

Commercialisation of agricultural products by producer organisations

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR THE VIDEO PRESENTATION

**“MANAGEMENT OF GINGER SUPPLY ON A LOCAL MARKET:
The Nowefor producers’ organisation and its experience in Cameroon”**

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Foreword

This document was written in the framework of the CTA-Inter-réseaux *Working group* on “market access and the commercialisation of agricultural products”.

This *Working group*, intended to collectively elaborate thinking, consisted of sessions held to exchange information and highlight the experience acquired by producers’ organisations on the subject.

In this process, local partners¹, farmers, livestock breeders and their organisations, support organisations and local NGOs were the leading force and direct actors for the circulation of information about local experience.

The work² took place over several years and was articulated in several forums:

- [E-forum](#), an electronic forum on the commercialisation of agricultural produce in ACP countries and its role in boosting local economies (2003);
- Forum [Benin](#) (2004), Forum [Cameroon](#) (May 2006), meetings in [Guinea](#) and in [Mali](#) (2006) were events focused on initiatives put in place by farmers and livestock breeders’ organisations in these countries to better sell their products;
- [Regional forum](#), a multi-country meeting held in Bamako on the same topic (15-18/01/07).

The results of the process consist of, *inter alia*:

- the production of thinking and materials on the **content of these undertakings** and on the subject of market access and commercialisation of agricultural products: information sheets, video and radio recordings for sharing these experiences;
- the production of thinking on **working methods** for the construction of collective reflection.

This guide designed to accompany the video presentation, its form and contents are also a product of the *Working group*, the result of discussions and thoughts exchanged throughout the process.

It is subject to modification and improvement, as a result of on-going exchange between participants in the working group: the farmers, livestock breeders and their organisations, group leaders, instructors, technicians of local NGOs, local and international support organisations that have been involved in the process.

¹ We cannot list all the partners here. See the Inter-réseaux website for the names of individuals and organisations particularly implicated in each country. http://www.inter-reseaux.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=72

² See the Inter-réseaux website.

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PREAMBLE: A GUIDE FOR WHOM AND FOR WHAT USE?

This guide complements **other materials**³ which are related to the experience of **commercialisation of ginger by the Cameroonian producers' organisation Nowefor** (*North West Farmers' Organisation*). A summary of the experience, a detailed information sheet and the video presentation give the elements that are needed to understand how the producers of this organisation came to set up a system to manage the supply of ginger on the local market in Bafut.

These materials/tools can be **used by any person working directly or involved in support for the organisation of peasants and farmers on issues of marketing of agricultural products**^(a): group leaders, salaried technical staff, staff of support organisations, development agents working with the farmers' organisations (FOs) and their members. And of course also by FO leaders, producers, farmers, men and women, individuals or FO members, as they are directly concerned with the question, and their partners (local authorities, traders, funding bodies, donors, etc.).

The materials are designed to serve as **tools for leading collective reflection**^(b) on the topic of the marketing of the agricultural products by FOs. They are not extension training materials on the subject. A discussion session using the video is centred on generating communication within the group; it should help the group to think together, and enhance awareness of issues. The Nowefor experience is not just a model to be copied but constitutes a concrete example of what a FO does, and therefore should help generate questions and discussion on this subject with agricultural technicians, producers and members of FOs in particular. When it is not possible to visit the site, a group can discover the process and its results via the video presentation. Nevertheless, the video is not meant to provide all the answers to the numerous questions which may arise in the audience. Indeed, the person presenting the video should expect the audience to ask questions related to the aspects they see as lacking in the video: technicians, agricultural extension agents, researchers, farmers, etc. all have personal perceptions of reality and expectations which are the result of their past experience and present preoccupations. It is normal for them to have different reactions and perceive some amount of information as lacking. The video aims to generate the expression of different reactions to this action. Through their remarks and questions about the Nowefor undertaking the members of the audience can express their viewpoints and visions, their preoccupations and worries, in short talk about their own experience. The video can therefore help viewers to better discover themselves, know their differences and **recognise the value of each and all**^(c).

