particularly affected the market. The textile industry refrained from paying fair prices, as it managed to import cheap and subsidised lower quality cotton from the US. And worst of all, “they are making clothes with regular imported cotton and stating that it is Peruvian”, exporting it as if it were made from Peruvian Pima.

As a result, the 60,000 ha of Pima in the 1960-80’s dropped to only 1,500 in 2010. Through COSTACH, Pima cotton has been re-introduced. The activity of COSTACH and its partners sought to ‘paint the fields in white’ aiming for 12,000 ha in the 2012 campaign. In 2011 COSTACH started to assume processing and exporting functions. It managed to contract a cotton ginnery to produce fibre and vegetable oil. COSTACH is recognised by key institutions such the Ministry of Agriculture, investment banks and municipalities and is now looking for ways to build their own ginnery. They are starting the first step to a Denomination of Origin (DO) of the Peruvian Pima Cotton, to stop unfair competition with imported low-quality textiles. The association COSTACH must withstand the current oligopolistic control of the economic flow of cotton in Peru by strong private companies. For COSTACH this means “to make links, to go abroad, to improve farmers’ activities” and to regain part of the value added in the Pima cotton market chain.

*Source: Michel Dulcire (AGRINATURA) ‘La Cooperativa de Servicios Múltiples Tallán Chusis (COSTACH), de algodóneros del Pima en la zona de Piura, Perú: historia, balance y perspectivas. ESFIM-Peru, 2012*

*“However, it took until November 2012 to have the national tax service (SUNAT) effectively apply the law and free the cooperatives from its fiscal harassment. This meant a historic victory for the cooperative sector.”*

In response, advocacy efforts had to be intensified, e.g., through an emergency session on 22 August 2011 in Congress and a march to the Congress on 23 November 2011. In response to the march, the Government formally withdrew the change in the tax law from the Congress’ agenda. However, it took until November 2012 to have the national tax service (SUNAT) effectively apply this new interpretation of the law and free the cooperatives from its fiscal harassment. This meant a historic victory for the cooperative sector.

*“It proved advantageous to provide research support to an organisation already having a strong track record in advocacy.”*

## Partnership

The ESFIM partnership had a rather unusual role in Peru. ESFIM played a minor part in the constellation of factors that defined the political success of the farmer organisations to influence policy making through CONVEAGRO. In retrospect, however, it was used in a very timely manner by JNC to empower the sector in advance of the election process within CONVEAGRO. The three workshops held with the (informal) platform members were exemplary for the ESFIM process, the purpose of which was to support advocacy around evidence-based research. After 2011, the research component became secondary to the advocacy actions taken, not in the least because CEPES and other research institutes had already provided research support to farmer organisations for a long time, and they continued doing so with the new board. Furthermore, JNC was obliged to refocus its attention to the tax issues and left CONVEAGRO to take up the work around cross-sector advocacy issues. In 2013, the process to strengthen cross-sector advocacy between cooperatives and producer associations was continued, culminating in the constitution of the National Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives of Peru.

The coordinator of JNC, Lorenzo Castillo, presented the ESFIM and JNC strategies at several international conferences, the IFAD Farmers Forum in February 2012 in Rome, and the Global Conference on Agricultural Research on Agriculture and Rural Development (GCARD) in November 2012 in Punta del Este - Uruguay. He clearly demonstrated the potential of farmer organisations in empowering smallholder farmers in markets, and the importance of programmes that help them to do so.

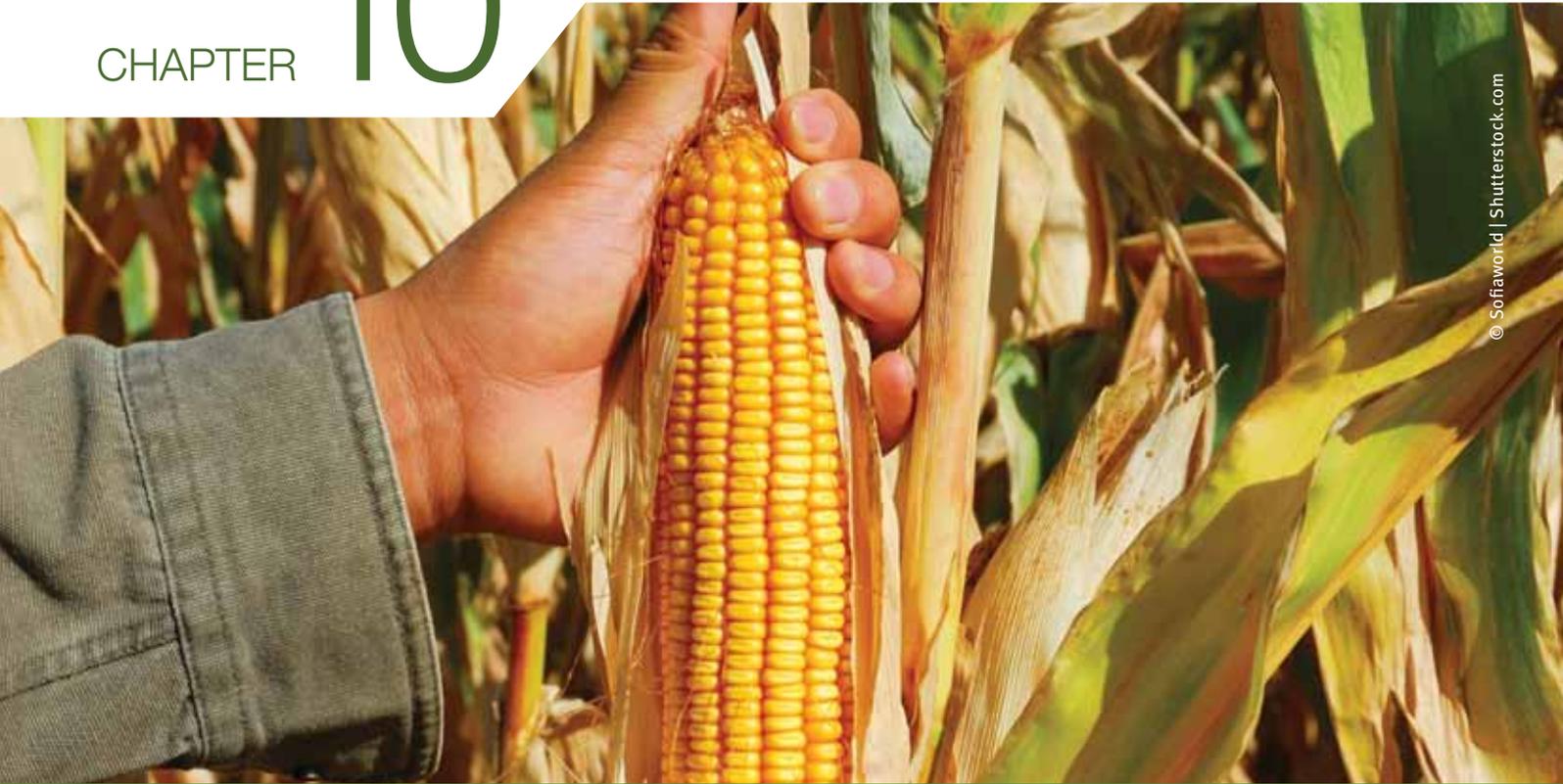
## Lessons learnt

- It proved advantageous to provide research support to an organisation already having a strong track record in advocacy. JNC had the capacities to ‘mold’ the ESFIM research support to their advocacy priorities. Of course, the downside of this is the modest role of ESFIM in triggering a qualitative upgrading of advocacy capacities. In fact, JNC provided support and expertise to the ESFIM programme and researchers, perhaps more than vice-versa.
- However, JNC had problems coordinating the activities of ESFIM with other organisations in the platform. The support to COSTACH was very successful, but for some of the others it proved difficult to define clear terms of references. In response to this, JNC delegated the responsibilities for this support to other sectors to the new CONVEAGRO board, in which these farmer organisations were represented. CONVEAGRO, however, proved to have other priorities than research support consultancies for some of their members, focusing on policy issues related with the presidential elections (external focus) and their relations with the NGOs in CONVEAGRO (internal focus). Therefore, a part of the budget was unspent and re-allocated to support activities that were more supportive to JNC’s own advocacy priorities, and less relevant for the platform of economic farmers organisations.
- Strengthening advocacy platforms of farmer organisations takes time and needs perseverance. The constitution of the National Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives, in September 2013, resulted from a process in which the ESFIM activities in 2009-2010 have been catalysing factors.

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# CHAPTER 10



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# Philippines

## FFF-Philippines: towards a smallholder-inclusive Agricultural Commodity Exchange

FRÉDÉRIC LANÇON

The Philippines holds a distinct position among emerging South-East Asian economies. Comparing major development indicators for the Philippines with neighbouring countries of similar demographic size (such as Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam), it is apparent that while the average per capita GDP has increased in the four countries, the growth has been faster in Indonesia and Vietnam. In the Philippines, the per capita GDP has grown by a factor of 1.6 between 1990 and 2010, whereas in Indonesia and Vietnam, it grew 2.2 and 3.0 fold, respectively and in Thailand 1.4. While this slower growth in the Phil-

*“Combining rural poverty reduction strategies and food security objectives for a fast growing urban population in such a polarised agricultural economy has been and remains a challenging task for successive Filipino governments.”*

ippines and Thailand can be explained by the higher initial average per capita GDP in these countries relative to the two others, it should be underlined that this favourable initial position has not translated into a lower poverty rate for the Philippines at the present time. In 2010, according to the World Bank, 27 per cent of the population in the Philippines lived below the poverty line, whereas this was 15 per cent in Indonesia and Vietnam and 9 per cent in Thailand. In short, Filipino growth during the last decade has had a relatively smaller impact in terms of poverty reduction than in neighbouring countries.

The Philippines also distinguishes itself from the other countries by having a faster decrease of the value of agriculture in the economy; the average share of agriculture in the total GDP decreased from 19 per cent in the 1990s, down to an average of 13 per cent in the years between 2000 and 2010, while the average percentage for the 2000-10 decade is at 15 per cent and 21 per cent in Indonesia and Vietnam, respectively, and has even increased from 10 to 12 per cent in Thailand. Along the same lines, there is a higher rate of urbanisation among the population of the Philippines than in the other countries, which again illustrates the decline of the agricultural sector. This rapid decline of the importance of agriculture in the economy translates into a lower share of agricultural raw products and food products in the total value of exports, while food imports are greater than for the other large Southeast Asian countries. The structure of agricultural trading also reflects the specialisation of the Filipino agriculture, with exports being dominated by rather high-value products produced and processed by the agro-food industries (e.g., copra, bananas, pineapple and fruit juices). At the same time, the country recognises a trade deficit in staple food and feed, with rice and wheat being the major imports.

These indicators also reflect the difficulties faced by Filipino agriculture and its smallholders in particular in responding to the needs of an expanding urban market, and thereby missing an opportunity to reduce the poverty level in rural areas. Agricultural production takes place in a precarious environment marked by recurrent climatic calamities such as typhoons, floods, and landslides. Furthermore, the archipelagic and mountainous configuration of the Filipino countryside induce high costs for linking scattered and remote areas to major markets. Last but not least, the agricultural sector is characterised by highly skewed land distribution, with approximately 3 million rural households owning an average of 2 ha of land coexisting with 13,000 private properties of up to 20,000 ha.

Combining rural poverty reduction strategies and food security objectives for a fast growing urban population in such a polarised agricultural economy has been and remains a challenging task for successive Filipino governments. While state intervention in the marketing of staple crops (rice and maize) and control of food imports has historically been one of the major policy instruments to support agricultural development, these options have been gradually reconsidered under the WTO agreements and the increasing integration of the Philippines into the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA). This new context requires the government to radically redesign its agricultural policy and the instruments used to implement it. To what extent can this increasing opening up of Filipino agriculture to global competition take place without further jeopardising outlets for the smaller and poorest farmers?

Farmer organisations play an active role in this debate, benefiting from a long experience of political struggle dating from opposition to the colonial power and to the Marcos dictatorship. The current political scene revolves around the strategies of powerful political dynasties built upon strong relation-

ships with local constituencies. However, the Philippines benefits from active and operational political institutions, in which various social groups keep their power through a democratic process that has proven resilient, even after experiencing several crises throughout the years. Politics and policy debates showed impact in shaping the course of public policies. Hence, the Philippines offers a rather enabling environment for applying the ESFIM paradigm, as farmer organisations already have experience in making their voices heard and lobbying within the policy arena.

The Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) has been in charge of implementing the Filipino component of ESFIM. Established in 1953, it is one of the oldest farmer organisations in the country. The FFF has a Federation, in charge of lobbying activities and farmers' participation in the policy dialogue, as well as a commercial branch, the Federation for Free Farmers Cooperative, Inc. (FFFCI), in charge of economic and support activities (collective marketing, technical and management support and training to FFF members). The FFF vision to empower farmers through participation in a democratic process promoting reforms differs from more radical farmer organisations in the Filipino political landscape. FFF has a long tradition of interactions with various political institutions (government, parliament...) to promote its view and influence, as much as possible, the regulations and public policies that shape the transformation of the Filipino agriculture. In particular, the FFF has held a key position in the debate about Filipino adherence to the WTO and its potential impact on rural livelihoods. Furthermore, the charismatic and strong leadership of the FFF have also been very active on the international stage: Raul Montemayor, the FFF National Manager, has been one of the vice presidents of International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) and the FFF has participated in several regional and international projects and initiatives.

## Development challenge

The specific objective and content of the ESFIM collaborative project in the Philippines was designed during a two-day workshop organised in February 2009. While the process along which the collaborative project was defined adhered formally to the ESFIM methodology, its content diverged to a large extent from the expected types of action to be implemented within the ESFIM context. As a matter of fact, rather than going through a complete review and prioritisation of the various constraints preventing the empowerment of small-scale farmers on agricultural market, the workshop eventually placed the focus on the assessment of one single objective: the implementation of an Agricultural Commodity Exchange Systems (ACES), based on an electronic trading system, to improve market transparency and efficiency.

The establishment of a commodity exchange system based on an electronic platform echoes similar initiatives in various developing countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. In the case of the Philippines, this initiative followed previous actions taken by the NFA, including the design and attempt to make operational an electronic trading system for maize, including a warehouse receipt system, processing and grading facilities, etc. A joint assessment by NFA and other agricultural institutions, including the FFF, of the shortcomings of these previous initiatives concluded that it was necessary to open and share the formulation and the design of the systems with all the different stakeholders involved in agricultural marketing (agro-food industries, traders, farmers and NFA). ESFIM was viewed as one opportunity to support this participatory process for the design of the improved exchange system. The workshop ended with a set of recommendations about the design of the ACES and its rules of operation. Furthermore, actions to be taken were listed and included in a first project proposal.

This priority given by FFF to the ACE must be placed into the Filipino context. The large market power held by major traders, combined with the physical obstacles that increase marketing costs throughout the country (e.g., distance, scattered supply and procurement points throughout the archipelago) has been considered as a major constraint for improving the position of smallholders on the market. Moreover, the wave of reforms in public intervention on major agricultural markets has pushed for a redefinition of the institutional setting in which these markets operate and in particular the role of the National Food Authority (NFA), the Filipino marketing board. For farmers' representatives, and the FFF in particular, the NFA reform is an important issue. Even though, the ESFIM partners in the Philippines acknowledge the criticisms to the shortcomings of the NFA operation, new mechanisms, or institutional arrangements that could reduce as much as possible market asymmetries and unequal power, remains an issue.

## Collaborative research support

The unexpected orientation and format of the Filipino collaborative project generated concerns among the AGRINATURA and IFAP project team. Questions were raised about the possible drawback of focusing the collaborative project on only one thematic area, at the risk of ignoring other strategic issues. Another part of the discussion dealt with the expected impact of a ACES on the inclusion of small farmers in the market, arguing that this type of institutional set-up are generally more useful for larger farms than for smaller ones. A consensus was reached to support the Filipino project, provided that ESFIM funds would be more specifically allocated to an assessment of how the ACES could serve the interests of smaller farmers.

The delay in funding in 2009 provided an opportunity to revise and streamline the initial proposal. The first version of the project proposal included a broad range of actions, from the investigation of legal issues associated with the implementation of the ACES to the launching of a pilot implementation of the system. The revised version focused on understanding how smallholders may interact with planned ACES marketing. The collaborative research included four components:

1. ACES Baseline Survey for Palay (rough rice or rice grain) and Corn (maize)
2. Monitoring and Documentation of ACES Implementation,
3. Designing material for ACES Workshop for Small-scale Farmers and other Stakeholders
4. Conducting ACES Workshops

The objective of the survey was to have an up-to-date understanding of smallholders' marketing practices and a better knowledge of their perception about marketing issues and their potential interest in an ACES. The monitoring and documentation of the ACES implementation was intended to keep record of the various steps through which the system was developed. As already mentioned, several commodity exchange systems have been launched worldwide in the past decade, but the Filipino ESFIM team found only a limited number of references on the practical implications of these initiatives and how they were developed. Accordingly, it was decided to produce a document that could be used by others as a reference on the ACES experience. The organisation of workshops with farmers and other stakeholders aimed at facilitating information exchange and discussion about the ACES. In order to have a fruitful debate focusing on practical issues related to the utilisation of the ACES it was decided to develop a simple game simulating how the system operates; this device could help an audience having a low education level to understand the ACES mechanism.

The project was implemented and coordinated by the FFF National Manager, and benefited from his long experience and extensive knowledge of Filipino rural development issues, with the assistance of two consultants that also had a broad expertise on agricultural marketing issues. This core team was part of the steering committee put in place under the auspices of the NFA to follow up the actual implementation of the ACES. The strong link between the ACES development and the ESFIM collaborative research allowed FFF to be part of the learning process associated with the development and the design of the system. For example, the FFF National Manager participated in the study tour organised by NFA in three sub-Saharan countries where commodity exchange systems were operational or being implemented. Through these activities FFF was also able to bring farmers' views and concerns into the steering committee debate and provided a number of key inputs into the debate about the potential impact of the projected ACES.

The analysis of the baseline survey on farmers marketing practices pointed out that the ACES would be an attractive option for them but only when a number of conditions were met. The report concludes specifically that: "The original postulate that farmers who process their produce before harvesting, bring them to buyers directly and borrow from formal lending institutions would be most inclined to wean themselves away from traditional traders and sell through the ACES does not seem to be validated convincingly by the data" (Survey of rice and corn farmers and evaluation of the need for an Agricultural Commodity Exchange System (ACES), p18). The report emphasised that logistical (transportation, physical access to buying stations) and post-harvest constraints (drying, cleaning) hinder the smallholders' position on the market more than market asymmetries and financial constraints (e.g. credit) do. It underlines that the design of the ACES would have to take into account these constraints for the system to benefit the smallholders. This would imply that it is necessary to have more flexibility in quality standards at an initial stage, and that providing post-harvest services would enhance the capacity of smallholders to use the ACES.

The outcomes of the four workshops organised in different grain producing areas corroborated the conclusions of the baseline survey. The workshop brought together smallholders' representatives and other stakeholders of the maize value chain (traders, feed millers...) to present how the ACES will operate and to discuss whether the proposed design was compatible with their requirements. In order to support and trigger exchanges between the participants, the ESFIM team used the above-mentioned game, that simulates how transactions will be set up through an Enhanced Electronic Trading System (EETS) (i.e., enhanced compared to the previous system developed by NFA before 2009). This innovative training tool allowed the various categories of participant to understand clearly how the system operates, and as such is a key input of the ESFIM project to capacity building of farmers. Further-



more, the simulation game also improved the quality of exchanges between the participants, because it placed all participants on the same level, irrespective of the size of their business and their market knowledge. Mixing different kinds of stakeholders in each group “playing” the simulation game also improved the quality of the discussions. The workshops were therefore able to facilitate the extensive and constructive discussion of issues such as the quality of the grain that would be traded, the size of the basic contract and other related constraints (agricultural and marketing practices, credit, logistics, etc.). The workshops provided key inputs for the development of the ACES and for the identification of constraints that should be addressed. They also offered an adequate arena to express farmers’ views on the proposed system.

## Advocacy outcomes

The ESFIM collaborative project focused more on analysing the potential impact of the ACES on small-holders’ empowerment in the market rather than on the formulation of a farmers’ position to be defended at the policy level, although the two perspectives are linked. As a matter of fact, the public support needed to establish the ACES, at least at an early stage, came from the various agricultural markets players (farmers, traders, agro-food industries, etc.). While the wide and diverse attendance of the 2009 inception workshop confirmed the interest of various stakeholders in the project, at the end of 2012 the utilisation of the system by the different players is still far from being evident. Moreover, the delay and difficulties faced in making ACES operational at the same time provided the opportunity to extend the discussion about the potential impact of the ACES on farmer’s empowerment. Conversely, the absence of an operational system may have hindered the identification of potential issues for the various agricultural market stakeholders. The collaborative research and the related debate may have taken on a different perspective if the system had already been operational.

The ESFIM collaborative project provided a venue to strengthen interactions not only between farmers and NFA, but also with the private sector, and to develop a common understanding of what the system could offer. The project has generated knowledge about the capacity and profile of farmers that could use the system with the initial design, and this information has been used as much as possible in the improvement incorporated into the later system. In addition to obtaining input from farmers for the ACES, the effective participation of the FFF National Manager in the steering committee of the ACES project has also been critical in ensuring that farmers’ views were taken into account. Thus did the ESFIM collaborative research fulfil both objectives: generating evidence-based knowledge to backstop the position of farmer organisations and supporting FFF participation in the policy dialogue.

## Partnership

The implementation of the collaborative research was mainly managed by a core group including the National Manager of the FFF and a team of specialists, in consultation with AGRINATURA researchers. Given the rather technical nature of the issues concerned, interactions with other stakeholders and farmers in particular was initially rather limited. It should be underlined that the inception and concluding workshop assembled a wide variety of stakeholders, including representatives from FFF and other farmer organisations, NGOs and the private sector. The National Food Authority, which supports and oversees the ACES development project, was a key partner for ESFIM. The collaboration with the NFA was constructive and balanced, benefiting from a long history of relations between FFF leaders and the public institutions. The high level of education of the whole core group led to an endogenous process in terms of analysis. There was no collaboration with other sources of expertise, such as from the academic institutions.

*“The Filipino case shows that given appropriate tools, it is possible to involve farmers and farmer organisations in technical discussions, whatever the complexity of the subject and their level of education.”*

The collaboration with AGRINATURA scientists was also very open and balanced, with each partner being able to express his or her views about the direction and the methods of the research. While the view of the AGRINATURA scientists have been duly considered, FFF and its Filipino partners always took the final decisions about the management and the direction of the project. In the Philippines, the collaborative research benefited only at the end of the process of the expertise of Gideon Onumah from NRI who has an extensive knowledge about the establishment of commodity exchange systems in Sub-Saharan Africa, although it would have been more efficient to involve him in an earlier phase in the collaboration with FFF.

## Lessons learnt

- The Filipino case shows that given appropriate tools, it is possible to involve farmers and farmers' organisations in technical discussions, whatever the complexity of the subject and their level of education. The development of the simulation game and the way it has been applied to support the discussion between farmers and other agricultural market stakeholders is certainly a tangible and valuable asset for this collaborative research that could be used on other occasions.
- Another lesson learnt from the Philippines is that focusing on a single issue may not be detrimental to a wider exercise in terms of capacity building. Actually, the discussion about the design and launching of the ACES brought into the debate a number of crucial issues related to market access for smallholders (e.g. post-harvest technology and quality issues, collective marketing, credit, market information and grading systems) in a structured and orderly manner. Similarly, while focusing project activities around a single issue may initially have been perceived as a risky option, it was also the expression of a strong commitment and interest on the part of the FFF and its partners to work on the project. The issue has been addressed rigorously and frankly, as the outcomes of the baseline survey and of the workshops discussions have been taken into account by the promoters of the project.
- Great attention was paid to the selection and ranking of themes in each country in the ESFIM collaborative research methodology in order to identify key research areas. The Filipino case shows that in spite of the complexity of the topic pursued and the nature of the project, which was oriented toward the implementation of an institutional arrangement (i.e., more towards development than research), this collaborative research produced valuable knowledge for understanding how the ACES could benefit the smallholder. Hence, the ESFIM methodology is compatible with the implementation of a development-oriented project, especially when this offers the perspective for a steep learning curve.

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# Uganda

## UNFFE-Uganda: grassroots consultations to refine the national agricultural advisory services

BETTE HARMS, GERDIEN MEIJERINK AND AUGUSTINE MWENDYA

The core business of the Uganda National Farmers Federation (UNFFE) is to lobby and promote the farmer-enabling environment. The Federation stemmed from agricultural competitions organised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government between 1988 and 1993. The competitions, were meant to reward best performing farmers in livestock and agricultural production. In order to institutionalise these competitions, the Ministry

*“The majority of farmers are individual producers at subsistence levels having limited surpluses to sell, which they also sell as individuals. The quality of their produce is generally low.”*

facilitated the formation of the Uganda National Farmers’ Association (UNFA) on 22 January 1992. The Association developed into the Uganda National Farmers Federation (UNFFE) in 2002.

