KILIMO TRUST: PROMOTING REGIONAL SOLUTIONS TO LOCAL PROBLEMS

A case of institutions linking farmers to ready markets

BY HALIMA ABDALLAH

The UNDP funded DIMAT project saw over 4,000 farmers improving their business skills and accessing financial services. 18 farmers associations were developed by the producer representatives, 1,648 farmers opened up bank accounts and 75 saving Associations were formed and/or revived. Farmers also access more credit to improve their production to meet the market demand.

Ultimately, 4,623 farmers accessed improved technologies (seeds and agro-chemicals) during the project period. The impact of training programme saw increased yield and production. The average beans yield increased from 0.35MT/ha to 0.8MT/ha and rice yield increased from 0.8MT/ha to 1.8MT/ha.

The main ingredient that the project team found key for success was the certainty of the market, said Fiona Lukwago. Within 1.5 years, small farmer groups in Gombe district increased from 100MT to 1000MT. In 2014, 121,000 MT of passion fruit seedlings were sold, and farmers in Kisinbu Farmers Group increased seed production from 2.47MT to 10MT to grow more seeds, Equator Seeds Ltd rice farmers in Northern Uganda had 100% increase in production due to costs of the market.

Certainty of the market was also a big driver for increasing yields through investment in improved seed and other inputs. Income increases were most when farmers were linked to the markets that pay a premium for quality. There must be an established market the region or outside for the national buyer. The farmer needs to understand the immediate off-taker and increases their willingness to contract farmers.

For faster adoption and commercialization, ALL capacity building efforts/catalysts for ALL participants in the market system must be business oriented/profitable. All training provided must have components of monetary gain or loss if practised or not. The value proposition to all concerned parties, including non-farming communities must be very clear and understood, for buy in and cooperation.

Additional learnings include: Demonstration and piloting of technologies for efficiency (farm level and post-harvest) is key for increased adoption. The DIMAT project was limited in funding these demonstrations and pilots and so adoption was slow in areas where this was not done.

Even after appreciation of good agro-economic practices and the returns from such, farmers were limited and could not expand their land under cultivation due to labour constraints. Most could not plant in lines or weed frequently due to the high cost of labour. Introduction/ac- cess to appropriate farm machinery would have gone a long way in increasing commercialization and efficiency in production.

Structure is key - Farmer organisations must operate in a Business-like structured manner, and he well organized to attract financiers, credible buyers, input suppliers and other partners. Good organization also increases trust among farmer groups and associations, which results in collective marketing/bulking and efficiency in aggregation.

This project was implemented by a consortium of Kilimo Trust, Enterprise Uganda and the Private Sector Development Companies.

The farmers targeted by Kilimo Trust under the project, were linked brown to Ionyage Industries Ltd, in Kigali Rwanda as a regional market for their produce.

Kanungu and Kabale districts, which, through the project, were linked to the Uganda's Ministry of Agriculture market. The recently concluded Development Organization of the United Nations (FAO) both quantitative and qualitative food losses of significant volumes occur at all stages in the post-harvest system from harvesting through handling, storage, processing and marketing to final delivery to the consumer.

Silver Safari grows beans, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes and peas to ensure food security for his young family. The surplus he sells however is fetching higher prices. “Thank you very much for teaching us how to make profit. The knowledge has been very useful,” said Silver.

Farmers in a passion fruits garden

The project constructed a 15,000 Mt passion fruit seedlings business.

Farmers loading harvests for the sale

Fiona Lukwago, Project Team Lead at Kilimo Trust.

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