This guide seeks to contribute some elements and guidelines to facilitate the organisation of these moments of collective exchange, with two sub-objectives: first to facilitate understanding of the specific Nowefor experience, and secondly to help the participants **put the commercialisation of agricultural products by FOs in perspective**^(d), with respect to their own commercialisation action or support for similar initiatives. It consists of:

- questions to ensure that the Nowefor case is properly understood (Part 1);
- conceptual elements to put the example in perspective (Part 2);
- concrete examples of further activities carried out by other FOs (Part 3);
- practical comments for using the video to lead a discussion (Part 4).

³ Useful materials available for work with this guide (French and English versions):

- The commercialisation of ginger by Nowefor, a peasant organisation in Bafut, North West Province, Cameroon. - CTA, Inter-réseaux, Nowefor, Saïld, 2007. - Video 12 min. + Transcript (4 p.)
- Supply, demand, and equilibrium price: a case for study – Improved prices for farmers through the organisation of the local market and the regulation of the supply of ginger by Nowefor in Bafut (North West Province, Cameroon). - CTA, Inter-réseaux, Saïld, 2006. – Information sheet 12 p.+ summary 1 p.

Online materials: http://www.inter-reseaux.org/article.php3?id_article=1078.

(a) The marketing of agricultural products: rich and diverse experience which is poorly exploited

Analyses of the marketing of agricultural products in sub-Saharan Africa reveals a certain number of issues:

- many farmers and livestock holders underscore the difficulties which they face in the commercialisation of their products and the low returns they receive;
- there are many persistent prejudices and poor perceptions of the role of traders (regarded as “speculators”), the role of the FO (limited to the role of buying members’ products in cash and at high prices during harvest and reselling them during periods of scarcity, counting firmly on increased prices but the latter are unstable), as well as of the functioning of markets (the producers do not have a clear vision of the production chain which would enable them to understand the mechanisms of setting prices, and the positioning of actors...);
- some experiments, successful or not, have been carried out in the commercialisation of agricultural products by farmers and livestock breeders, but they are little or not at all known, seldom analysed, and for the most part this experience is not exploited (projects not properly articulated nor taken into consideration by the FOs and other actors – decision-makers, support organisations, donors etc.).

(b) The video presentation: a tool for leading collective reflection

The video is conceived here as a tool for leading group reflection on the subject of organisation of producers in order to market their agricultural products. It does not claim to describe the Nowefor commercialisation experience in its entirety. Two hours of video would not be enough to recount the whole rich experience. Moreover, if the presentation lasted two hours, it would limit the possibilities for screening and discussion. And by the time you read this document, the Nowefor FO will certainly have changed! The idea is therefore not to set out an experience to be reproduced elsewhere. A simple transposition will surely not be possible. Each place, context, history and organisation is unique and constantly changing, and solutions have to be found according to the circumstances.

The video presentation aims to recount a concrete story which will help actors involved in similar situations to realise that there are other ways of seeing and doing, to assess themselves and to reflect on their own experience with regards to the different roles that the FO can play, in order to improve the commercialisation of its members’ products. It should be a pretext to create a session for exchange, of debates and reflection in groups on the actions carried out by others and on those actions which are possible in their own contexts. It is hoped that the video will play the role of a mirror, helping not only to put past experience into perspective, but also looking forward and/or anticipating future situations, encouraging vigilance and therefore preparedness: having in mind other possibilities so as to better anticipate changes.

(c) Different visions and concerns

“The baobab tree is not the same tree when recounted by a rat which plays around in front of its roots, by the elephant which comes to feed on the leaves, and by the eagle which flies over it in search of its prey.” But too often, we (advisers, technicians, development agents, etc) think we know the farmers and by so doing we allow ourselves to think and decide for them. We define our actions according to the images we have of social reality, and not according to reality itself, and even less according to the reality that is perceived and experienced by the farmers.

Therefore, it is useful to know each other better, to know where there are differences: we cannot move forward in the construction of a relationship by erasing the differences. On the contrary, it is important to know in which ways the other is different.

(d) One’s actions in retrospect

Thinking about one’s past actions is not an easy task. Often the mediation of an external actor is necessary to put one’s action in perspective, and/or to stand back and be detached from the particular context of another experience.

The mediator can help question what has been done, how resources were mobilised, and compare with other ways, can help forge links to other contexts and situations. The mediator can in this way demystify errors and make them into learning processes, encourage dialogue and propose options for future work.

This is important because establishing some distance can increase the motivation to learn and to act. By becoming aware that one can control one’s actions, the person realises that it is possible to influence the result of the action.