The Federation has 78 member farmer organisations, consisting of District Farmer Associations (DFAs), Commodity-Specific Associations and agri-business related farmer-service oriented companies that operate at national and district levels. The total individual membership is over 1,000,000 farmers, of whom 45 per cent are women. UNFFE leaders are elected at parish, sub-county, district and national level. Elected officials serve voluntarily, based on their interest in improving the incomes and welfare of fellow farmers.

UNFFE organisational structure consists of: (i) The National Farmers Council, (ii) The National Executive Committee, and (iii) The Secretariat. The National Executive Committee, currently presided by Mr Charles Ogang, has ten members and is supported by a management staff of eleven.

## Development challenge

Uganda has a population of over 35 million people with ten main ethnic groups. Some 15 per cent of the population lives in urban areas. Literacy rates are almost 77 per cent for men and 58 per cent for women. Uganda has generally fertile soils and regular rainfall. Agriculture is the most important economic sector, employing some 80 per cent of the work force and representing some 24 per cent of the GDP.

Coffee is one of Uganda’s main crops, accounting for the main portion of its export revenues. In addition to coffee, Uganda also exports fish and fish products, tea, cotton, flowers and horticultural products.

Since 1986, the government of Yoweri Museveni has brought relative stability and economic growth to Uganda. Museveni was re-elected for another 5 years in 2011. From the start of his rule, the Ugandan government has focused on rehabilitating and stabilising the economy by undertaking currency reforms, raising producer prices on export crops, increasing prices of petroleum products, and improving civil service wages. The policy changes are especially aimed at dampening inflation and boosting production and export earnings. The GDP for 2011 was estimated to be USD47.78 billion, with a growth rate of 5.1 per cent (down from 6 per cent in 2010 and 7 per cent in 2009). The global economic downturn has hurt Uganda’s exports. Oil revenues and taxes will become a larger source of government funding as oil comes into production in the next few years. Per capita income is currently USD1,400, up from USD1,300 in 2009. However, it was estimated that 24.5 per cent of Ugandans still lived below the poverty line in 2009.

Uganda has six million farmers. Smallholder farmers form the majority (over 90 per cent) of the farming community in the country. They are characterised by a low resource base in terms of land (less than 3 ha per household), capital, labour (they mainly depend on family labour), and limited farm management skills. Their farming operations are low input/low output and they generally lack necessary information for improving their situation. The majority of farmers are individual producers operating at subsistence level having limited surpluses to sell, which they also sell as individuals. The quality of their produce is generally low, a factor which hinders access to markets and reduces their bargaining power. Thus farmers do not benefit fully from farming, which is their major economic activity. The need to improve their access to markets is therefore apparent.

UNFFE strives to help farmers in four major areas: building institutions, technical assistance, general support services, and lobbying and advocacy.

**Building Farmer Institutions:** Starting at the grassroots level, UNFFE's members help to organise farmers into groups commonly known as Special Interest Groups (SIGs). These SIGs receive services such as agricultural extension, training in post-harvest handling and quality management. They are also encouraged to pool their produce and sell as a group in order to increase their bargaining power. These services are all aimed at helping farmers to access the market.

**Technical Assistance:** UNFFE provides technical assistance to farmers, through the DFAs, in the following areas: Accessing high-quality inputs (e.g. improved seeds, fertilisers), training in proper use and handling of agricultural chemicals, provision of input/output market information as well as development and training in improving product quality.

**General support services:** These include promoting produce bulking, linking smallholder farmers to traders and institutions, and sensitising smallholder farmers on the GlobalGAP.

**Lobbying and advocacy:** These are activities that help smallholder farmers to increase production to meet demand and that promote market access within multilateral trading systems.

## Collaborative research process

Many development challenges were identified in the first workshop held by AGRINATURA, IFAP and UNFFE in 2008:

1. Provide accessible and affordable finance for farmers to invest in value addition of farm production.
2. Provide accessible and affordable finance for storage and bulking.
3. Provide access to market information (including radio stations, internet, etc.).
4. Strengthen extension services through existing and new farmer groups.
5. Establish incentives for strengthening and self-sustenance of farmer groups.
6. Establish regulations for quality standards.
7. Support district commercial officers in collecting market information.
8. Put zoning policies (geographical specialisation/commodity-based regional differentiation) into operation.
9. Provide national policies on bulking.

There was much criticism of the existing National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) policy, mainly because the government has established new structures instead of involving existing farmer organisations and frameworks. Therefore, UNFFE decided to undertake a survey to audit the effectiveness of

legislation and policies that affect farmers, with specific reference to NAADS. UNFFE's other partners (Uganda Cooperative Alliance (UCA), the Agri-Profocus-Uganda network, the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), and Pelum Uganda), joined in to further formulate this research agenda. In July 2010 a project consultant Morrisson Rwakakamba, a former UNFFE advocacy officer, was hired to facilitate the process and coordinate research with UNFFE's partners. A detailed proposal was developed entitled: *"Action Research to Audit the Effectiveness of NAADS and proposals for Reform: NAADS that farmers want"*. The objectives of this research were to:

- Facilitate a data-driven consensus on the effectiveness/ineffectiveness of NAADS from the farmers' point of view
- Benchmark and analyse various extension models, with a view to recommending progressive models that deliver solutions to farmers' concerns
- Deliver a farmers' "Green Print" proposal detailing a road map for the reform of NAADS
- Provide evidence of the impact of NAADS on farmers and enable UNFFE to conduct effective advocacy
- Map the power/influence matrix to underpin reforms in NAADS

To begin with, a preliminary survey with farmers was conducted in order to get their opinion on NAADS, resulting in "NAADS that farmers want – dialogue report". This served as an input into the first focus-group dialogue, held on February 3, 2011. This dialogue brought together key stakeholders, from the private sector, (inter)national NGOs, government including representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and NAADS secretariat, farmers and researchers. UNFFE also engaged the Ministry of Finance, for whom improving NAADS was a key issue. Both the research theme and dialogue initiative were welcomed by the government and NAADS. During the dialogue, the results of the preliminary dialogue report were discussed as well as the implementation of NAADS. The main results of the consultations on key issues and constraints of NAADS have so far been:

- Overpricing of inputs / poor quality technologies to farmers
- Poor public relations at local government level
- A flawed selection process for the six model farmers per parish: only rich farmers or those having political influence benefited from NAADS
- Annual growth in the Ugandan agriculture sector continues to fall, despite the investments made by NAADS

After the dialogue, a fact-finding survey was done to analyse the effectiveness of NAADS Programme. This included developing the questionnaire, and selecting regions and respondents. Farmer groups that participated in NAADS as well as some that did not were interviewed about their experiences with NAADS during so-called 'fire-place meetings' (meetings taking place in villages with a group of farmers). The information was combined in progress reports, which served as a basis for developing a strategy to improve NAADS. The fact-finding survey was performed by a consultant, who collaborated with two members of UNFFE in performing the 'fire-place' conversations and interviews. AGRINATURA researchers helped with the methodological set-up and documentation of the results of the survey.

On the basis of the survey results, the consultant and two UNFFE members drafted a proposal "A Green Print for NAADS reform". On March 21, 2012, the findings of the survey were presented to a wide platform of stakeholders, during a workshop convened to discuss the advocacy points with UNFFE Board members and stakeholders. Representatives of NAADS secretariat, Oxfam, Pelum, SNV, Trias, Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA), Scientific Foundation for Development, VECO, Makerere University and AGRINATURA attended this workshop. These parties were also involved in the setup of the study.

*“The problem with NAADS is not money, but rather lack of proper partnerships and everybody in the agriculture sector engaging in scattered activities on their own.”*

The advocacy points included:

1. Farmers want NAADS to carry out widespread awareness on the new NAADS, especially on the differences between the old and new NAADS
2. NAADS should urgently tap into the pool of Extension Link farmers that were trained by UNFFE members throughout Uganda in Animal Husbandry and Agronomic practices.
3. Local governments at district and sub-county level should be involved in identifying and moderating Private-Public Partnerships frameworks across the country.
4. NAADS should promote labour-saving initiatives and other technologies that would reduce labour costs.
5. NAADS should promote particular enterprises, backed by enterprise-specific extension.
6. Farmers expect NAADS to provide market information and forecasting for enterprises that they promote.
7. Farmers engaged in animal husbandry need more livestock extension services as well as access to inputs such as improved seeds, fertilisers, pesticides.
8. Crop and livestock diseases should be urgently contained and curtailed. For instance, the 31 per cent decline in coffee exports in 2010 was mainly attributed to coffee wilt. Other crop and animal diseases like banana wilt, cassava streak virus disease, Newcastle disease in poultry, pneumonia in cattle and African swine fever all affect agricultural performance in Uganda.
9. NAADS should work more closely with National Agricultural Research Organisations (NAROs) and other research organisations to provide producers with resilient seed as well as appropriate varieties and other plant materials. At the moment, NAADS does not collaborate closely with research organisations.
10. NAADS should promote the efficient use of both inorganic and organic soil fertility measures in various crop systems throughout the farming community in Uganda.

In the discussion on the Green Print proposal, UNFFE expressed its gratitude for the study and the importance of the proposal for creating an evidence-based and legitimate advocacy strategy for UNFFE. An action plan was formulated (see Box 9).

### BOX 9 Action points for UNFFE advocacy on NAADS'

1. Fine tune the Green Print and identify the core messages presented by the research team and UNFFE advocacy officer.
2. Publish the Green Print and study report so that UNFFE advocacy can be based on this research. The intention was to take the report back to farmers for validation and also to engage them in advocacy activities at the local government level.
3. The Jinja Source of the Nile Annual Agricultural Trade show provides a platform for UNFFE advocacy. The Green Print should be worked into the speech of UNFFE president at the show and used to petition the President of the Republic of Uganda. During the trade show, UNFFE should have an information/documentation room where advocacy issues can be relayed to members and to the multitudes of show-goers.
4. UNFFE will seek an appointment with the President of Uganda, the Minister of Agriculture and the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture to discuss the contents of the Green Print, with a view to securing practical and concrete commitments.
5. UNFFE should enter into dialogue with journalists involved in agriculture reporting across the wider media in Uganda. The Green Print could then be published and circulated via newspapers.
6. The Green Print can be posted on online media, blogs and websites. The Agri-Profocus website is an example of one of the many avenues to disseminate information that can generate discussions of issues raised in the Green Print.

Grassroots organisations have not been directly involved in the presentation of the findings and the Green Print, although some of the Board members of UNFFE represent district farmer organisations in the country. However, the research itself has been a way to reach out to the grassroots organisations. Or, as a UNFFE member included in the study stated: *“wherever we had discussions in the villages, UNFFE members in district branches were actively involved”*.

## Advocacy outcomes

During the workshop, it also became clear that the purpose of the Green Print proposal serves not only as an advocacy recommendation to the government, but the president of UNFFE also stressed that disseminating the proposals to their members gives them proof that their views are incorporated into the national UNFFE advocacy strategy. The effect of this is a strengthening of UNFFE's relationship with member Farmer Organisations. One of UNFFE Board members expressed this as follows:

*“Such studies give us a chance to keep in touch with our members and provide a picture of the real beneficiaries of NAADS.”* Another stated *“We have tickled these farmers and they are waiting for responses and findings from the report.”*

After the discussion about the Green Print during the workshop on March 21, 2012, UNFFE presented the final document to the Ministry of Agriculture and discussed the Green Print with the Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Tress Bucyanayandi, who acknowledged the conclusions. He assured UNFFE that the NAADS

programme would revert to a focus on the provision of extension and advisory services. In addition, the Minister also appointed UNFFE to the committee which is planning a new project under NAADS called Agriculture Technology and Agri-business Advisory Services, whose main objective is improving advisory service systems in Uganda.

UNFFE's relationship with NAADS secretariat has also improved, which has led to a closer cooperation between UNFFE and NAADS. This is illustrated by the fact that NAADS has recently funded UNFFE's farmer members to attend the International Agricultural show in Nairobi, to learn new technologies. UNFFE and NAADS also will sign an MoU, which will facilitate cooperation in the future. Finally, at the end of 2012, UNFFE plans to share the Green Print with the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture.

