

CROSSROADS



Alma Bayta, 43 years old, is seen here harvesting rice in Bula, Camarines Sur, in the Philippines. © Isabel Corthier/AgriCord

About our next General Assembly

BY DANIEL SZCZEPANSKI

We are happy to announce that our General Assembly is taking place in Brussels on December 12-13 2022.

We are very much looking forward to hosting the members of General Assembly here at the Secretariat!

However, apart from the usual suspects, we also hope to bring together other stakeholders, including staff of the European Commission's DGs INTPA and Agri.

As usual, the General Assembly will also be complemented by sessions for AgriCord's Audit and Programme Commissions.

This year, a separate session of the Steering Committee for our new FO-led Research & Innovation (FORI) Programme will also be held for the first time.

For our agri-agency members and partners: you can expect news on the agenda and practical details over the next few weeks. We hope to see you soon!

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Crisis and Solutions in Extension Services in Kenya

BY DANIEL SZCZEPANSKI

Kenya has seen a marked decline in government extension services to farmers over the past few decades. There is an ongoing generational switch, as older officers retire and are not replaced. Private companies are also able to offer competitive salaries and benefits, trying to poach government officers. More generally, budgetary allocation has proved inadequate to provide quality extension services to farmers. A study, commissioned in 2018, found that the ratio of national extension staff to farmers is 1:1,000, compared with the recommended 1:400. In comparison, neighboring Ethiopia had one extension officer for every 472 farmers, and spent almost all of its (significant) agriculture budget on extension services.

Unreliable and sometimes nonexistent agricultural extension services have led to poor agricultural practices, which in turn contributed to lower yields for smallholders. Farmers incomes suffer as a consequence.

The lack of government extension services have also left farmer organizations scrambling for solutions. In some cases, this has evolved towards the development of in-house extension services, provided by the FOs themselves. At the same time, there have been calls to hold the government to account and advocate for more extension officers.

Working with FFD, our partner FF-SPAK has devised some inventive solutions in Kiambu and Muranga Counties, north-west of Nairobi. Through a unique partnership, government extension officers cooperate closely with FF-SPAK. As farmers signal their needs for advice on specific issues, FF-SPAK brings extension officers in touch with these farmers. Special events, such as farmer field days and field demonstrations, are also used to connect farmers with the officers.



Extension officers at a field demo.
© Daniel Szczepanski/AgriCord

These hands-on demonstrations are useful to explain practical issues, such as pruning techniques. Crucially, FF-SPAK also compensates certain costs. This includes transportation compensation and meals. In times of rising food and fuel prices, such efforts can go a long way towards motivating extension officers and reaching farmers in need.

Solutions such as these emphasize how FOs can cooperate with governments to strengthen extension services.

Hopefully, FF-SPAK will be able to continue and build on its impressive achievements also in other counties. Local farmers certainly need and appreciate them!

WITNESS TESTIMONIALS

"Now we have a huge gap in extension. We, FF-SPAK as a farmer-based organization, build the capacity of farmers. One way of doing that is through the government extension officers."

GEOFFREY WANYAMA,
CEO FF-SPAK



Towards a Holistic Approach to Rural Digitalization

BY LUCHIE ALMAGRO

In recent years, a plethora of digital technologies have been introduced across South-East Asia to improve production efficiency and food transformation. This ranges from high-level policy work to frame digitalization all the way to more localized solutions, such as setting up online shops and social media accounts. This also means that a plethora of stakeholders, ranging from policy-makers to local farmers, have a stake in this issue.

At the same time, though there are many benefits to digitalization for rural development, the process also poses many complex challenges. This is particularly the case for farmer organizations (FOs) and smallholder farmers. For example, FOs face institutional and capacity challenges to properly implement digital tools and instruments. Not all rural communities have strong digital connectivity, reinforcing inequalities.

In this regard, AgriCord's member agri-agencies can play an important role both in providing platforms to connect these stakeholders and addressing challenges faced by FOs and smallholders in a holistic manner.

On August 9th 2022, AsiaDHRRRA organized a virtual regional forum, "Rural Transformation: Harnessing Digital Agriculture towards Strengthening Small-farmers' Resilience."

Delegates from a wide variety of stakeholders participated in this event. This included AsiaDHRRRA members, partner CSOs, Rural Peoples' Organizations (RPOs) as well as major development partners like the Asian Farmers Association (AFA), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (UN-FAO), IFAD and ASEAN.

The forum underlined a number of important key takeaways, highlighting the potential and perils of rural agricultural digitalization. These can only be addressed through a territorial and holistic rural development approach:

- Stronger partnerships of stakeholders in policy making and program implementation;
- Responsible investment in technology and infrastructure;
- More individual and institutional capacity-building interventions;
- Highlight the role of CSOs in scaling up inclusive digitalization in agricultural value chains in the innovation systems, especially in the principles of designing and understanding the ecosystem;
- Expand and streamline "inclusive" digitalization policies existing in some countries;
- Recognize and push forward the important role of cooperatives and farmers' organizations in implementing policies and programs;
- Co-develop regional programs and synergize resource generation and development; and
- Encourage, empower, and engage youth to participate in agriculture innovations.