1- QUESTIONS TO HELP UNDERSTAND THE SPECIFIC CASE OF NOWEFOR

The questions suggested here, with some brief answers, are possible questions to put to the participants, to make sure that the process and the results of the ginger commercialisation activities carried out by the Nowefor FO have been understood.

This is not an exhaustive list of questions, and all the questions do not necessarily need to be posed: that will depend on the objectives pursued, available time and the dynamics of the group (cf. Part 4).

Which ELEMENTS LED TO THE CHANGE in the system?

In the past, coffee was the main source of income (for children's education, construction of houses). The coffee crisis which struck the locality pushed the peasants towards other alternatives – the cultivation of ginger. A process of reflection started within the Union, with the support of SAILD (Support Service to Local Initiatives of Development).

How was the BATTLE FOR PRODUCTION won?

A local management committee was put in place at the level of the FO to improve techniques and production at different levels, with the technical and financial support of local and Belgian NGOs.

- seedlings: preparation before planting (multiplication, treatment), selection of good-quality rhizomes;
- cultivation techniques: density of planting, ridging;
- soil fertility: crop combination (maize and ginger) and rotation, use of organic fertiliser (manure, maize straw).

In parallel with these steps and to follow up on these technical changes, organisational (for the supply of inputs and the follow-up of activities) and financial support (for the set-up of a savings and loan scheme for the purchase of inputs) was provided by SAILD.

How was ginger marketed BEFORE? Which difficulties did the producers face?

Each producer sold individually, on the market (without a designated spot) and/or outside of the market, depending on the opportunities and when the traders came around.

But prices were unstable and with the increase in production (technical success) prices fell very low.

Which elements contributed to the FALL in PRICES?

We note different elements:

- on the one hand there was an increase in production: more producers, better yields per surface area with new technical practices and new varieties introduced by research (shorter production cycle);
- on the other hand, demand did not increase on the local market;
- the result was that the supply brought to the market by the producers exceeded the local demand, thus the fall in prices.

What NEW ORGANISATION have the actors set up at the local level?

- a unique sales-point in the market and a ban on selling elsewhere;
- a committee in charge of regulating the supply of ginger so that it does not exceed demand, in order to hold up prices on the local market;
- division of the community into sales zones, production rotation and access in turn to the local market in order to limit the number of producers coming to sell their produce, and thereby control supply;
- oversight by the FO and the local authorities.

What are the ROLES OF NOWEFOR in the commercialisation of ginger?

Nowefor's action takes different elements into account:

- raising awareness and educating the population (local producers, local decision-makers, etc.) to explain the situation, the new mode of organisation, the importance of complying with the new rules;
- working in collaboration with other actors (the mayor, the Fon of Bafut, etc.) so that they understand and support the organisation of the market;
- monitoring of the market and management of supply;
- obtaining the best value for produce and assistance to reduce fluctuation of ginger prices on the local market.

To stop the fall in the prices, Nowefor decided to control supply so that it would not exceed demand.

This was possible by dividing the production zone and by organising turns/schedules for sales in the market. Each producer was allowed to sell produce only once a month. This mechanism for the regulation of supply functioned perfectly and led to an increase in sale prices. But at the end, the producers could no longer sell all their produce on the market.

As a complement, Nowefor sought new market outlets as well as new buyers outside of this market and outside of the region.

Nowefor is also looking for possibilities to process the ginger.

What EXPERIENCE AND LESSONS have been learned through SALES TO EXTERNAL BUYERS?

At first Nowefor:

- sought buyers in the big cities (Douala, Yaoundé),
- agreed (orally) on a sale price and proposed this price to the producers.

The agreements were not respected by the traders who took advantage of the fact that Nowefor had incurred transportation costs to move the produce, refused the proposed price and offered less. The loss was incurred by Nowefor. Moreover Nowefor did not have control over the transportation costs as well as other incidental costs.

In view of these first results, Nowefor changed its approach and started to seek buyers from other markets, and to negotiate and to organise the transactions: clustering of the quantities demanded, setting prices, oversight. The buyer comes once to buy the quantity negotiated and pays the producers. Nowefor intervenes to facilitate the transaction, and not to buy the members' produce.

What are the ROLES AND THE TASKS OF THE COMMITTEES in charge of marketing and management of the market?