The AGRINATURA research team and UNFFE identified several factors that influenced the uptake of the study's findings (i.e., the Green Print) into a successful advocacy strategy:

1. The consultant provided continuity throughout the project's lifespan, which was characterised by occasional lapses of time during which few activities were developed.
2. The connection with UNFFE was helped by the fact that the consultant had been employed as an UNFFE advocacy officer in the past and had a good working relationship with UNFFE staff.
3. The research team included two UNFFE officers, of which one also a UNFFE Board member. As UNFFE Board member stated, *"I think involving UNFFE staff in the exercise was a good thing. It was also an awesome thing that the funding came in very fast on request"*
4. The topic, reforming NAADS, was selected by the organisation itself and is still high on both the social and political agenda. Again, quoting UNFFE Board member: *"it all started with careful selection of the topic NAADS, which touches the hearts of many farmers. Thus they were all motivated to loudly speak out on the issue and share experiences"*.
5. UNFFE has strong relationships with the President's office and the Ministry of Agriculture. The strength of advocacy and links to the government were highly valued by the Board members.
6. The study strengthens UNFFE's legitimacy and therefore its position in matters of advocacy. UNFFE Board member summed up with: *"UNFFE can now be put at a higher level of research and fact-based advocacy. It will even leverage our partnerships and lobbying."*

Constraining factors for the uptake of the findings into a successful advocacy strategy:

1. There was a long delay after the initial workshop in the start-up of UNFFE and ESFIM activities in 2010. The momentum had been lost, and some UNFFE staff had been replaced. The "institutional memory" of the project had been somewhat lost as a result.
2. There was no involvement of senior UNFFE staff in drafting of reports and the Green Print proposal prior to the presentation on 21 March 2012.
3. The timing of the final report and the Green Print did not match the timing of the final workshop.
4. The cost of printing and disseminating the Green Print and final report are to be borne by UNFFE, but UNFFE may not have budgeted for this.
5. The sample size of the survey was small. As an UNFFE Board member remarked during the final workshop: *"I think the study was good so that UNFFE was able to get the real feeling of the farmer. However I think the issue of coverage/sample size didn't go well and we didn't reach many people."*



In the self-assessment performed by UNFFE Board members and employees, UNFFE has acknowledged the limitation in consultation of their district members and travel to these regions for the creation of evidence-based advocacy. Costs associated with these activities limit the field work carried out by UNFFE employees. To quote an UNFFE Board member remarked during the final workshop

*“There are logistical constraints that limit our coherence, especially between the secretariat and district branches. In the previous three years our donor support had gone very low and this trickled down to our existence and support to our local stakeholders.”*

The study is, however, highly valued by UNFFE president and Board members and they see the importance of such surveys for strengthening their advocacy strategy. An UNFFE Board member said: *“The research will greatly improve UNFFE’s advocacy work. The presentation of the findings today has really opened our eyes on NAADS.*

In its 2008-2012 Advocacy Strategy, UNFFE observed the following obstacles to its advocacy and lobbying strategy:

*“There is very limited funding for lobby and advocacy efforts. This is due to lack of knowledge on the benefits of the activity and a tendency among most donors to think that advocacy is a one-day or one week activity. Yet research shows that in order to achieve advocacy objectives, there is need for a long-term, sustainable and protracted approach that initiates contact with advocacy targets and sustains it for longer periods. (...)*

*Limited coordination between research and advocacy. If advocacy were a factory, research would be its raw material. Good lobby and advocacy results from well researched and factual lobby and advocacy positions that are compelling enough to move policy makers, donors and development partners. Research therefore needs to be properly harmonised with lobby and advocacy for maximum results.”*

## Partnership

The ESFIM project therefore was rather timely. The AGRINATURA team (LEI), UNFFE and IFAP met for the first time during an agenda-setting workshop in Kampala, in December 2008. This relationship was characterised as equal, in the sense that UNFFE was in the driver's seat to determine the research agenda, with LEI providing the methodology. UNFFE hired an external consultant, who had previously been employed by UNFFE, Morrisson Rwakakamba. There was considerable trust between UNFFE and the consultant, who worked independently, but had regular consultations with UNFFE and LEI. Mr Rwakakamba visited many farmers in different regions of Uganda. This resulted in an improved link of UNFFE to its constituency, which was much in need of improvement, as UNFFE admitted.

Some scepticism has been expressed during the process in Uganda about the pivotal role that the consultant has played in collecting data, writing reports and self-assessment. It is a fact that the AGRINATURA team would have preferred more involvement on the part of UNFFE staff, other stakeholders (such as NGOs working in the same area), or university researchers. However, whenever this topic was discussed with UNFFE partners, they indicated that they preferred to continue working with the consultant only. UNFFE itself appeared not interested in being more actively involved in the drafting of the reports. This may partly reflect the fact that being a farmer organisation mainly involved in advocacy and lobbying meant that UNFFE members are not accustomed to or interested in writing reports. National research partners (such as universities) were not involved. Although including them was considered, it would have meant increased fragmentation of the budget, which was thought to be undesirable.

The advantage of rehiring the same consultant several times was that this provided a stable factor in the project. Changes in personnel at UNFFE and LEI thus had less impact on the "institutional memory" of the project. It has also contributed to the relatively smooth continuation of activities. While communication between the AGRINATURA team and UNFFE was sometimes difficult, with long lapses of silence, communication between the AGRINATURA team and the consultant was much better. The risk was, however, that UNFFE could feel that they had lost ownership of the project. However, because the consultant knew UNFFE staff well, he could easily link up with them. In addition, the topic chosen for the research (evaluation of NAADS) was of importance to UNFFE, and UNFFE remained involved throughout.

## Lessons learnt

- The goal of ESFIM was to improve UNFFE's lobbying strategy through local research, supported by the AGRINATURA team. At first, it was not clear whether this concept would work in practice. We feel that it has been partly successful in Uganda. Gathering evidence-based information from farmers gave UNFFE sufficient material upon which to base an advocacy strategy. It had the beneficial side-effect of linking UNFFE up with various farmers throughout Uganda. However, because most activities were carried out by a consultant, ESFIM probably contributed little to institutional learning and to forging partnerships with research institutes such as universities. However, the project did provide UNFFE with the positive experience of using research, as was illustrated by a statement made by the President of UNFFE during the final workshop: *"I would like that UNFFE staff get more involved in research programmes. We need a more participatory programme both at the apex and down to the beneficiaries"*.

- The study has given UNFFE a strong evidence-based advocacy message that was enriched by discussions with its members and partners. UNFFE has expressed advocacy and lobby as one of their strong points, in contrast to a poor capacity in reaching out to member organisations, therefore EFSIM has provided crucial support.
- UNFFE's challenge for the future is to create strong coherence with its members in order to send a stronger advocacy message to the outside world.

## Acknowledgements

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# CHAPTER 12



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## Uruguay

### CAF-Uruguay: cooperatives discover their role in innovation

GIEL TON AND HENRI HOCDE

ESFIM supports the Cooperativas Agrarias Federadas, CAF (Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives), which has a constituency of 33 organisations including approximately 12,500 family farms (AgriterracAF 2008). CAF is a second-tier cooperative. The member organisations are cooperatives or associations (sociedades de fomento rural) that are involved in collective marketing.

Some of the members of CAF, especially the dairy cooperative Cooperativa Nacional de Productores de Leche (CONAPROLE) and the wool cooperative Central Lanera Uruguay (CLU), are among the strongest industries in Uruguay. A large part of the membership, however, consists of relatively small players

*“The success of its members backfired on CAF, which entered into an identity crisis because the cooperatives managed very well alone and needed little help from CAF.”*

in comparison to the very strong multinational companies that increasingly offer similar services. The strong cooperatives support CAF chiefly as an instrument to obtain favourable agricultural policies, whereas the smaller members also look to CAF for support on organisational issues. The vision statement of CAF emphasises the importance of this representative function:

*“To position CAF as a respected and well-networked organisation of the agricultural sector that genuinely represents the vigorous cooperative enterprises and that is the specialised, sector specific voice of its member agricultural cooperatives, for the construction of competitive growth with equity and social responsibility.” (CAF 2006)*

In the last decade, the cooperative sector in Uruguay has faced profound changes. Uruguay experienced an economic crisis in 1998-2002. This was mainly the result of the Argentine monetary policies, which had linked the exchange rate of the peso to the US dollar and, in 2001, forced by a sovereign debt crisis, decided to re-float the currency and introduce restrictions on monetary flow. This abrupt change in the monetary policy context affected the banking system and disrupted much economic activity, leading to declining purchasing power in Argentina and Uruguay. Household incomes decreased by 20 per cent in this period and poverty figures rose, although still remaining relatively low compared to other South American countries. The cooperative sector barely survived this crisis. Many cooperatives could only remain in business with the support of the government and the state development bank, Banco de la República Occidental de Uruguay (BROU). CAF played a key role in coordinating the sector’s negotiations with the government to obtain support post-crisis, such as in resolving debts. A major support measure took place in 2004, when the state enterprise that managed the national grain storage system transferred their facilities to the cooperative sector, thereby strengthening the patrimony of these cooperatives. In 2005, many of the cooperatives that started to manage these storage facilities became a part of COPAGRAN, a merger of eleven cooperatives. This organisation started out heavily indebted but has managed to become solvent again by offering its storage facilities to farmers profiting from booming soya prices and a solid growth in acreage.

From 2007 onwards, all agricultural commodity prices improved, not only soya, and this generated a boom in agricultural investments and economic activities. The market for cooperative services for agricultural inputs and seeds grew very quickly. Many transnational companies entered the market and competed with the cooperative sector but left enough room in the market for the latter to grow, attract loans for investment in infrastructure and extend their service provisioning. The dairy sector, with CONAPROLE as the leading company, has increased production and developed an impressively wide range of consumer goods.

## Advocacy challenge

The success of its members backfired on CAF, which entered into an identity crisis because the cooperatives managed very well alone and needed little help from CAF. Furthermore, CAF's funding needed to be reinvented. In the period between 2004 and 2009, approximately 50 per cent of CAF's income was generated from membership contributions and another 50 per cent from international donors, especially Agriterro and the Swedish Cooperative Council (SCC) (Agriterro-CAF 2006). A large part of the technical team of CAF was hired with funding from development cooperation, to carry out activities on organisational reinforcement and to develop a youth programme. In 2010, the reduction of funding and the unwillingness of the cooperatives to pay for these 'non-core' services with member contributions, generated a reduction in personnel. The retirement of the director (*gerente*) after more than 25 years, caused a deterioration of the institutional memory as well as the contacts and networks within the government. Gaston Rico had been director of CAF from its foundation in 1984, and had been the central figure in CAF's advocacy work. After his retirement, the board and the newly-appointed director had initial difficulties in replacing him. The new director appointed in August 2010, faced with necessary budget cuts, started a process to change the function of CAF as a 'public good' service-provider to an organisation that was more instrumental for the different advocacy activities of each of its members. However, paradoxically, this proved difficult due to the cooperatives' reduced interest in collective action. The cooperatives no longer needed the active CAF lobby to get (emergency) government support. Another replacement of the executive director in August 2011 aggravated this process. The new, young director was left with a very limited support staff, few contacts within the government and fewer demands from the members, resulting in few possibilities for specific advocacy activities or organisational support. The institutional crisis in CAF ended in July-August 2012, when, partly as a result of ESFIM, the new staff at CAF managed to re-position CAF as a leading agricultural union with influence in government policy making.

## Collaborative research process

The main problems related to market access were discussed in a national workshop in March 2009. The results of a preparatory study commissioned by CAF and AGRINATURA and conducted by the consultant Santiago Cayota and CAF-officer Lourdes Pose played a key role in this workshop. These consultants discussed the current dynamics and major challenges related to competitiveness and growth with specialists from each agricultural sector. The role of the cooperative in each of the sectors was described and illustrated with available data. Based on a review of the various commodities, a preliminary list of thirteen main constraints was identified and discussed in the workshop. These constraints were ranked in importance for each of the twelve sectors.

The participatory methodology for the workshop was developed by the AGRINATURA researcher Giel Ton together with CAF-officer Lourdes Ponce. The preliminary list of key constraints served as the major input to distil focal areas for ESFIM research support. The key constraints were discussed in small groups and elaborated during the first day, and prioritised and translated into advocacy activities on day two of the workshop. In the action plan, both necessary internal actions (by CAF and its members) and external actions (by the government) were specified.

