

CROSSROADS



Philippine farmer at work - © Isabel Corthier/AgriCord

Our New President

BY DANIEL SZCZEPANSKI

Pieter Verhelst was elected as the new President of AgriCord by our General Assembly hosted by Cresol agri-agency in Francisco Beltrau, Brazil early June.

He brings with him a wealth of experience combined with a strong strategic vision and understanding of agricultural sector. His background is in the commercial engineering and rural development. Pieter joined Boerenbond, the Flemish farmers' organisation, in 2008 - first as a European and international policy

advisor and later on as a member of its Board of Directors.

Representing Boerenbond, Pieter participates in the work of COPA-COCEGA and the WFO. He is also a member of the Board of investment funds financing cooperatives and agri-food SMEs and represents farmers' interests in the Belgian Agro-Food Chain Initiative, to mention few of his responsibilities.

We are excited to work under his leadership for the benefit of our farmers' organisation partners!



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Lessons in Agroforestry

BY CHI BUI & DANIEL SZCZEPANSKI

Certification can make agroforestry an attractive business for farmers and cooperatives, as our partners Quang Ngai (QNCA) and Phu Yen (PYCA), supported by FFD, in Vietnam have found out in the context of the EU financed FO4Asia project. Forest certification can benefit farmers to respond into compliance challenges and open access to more profitable markets.

Agriculture in Vietnam faces a plethora of challenges. Farmers in lowland areas rely on rice as a crop, but changing weather patterns and disasters are becoming a regular occurrence. Youth leaves rural areas to seek work elsewhere. The poorest farmers, particularly from ethnic minorities, are excluded from commercial agriculture and plantation forestry, due to lack of financing and land rights issues.

Growing trees on land is recognized as a viable complementary source of income - also by government authorities. The Vietnamese government has made long-term leases of state-managed lands available for private enterprises, small farmers, communities and cooperatives. Farmers have taken up on this opportunity, planting a variety of species, including acacia, pine and indigineous trees. Getting the timber certified provides an opportunity to, fetch good prices.

Timber from sustainably managed, Forest Steward Council (FSC)-certified forests are of particular interest to cooperatives as FSC is international recognized by big manufacturers and retailers.

However, getting small forest owner plots certified is not an easy task. In the FO4Asia project, the process began by contracting FSC experts to develop an action plan. Activities included market surveys, establishing Provincial and Cooperative FSC Development Management Boards, and disseminating information about FSC. Technical training sessions focused on low-impact logging, labor safety, forestry management, chemical usage, and FSC regulations. The supported cooperatives set up also nurseries, which provide their members with high quality seedlings at interesting prices.

Certification gives farmers greater negotiation power and an upgraded position in the value chain. The results from the project are promising. Smallholder forestry plots have been successfully certified and until now over 86,000 tons of timber has been marketed for a value of over 3,780,000 euro.

Such results and benefits show the potential of certified timber as an additional - or even primary source - of income for smallholders/small scale forest owners. If sustained, such evolution can go a long way towards improving farmer livelihoods and reducing poverty in the rural areas.

QUESTIONS?

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO GET IN TOUCH WITH DANIEL OR WITH OUR COLLEAGUE CHI AT FFD!

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Creating an Enabling Environment for Kenyan Farmers

BY FLORIAN REYSKENS

Over the past few years, CGA (Cereal Growers Association) in Kenya has been supported by Fert under the AFD financed SEPOP programme. The project has focused on improving policy advocacy skills and technical expertise and tackling financial constraints. These are critical elements in creating an enabling environment for farmers' business to flourish.

Now, CGA's and Fert's joint efforts are starting to bear fruit. CGA negotiated successfully a minimum guaranteed price scheme with the Kenyan government. This agreement has enabled the storage and marketing of 107,763 tons of cereals at a price favorable to farmers. This has been instrumental in providing financial stability and better market access to the farmers involved.

With regards to service delivery, an Arvalis expert (a reputed French agricultural technical institute specializing in cereal crop experimentation) conducted a mission to enhance the skills of CGA teams and relay farmers trained by CGA extensionists.



A field demonstration for Kenyan farmers - © Fert/CGA

The focus of this technical advice was on soil fertility and pest/disease management. The training provided by Arvalis equipped CGA to train farmers with essential knowledge, which is now being progressively disseminated through a network of relay farmers.

CGA identified cash flow problems among members of many grassroots farmers' organizations as a critical challenge. To tackle this issue, a training program for FO field advisors and a few pilot groups was initiated in 2023. This program aimed to improve financial management and operational efficiency within these organizations. As a result, seven Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) were either created or strengthened in 2023. These VSLAs play a crucial role in providing access to finance and fostering economic resilience among CGA members' farmer members.

This collaboration exemplifies the potential of targeted support and strategic partnerships in driving positive change for farmers.



A training for farmers in Kenya - © Fert/CGA

QUESTIONS?

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Embracing Sunflower Farming

BASED ON A STORY BY CATHERINE WAKING'A

One of the projects under the Farmers Organisations-led Research & Innovation in agroecology (FORI), financed by the EU and OACPS, is invested in strengthening the productivity and profitability of the sunflower value chain in Arusha, Tanzania. Providing economic opportunities for women is a key element of the project, supported by We Effect.

A pastoralist-turned sunflower farmer, Gloria Joel Kilamian is a 47-year old farmer, owning a 2-acre plot in Ekenywa village. Born and raised in a pastoralist community, she was among the farmers who agreed to test sunflowers on their farms. Sunflower farming was new in her community, but she nonetheless allocated a section of her land for a trial demo plot to pilot sunflower farming. “When we started the sunflower farming, people in the village who are mostly pastoralists or tobacco farmers were sceptical. How this could work in our area? Some of them mocked us for wasting our time farming crops incompatible for our land... Allocating a plot for the research was not an easy decision. Normally it is men who decide land issues in our community,” Gloria explained.



Gloria on her sunflower plot - © Imani Hezron

With technical advice from Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute (TARI), including agroecological practices for soil fertility, Gloria achieved a good yield from her plot. She harvested 108 kg of sunflower seeds, which after processing gave 35 liters of sunflower oil. “I sold a liter of oil for 5000 Tsh. This income has enabled me to pay school fees for my children,” Gloria smiled.

Gloria will continue to farm sunflowers, as it has changed the life for her family. “Our community still believes in tobacco, but for me, sunflower is the real deal. It has been of benefit to me, my family, and my land,” she added.



Gloria's sunflower farm. © Imani Hezron

Savoir-Faire & Links

Check out our [Annual Global Report for 2023](#) with an overview of results and some interesting case studies.

We also recommend our publication on [the latest achievements and results for the SEPOP programme](#) specifically, financed by the French Development Agency.

We also now have a FORI factsheet for the entire programme.

[Scroll to the bottom of the page!](#)

One last thing: [make sure to follow our LinkedIn page, as we are quite active there.](#)



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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.