- discussion of practical modalities and conditions for establishing the market;
- relations with the authorities;
- setting prices;
- organisation of the market management committee;
- oversight of compliance and respect of the rules by the producers.

What are the stakes involved in the organisation of a SINGLE SALES-POINT IN THE MARKET at local level?

The single sales-point helps to fight against the dispersion which leads to poorly informed producers (asymmetry of information). This reinforces the producers' willingness to respect the price proposed by their organisation.

It is also possible to control the quantity and quality supplied. Supply and demand can be better managed, and the power relations between producers and buyers, which are often unfavourable to the producers, can be modified.

WHO BUYS the ginger and where?

Initially, at the local level in Bafut, there were only traders who came to buy in various places, in the market or elsewhere. Since then there have been several types of buyers:

- the traditional buyers continue to buy their ginger from the local market in Bafut;
- Nowefor organised the transport of some quantities of ginger to new and more distant buyers (Douala, Yaoundé, etc.);
- traders willing to buy larger quantities of ginger come to the community on a date that has been fixed with the producers and collect the quantities at a price that has been negotiated; this enables traders to gain time and travel less often to the market.

How is the PRICE of ginger set?

on the local market, a common market price is negotiated with the authorities and producers; contracts are negotiated with potential buyers in Yaoundé and Douala, on a case-by-case basis, after preliminary discussions between producers and the NOWEFOR committee.

What means are taken to ensure that the negotiated prices are respected?

rules are set up. There is no monopoly. The producers sell to whomever they want but must respect the place and the price on the local market;

the rules are fixed to ensure the respect of the price and the single market location with penalties in the event of non-compliance;

these rules do not have a legal basis but they are accepted by the local government and the traditional authorities who continue to give their support to Nowefor, seeing the economic results and the consequences of the action on the development of the subdivision;

reasonable and realistic negotiations: the general rules of the market remain valid – if prices are too high the traders will not buy, and could end up turning away from the market.

Why does one speak about REGULATION of the market?

A new concept was accepted by the local authorities: the right to regulate in view of a more equitable market, with several features:

the organisation of the producers led to control over the volumes of ginger brought to the market, through the introduction of sales turns and schedules and the use of a single sales-point in the market. Nowefor can thus control the supply of ginger;

this limitation of the supply makes it possible for Nowefor to fix an “equitable” price i.e. accepted by the buyers and making it possible for the producers to cover their production expenses and to derive revenue from sales. The single market location makes it possible to ensure that this price is respected, and by so doing limits price variations from market to market. The price is therefore controlled;

Nowefor, with the support of the authorities, laid down rules to ensure the respect of these principles and sanctions can be taken by the authorities in the event of non-compliance.

What are the KEY ELEMENTS of SUCCESS?

there was a preliminary organisation at the level of Nowefor producers: meetings to discuss and decide on the organisation of the market, designation of representatives to monitor the process;

Nowefor built on existing local know-how AND the actors in place;

Nowefor sought to create a better-functioning traditional market, more profitable for the producers, and this guarantees the sales of a good share of the produce. Nowefor later on sought other market outlets for the quantities which could not be absorbed by the local market at a sufficiently remunerative price;

Nowefor shared and exchanged its vision of the project with others and obtained support; a

proper integration into the socio-economic fabric. There was a strong mobilisation of other actors in the community: the mayor (he designated a specific place where ginger was to be sold in the market), municipal employees (who carry out patrols to limit sales outside of the market), and the Fon (who supported the idea of zoning, instituted fines and penalties, and assigned his messengers to carry out unannounced regular spot checks and controls);

at the same time, a monitoring committee was set up to oversee compliance with the strategy put in place by Nowefor in agreement with the local authorities. The town council and the traditional council are represented on this committee;

Nowefor was able to test new ways of marketing, to take failures into account and to correct them;

the producers continue to sell on the local market or are in contact with the external buyers; they know the prices, there are no surprises and therefore no room for any suspicion or mistrust whatsoever concerning the management of the organisation.

What are the NEW CHALLENGES for Nowefor and the producers?

Two types of actions are on the agenda:

finding new outlets for ginger with other buyers, on external and more distant markets, in other forms, processed/transformed in order to handle increasing production;

processing ginger: on the one hand this is a way to gain added value (if the techniques and investments are mastered) and on the other hand a way to facilitate the management of ginger stocks (the processed product is more readily preserved). This will make it possible to reduce dependency on buyers and to spread out sales of the product over time, avoiding any decline in the local market prices.