This participatory process led to an ESFIM Country Plan being drawn up in 2009 that concentrated on three issues:

- Financing, internal capitalisation of patrimony and member commitment to cooperatives
- Risk management and agricultural risk insurance
- Capacity building for board members and strategic organisational development

In December 2009, a second national workshop was organised around the first of these three issues. Examples of good practice in institutional arrangements and internal organisation that resolved constraints on capitalisation were taken from within the cooperative sector and CAF. Among these were CONAPROLE's member certificates and the resurgence of Cooperativa Ruralista Agraria del Departamento de Colonia (CRADECO) which was based on contributions of a select group of members that decided to invest in the cooperative to preclude bankruptcy. Members' commitment was also illustrated using the example of the Unión Rural de Flores, which had a strategy to distinguish services for members and non-members. The participants discussed in small groups the viability of these kinds of instruments to resolve similar problems in their own cooperatives. The ESFIM country plan included a follow-up component of in-depth case-studies to apply the analytical framework developed under the comparative research project 'Incentive Structures in Collective Marketing'.

Alongside the national workshop in December 2009, research had been done on the position of cooperatives compared to other institutions that link smallholders to markets and that directly compete with cooperatives in service-provision to farmers, especially contract farming for agribusinesses. The research focused on the loyalty of the members to their cooperatives. A random sample of nine cooperatives was selected for this research, which used two methods, a telephone survey to a random sample of members from each cooperative and visits with board members to discuss the issues. One of the topics that were included in the study was members' perspectives towards a peculiar phenomenon in Uruguay: when lending money, banks require collateral to be provided by the board members personally. Because of this, board members are discouraged from engaging in dynamic business strategies. Interestingly, the members interviewed also pointed to the positive side of this system, in that it prevents board members from making risky decisions. The study evaluated the social and economic performance of Uruguayan cooperatives by mapping differences between cooperatives and their members in their perceptions on the performance of the cooperative's service provisioning and internal governance. The data from this survey was subjected to econometric analysis by Sabrina Samson (WUR), between March and July 2010. Through Principal Component analysis, two social performance indicators were distilled from the questionnaire and compared with three economic performance indicators: return on equity, turnover per member and leverage of external capital.

*“The research made CAF-staff and the cooperatives aware of the concept of innovation and the value of their practices in innovation processes.”*

## Advocacy outcomes

The ESFIM Country Plan that proposed to further the research on organisational intelligence in the cooperatives was not implemented, due to the changes in CAF that we discussed above. CAF proposed to reformulate the ESFIM country plan and, instead of case-studies, to focus on the Innovation Policy that forms the backbone of Uruguay’s support to private sector development. The relevance of this theme was based on the rapid development and growth in the Uruguayan agricultural sector. Agriculture is booming, primarily as a result of the activities of the corporate sector (mostly international companies), which are able to generate funds for investments and to attract highly-skilled personnel. This results in a high density of technological innovations and high levels of specialisation. Economies of scale result in high productivity.

Uruguayan economic policies have innovation as their core objective. The National Agency on Research and Innovation (ANII) is an inter-ministerial agency created in 2007, which commissioned a study on innovation in agriculture in 2010. Because of the relevance of this theme for CAF, it decided to complement the ANII-research with its own, ESFIM-supported research to provide a perspective on innovation in the cooperative sector. CAF’s study highlighted the importance of social capital in the agricultural sector and the relevance of institutions such as cooperatives and CAF itself in innovation, and identified points for improving the enabling environment for innovation within the cooperative sector.

The board of CAF hired the senior consultants in July 2011. The team was composed of two researchers, Lucia Pittaluga and Carina Narbono, who undertook a range of interviews with the key persons in Uruguay’s innovation system. The team was assisted by advisors from CAF and ANII/INIAA. In September, the consultants developed the conceptual framework for the study and discussed it with the AGRINATURA researcher in three teleconferences. The resulting framework was then discussed with the CAF board. It explained the important concepts in the dialogue surrounding innovation processes, and made the cooperatives cornerstones of innovation networks.

In November 2011 CAF hired three more sector experts to conduct research on the innovation obstacles affecting cooperatives in three areas: agriculture, dairy, and livestock. Each sector has particular characteristics in terms of relative competitiveness of cooperatives and logistical challenges in each of the value chains. The sector reports identified the main issues related to innovation, examples of successful innovative practices and pointed out advocacy topics related to innovation policies and instruments. Preliminary results were discussed by the consultants in the CAF office, in the presence of two AGRINATURA researchers in June 2012. The research underlying the sector reports had made CAF-staff and the cooperatives aware of the concept of innovation and the value of their practices in innovation processes. As a result, innovation became prominent in CAF’s public relation activities. The case-descriptions of innovation processes provided material for several presentations at the Foro Cooperativo Agropecuario CAF 2012, in August 2012 including: the partnership called ‘Grupo Trigo’ created between the cooperatives and the research institute INIA, designed to fast-track the testing and release of new seed varieties; and the novel agreements made between sorghum contract farming and animal feed procurement by different echelons of members within the cooperative (Cooperativa Agraria Limitada de Aigua - CALAI). This Forum was organised inside the Parliament and aimed to reposition the cooperative sector in Uruguayan policy making. The Forum gathered 160 participants for six hours of conferences, including cooperative leaders, ministers, parliamentarians and researchers. It was a landmark event for CAF, reflecting an increasing openness on the part of the ministry. CAF’s small professional



team obtained much support and funding from within the Parliament and ministries to cover expenses. ESFIM funds provided a fallback option that proved unnecessary, and these funds were redirected to support a second event in October 2012.

The second event at which the ESFIM research on innovation policy was discussed at a workshop held on 5-6 October 2012. Although the lead consultants did not manage to present a report to the workshop, the three sector consultants drafted a common summary document. The research results were also presented by José Bervejillo, one of the experts, in a break-out session of the Global Conference on Agricultural Research and Development (GCARD 2012) on 30 October 2012 in Punta del Este. This event presented a valuable networking and advocacy opportunity for CAF, with high-level participation of INIA, as well as the presence of President José Mujica and the Uruguayan chair of the CGIAR, Carlos Perez de Castillo. On 31 October, 2012, the AGRINATURA researcher and CAF discussed the delay incurred by the researchers in presenting actionable points related to innovation processes and innovation policies in agriculture. It proved difficult for the researchers to apply their concepts on innovation systems to the concrete realities of cooperatives. Based on the feedback from these discussions, the consultants finished their work. CAF went ahead with the preparation of a final report, incorporating most of the sector reports, and the additional, more conceptual ideas in the overall study. A book, titled “Innovaciones en las Cooperativas Agrarias Federadas” has been edited and printed on the role of cooperatives in innovation policies in May 2013 (Bervejillo et al, 2013)

## Partnership

Several teleconferences concerning the start of ESFIM and plans for a workshop took place between CAF and the AGRINATURA researcher preceding the kick-off meeting in March 2009. ESFIM research activities on the research priorities identified started in September, with the pilot testing of a survey on the motivation of farmers to either be active members of cooperatives or choose private market outlets. Formal approval of the 2009 ESFIM budget for operational costs was reached with Agriterro in November 2009, but only one quarter of the required budget was allocated. This funding was sufficient to finance the CAF policy officer and to organise the national workshop. The funds for subsequent ESFIM collaborative research in 2010, however, were not secured from EL&I-DGIS until late 2010.

The change in focus of the ESFIM-Uruguay country plan, from case studies on ‘member loyalty and capitalisation’ to ‘innovation policies and innovation processes’, was a conscious decision of the CAF director and board. The AGRINATURA researcher accepted these changes, but only after several teleconferences. The main concern of the researcher leader was to obtain actionable research outputs for CAF. The main consultants’ report was abstract and conceptual. The AGRINATURA researcher stressed the inclusion of recommendations for enabling policies and documentation of illustrative cases, next to the proposed general survey to all cooperatives on aspects related with innovation. In June 2012, this necessity of ‘touching ground’ was further discussed by both the senior and supporting AGRINATURA staff members with CAF and the hired consultants. It was decided to plan regional meetings to evaluate the findings in the relevant sector documents and then develop a two-track process: firstly would be the presentation of recommendations and project proposals at a Forum with parliamentarians in August 2012; and secondly, a synthesis report on innovation processes would be presented by the senior consultants at the CAF Annual meeting in October 2012. The delay in delivering actionable outputs was discussed on 31 October, and a final report was presented in December 2012. The final publication of results were presented by CAF in a national event in July 2013.

## Lessons learnt

- Staff changes affect collaboration. The work in Uruguay proved that personal relationships are essential for fostering research partnerships. Initial teleconferences and face-to-face interaction during December 2008-March 2009 created a smooth working and communication channel that was followed by a sequence of high-quality research activities. The change of the CAF policy officer Lourdes Pose in January 2010, coupled with the lack of funding for collaborative research in the same year and affected by the retirement of the director in August 2010 changed this panorama. It took more than one year to get on track again with ESFIM research-plus-advocacy.
- Advocacy moments provide the needed deadlines for consultants. The consultancy on innovation policy took a long time; much longer than planned. A relatively large part of the funding was dedicated to the external consultants and almost nothing for co-funding CAF-staff. As a result, a situation was created in which the supervision and pressure on the consultants to deliver actionable results was reduced. The setting of dates for high-level advocacy events made it necessary to generate research outputs. This revealed where the delays in the research were occurring, and made it clear that these had to be tackled by CAF in order to get actionable outputs.
- Backstopping helped to keep up momentum. CAF liked the role played by both AGRINATURA researchers in backstopping the research. They were especially pleased with the field visits with Henri Hocdé, which helped them to see the benefits of the research, and the face-to-face meetings between Giel Ton and the researcher leaders to help shape and finalise the research assignment.
- External perspectives triggered internal learning. AGRINATURA support was especially valued by CAF for making it possible to look at salient features and experiences common in the respective cooperatives, but that were novel for other cooperatives and other stakeholders involved in agricultural innovation. The technique of drawing a visual map of innovation processes in cooperatives after each case-study visit, proved effective in starting discussions with the CAF board and preparing presentations for external audiences. The interviews also provided the new director of CAF with an entry into the history and dynamics in a sector that he barely knew. It became clear that staff in national offices often have little opportunity to learn about the inner economic workings of their member organisations. Visits with outsiders can provide these insights, and can open doors to other stakeholders (government, etc.) that otherwise would have been kept closed to them.

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# CHAPTER 13



## ESFIM's impact on capacities for evidence-based advocacy

KARIN DE GRIP AND GIEL TON

The ESFIM programme aims to create a research interface between national farmer organisations (NFOs) on the one hand and researchers and topic experts on the other. Evidence on specific themes have been collected and analysed to create an active advocacy strategy. NFOs need specific capacities to steer the advocacy process, so that they can articulate propositions that will contribute to policies enhancing market access for smallholder farmers. In order to gain insight into the specific capacities of the NFOs and the role of ESFIM in improving these capacities, a baseline and monitoring project was designed and implemented in the various ESFIM countries in 2012.

There is broad consensus on the benefits for civil society organisations to use evidenced-based advocacy to influence policy development processes (Blagescu 2006). Using, for example, the INTRAC Praxis Programme, the Participatory Generation of Policy proposals (Gouet 2011), and advocacy for pro-poor policy literature (Reisman 2007; Ringsing and Leeuwis 2007), (Interreseaux Developpement Rural 2011), we considered the following to be relevant building blocks of a successful advocacy.

Advocacy for a pro-poor policy development process generally starts with a phase of reflection, consultation and articulation of the key problems i.e. “what are the ‘hot’ issues and concerns of stakehold-

*“Advocacy is a way of influencing decision-making on problems that concern people, especially those who have been marginalised and left out of the policy process.”*

ers?”. This results in a ‘Thought Paper’, giving an up-to-date overview of the topic. This is often an exercise based on practical knowledge and experiences of the stakeholders, requiring them to articulate their needs and prioritise them.

The second phase involves a discussion on what information needs to be verified and/or elaborated on for example: whether best practices to deal with similar issues can be identified; which formal policies and laws apply to the subject, etc. Research goals are defined so that detailed and validated information can be obtained. Legal and expert information is compared and mutual learning stimulated. The process is often supported by desk and field research, as well as case study analysis, which help the lead organisation to understand what is at stake.

In the third phase, translating facts and knowledge into concrete proposals can contribute to overcoming institutional barriers. It is about defining the message in such a way that it influences decision makers and informs the public at large, giving shapes to the advocacy strategy. Good communication skills are needed to identify the right language and tone for the target audience. Advocacy includes campaigns, lobbying and capacity building and can be defined as pleading a cause, or helping others to plead a cause. Advocacy is a way of influencing decision-making on problems that concern people, especially those who have been marginalised and left out of the policy process. Advocacy should not be seen as isolated events but as processes of change that are woven into societal contexts. It requires mapping the major stakeholders in decision making in terms of their interest in and power to influence the relevant issue, as well as the identification of opportunities to access key decision makers and to build strategic alliances. Generally, this needs to be backed with sufficient exposure in the media to gain popular interest and support.

