

## Renovating agricultural training schemes

Frédéric Lhoste (frederic.lhoste@supagro.fr)

**A**GRICULTURAL TRAINING—like advisory services—aims to assist farmers and help them become more independent in the management of their farms. It also addresses practical and technical needs. And yet, the few existing training programmes reach few people and are often not well adapted. This article proposes a number of ideas for discussion.

► Frédéric Lhoste is project leader within the DEFIS department at the Montpellier SupAgro Institute of Warm Regions. He specialises in rural development and in the engineering of training schemes.

**A**GRICULTURAL TRAINING and advisory services aim to overcome the same challenges for the agricultural sector: to produce, to adapt to market developments and climate change, to feed families, etc. They also both still reach too few actors in West and Central Africa, particularly young people, women, and farmers. That is why improving access to services that are tailored to family farming and to developments in the world of production requires renovating training schemes and schemes supporting agricultural advisory services. Such renovation involves thinking about how to assist instructors and advisors, and about the learning process for actors receiving training.

**Strengthening farmers' decision-making autonomy.** Agricultural training is still underdeveloped and too often implemented with a prescriptive approach that is not in line with farmers' needs. One of the functions of training for young people and advisory support for farmers is to strengthen their capacities for greater decision-making autonomy when managing the farm, whether it involves making choices with regard to production, crop-management techniques, equipment, or funding options (see pp. 29–30).

Training also aims to help farmers become better able to adapt to the changes that are currently in progress. The training needs of young rural entrepreneurs, farmers, professional agricultural organisations, and advisory scheme managers persist and evolve depending on the situation, even though eve-

ryone is looking for new technical and managerial knowledge and savoir-faire.

**Tailoring assistance to the target audience.** Training and advisory services differ from one another mainly in the way that assistance is apprehended. Initial agricultural training targets a “younger” demographic of aspiring farmers. The pedagogical objective is to help “young people” develop their integration projects, with a focus on improving professional skills. Agricultural advisory services, on the other hand, target adults who are professionals and who need to adapt their decision-making tools through further training.

It is also important to remember that the beneficiaries of agricultural training and advisory services are often illiterate, and that young people in rural areas often do not complete primary or secondary school, which means they are more limited in their learning capacities.

In this context where professional learning—often informal—is not considered at its fair value, the combined study and internship programme is a pedagogical method that allows young apprentices to engage in a beneficial learning experience, while simultaneously helping the farmers whom they work with improve their practices.

**The study and internship programme and territorialisation in Cameroon.** Moreover, to be effective and well-adapted to all different operations, agricultural training and advisory services need to be broken down by territory and engage with partners. That is the ambition of the Programme to Support the Renovation and Development of Professional Training (*Programme d'Appui à la Rénovation et au Développement de la Formation Professionnelle*) in Cameroon (see pp. 36–38), a national scheme in charge of training and professional integration for young people in agriculture. The programme's approach focuses on territorial integration with a national network of training centres, and on a partner-based approach combining local private and public actors who are invited to join the scheme. Farmers and their families are also encouraged to participate in order to facilitate changes in posture with respect to life projects.

In Cameroon, after young people become established in agriculture, we are seeing new ways of passing on knowledge and savoir-faire: from young people to other young people without training, and from young people to active farmers looking for technical or managerial assistance for their farm. ■

Young people enrolled in professional training at the Gagnoa training centre in Ivory Coast (2018)



© F. Lhoste

## Inclusive agricultural advisory services: vectors of change

Cécile Broutin (broutin@gret.org), Mame Coumba Faye, Marc Petitdan

**ONE OF THE CHALLENGES** when it comes to agricultural advisory services is ensuring that gender is taken into account. This article looks back at an experience where gender was taken into account when providing advisory services for family farms in Senegal with regard to the joint management of dairy production, and highlights the challenges that were encountered.

► Cécile Broutin is an agricultural economist and programme head at GRET in charge of monitoring the Asstel project, which facilitates access to services and helps structure family livestock farms.

► Mame Coumba Faye is a land-use and environmental engineer, and has been an Asstel project manager since July 2018.

► Marc Petitdan is an agronomist and an independent expert who was an Asstel project manager from January 2016 to July 2018.

SINCE 2014, as part of the Asstel project, GRET and the Southwest Association for International Agricultural Development (Association Sud-Ouest pour le Développement International Agricole) have been testing managerial advisory services for family farms (conseil à l'exploitation familiale, or "CEF") specially designed for dairy farming in the Dagana and Podor departments of northern Senegal. The goal is to help family livestock farms boost their milk production and their income.

This CEF initiative—which includes technical/economic advisory support, a teaching/training programme, and experiments—has provided support for a network of 22 pilot livestock farms (PLF). In four of them (only in the Jeeri zone), women are in charge of dairy production.

**Specific roles assigned to everyone.** Women in the Jeeri zone are highly involved in milk production, a role they were assigned by tradition. They are in charge of milking and feeding the cows. Some of the women are responsible for testing the milk, monitoring the collection of the milk, selling to the Laiterie du Berger dairy (LdB)—which collects between 1,500 and 2,000 litres of milk a day locally from 600 to 800 livestock farming families in northern Senegal—or selling some or all of the milk (whether processed or unprocessed) at local markets. Women who are registered with LdB as "milk container supervisors" also collect payment for the milk each month and manage orders for concentrated feeds and fodder.

In the Waalo zone near the Senegal River, milk is sold exclusively at local markets, and seven PLFs are monitored there. On those farms, it is mainly the men who are in charge of dairy production. The men milk the cows, feed the herd, etc. But on certain PLFs, women are still involved and are in charge of processing and selling the milk at the local market.

**The "family advisory services" approach: achievements and challenges.** CEF is implemented in accordance with the "family advisory services" approach developed by FONGS and APESS. All members involved in dairy production (contact person for the PLF, person in charge of the herd, people in charge of milking and feeding, herdsman, etc.) are invited to take part in work sessions. Both men and women

participate in the annual review of the milk year, which involves: a global presentation of the technical and financial results for the dairy activity, analysis of strong and weak points from the period under review, and identification of adjustments that should be made in order to boost production in future years.

Thanks to this inclusive approach, women are involved in the decision-making process for dairy: quantifying concentrated feed and fodder needs; measuring a cow's milk potential; managing reproduction within the dairy herd and selecting offspring, etc. One pilot livestock farmer in Boffel says: "*LdB called yesterday to find out how much feed to order. My husband handed me the phone and said that I'm the one who knows how to handle that and who is passing that knowledge down to my children.*"

It is important to note, however, that even with this approach, some decisions – such as leaving for transhumance and selling animals – are not always open for discussion. Often the man decides without discussing with his wife, or without taking her opinion into consideration. A female livestock farmer in Souyéline says: "*Last year, I left for transhumance against my will. I wanted to stay and manage the farm. But if your husband refuses, you follow him. I sold nine animals, and since then the level of milk production has fallen. I'll never go again, and my husband understands now.*" A male livestock farmer in Fourarat says: "*I'm the one who decides when to sell members of the herd, and I just inform my wife.*" Those statements reveal the challenges faced when it comes to taking gender into account in advisory services for family farms where roles are firmly rooted.

**Male and female advisors.** The scheme mobilised a male advisor and a female advisor to advise on livestock farming techniques. It was shown that the advisor's gender does not affect how advisory services are perceived or adopted. It's the advisor's skills and abilities that matter most. Gender diversity also creates a positive image highlighting professional possibilities for girls in the community, who receive very little education.

In order to renew family farms, advisory services must therefore cover the entire family farm and take into account the contributions and needs of everyone—men, women, and young people. ■