In this case as in any other, Nowefor needs to continue working with more producers, for at least two reasons:

to increase volumes to be offered to distant buyers so that transportation can be cost-effective;

to be able to invest and cover the initial costs of the processing equipment needed for transformation (this investment is profitable only after a certain volume of ginger has been transformed).

2- CONCEPTUAL ELEMENTS FOR RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE NOWEFOR CASE

Determining prices

The analysis of price setting is central because the prices partly determine the sharing of value between the different actors in the sector: producers, processors, traders-distributors. Agricultural production comes from a sector that is generally considered as being competitive.

According to classical economic theory, the interactions of supply and demand determine a fair and effective market price.

When there are numerous sellers (suppliers of products = producers) and numerous buyers (demanders of products), and each individual is of relatively small economic size (too small to have a direct influence on the market price), and all participants have perfect information on the quantities and prices, and all can circulate freely on the market, then, in theory, the prices are set by the market. Prices set under such market conditions are therefore flexible (prices which vary with demand and supply), fair and equitable: they satisfy buyers and sellers and do not work in favour of one of the parties to the detriment of the other, and contribute to market sustainability.

In theory the mechanisms of competitive markets should regulate the economy and lead to a general equilibrium with an optimal allocation of resources which satisfies both buyers and sellers. In other words, if the market operates freely, with many buyers and sellers freely expressing themselves in a competitive market (what is generally called a pure and perfect market), supply interacts with demand to determine the quantity supplied, the quantity demanded and also the price.

But, in many cases the effectiveness of the perfect competitive market is not achieved: in the Nowefor area as well as in many other situations in Africa, markets are often dominated by a limited number of people. The power relations are often to the detriment of the producers who are seldom in a strong position to negotiate prices.

On the Bafut market in particular we observe:

- unbalanced competition in the market: certain actors – the buyers (*Bayam sellams*) – were in a dominant position with a strong power of influence on the market price (too few buyers);
- no easy way to bring produce to the market: transport problems (lack of transportation, uncontrolled “taxes” on the roads) and difficult access to credit;
- imperfect information: before operation “zero ginger”⁴, the producers were dispersed and unorganised and had no clear understanding of supply and demand, and were therefore passively subjected to the prices which they obtained. In addition it was possible to cheat on quantities (measuring units) and quality of inputs to the detriment of the producers, who because they are isolated cannot be sure of the quality of the seeds, phytosanitary products, etc. that they buy.

Rigidity of supply and demand

The supply of ginger did not adjust spontaneously to price changes. The rigidity of the supply in relation to the price changes can be explained by several factors:

- the sale of the harvest was often necessary in order to make purchases or repay debts;
- 24 months are needed to obtain improved seedlings and then 10-11 months to produce ginger, and it is difficult to immediately adjust supply to the weekly market price. Once the produce is brought to the market farmers are forced to sell, otherwise the produce is lost as it does not store for long;
- because of the length of the production cycle, there can be counter-productive speculation effects. If prices rise, producers produce more, which immediately leads to excess supply in the market and a drop in prices;

⁴ See the information sheet: Supply, demand, and equilibrium price: a case for study – Improved prices for farmers through the organisation of the local market and the regulation of the supply of ginger by Nowefor in Bafut (North West Province, Cameroon). - CTA, Inter-réseaux, Saïd, 2006. – Information sheet 12 p. + summary 1 p.

- production problems may occur: the quantity supplied is variable and seasonal as it is highly dependent on climatic conditions, regardless of price or demand for the products in the market;
- capital cannot be easily reallocated to a different activity because the production system cannot be easily changed in the short term if prices drop: risks are too high and alternatives limited.

Thus supply was not a function of the price. This rigidity in the supply is also constrained by a certain rigidity /inelasticity of demand: on the local market, the demand for ginger did not necessarily vary much, regardless of the price; as buyers limit their purchases to what they can pay for, and what they can sell later on. When supply increases and prices fall, demand does not increase: it remains rigid.

