

One World - No Hunger Initiative

Global programme Innovation Centres for the Agriculture and Food Sector

Background

2014 was a record year for global food production, yet there are still over 800 million people going hungry and two billion individuals suffering from chronic malnutrition worldwide. Rural areas are hit hardest by poverty. A large proportion of foodstuffs go rotten en route from field to fork due to a lack of coordination between the ways they are stored, processed and sold. In addition, progressive climate change brings great regional variations in rainfall, an increasing number of storms, and rising temperatures. Nonetheless, the global population is continuing to grow and is expected to reach 9.6 billion by 2050. The increased use of biomass in energy generation is also further diminishing the range of available foods. This trend could lead to major food shortages in the long term. These effects have already been witnessed at local level, in the Horn of Africa for example, at the end of last century. Food price crises have shown that heavy dependence on the global market can result in acute food shortages in the short term. Consequently, it is important to increase the availability of food on local markets. Acute hunger is still primarily an issue linked to poverty and most of those going hungry are smallholders. They are unable to take sufficient advantage of the rising global demand for agricultural goods to improve their livelihoods sustainably.

The key to boosting incomes and production in an agricultural landscape dominated by smallholdings is to increase productivity on a sustainable basis and improve organisation (through producer groups, for instance) and sales and processing activities throughout the entire agricultural value chain.

However, options for expanding farmland without over-exploiting local biodiversity have been exhausted in many cases. At the same time, the mass application of external inputs is often cost-intensive and not always environmentally and economically sustainable.

In short, innovative approaches - locally developed, but using international expertise - are needed to improve the entire agricultural and food sector sustainably.

Objective

This global project aims to use innovation in the agricultural and food sector to boost the incomes of smallholders, create more employment opportunities (particularly in food processing), and to increase regional food supplies in the project's rural target areas.

To achieve this, the project works with innovation partners locally to promote green innovation networks in the agricultural and food industry. Together, they are developing innovative approaches to growing, processing and selling staple foods, and establishing and implementing programmes for strengthening the domestic processing sector. While innovation can be technical in nature, for example regarding mechanisation, improved seed, fertiliser or refrigeration chains, the project will in many cases be looking at new forms of cooperation such as setting-up producer groups, specialised companies and interest groups. The programme also promotes support services such as knowledge development and dissemination by providing advice and training, as well as access to loans. To do so, it works with existing knowledge centres such as research institutions and agricultural colleges.



Expected results for the target group

At the heart of the project are smallholders who receive assistance to increase their production and income levels on a sustainable basis. At the same time, the project seeks to create new jobs in food processing, thereby ensuring that a higher proportion of the value created locally remains in the local vicinity, particularly in rural areas.

The global programme measures its impact in terms of its achievement of the following goals:

- The income earned by smallholders from the sale of products in designated value chains has increased in the selected rural regions of the global project, as has the productivity of smallholdings and enterprises.
- Employment levels in the selected value chains have increased, with 20 per cent of jobs being filled by young people and 35 per cent by women.
- Take-up of training services, including advice provision, has increased.
- The interest groups representing the various actors have helped to shape the general conditions for sustainable structural change.
- Partnerships are actively promoting innovation in the partner countries.

Given that women generally have poorer access to production factors and education, this global partnership is giving particular consideration to their needs, for example, by providing special training and advisory services.

Target countries and use of resources

So far, there are plans for innovation centres in 12 selected partner countries: Benin, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Togo, Tunisia and Zambia. Options are currently being examined for a centre in Burkina Faso. Some EUR 80 million is available to fund the project for three years. The innovation centres will build on and work with existing programmes being carried out by German development cooperation in these countries.

The global project in the field

Innovation centres in practice: more food for Ethiopia

Support is being provided to smallholders in Ethiopia to help them introduce innovative production processes for wheat and broad beans. Specifically, the programme aims to improve tillage, provide better quality seed, and find new ways of applying fertiliser and protecting crops. As a supporting measure, the project will train advisors and trainers

in these areas. Innovation clusters will also be developed within the project to provide space for dialogue and scope for new partnerships, and it will advise the government in the capital on ways to encourage the dynamic development taking place in the growing regions.

Innovation centres in practice: an innovation fund for Ghana

An innovation fund is being set up in Ghana in order to finance training measures and technical innovation activities. Actors with good ideas, be they training institutions, research institutes, farmers' organisations or enterprises, can apply to the fund for financial support. This support is greatly needed. For instance, following the discontinuation of fertiliser subsidies for maize, rice and pineapple, there is a pressing need for innovative ideas on how to maintain soil fertility for these crops.

Rounding off these activities, special training is provided to ensure that a large number of smallholders benefit from the innovative measures. An online directory of actors is intended to pool scattered knowledge, and there are plans to develop innovation partnerships to support the project. As well as promoting new forms of cooperation, these networking activities will also encourage political advocacy.

Opportunities for the involvement of non-governmental actors

The project will work with a whole range of private-sector and public-sector organisations in the agricultural and food sector, including enterprises, national and international associations, and farmers' organisations such as producer groups and cooperatives. Non-governmental organisations are welcome to participate.

The project will work closely with the governments of partner countries, primarily advising them on participatory methods of elaborating national policies for developing the agricultural and food sector. Innovation partnerships, that is, new forms of cooperation between development policy actors, the agricultural and food sector in the partner countries, in Germany and internationally, and civil society in the partner countries and Germany, will take the knowledge and experience of the partners and use it to drive shared innovation.

The project will use the findings of local, international and German agricultural research, and will itself be supported by an accompanying research project of the University of Bonn's Center for Development Research.

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