Table 12 presents a framework and summarises this process of evidence-based pro-poor policy development and the capacities that are needed in the four different phases. This indicates the type of activities needed to undertake in evidence collection and the advocacy process, which are the starting point for capacity-strengthening activities.

TABLE 12 EVIDENCE-BASED PRO-POOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

PHASE	1. IDENTIFYING INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS/ ISSUES	2. COLLECTING EVIDENCE	3. IDENTIFYING POSITIONS AND PREPARING PROPOSALS	4. DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING STRATEGIES
KEY ACTIVITIES	Situational analysis Consultation Prioritising	Define information needs Prepare a search strategy Interact with experts/ and knowledge networks Evaluate the evidence Synthesise the results Validate and disseminate the results	Translate evidence to message and position Validate Generate (public) support	Identify relevant decision makers, their position and power. Build up strategic networks
KEY CAPACITIES	Context analysis Communication	Set research agenda Define research strategies Learn through networks Make sense of results Dissemination and communication	Make stakeholder analyses Network Build strategic alliances Work with the media Implement advocacy and service delivery activities	

## ESFIM intervention logic

The ESFIM programme focuses on the capacities defined above to empower NFOs, so they can better engage in advocacy to improve market access for smallholder farmers. However, this pro-poor policy development and advocacy process is not at all a linear process, as many factors besides ESFIM-activities may influence the final outcomes. Therefore, we need to focus on those outcomes to which the ESFIM activities are likely to contribute directly, and that are real indicators of change rather than just outputs resulting directly from planned activities. To distil these key outcome areas and find appropriate signs of impact, we differentiated between immediate outcomes of activities, intermediate outcomes that result from these immediate outcomes, and ultimate outcomes of the advocacy strategy of the NFOs. Attributing changes to ESFIM activities is high when considering immediate outcomes: when these changes are positive, ESFIM can claim success, but ESFIM can be held responsible for negative changes. However, attribution is less obvious when intermediate and ultimate outcomes are concerned: ESFIM is at most one of the contributing factors in a constellation responsible for changes in these areas (Ton, Vellema et al. 2011).

One of the major other factors that underpinned the capacities of the NFOs was the donor support by Agriterra. This support facilitated the presence of human and financial resources to organise member consultations and support several economic initiatives of their grassroots member organisations (see Table 13)

TABLE 13

ORGANISATION	COUNTRY	ESTIMATED MEMBERSHIP 2008	AGRITERRA-FUNDING 2007-2012 (EURO)
KENFAP	Kenya	650,000	1,912,927
FUPRO	Benin	450,000	1,363,953
UNFFE	Uganda	300,000	177,216
FFAAP	India	75,900	723,850
FFF	Philippines	255,000	657,435
CAF	Uruguay	12,000	228,499
CIOEC-B	Bolivia	103,200	195,967
JNC	Peru	41,000	487,878
CMC	Costa Rica	1,350	93,651

Source: Agriterra 2013

The ESFIM programme has four components. The most important component is called 'ESFIM Collaborative Research'. ESFIM aims to strengthen the capacity of smallholder farmers to generate cash income from markets by strengthening the lobby and advocacy capacity of NFOs in fostering conducive policies. ESFIM stimulates this through a combination of research and evidence collection, policy and case-study analysis, dialogue and cross-learning between participating NFOs and other NFOs in developing and developed countries. With these activities, it contributes to the capacity of national farmer organisations to formulate pro-actively policy propositions in order to adapt the institutional environment of markets to the benefit of smallholder farmers. In the start-up phase, eleven NFOs identified and prioritised specific issues that relate to and hamper access to markets. With the support of ESFIM in analysis and evidence collection on some of these key issues, the NFOs can articulate sound propositions and lobby for changes in specific elements of the institutional environment. This is expected to translate

into increased influence of NFOs on policies and strategies of governments and the private sector. ESFIM worked with NFOs in ten countries: Benin, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Peru, the Philippines, Uganda and Uruguay.

A second component is called 'ESFIM Comparative Research'. This is not restricted to the countries selected for collaborative research, but uses results from the whole world. ESFIM had four themes for which comparative research was undertaken. These are: 1) innovative financial models, 2) market information systems, 3) incentives in collective marketing, and 4) risk insurance. Through desk research, these themes are further elaborated and evidence on best practices is categorised. These insights are also used in the work with NFOs and shared with a wider audience of organisations and institutions working in the area, in order to contribute to the evidence-based advocacy process for policy development.

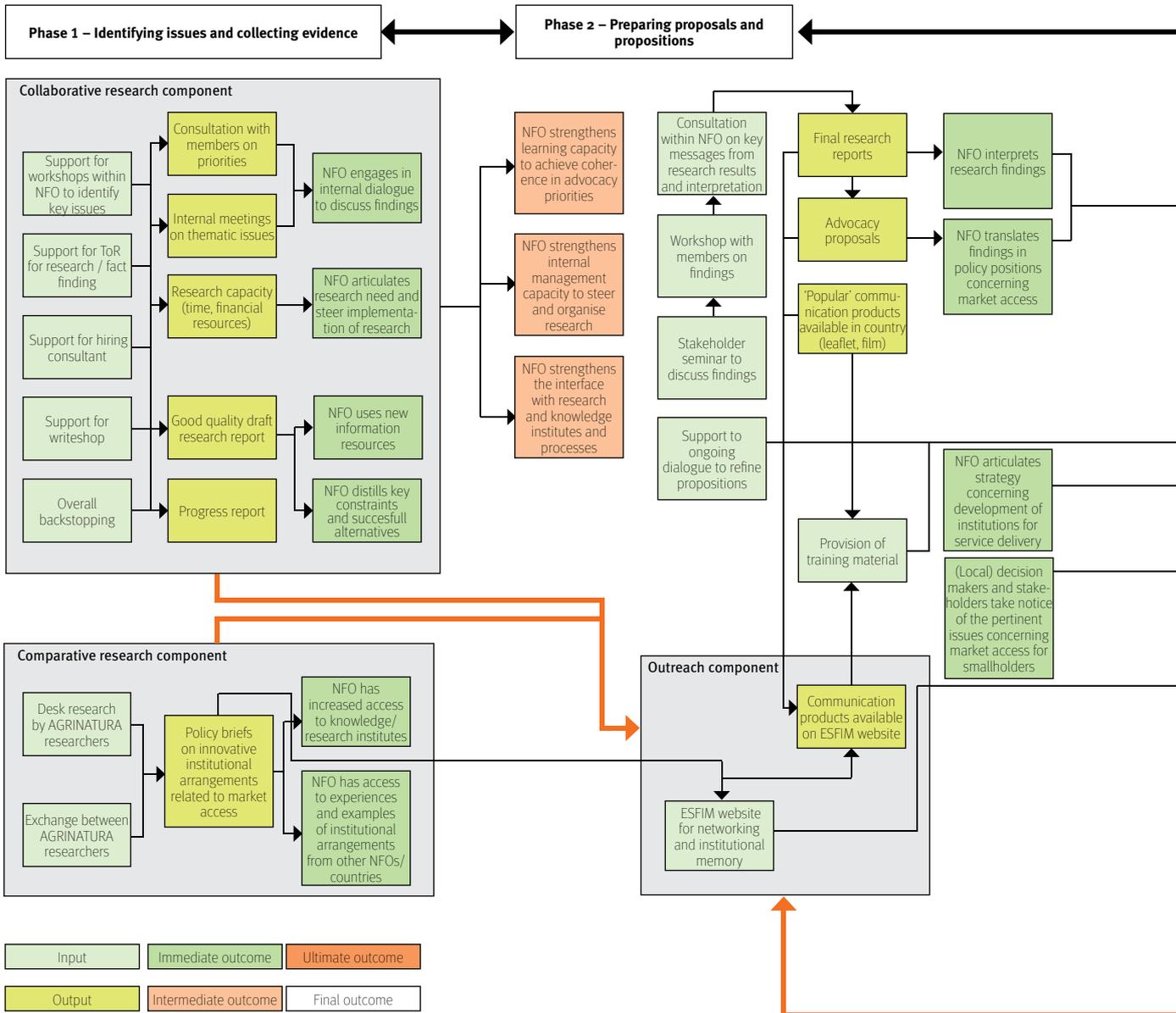
A third area of intervention is 'Outreach', which is mainly the management of the ESFIM-website to exchange information between countries and to inform a wider audience on ESFIM-activities.

The fourth component is 'Learning for Action', in which activities are geared to regional and international exchange and discussion through international conferences and workshops.

We summarised the four intervention areas that influence the five capacities of organisational strength in a result chain (Figure 1). This is a visual representation of outputs, immediate outcomes, intermediate outcomes and ultimate outcomes that are expected to be realised with the ESFIM activities. In order to relate the outputs of ESFIM activities to ultimate outcomes in smallholder empowerment, we used the 'five-capacities framework' (5C-framework) (Figure 2), developed by Baser (2008). The 5C-framework presents five elements of capacity which are logically related and can define the context for the NFOs capacity for influencing policy. The five elements it distinguishes are:

1. Capacity to achieve coherency: this is about building connections, managing diversity (internal and external), and communicating
2. Capacity to commit and act: this is about the organisation's willingness and confidence to act, to engage, and to prioritise issues and actions related to research for advocacy and service delivery to enhance better market access.
3. Capacity to relate and attract: this is about creating relationships and networks, creating credibility and legitimacy internally and externally, mobilising support and resources, and developing political sensitivity and assertive advocacy
4. Capacity to adapt and self-renew: this is about organisational learning capacity, internal dialogue, repositioning vis-à-vis developments, incorporating new ideas and identifying a growth path.
5. Capacity to deliver development objectives (advocacy, service delivery): this is about carrying out the predefined functions and activities, strategically planning and managing activities, logistics, finances and resources.

