

SCALING UP LIVELIHOOD IMPACTS THROUGH FARMERS' ORGANIZATIONS AND ACCESS TO MARKETS PROJECT

From Field to Market: A case of Mazimasa Sub-county Farmers Network

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BACKGROUND

For some time, farmer groups in eastern Uganda have complained about low prices, unreliable and unsustainable markets for their produce. To this effect, The Harris Group has developed and strengthened higher level farmer associations/Farmer Field School Networks in the region for collective marketing and access to better markets for increased incomes. Mazimasa Sub-county Farmer Field Network in Butaleja district is one such group to have benefited from the consortium's initiative.

A) THE PROCESS

Identified problem: Low prices, unreliable and unsustainable markets, Individual sales (small quantities available),

Market opportunity identification (Participatory Market Research)

1. Election of marketing/survey committees
2. Selection of the products on which to collect market information
3. Reconnaissance of the principle markets
4. Preparation of checklist/questionnaire by the farmers and facilitator
5. Definition of market survey groups to study different products
6. Conduct Market survey with the farmers leading the session
7. Analysis of the results from the market
7. Feedback of the results to the rest of the group

Enterprise selection

Among the outlets visited was the largest boarding school in the district St. Peters college that needed a supplier of horticultural produce i.e. onions, tomatoes and kales. The CBA results revealed that these crops were profitable to produce. [profit of 300,000/=, 400,000/= and 150,000/= per acre respectively] and were selected by the network.

Enterprise development/production

- The network agreed to have one plot of each of the 3 crops every season but also that each network member should atleast have half an acre of any of the 3 crops so as to have a sustainable supply of the produce. The fact that farmers have to supply the produces every school term yet there are 2 cropping seasons has caused the members to device the following means to sustain the market:
- Planting at different times to have a continuous supply
- Buy produce to supply to the school from other farmers outside the network specially during the dry season using network savings

Bulking of produce

Supply to St. Peters College

| Produce | Price per kg | Frequency of supply | Quantity (kg) per supply |
|----------|--------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Onions | 1200 | Twice a month | 100 |
| Tomatoes | 600 | Weekly | 120 |
| Kales | 400 | Twice a month | 120 |

Terms of payment: Payment for supplies is made on a monthly basis to the chairman of the marketing committee who then pays members that supplied in that month (see table 1 below for earnings).

B) RESULTS

Improved income: Testimony

We had always known that the role of farmers was to produce and sell to buyers from our homes or in markets within our community. However, through the trainings and exposure we have had in The Harris Group we have learnt that farmers can also identify buyers by themselves even outside our community. I am glad to have been involved in these activities that have improved our marketing skills and income. The better prices we receive have enabled me improve my income and I am even building a permanent house for my family. Difas Ekakoro;



Market Research



Analysis of market results



Feedback of results & CBA



Enterprise development



Produce collection for bulking



Payment to farmers by the marketing committee chairman



Table 1: Income earned over one year

| Enterprise | Income (UGX) |
|------------|--------------|
| Onions | 2,160,000 |
| Tomatoes | 2,592,000 |
| Kales | 864,000 |
| Total | 5,616,000 |

Improved access to credit

Proceeds of the sales from the group gardens are used as a revolving fund which members borrow at 10% interest.

Improved access to agricultural inputs

The network purchased an ox-plough set that members access for free and non-members at a fee of 20,000/=.

Better education for members' children

Parents who at have children at the school have reached an agreement with the school administration to retain money for the supplies they make to enable them pay school fees. Other parents have moved their children from day to boarding schools because of improved earnings.

C) LESSONS FROM THE EXPERIENCE

1. Farmers can take charge of marketing their produce if given the required training and exposure
2. Linking small-holder farmers to markets requires patience and continuous follow-up to put in place a sustainable marketing system
3. SMS & Community Radio can be integrated in market intelligence and sharing.
4. Exploring WRS for collective storage, marketing and credit Institution integration.

NEXT STEPS

Increasing scale of production. The marketing committee of the network is identifying more outlets like schools and hotels where the farmers can supply the same produce

The network is in the process of becoming an ivory member of UNADA so as to access reliable and good quality inputs at farmer friendly prices.