Unstable and inequitable prices

In the end, supply does not adjust rapidly to demand, and variations in supply are usually greater than variations in demand. Variations in supply do not result in corresponding adjustments in demand but rather in wide price fluctuations. The price in the market is therefore unstable. The price in the market is not an optimum equilibrium price resulting from regulation by supply and demand. It is an inequitable price principally because the producers are isolated and poorly informed whereas the buyers have very strong market power due to their financial position and better access to information.

The existence of weaknesses in the market reduces the allocative efficiency of the price system. Also, for lack of understanding about the functioning of markets and price determination, the producers often decry the role of the intermediaries along the production chain, with a tendency to want to “eliminate” them, or in any case to avoid them by taking over some types of tasks.

Improvement in the functioning of the market for more fluidity, effectiveness and equity

The producers of the Nowefor FO successfully solved some of the problems by working on:

- improving the quantity and quality of ginger production while reducing costs, to achieve greater competitiveness;
- enhancing transparency of transactions: single market location, price negotiation, improvement in the advance provision of information on prices to producers, improvement of the weighing system , improvement of relations between suppliers (producers) and buyers (traders);
- regulating supply through the regulation of production (mastery of the technical practices for ginger production making it possible to forecast production volumes and achieve uniform quality) and organisation of sales rounds/turns in a single location at the local market;
- sharing responsibilities among the different actors (management committees, monitoring, oversight of compliance with rules, etc.): the organisation of the local market and transactions are the results of agreements between producers, the traditional and administrative local authorities.

Finally, as a result of the long process of social learning, Nowefor succeeded in enhancing the value of its production (for the producers who have better prices), and to reduce the fluctuation of prices on the local market. This led to more efficiency and social justice.

3- EXPLORING OTHER INITIATIVES BY FOS TO ORGANISE MARKETS

The work of other FOs to improve the commercialisation of their members' products is illustrated in various materials:

- the *egusi* market organised by the women of the Afebid association in Cameroon;
- the rice market put in place by the Mogtédo cooperative in Burkina Faso;
- the self-managed cattle market organised by the livestock breeders members of Udoper in Benin;
- the cereal market fairs organised by Amassa Afrique Verte in Mali.

The *egusi* market organised by the women of the Afebid association in Cameroon;

The members of Afebid produce more than 100 tonnes of *egusi* but have serious problems selling it: sales of small quantities at the local level, distant markets difficult to access because of numerous sellers. In recent years the women have decided to pool their produce in the same place at the market on an agreed date. Before this date negotiations are conducted with potential buyers in order to have an idea about the demand, to propose prices and discuss them with the producers in order to agree on prices and on quantities that are available at that price.

The local market was set up with the collaboration of the local village and administrative authorities and with the involvement of young people. This on-going experience clearly illustrates the role of the association in ensuring a fluid interaction between the *egusi* suppliers (producers) and buyers-retailers

Reference: Group sales of *egusi* by Afebid. - Odéco, 2006. - 6 p.

(on line on: http://www.inter-reseaux.org/article.php3?id_article=655)

The rice market put in place by the Mogtédo cooperative in Burkina Faso

The Rice Production Cooperative of Mogtédo organises the production and the marketing of rice, and grants input loans to its members. The cooperative set up an innovative system to manage the supply of rice on the market so as to have regular supply of quality rice. It does not buy paddy from its members (except for people who have major difficulties) but controls the supply of rice on the market with rice obtained through in-kind repayment of input loans given to members. The cooperative stores rice and withdraws it from the warehouses depending on market demand. The cooperative, like its members, sells for cash to the processors in the area. These women parboil the rice, take it to hullers and then sell the shelled rice to traders who come to buy on the market.

This innovative system could not have been put in place without consultation with the local authorities.

References:

- Mastery of the local commercialisation of rice by the Mogtédo cooperative. - CTA, Fida, Inter-réseaux, 2004. - Video 12 minutes + transcript of video (4 p.).
- Creation of a secured and self-managed market by rice producers of the Mogtédo cooperative in Burkina Faso. - Inter-réseaux, 2006. - INFORMATION SHEET 10 p. + SUMMARY 1 p.
- Discussion guide for the video presentation – Inter-réseaux, 2007. - 13 p.

(on line on: http://www.inter-reseaux.org/article.php3?id_article=1078)

Self-managed cattle market set up by UDOPER livestock breeders in Benin

Improving the transparency of transactions, the interaction between livestock breeders and buyers, the organisation of the market, etc. was the challenge taken up by Beninese livestock breeders... and with what success! This peasant-led innovation was initiated by the livestock breeders of Gogounou in Northern Benin, who are today organised as UDOPER – Divisional Union of the Interprofessional Organisations of livestock breeders of Borgou and Alibori.