FIGURE 1 THE ESFIM INTERVENTION LOGIC



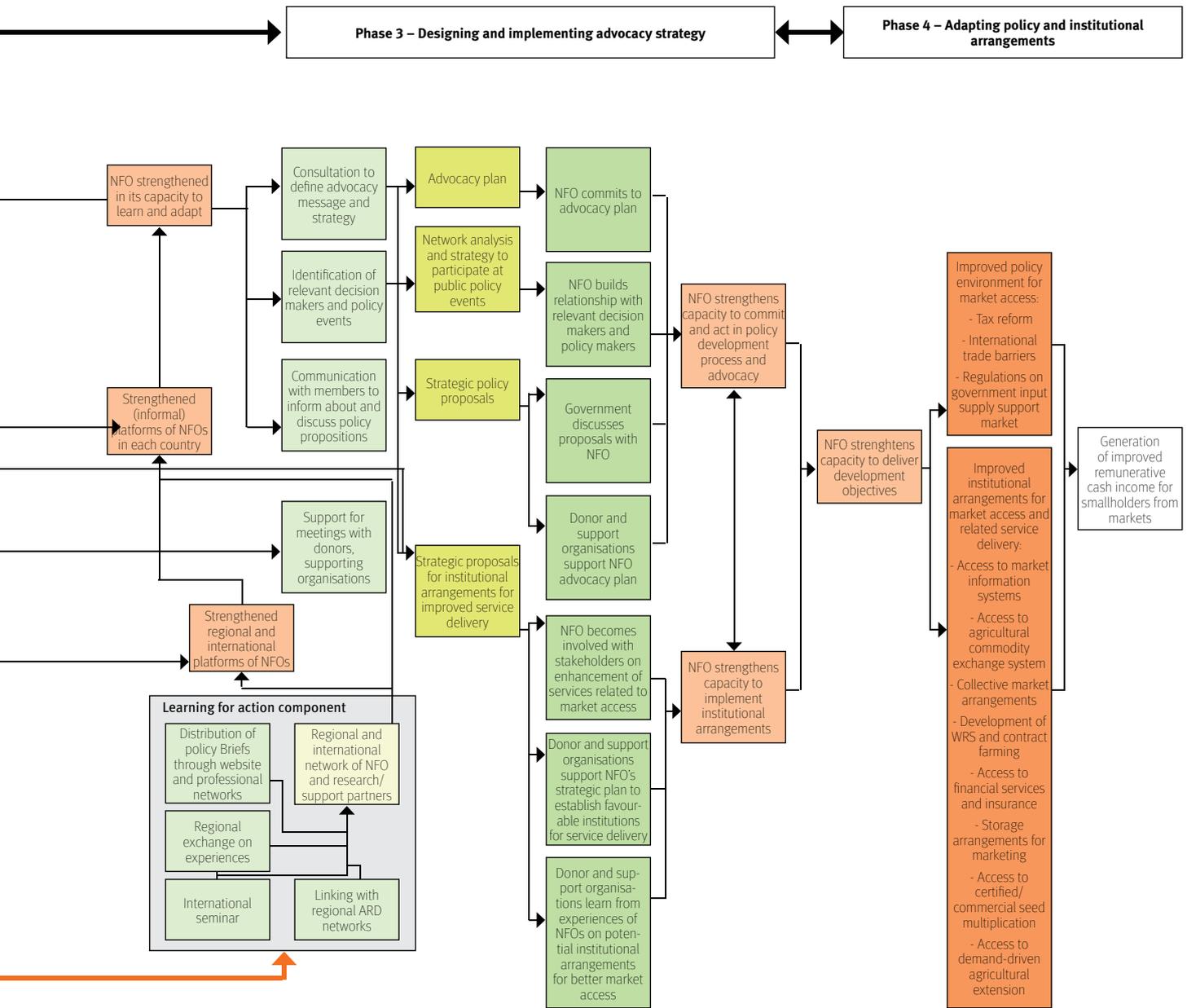
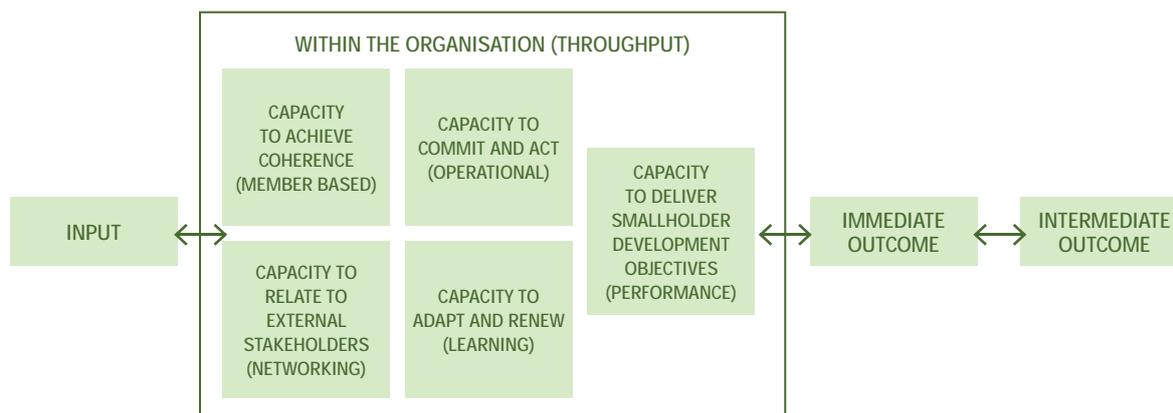


FIGURE 2 FIVE-CAPACITY FRAMEWORK FOR NATIONAL FARMER ORGANISATIONS ENGAGED IN PRO-POOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND ADVOCACY



## Data collection

In addition to monitoring data on outputs (workshops held, studies done) and immediate outcomes (strategies in response to these workshops, use of the research) of the ESFIM programme, we collected data on intermediate outcomes (capacities for advocacy). For the latter, we are aware that ESFIM is only one of the contributing factors, but we nevertheless believe that ESFIM makes a real contribution. Summarising the state of affairs regarding outcomes can help us in evaluating the rationale of ESFIM and testing our key assumption that research and evidence really matters for building advocacy capacities.

During data collection, a mix of both quantitative and qualitative methods has been used with various groups of respondents. Proxy-indicators for each of the five capacities are incorporated into a self-assessment tool for NFOs. This tool, an Excel-application, was used by each of the board members of the NFO. The exercise was implemented in nine NFOs in nine different countries. After filling out the self-assessment forms, the board members discussed the findings in a workshop setting. These discussions were moderated and documented by an external consultant and gave valuable insights about both the (changing) capacities of NFOs and the influence of the ESFIM programme on these changes.

In addition to this self-assessment, the consultant interviewed an external panel of at least four different stakeholders in each country, who were knowledgeable about the activities of the NFO. This was based on a standard list of policy issues related to the market access of smallholders, and interviewees were asked to give their appraisal of the NFO's strengths and weaknesses in terms of the five capacities, and how they use research to strengthen their capacities.

## Internal assessment of capacities for evidence-based advocacy

### Overall capacity

The average results of the self-assessments in each of the nine NFOs are presented in Table 14. The self-assessment tool measured two different aspects of the capacities: the perceived status at the moment of the assessment, and the perceived change in the last three years. This two-fold information facilitates the valuation of the advocacy capacity between NFOs. For instance, board members in NASFAM are satisfied with their advocacy capacities though they do not see much improvement in the last three years. In contrast, the board members in UNFFE are neutral, not satisfied/not dissatisfied, but see an improvement in the last three years. CIOEC-Bolivia is another interesting case, where the board is dissatisfied with the status of most of the capacities, but see improvement in two of these whereas the two other capacities are declining. We feel that these results are realistic and point to the different phases in which these NFOs are. NASFAM has a strong presence in policy making in Malawi and has maintained this presence during the last decade, while UNFFE suffered from an internal crisis that led to a change of leadership in 2009. The board members see these changes as an improvement, although they also consider that UNFFE has not yet reached its full potential. CIOEC's advocacy suffered from the change of government in Bolivia. The Morales government had other national farmer organisations as their political base, and this led to CIOEC's political marginalisation from 2008 onwards. CIOEC has increased in membership but had problems in adapting their internal structure to further decentralisation. However, during the last year, CIOEC has started to reposition itself through a process of decentralised workshops to discuss a new strategic plan. With ESFIM support, CIOEC also contracted consultancy support to re-launch the advocacy of their flagship legal initiative, the Ley de OECAs, intended to position their sector of collective marketing organisations as preferential partners for rural development support policies. The self-evaluation exercise took place in the light of this process, before the advocacy activities had resulted in the inclusion of the Ley de OECAs on the parliamentary agenda. This explains the positive evaluation of the board on the capacity for coherence and the capacity to commit and act in advocacy, while at the same time the NFO suffered from decreasing capacities related to effectively delivering advocacy results.

Overall, of the five capacities, the perceived capacity for coherency is rated highest by their NFO boards, while their capacity to network is, on average, rated lowest. This indicates that the NFO boards consider that their organisations have sufficient support and contact with their membership, but still have problems relating to others. In the following paragraphs, we will expand the analysis of these scores for each of the five capacities. We base this analysis on the differences between the NFOs in the average evaluation by board members, which are averages of individual scores made by each board member. In separate documents, one for each of the NFOs, the sometimes considerable differences in scoring between the board members of each NFO are analysed in more detail. We will use insights from these documents to help us shed light on the scoring pattern of the respective NFO.

### Capacity for coherency

With respect to capacity for coherency, the self-assessment tool measured contacts with members, change in size of the membership and support within the organisations for the positions taken by the NFO in advocacy. Most NFOs are satisfied with member consultation, contact and agreement with the positioning of the NFO. Although most NFOs increased their membership over time, CAF is the exception, with a decrease in the last three years. Both CIOEC and CAF are considered to perform dissatisfactory in this aspect. In CIOEC, membership has grown but the organisation has not yet managed to reach

a large share of the rural population, and this limits their influence in national politics. UNFFE board members explained during the workshop that their contact with members is not adequate. This is mainly due to logistics, and more specifically the distance between regional and national offices and their members, which are largely District Farmers Organisations. CAF in Uruguay also indicates that they are constrained by a low membership. Several members of CAF have merged with COPRAGAN since 2005 and this process of consolidation is expected to continue.

In most countries, board members indicated that the capacity for coherency has improved compared to three years ago. It is plausible that ESFIM has played a role in this, as at the start of the programme many NFOs organised consultations and validation workshops with their members to identify key issues hampering market access. Several NFOs indicated during the workshops that this opportunity to have more consultation and contact with their members has contributed to stronger internal coherency as a NFO. CPM, the coalition of smallholder organisations in Madagascar, highlighted in a presentation made during an ESFIM event held during the UNECA/CTA Conference Making the Connection in October 2012, that improved internal coherence was one of the major achievements of ESFIM.

TABLE 14 AVERAGE SELF-ASSESSMENT SCORES OF BOARD MEMBERS ON NFO ADVOCACY CAPACITIES (2011)

Capacity	FUPRO Benin	CMC Costa Rica	UNFFE Uganda	NASFAM Malawi	KENFAP Kenya	FFF Philippines	CIOEC Bolivia	CAF Uruguay	CPM Madagascar	Average
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Perceived status at the moment of the self-assessment

1. Capacity for coherency	2.2	2.2	2.0	2.4	2.3	2.2	1.6	1.7	2.4	2.1
2. Capacity for networking	1.8	2.0	1.5	2.0	1.9	1.9	0.9	1.7	1.7	1.7
3. Capacity to renew and adapt	2.2	2.0	1.8	2.5	2.3	2.1	1.1	1.9	2.0	2.0
4. Capacity to commit and act	1.7	2.2	1.8	2.5	2.4	1.9	1.0	1.3	2.1	1.9
5. Capacity to deliver development objectives	1.7	1.9	1.9	2.3	2.0	1.9	1.4	1.7	2.2	1.9

Improvement of capacity compared to three years ago

1. Capacity for coherency	0.4	0.8	0.4	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.3
2. Capacity for networking	0.1	0.6	0.0	-0.6	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.2	-0.1	0.1
3. Capacity to renew and adapt	-0.2	0.6	0.3	0.1	0.5	0.7	-0.4	0.0	-0.2	0.2
4. Capacity to commit and act	-0.3	0.9	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.3
5. Capacity to deliver development objectives	-0.3	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.4	0.3	-0.6	0.2	0.3	0.1

LEGEND:

Actual capacity	Bad (0.0-1.5)	Regular (1.6-2.0)	Good (2.1-3.0)
Compared to three years ago	Capacity worsened (-2 - -0.3)	No change (-0.2 – 0.2)	Capacity improved (0.3 – 2.0)

### Capacity to relate and network

For measuring networking capacity, we asked NFOs to what extent they were satisfied with their external relationships and collaborations. The collaboration with other NFOs was judged satisfactory by all. Most NFOs were less satisfied with the collaboration with local authorities and with research institutes. One of ESFIM's objectives was to foster the NFO and research interface so that evidence would be collected systematically as a basis for policy proposals. The results suggest that this has not been fully achieved, with several NFO boards appearing to be dissatisfied with the current status. Even though collaboration with research institutes was not uniformly satisfactory, it seemed to have improved compared to three years ago. This indicates that ESFIM may well have enabled NFOs to invest in research, as most NFOs seemed to have gained experience in implementing research into their priority topics. Although ESFIM hoped to work more closely with (national) research institutes, this did not happen everywhere. It has, therefore, been taken up as one of the priority activities in a next phase of ESFIM.

Another observation was the dissatisfaction of CIOEC with their current capacity to network with other stakeholders, except fellow farmer organisations, which they estimated to be less than what it was three years ago. Many NFOs also indicated their difficulty in relating to local authorities. CAF is a notable exception there, and this can be explained by the small size of the country and its rural populations. FFF in the Philippines and KENFAP in Kenya were most satisfied with their networking capacities and the strengthening of these capacities in the last three years. For KENFAP, the only negative point was its relationship with donors. NASFAM is an interesting case: although the board was generally satisfied with its networking capacity, it nevertheless indicated that its capacity was even better three years ago. This can be explained by budget restrictions; until a few years ago, resources for their advocacy work were supported by USAID.

### Capacity to renew and adapt

The capacity to renew and adapt means becoming engaged in a learning process around advocacy issues. Most NFOs were satisfied about how they were informed about policy developments; and the majority also indicated that they felt that this has improved over the last three years. The same applied to participation in various platforms on policy debates and discussions; six of the nine NFOs indicated that this had also improved over the last three years. We also noted a small improvement in the interpretation of data, and collaboration with research institutes, and possibly also with other research partners or consultants.

