

**MOAAS SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE GENERAL UNION OF PINEAPPLES' PRODUCERS OF TOFFO IN BENIN– (UGPAT)<sup>1</sup>**

**Family farming advice (FFA) for better market access to small holders' farmers**

**Country:** Benin

**Institutions involved:**

- French cooperation project involved in Family farming advice (FFA)
- NGOs
- UGPAT: General union of pineapples' producers of Toffo (farmers' organisation).

**Brief summary:**

Producers from UGPAT organisation in Benin faced problems on the level of pineapple production and its commercialisation. A specific advisory service (Family Farm Management Advice) which is provided by private local services providers (local NGOs, supported by French cooperation) assisted in facilitating better access to market for pineapple producers at both, local and international level.

The farmer organisation (UGPAT) on its own provides many different services to its members in order to improve their market access.

**Question 1: What are the general settings and arrangements for MOAAS?**

The French cooperation together with family farming advice (FFA) is aiming at:

- rethinking farming advice function: classic agricultural extension didn't answer the new needs of farmers any more;
- improving and assessing the technical and economic results of the members of the organisation;
- producing technical and economic references for leaders, staff and farmers (especially for collective action such as price negotiation).

The general union of pineapples producers of Toffo (UGPAT) was established in 1997. So far, 2500 tonnes of pineapple have been sold to the local industry and 640 tonnes have been exported.

UGPAT faced various problems with pineapple:

- quality (techniques, inputs supply, financial management), and
- production planning (to have labour force and inputs, at the right time)
- access to international market.

It is important to note, that the pineapple production follows a two-year cycle and requires a high investment level (investments / ha).

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<sup>1</sup> Mieux négocier les prix pour nos produits Grain de sel n°20, - 2001 p 19-20 (<http://ancien.inter-reseaux.org/publications/graindesel/gds20/GDS20couv.htm>)

The family farming advice is an overall approach based on learning methods and decision making aids. The private service providers (NGOs), supported first by French cooperation, with different activities (3 years programme) on **family farming management advices** render:

- trainings on how to utilize documents and tools for farm management;
- exchange visits, field tours;
- common discussions in groups to analyse farms results.

**Farmer provider (UGPAT):**

Farmers' organisation UGPAT organises field tours and provides several services (directly or with external trainers) to its members:

- **family farming management advices:** some farmers are using farm management documents/tools for themselves or in groups in order to train other farmers (farmers-advisers);
- technical advices;
- inputs supply services;
- production organisation (calendar)
- organisation for commercialisation: export, agro-processing (fruit juice, dried fruit), local market.

Beneath are the insights and the lessons learnt from the framework conditions:

- In order to gain access to international market, the producers have to master their production system and makes him / her receptive to the family farm management advice.
- High level of investment for pineapple farms justifies a specific advice to farmers on farm management.

**Question 2: Who are the clients of MOAAS?**

Currently, 136 producers (60 % of them are literate) are benefiting from the service and they correspond with the anticipated client farmers.

The clients (family farm producers) have a certain level of capital.

There are 3 market destinations for pineapples:

- international market (export): at several occasions, the former projects permitted farmers to reinforces leaders and to establish contacts with buyers in France;
- agro-processing (fruit juice, dried fruit);
- local market.

The motivation for the farmers utilizing the services is due to the fact that exportation is more profitable but requires a high quality product, with a perfect technical practice in order to achieve the standards. Hence, the services also contribute to minimize risks.

Family farm management guides farmers to have a better understanding of their production unite. As a result, little by little, farmers are able to ask more specific advices.

With the help of NGOs help, farmers oriented their demand to specialised providers (e.g. training on insecticide, motorized ploughing).

The farmers are organised as follows:

- For the production sector: Groups of producers located in same geographical areas.

- For family farm management advice: Groups of volunteers (10-20 producers)

The insights and lessons learnt from the clients' involvement are as follows:

- good level of general education of the farmers;
- farmers work on different kind of markets which are complementary: farmers take less risk and do better valorise their all production;
- farm management is a real necessity when farmers make high level investment.

### Question 3: What approaches and methods are used for agricultural advisory services?

The agricultural advisory services are (a) trainings on how to observe, measure, and analyse farms data (production, costs, yields,) and (b) helping farmers to improve their practices and management of their family production units, by:

- definition of their needs according to their objectives;
- better appreciation of their real situation ( results, opportunities and constraints);
- looking ahead to evaluate the consequences of different possibilities and after by adjusting previous choices.

System, methods and tools

- very small experiment the first year with one group of 20 farmers, including the leaders of UGPAT (currently about 50 in several groups);
- methods and tools are not definitely achieved: many changes took place to make it easier to understand and to use for farmers.

Financing of the services is secured through small participation from farmers (monthly fees) and external funds (projects):

- farmers do not have access to credit, and their all funds are invested in production;
- local providers had to be trained itself by the project to this new kind of service that didn't exist before in Benin (project decided here to support private provider).

Concerning how the service providers relate to the farmers, UGPAT was already quite organised and the projects contacted them. Now, UGPAT farmers demand directly to private providers supported by external funds.

Currently, 2800 farmers get this kind of family services: about 10 private providers, funded by external funds.

The conditions for up-scaling are:

- to have more providers on farm management advice, there is a need of investment on training providers;
- farmers can participate to the cost, but not to the global cost: indeed, the impact of this investment on there income needs several years;
- extended literacy campaigns;
- To be up-scaled, this kind of advice must be integrated in national policies.

### Question 4: What are the outcomes and impacts of agricultural advisory services?

As a result of the services, farmers operate with better farming systems: improved quality, regularity in supply on very demanding markets.

**The outcomes/impacts of agricultural advisory services can be described as follows:**

**For farmers individually:**

- quantity, quality and regularity of production improve;
- incomes increase (also because of reducing costs).

**For organisation:**

- price per kilo increase from 65 to 75 CFA (at the field) and 85 CFA (to the factory)
- access to export market
- registered fair trade (Max Havelaar)
- negotiation for organic production

**The side-effects or unexpected outcomes of agricultural advisory services:**

- farmer's participation to chain commodity;
- strengthening of farmer's organisation: the farmers what have been trained individually in farm management used their abilities also in the Farmers organisation: this become profitable for the all members.

**The insights and lessons learnt from the impact:**

Farmers understood farm management through pineapple example and if the market for pineapples declines, farmers can move/change to another crop.

We can not provide this kind of advice to the entire number of farmers (high cost). So it is necessary to go on reflection on different form of practice/advice adapted to different group/kind of farmers.

**Question 5: What is the role of development cooperation and other key stakeholders?**

**The roles and functions of development agencies in agricultural advisory services are:**

- Initiating, financing role.
- Extension to NGO and public services

**The roles and functions of the government (local and national):**

National government:

- thinking on how to develop offices to capitalise and guarantee validity / quality of service;
- thinking about advisor training: new role of advisors / FFA: advisors do not any more deliver a solution/technology top down; they help farmers to auto-analyse their farm, problems, and they look for solutions together (there is no previous solution: problem has to be co-analysed with farmer: farmers and advisors look for solutions together).

**The insights and lessons can be learnt from the arrangement of roles, e.g., good practices, obstacles, pitfalls:**

- Training of providers must be charged on public or external funds.
- To reach more farmers, initial training of farmers (alphabetisation, initiation to farm management) must be developed.

**Question 6: What linkages exist between agricultural advisory services and other types of services?**

**Credit:** the FFA didn't facilitate access to credit.