This initiative was initially a human adventure, a battle engaged by a handful of livestock breeders who were convinced that their situation could be improved and who managed to meet, to talk and to mobilise a whole community to change the deeply entrenched local ways of doing things.

This market provides real leverage serving the interprofessional livestock breeders' organisation, development of livestock raising and rural development. Among other things these self-managed markets show that a win-win strategy between producers and traders/middlemen is possible, and that getting better prices for breeders does not necessarily entail the elimination of traders and middlemen.

Increasing the income of the producers while safeguarding the interests of other key actors, facilitating the interaction between supply and demand, making transactions more transparent and providing related services to the members are actions that have been carried out within this market and which have contributed to improve access of the products to the market. They could inspire other development actors.

References:

- Self-managed cattle markets: a Beninese example. - SOS Faim: Peasant dynamics n°10, 2006. - 8 p.
 - The Gogounou self-managed cattle market part 1. - UDOPER, 2007. - 9 min (radio recording)
 - The Gogounou self-managed cattle market part 2. - UDOPER, 2007. - 11 min (radio recording)
 - The Gogounou self-managed cattle market: Transcript of the radio band. - UDOPER, 2007. - 4 p.
- (on line on: http://www.inter-reseaux.org/article.php3?id_article=1078)

The cereal fairs organised by Amassa Afrique Verte in Mali

This document reviews “traditional” approaches carried out by some FOs belonging to the Office of Niger. It describes the experience of the Jèka Feéré economic interest group (GIE) which helps its member organisations to better sell their rice by mediating between sellers and buyers and also working to improve quality. The GIE does not store crops and does not take out loans but facilitates the transaction through different actions described here.

In a context where producers in the “Office of Niger” zone sell their rice ineffectively and where funding for marketing is limited compared to the needs, the system developed by the GIE has several interesting features.

References

- Intermediation of the GIE Jèka Feéré in the marketing of rice in the Office of Niger zone in Mali: a marketing experience without credit nor storage /Mr. Haïdara. - Mali: Amassa Afrique Verte Mali, 2007. - 11 p. + Summary 1p.
 - Organisation of cereal fairs by Jeka Fééré in Mali, 2007. - 7 min (radio recording).
- (on line on: http://www.inter-reseaux.org/article.php3?id_article=1078)

4- PRACTICAL REMARKS FOR LEADING GROUP DISCUSSION OF THE NOWEFOR VIDEO

Different objectives

The materials can be adapted for different uses and the group sessions can take different forms. The Nowefor video can be used in various ways, depending on:

- **aims of the discussion leader:**

- a simple exchange to **raise awareness** of the producers' innovative capacity and of other ways of marketing of agricultural products: the idea here is to show that producers' organisations/cooperatives can take on a variety of possible functions to improve the commercialisation of agricultural products, and also that producers can be actors in a context of liberalisation, even without major action plans, without any assistance, without operating funds, and without calling into question the statutes and the existing legal framework.

In this case, since the video is short, it can be shown at meetings (weekly meetings, board of directors meetings) that do not necessarily focus primarily on this topic. The moderator needs only to provide a minimum of information about the undertaking and distribute a summary, e.g. the information sheet which is more complete, the video on a computer or USB key (flash or thumbnail drive). This type of presentation requires half an hour at most.

- a real **stimulation meeting** that is aimed at assessing the concrete actions of FOs in order to initiate a reflection process, find creative ideas, and incite the members to innovate through a process of collective decision-making and common practical action, or through complementary action carried out with colleagues, partners and/or other development actors. This type of session could last several hours, depending on the dynamics of the group.
- **the number and type of people involved:** technicians—extension agents, FO leaders or members at different levels, local authorities, commercial and financial partners, literate or illiterate persons, French speakers or not⁵, etc.;
- **available resources:** sufficient time and a hall to host a group. The video can be shown anywhere where there is a computer, for 10-15 people up to 50, and even larger audiences if a dark hall that is big enough and equipped with an overhead projector is available.

