

The Neuchâtel Initiative
Review of Experiences on Market Oriented Agricultural Advisory Services
(MOAAS)

Country: Burkina Faso

Name of intervention: Programme de Développement de l'Agriculture (PDA)

Time period under analysis: 06/2005 – 06/2006

Institutions/agencies involved: Department of Agriculture, GTZ, DED, Consulting firm

Project purpose: Sustainable increase of income and improved food security amongst farmers in 2 intervention zones

Main (Intended) Results:

- Farmers are increasing their capacities in the context of agricultural sector decentralisation;
- Farmers are increasing their incomes;
- The value chains of five target enterprises will increase their returns by 10%;
- Farm households will feed themselves for an additional one month per year;
- Service providers are increasing their capacity to deliver services, and their services are becoming better aligned with farmer demand;
- The national policy framework is receiving support from this programme.

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N.B. The PDA is a new development program that is operational since June 2005. Therefore, the PDA has not gained much experience in some areas. Nevertheless, where possible we have indicated initial lessons by describing the present situation and context and by taking into account what the program is intended to do.

Services (intended to be) supported:

- Rural advisory services/ extension
- Business Development Services
- Non-formal qualification
- Rural Financial Services
- Marketing Services
- Training
- Organisational Development of Groups and Associations
- Sector specific Mainstreaming of HIV and AIDS

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

GTZ hopes to achieve the following through the PDA program:

- Building up and promoting service markets, aligning supply with demand;
- Enhancing particular value chains, including processing and marketing;
- Enabling poor farmers to increase their incomes;
- Promoting local economic development, especially local processing of agricultural products;
- Supporting local market linkages or exports.

The intervention is also designed in alignment with the Burkina Faso's Poverty Reduction Paper.

The PDA program takes place in a context in which farmers are not well oriented to nor well integrated into existing markets, whilst the sustainable use of natural resources remains an issue of concern. Farmers face numerous constraints in achieving market integration. These include lack of knowledge, information, know-how, capital for scaled-up production and business contacts. Further, it is difficult for subsistence farmers to take risks or to specialize their production, and they are enmeshed in traditions and social obligations that are not always conducive to commercialisation. Finally, many farmers face long distances and poor travel conditions between themselves and market opportunities.

In the regions where the PDA program works, there are a number of actors providing agricultural advisory services. Despite this, the availability of services is lacking. Processing and trading companies offer embedded services. Input traders provide farmers with information on the market and inputs. Government services in this sector are rather rare, but are available on demand and when the government is provided the financial means to do so. There are a number of programmes and projects in place which also offer advisory services. These services include rural advisory and business development, non-formal qualifications, and information supply.

One key lesson arising from this project is that, firstly that providing agricultural advisory services is easy and farmers are grateful. However, establishing *self-sustaining* agricultural advisory services amongst the poorest is difficult. This is because of general conditions of life (lack of money, entrenched traditions, social obligations and control, low levels of education, poor infrastructure, long distances, high travel costs, lack of information, etc.) and a lack of entrepreneurial thinking. Farmers often do not see the (monetary) value that lies in an investment in advisory services. The monetary relation between investment in a service and the benefits it entails is not necessarily a positive one nor is it predictable, and farmers often do not look that far ahead (e.g. paying training fees are a long-term investment).

Question 2: Who are the clients of MOAAS?

Individual farmers and farmer organizations make use of MOAAS.

Regarding the relationship between these farmers and markets, we find that farmers often access markets as individuals. Overall, there is little vertical integration:

Clients often do not have any notion of what is done with the produce, if and how it is processed, what the final product is. Contract farming is an exception to this rule, although even here, value addition is rare. However, it is common amongst market-oriented farmers to stock their produce in anticipation of a better selling period.

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

Agricultural advisory services vary depending on the focus of the program delivering them. Some development programs (and their contracted service providers) focus on giving technical advice (in accord with project goals) and try to link farmers to markets mainly via contracted production. Organisational development and value chain organisation is a declared aim of many programs. Some export companies provide certification where international markets are targeted.

Except for certification which is financed by the exporting company (which may in return charge producers with a quota), advisory services are still a domain of either governmental or development program funding.

Usually, service providers possess an agricultural degree but they are rarely trained in addition to that. Some development programs may train contracted service providers for special tasks.

Some service providers (NGOs, associations, etc.) may have close relations with farmers due to previous activities in the field which are seldom formalised, institutionalised or regular. Apart from that, there is not much of a relation. But in most cases, farmers are not the only people to whom the services are answerable: Development projects are often paying for the services, and are commonly the ones still specifying what services should be given (although hopefully farmers will increasingly take on this role), while the intended beneficiaries are usually villagers and/or farmers.

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

Development agencies have the following roles in delivering agricultural advisory services:

- Initiating interventions;
- Designing interventions, especially methodologies and all issues that go beyond pure technical training;
- Funding;
- Sometimes organisational development;
- Creating demand (!)

Development agencies are still largely perceived as funding agencies, rather than facilitators. As funders, they are still the ultimate clients and create the demand for services: Instead of giving responsibility to the farmers, instead of putting them in a position to decide for themselves, it is the development agencies that decide (because it is “our” money). As long as development agencies do not give over the entire decision-making responsibility and stick to an accompanying role the demand

for agricultural services will not come from farmers, who are used to being told what is best for them and what they need to do.

The roles and functions of government (both local and national) are:

- Developing regulatory and policy frameworks;
- Regulating, inspecting and certifying service providers, although this is an ideal, and in Burkina Faso we are far from that.;
- Researching;
- Providing information to service providers;
- Local governmental bodies are renowned for their good knowledge of the region and its population since at times when advisory service was an essential part of their assignment.

Governmental bodies (especially local ones) feel marginalized due to their lack of money. Usually government extension staff have quite reliable capacities and competencies and they are willing to work and go out in the fields. They are also willing to learn and cooperate (though their wages are often months late) but without even the money to fill the tank of the car to go out in the villages, their hands are tied.

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

To facilitate farmer access to loans, and encourage farmers to link to markets and processing opportunities, partnership networks are cultivated between the development agencies, farmers, financial institutions, and trader/exporters. These partnerships are varied according to the demands and the specific situation.

From these linkages, we have learnt that you must let stakeholders decide if you want MOAAS to be sustainable! The most crucial element of development project intervention is ensuring that development agencies hold back from their traditional dominant role in the process. In the early stages of intervention, it is important to persuade personnel (both expats and locals) to accept the mission objective of rendering ourselves superfluous, to let go of top-down approaches and to transfer responsibilities to stakeholders.