This is no silver bullet. Nevertheless, such platforms can go a long way in connecting people and handling challenges, faced by smallholders.



QUESTIONS?

PLEASE FEEL FREE
TO GET IN TOUCH
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Strengthening Local Diversification for Climate Resilience

BY KATJA VUORI

Recently, FFF partners – FAO, AgriCord (including FFD), IIED and IUCN - took part in the organisation of the five-day conference, held in Hanoi, under the theme “Saving our Future: Investing in locally-led diversification for climate resilience and food security”.

Collectively, 1.5 billion forest and farm smallholders supply at least one-third of the world’s food on just 12% of its agricultural land. But while total international climate finance for developing countries has exceeded US\$70 billion annually since 2017, as little as 10% of global funds reach the local level. From that, only 1.7% trickles down to locally controlled organisations.

“We need to create resilience programs and safety nets against climate shocks for farmers as part of the Green funds”, asserted Elizabeth Nsimadala, EAFF.

So how can we concretely ensure diversification, where it is needed, in support of climate resilience Participants focused on a number of key recommendations”:

- enhance recognition of forest and farm producer organizations as the voice of family farmers, support their lobbying capacities, and provide evidence of their ability to deliver services to their members to address the climate crisis.

- include forest and farm producer organizations as key actors in policy formulation and implementation, and equal partners in the development of climate-financing mechanisms.
- implement legal and policy frameworks to strengthen land rights of local communities and indigenous peoples, and provide incentives for locally led diversification measures, agroecology and agroforestry practices, with a specific focus on women, youth and ethnic minorities.
- support forest and farm producer organizations to strengthen their internal organization and entrepreneurship skills so they can attract youth to agriculture and to revalorize traditional knowledge.

“When forest and farm producer smallholders come together to work collectively, they can be powerful agents of change,” concluded Ewald Rametsteiner Deputy Director of FAO’s Forestry Division.

Savoir-Faire & Links

As usual, some more interesting resources to share:

Be sure to read Fert's [Activity Report for 2021](#). A very clear and interesting overview of project activities.

AHA published a comprehensive toolkit of [selected agricultural trade policy instruments](#).



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QUESTIONS? WANT
TO SHARE YOUR
STORY? A FRIENDLY
CHAT?

CONTACT US!

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AgriCord is a global alliance of agri-agencies mandated by farmers' organizations. The mission of the AgriCord Alliance is to promote and help to build strong, democratic, inclusive and professional farmers' organisations and cooperatives and in that way to spur development.

Special: How to Business Plan? Some insights from the Dominican Republic

About this edition...

Earlier this year, AgriCord organized a learning moment on access to finance. Our colleagues at Acodea and Juan Cruz de Guaranal, a local FO in the Dominican Republic, impressed us with their presentation on business planning.

Their prize: being featured in Crossroads' first special edition!

We spoke to Luis Conejo (Acodea), Darielys Polanco Martinez (co-administrator of the supply center - Juan Cruz), Julián Javier Rosario (Treasurer - Juan Cruz) and Leidy Díaz (Executive Secretary - Juan Cruz) about how they do business planning and what they have learnt.

Plan, but be ready to adapt

Though there is a core process with different, pre-set steps on how to draft a business plan, it is crucial to adapt these steps according to context and needs. In this case, one of the first core elements was to conduct a raw materials analysis, which put farmer needs central, as well as a market analysis. and its new young leaders, such as Darielys and Santa.

At the same time, FO staff and producers participated in a 4-month entrepreneurship training, organized by TRIAS and supported by ACODEA. Participants had to draft a business plan as part of the training.

Each person then had to do three presentations of the plan: one for institutions, one for the General Assembly of producers and one for the farmers and peers themselves.

One of the key challenges in the process was that technical experts like Darielys were not agronomists with farming expertise. This contrasted with the farmers' own extensive expertise in agriculture.

Buy-in from early adapters and farmer leaders is in this sense essential...



A training on business planning for producers.
© Acodea

Early adopters and inclusion

One of the most important elements in getting the plan done in an inclusive manner, is the presence of 'early adopters'. As Luis mentioned, ACODEA puts great stock in such champions to pave the way for reform.

Julián as FO leader involved Darielys in Juan Cruz's work and gave her space to be part of technical aspects of drafting the plan.

More broadly, he gave them space to be part of the FO. After all, the FO is not just an actor with formal roles, but has another important attribute...

The FO and sociality

It is important to recognize the FO as a social actor. The FO is not just an institution, but a place to socialize. People meet up informally and talk about every day life, but also discuss their affairs with each other and give or take advice on the running of their farms. In this sense, the FO is an important part of local social fabric.

Darielys, daughter of a producer, went directly to the FO and with the help of Julián formed part of this sociality, which helped her acceptance by the producers. This in turn helped with the identification of farmers' needs and the overall drafting of the business plan for Juan Cruz de de Guaranal.

About the project

Acodea works together with Clac and Trias in the Dominican Republic with 5 local partners, including Juan Cruz de Guaranal. The project seeks to strengthen internal organization and management for the development of cooperative economic activities.

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A farmer working in one of a cocoa plantation in Línea Noroeste, Dominican Republic. © Acodea