Tips for leading a meeting

Before the meeting, the moderator can select extracts from the materials (sequences in the video, sections of the information sheet). If necessary some pages can be translated into the local dialect. During the meeting, the participants will have the chance to express themselves and the moderator has to bring the audience to participate, to debate on the topic. The moderator should catch their attention, help the participants put the Nowefor experience in perspective, restate the problem, draw out ideas.

Helping participants understand the Nowefor case

The animator can first show the video in its entirety, to enable the participants to engage in the debate, and then discuss it afterwards.

The screening must arouse curiosity and interest, and allow for interactions between the moderators and the audience: reactions, feedback, returning to earlier sequences, gaining perspective what has been seen, group thinking, discussion of solutions for the audience's own specific circumstances. The presentation must create space for discussion among participants, create links so that people really meet each other. They may see each other very often but for lack of materials, there is neither a debate nor true exchange which can go beyond hasty value judgements.

⁵ Or audiences who understand English for materials in this language.

To make sure that the participants have understood the case presented, the moderator can ask them questions about Nowefor's activities, the processes and the results attained (cf. questions suggested in Part 1 of this guide).

If the participants are literate time can be allotted for them to read preselected texts that have been photocopied for the purpose by the moderator: a summary, extracts of the project information sheet, translated or not into the local language as the case may be. If reading is not possible it will be necessary to work on the sequencing of the video.

The moderator can then screen the entire video again or show sequences focusing on areas that were not well understood or on important aspects that have been discussed.

To help the participants gain perspective on the Nowefor experience

The moderator can compare this case to other cases that are known or which the participants have experienced:

The participants have seen in the example of the Nowefor case activities which a FO/cooperative can undertake to improve the marketing of its members' agricultural products, such as:

- intervention which does not involve buying members' products but facilitating transactions between producers and buyers (Bayam sellams, traders);
- improvement on the functioning of a market through greater transparency in the transactions (organisation of a single selling location, estimation of quantities, information on prices, volumes, quality, etc);
- improvement on the functioning of a market through the production of quality product and regular supply over time;
- regulation of the volumes marketed locally – supply management, through the organisation of turns and rounds for the sale of produce, and clustering of products;
- contacts, creation of links between potential buyers and contracts with more distant buyers (outside of the local market);
- sharing of roles between actors, specific and complementary activities;
- definition of rules and means of ensuring that they are respected, etc.

In what way are the activities of this project unique (Cf. Part 1)?

In what ways are they different from the audience's own situation? The moderator should then urge the participants to express the problems they face in the commercialisation of agricultural products.

The moderator should also bring the participants to put the Nowefor experience and their own experiences into perspective by providing new information on the subject:

- "conceptual" information, for example supply management, price determination, functioning etc. (cf. Part 2 of this guide);
- information on other additional and complementary projects (cf. Part 3 of this guide).

Lastly, the moderator can help:

- rephrase/reframe the questions that should be raised when a market is organised (production, management of demand and supply, price determination, information and market management, etc.);
- rephrase/reframe questions about the roles and general lessons for FOs.

This guide aims at providing a framework and guidelines to facilitate discussion and thinking about agricultural marketing projects carried out by producers' organisations.

It accompanies the video entitled "The commercialisation of ginger by Nowefor, a peasant organisation in Bafut, North West Province, Cameroon" (15 minutes on CD-ROM and Inter-réseaux website).

The video is conceived as a tool for discussion and reflection in groups to help producers organise to market their products.

It should help participants assess the experience presented and finally their own actions.

Video presentation: "The commercialisation of ginger by Nowefor, a peasant organisation in Bafut, North West Province, Cameroon"

The members of the Nowefor producers' organisation improved the production of ginger so much that the local market became saturated, resulting in a sharp drop in prices and in their incomes.

This project illustrates the path taken by the FO and the strategies developed to solve this problem. Emphasis is laid here on the processes which led to the organisation of the local market, with more transparency in transactions and the management of the supply of ginger.

Supply management here focuses on two mechanisms: regulation of supply at the local level in a way that permits the FO to negotiate better prices with buyers; and selling of ginger on new external markets, through the organisation of transport and sales to distant buyers.

This experience illustrates the capacity of the FO to innovate, and mobilise, and the producers' reaction to better their market positioning and obtain decent revenues for their work in a context where traders Bayam sellams ("intermediaries") seemed to have a firm hold on the market.