Most outstanding is the dissatisfaction of CIOEC in Bolivia. In the past, between 2000 and 2008, this NFO had produced high-quality research and was very much involved in agricultural policy development, but due to a change in the political context and a loss of donor support, their capacities decreased in the last three years. UNFFE was also not very satisfied with their capacity to renew and adapt. This may have been a result of the turbulence last year, when UNFFE lost its major institutional donor and had to lay off its highly capable advocacy officer (though he was contracted as a consultant for some ESFIM activities). Although having shown some improvement in the last three years, their capacities are still not entirely satisfactory. The self-assessment within NASFAM reflected their situation as a strong organisation, but their capacities for learning through workshops and research has decreased, partly due to the withdrawal of USAID support for this. The FUPRO's results were a bit confusing. Board members rated their capacities for keeping informed on policy developments and their participation in platforms as highly satisfactory but at the same time indicated that it had decreased relative to three years ago. Overall, the boards of CMC, KENFAP and FFF were the most positive about improvement in this capacity area during the last three years. The ESFIM programme stimulated NFOs in learning to select key issues, organising the evidence-collection process around them and becoming informed about the on-going policy developments.

### Capacity to commit and act

The assessment of the capacity to commit and act in the advocacy process showed different patterns between NFOs. Only NASFAM seemed to be fully satisfied with their capacity in this area. FUPRO, UNFFE, CIOEC, CAF and CPM were less satisfied with their activities and capacity in this area. For CAF, one explanation may be the lack of funding. Most of CAF's activities had been based on programmes supported by donors, and their main European donor withdrew its support in the past few years. The board of FUPRO proved to be dissatisfied with its capacity to commit and act, and indicated that this was a decline compared to three years ago. Remarkably, all NFOs except CIOEC showed improved availability of an advocacy strategy. Clearly, the formulation of an advocacy strategy, including policy formulation, was key to the ESFIM programme logic and it is most likely that the programme has contributed to that capacity. CIOEC joined ESFIM later than the others, only in 2011, and has made important steps in a positive direction in 2012. In 2013, the advocacy even resulted in the approval of a specific law to facilitate public support to organised producers. This important advocacy success took place in the months after the moment that this self-assessment exercise was done. A similar exercise at the end of 2012 would have yielded much more positive results.

### Capacity to work on advocacy and service delivery to improve access to markets

The fifth capacity is the capacity to deliver smallholder development objectives, both in terms of the implementation of advocacy activities and smallholder market access. As we can see from the pattern of results of the self-assessment, there are NFOs in which there is some dissatisfaction on elements of this capacity, for example FUPRO, CMC, CIOEC and CAF. Conversely, UNFFE, NASFAM, KENFAP and CPM are quite satisfied about their own capacities in this respect. Discussions amongst board members did not indicate specific reasons for either the satisfaction or the dissatisfaction on these different aspects. Compared to three years ago, we can observe overall improvements in this capacity, especially for CMC, UNFFE and KENFAP, whereas FUPRO and CIOEC suffered a declining capacity over the last three years.

## External stakeholders' perspectives

Part of the methodology for the monitoring and baseline assessment was to collect stakeholders' views on the NFO's performance on advocacy, making possible a comparison of the self-assessment with the opinions of these panels. In most countries, four to six respondents were interviewed from different professional fields, e.g., ministry officials, NGOs/donors, journalists and individuals from the private sector. They were selected for their knowledge of the respective NFO, which at the same time most likely gives a selection bias to their ratings. The external panel was asked different questions than those in the self-assessment, and only covered four of the five capacities.

The opinions of the external panel diverged more between each member than was the case with the board members. Nevertheless, on average, their opinions largely confirmed the findings in the self-assessment. NFOs that were most critical in their self-assessment (CIOEC, CAF and CPM) were also perceived as weaker by these external stakeholders. The two types of assessment diverged most for UNFFE and KENFAP, with the external panel being less positive than the board when analysing their development in the last three years. However, in their evaluation of its current status, the external panel still considered UNFFE a strong organisation. When NASFAM and FUPRO were concerned, the external panel saw progress whereas the board pointed to stagnation or decline in the last three years. The external panels saw across-the-board improvements in CMC, NASFAM and FFF, and stagnation in the cases of UNFFE, KENFAP, CIOEC, CAF and CPM.

TABLE 15 COMPARISON OF THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ASSESSMENTS OF CHANGE IN ADVOCACY CAPACITIES IN THE LAST 3 YEARS

	FUPRO Benin	CMC Costa Rica	UNFFE Uganda	NASFAM Malawi	KENFAP Kenya	FFF Philippines	CIOEC Bolivia	CAF Uruguay	CPM Madagascar
<b>CAPACITY FOR COHERENCE</b>									
Self-assessment	Strong	Strong	Neutral	Strong	Strong	Strong	Neutral	Neutral	Strong
External view	views not collected								
<b>CAPACITY TO RELATE AND NETWORK</b>									
Self-assessment	Neutral	Neutral	Weak	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Weak	missing data	Neutral
External view	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Neutral	Strong	Neutral	Strong	Strong
<b>CAPACITY TO RENEW AND ADAPT</b>									
Self-assessment	Strong	Neutral	Neutral	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak	Neutral	Neutral
External view	Strong	Strong	Neutral	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak
<b>CAPACITY TO COMMIT AND ACT</b>									
Self-assessment	Neutral	Strong	Neutral	Strong	Strong	Neutral	Weak	missing data	Strong
External view	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Neutral	Weak	Strong
<b>CAPACITY TO DELIVER ON ADVOCACY FOR SMALLHOLDERS MARKET ACCESS</b>									
Self-assessment	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Strong	Neutral	Neutral	Weak	Neutral	missing data
External view	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak	Weak	Strong
<b>IMPROVEMENT CAPACITY TO RELATE AND NETWORK COMPARED TO 3 YEARS AGO</b>									
Self-assessment	Neutral	Strong	Neutral	Weak	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	missing data	Neutral
External view	Neutral	Strong	Neutral	Strong	Neutral	Strong	Neutral	Strong	Neutral
<b>IMPROVEMENT CAPACITY TO RENEW AND ADAPT COMPARED TO 3 YEARS AGO</b>									
Self-assessment	Neutral	Strong	Strong	Neutral	Strong	Strong	Weak	Neutral	Neutral
External view	Strong	Strong	Neutral	Strong	Neutral	Strong	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
<b>IMPROVEMENT CAPACITY TO COMMIT AND ACT COMPARED TO 3 YEARS AGO</b>									
Self-assessment	Weak	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	missing data	Neutral
External view	Strong	Strong	Neutral	Strong	Strong	Strong	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
<b>IMPROVEMENT CAPACITY TO DELIVER ON ADVOCACY FOR SMALLHOLDERS MARKET ACCESS COMPARED TO 3 YEARS AGO</b>									
Self-assessment	Weak	Neutral	Strong	Neutral	Strong	Strong	Weak	Neutral	Strong
External view	Neutral	Strong	Neutral	Strong	Strong	Strong	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral

## LEGEND

Capacity of NFO	Weak	Neutral	Strong
Compared to three years ago	Weaker	The same	Stronger

Source: ESFIM original data collected in 2012.

## Conclusions

The monitoring and evaluation exercise generated useful information to consider the effectiveness of ESFIM in strengthening the organisational capacities of NFOs for advocacy on market access issues. The assessment is meant to be repeated in the new phase of ESFIM, using the current measurement as the baseline. Direct attribution of these changes to ESFIM activities is difficult. As explained above, ESFIM works in a complex environment with many influencing factors. Changes in capacities are influenced by many more factors than ESFIM alone.

Perhaps the positive development seen in CMC in Costa Rica may be attributable fairly directly to ESFIM support, as the project was CMC's only funding partner for their advocacy activities. However, in other organisations such as KENFAP, JNC and FUPRO, ESFIM was only a partial funding partner and facilitated research for issues on which the NFO had already started their advocacy strategy at the time that the ESFIM support started. Nevertheless, the changes in the NFO can be considered as food for thought.

None of the NFOs was considered to be in decline in the view of both panels. CMC, FFF, UNFFE, KENFAP, FUPRO and NASFAM emerge as being both strong and improving in their capacities, according to at least one of the panels. CAF and CPM can be characterised best as being moderately strong but stagnant in their development.

We explained earlier that the weak shape in which CIOEC is found, is to a large extent a result of their political marginalisation in the Bolivian context of strong competing NFOs having direct links to the government. ESFIM contributed to the process of re-launching a major policy initiative that indeed resulted in political recognition in the second half of 2012.

TABLE 16 DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL FARMER ORGANISATIONS' ADVOCACY CAPACITY IN THE LAST THREE YEARS: COMPARISON OF THE ASSESSMENT OF AN EXTERNAL PANEL AND SELF-EVALUATION OF THE BOARD

DEVELOPMENT OF ADVOCACY CAPACITY IN LAST THREE YEARS		ASSESSMENT OF EXTERNAL PANEL		
		Strong	Moderate	Weak
ASSESSMENT OF BOARD MEMBERS	Strong	CMC, FFF	UNFFE, KENFAP	
	Moderate	NASFAM	CAF, CPM	
	Weak		CIOEC, FUPRO	

TABLE 17 STATUS IN MAY 2012 OF THE NATIONAL FARMER ORGANISATIONS' ADVOCACY CAPACITIES: COMPARISON OF THE ASSESSMENT OF AN EXTERNAL PANEL AND SELF-EVALUATION OF THE BOARD

CURRENT STATUS OF ADVOCACY CAPACITY		ASSESSMENT OF EXTERNAL PANEL		
		Strong	Moderate	Weak
ASSESSMENT OF BOARD MEMBERS	Strong	NASFAM		
	Moderate	FUPRO, CMC, UNFFE, FFF	KENFAP, CAF, CPM	
	Weak			CIOEC

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“The authors are congratulated on how well they have set out their case. I trust that it will in turn inspire many others to actively link farmers and research in addressing the challenges of agricultural innovation.”

*Mark Holderness, Executive Secretary of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR)*

“Food should be produced in every country, according to a diversity of environments and potentialities, close to the consumers, close to the hungry and to the malnourished. Let us hope that the International Year of Family Farming 2014, will be able to obtain better public policies in favour of Family Farming. The experiences documented in this book show the dignity and the leadership of farmer organisations in advocating for such policies.”

*José Antonio Osaba García, Civil Society Coordinator of the IYFF-2014, World Rural Forum (WRF)*

“Too often the development community speaks on behalf of small-scale farmers, rather than allowing their voices to steer policy and research agendas around their priorities. This important book provides a counterpoint by describing the reality of building capacities of farmer federations to shape research and policy in favour of their members, at a time of rapid change in agricultural markets. The book is rich in lessons that result from a frank assessment of challenges involved in the research support process.”

*Bill Vorley, Principal Researcher Sustainable Markets, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)*

“Poor formulation and implementation of policies are major constraints to development of the agricultural sector in many African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. One reason for this is the insufficient level of consultation with relevant non state actors - both the private sector and farmers- in agricultural policy processes. Moreover, even when consulted, farmer organisations are not well-equipped to contribute to policy debate because they often lack the necessary facts and figures to argue their case and do not have the resources to carry out the studies required to generate the needed information. More effective linkages between the research community and farmer groups is therefore highly desirable and this publication makes a major contribution to promoting such research.”

*Michael Hailu, Director of the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA)*

“The book is very informative and it presents the notion that farmers are naturally entrepreneurial but will need to be supported technically and with evidence to have the capacity to integrate into profitable value chains and more-so to provide leadership in agriculture policy discourse in Africa.”

*Stephen Muchiri, Chief Executive Officer, Eastern African Farmers Federation (EAFF)*

The Empowering Smallholder Farmers in Markets programme (ESFIM) creates a space for learning-by-doing on institutional modalities to bridge the gap between the research community and national farmer organisations on issues relating to smallholder market access. It generates research-informed proposals for change in the enabling/disabling institutional environment and it supports the capacities of national farmer organisations to engage in related advocacy activities. This book describes the dynamics in eleven countries that were included in the programme between 2008 and 2013. Context mattered and this is demonstrated in the diversity in

themes prioritised and selected in each of the countries. These ranged from research on modalities of collective marketing to the generation of evidence on the impact of seed programmes, 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 chapters give insight in the advocacy strategies of national farmer organisations and their use of research and evidence to strengthen the voice of smallholder farmers and formulate pro-active proposals for change.

#### Website

[www.esfim.org](http://www.esfim.org)

#### Contact

Giel Ton  
LEI Wageningen UR  
Alexanderveld 5  
2585 DB Den Haag

PO Box 29703  
2502 LS Den Haag  
Netherlands

tel: 31 (0)70 335 83 30

fax: 31 (0)70 361 56 24

[giel.ton@wur.nl](mailto:giel.ton@wur.nl)



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