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ASSISTANCE ON RESILIENCE BUILDING AND SUSTAINING LIVELIHOODS OF SMALL FARMERS IN THE POST-COVID 19 ERA IN THE SEYCHELLES

November 2024

SDGs:



Country: The Republic of Seychelles

Project Code: TCP/SEY/3801

FAO Contribution: USD 122 000

Duration: 1 August 2021–31 December 2023

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Implementing Partners

The Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture, the Seychelles Agricultural Agency (SAA) and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Beneficiaries

Small agricultural producers and their families.

Country Programming Framework (CPF) Outputs

CPF 2018- 2021

Priority B: Enhancement of agriculture and fisheries value chains. Priority C: Promotion of innovative and sustainable farming practices in the face of climate change.



BACKGROUND

The sudden and severe impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the abrupt closure of borders at the end of March 2020, have significantly contracted the economy of the Seychelles. The collapse of the prime tourism industry, a major source of foreign exchange, and the discontinuation of imports for approximately 12 weeks have particularly set back the national agricultural sector. The closure of borders disrupted the importation of agricultural inputs, such as fertilizers, seeds, and plant protection products, which are predominantly secured through imports. Consequently, local supplies have dwindled, creating a situation that threatens the continuation of agricultural activities, thereby endangering the livelihoods and incomes of the 575 registered farmers and their families. Each farm typically employs three persons and sustains approximately five individuals from the farm family, meaning that around 4 500 people are directly impacted by these circumstances out of a total national population of 95 000.

Furthermore, the decline in national agricultural production threatens the country's food and nutrition security at a time when food imports are restricted, given that Seychelles imports 80 % by weight of the food it consumes. The assistance provided through this project aims to build resilience among farmers against the post-COVID challenges, ensuring continued local food supply and meeting the needs of the country by maximizing local capacity and capability.

The project targets to restore production capacity for 575 small agricultural producers, maintain their livelihoods, generate income, and provide local food supplies to the general population of 95 000 people amidst restricted food imports. This will significantly contribute to national food security efforts. The renewed availability of agricultural inputs will also facilitate national campaigns such as "Every Home a Garden" and "Every School a Garden," which are part of the High-Level Committee on Food Security Surveillance initiatives proposed by the President of the Republic of Seychelles. These campaigns will target approximately 12 000 households and involve 11 secondary schools, with the possibility of extending to primary schools. The funds generated by these initiatives will support their sustainability.

Revitalizing national food production through these efforts will enhance food and nutrition security, aligning with SDGs 1 and 2, particularly in times of limited imports. The project also holds potential for engaging young Seychellois through the Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) program, ensuring equal access to project benefits across genders. Additionally, the project will comply with FAO's Environmental and Social Standards, with mechanisms in place to address any grievances that may arise during its implementation.

IMPACT

The project will improve national food and nutrition security in Seychelles by strengthening the resilience of small farmers in the post-COVID-19 era. By restoring the production capacity of 575 small agricultural producers, the project will reduce the country's heavy reliance on food imports and ensure a steady supply of locally produced food. This initiative safeguards the livelihoods of farmers and their families while promoting self-sufficiency through campaigns like "Every Home a Garden" and "Every School a Garden." Ultimately, the project will build a more resilient agricultural sector, contributing to long-term food security and economic stability in Seychelles.

ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

Limited progress has been made, primarily due to shifts in most activities toward establishing SIAH as a demonstration hub for Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) and using the school as a model to promote technological advancements aimed at enhancing crop production resilience. The project team anticipates that once the project is fully established, the desired impact will be achieved.

With this, the project has had delays in implementation and changes in project activities by the government department.

IMPLEMENTATION OF WORK PLAN AND BUDGET

The initiation of project activities were slightly delayed due to challenges in recruiting a qualified national consultant, as well as unforeseen delays related to the nomination of a national project coordinator. The national consultant was responsible for delivering a number of crucial tasks, including a pesticide registration form, gender and agriculture survey, developing input lists, reviewing the Seychelles Institute of Agriculture and Horticulture (SIAH) high-tech greenhouse proposal and a report on agricultural barriers in the Seychelles.

As training needs assessment was conducted through a desk study and review of previous interviews from lecturers to obtain a general idea of the current status. The assessment was presented in a syllabus format, clearly identifying all subjects that should be covered to address the training needs for the SIAH, and a report was prepared but the development of an action plan integrating food and nutrition security was not fully addressed. The main activity was a field visit to the main agriculture store to understand how the operation of procurement of inputs occurs and another visit for Praslin was scheduled but not carried out due funding issues.

The report on training sessions on the prevention and emergency preparedness for local committees was not drafted during the course of consultancy; however, training sessions were discussed with other partners, including United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the project Ridge-to-Reef (R2R) Approach for the Integrated Management of Marine, Coastal and Terrestrial Ecosystems in the Seychelles (R2R) and the Department of Agriculture. A survey form was developed to gather data to assess the current level of preparedness in the face of existing issues surrounding agriculture and the gender role in the sector, as well as to facilitate good decision-making.

FOLLOW-UP FOR GOVERNMENT ATTENTION

The government's follow-up responsibilities include providing ongoing support to the implementation of the project by facilitating the operations of the FAO and other partners, monitoring the progress of agricultural activities, ensuring the continued supply of agricultural inputs, supporting the campaigns' expansion, and coordinating with local stakeholders to sustain the project's outcomes, particularly in enhancing food security and farmer resilience.

Additionally, the government will ensure that the SAA effectively engages with the farming communities and that all relevant national policies and procedures are followed throughout the project's duration.

SUSTAINABILITY

1. Capacity development

As of today, the Department of Agriculture in Seychelles lacks an updated policy to govern the agricultural sector. This absence has made it difficult to align project outcomes with relevant legal frameworks to ensure sustainability.

2. Gender equality

The abovementioned survey on existing issues surrounding agriculture and gender was reviewed by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), R2R and UNDP; however, the Department of Agriculture was not able to contribute to this review. The survey form was submitted for possible digitalisation and eventual distribution to potential participants.

3. Environmental sustainability

One of the main objectives of CSA is to protect the environment and ensure that production practices have minimal or no impact on climate change. With the upcoming completion of the high-tech greenhouse and nursery, SIAH will be well-positioned to play a pivotal role in integrating environmental sustainability into national policy, as the only institution in the country mandated to train agricultural professionals.

4. Human Rights-based Approach (HRBA) – in particular Right to Food and Decent Work

Enhancing resilience in the food production system directly impacts human rights. Although the deliverables of this project are limited, it has successfully established various capacity-building initiatives to address the sector's needs. These efforts are expected to significantly improve the abilities of smallholder farmers and other growers, ultimately leading to increased production and improved livelihoods, thereby strengthening the national resilience of the food production sector.

5. Technological sustainability

This is highly appropriate, as it aligns with the country's efforts to adopt more sustainable production practices. Using SIAH as a model farm to demonstrate this technology will eventually help the country move in the desired direction. While this is still in the early stages, a potential second phase of the project could achieve this objective. The score above highlights that the training need has been clearly and effectively identified.

6. Economic sustainability

To ensure that beneficiaries express interest in the technology, the project team has considered the most affordable options available on the market, as well as those currently in use within the country. Also, it is anticipated that once the technology is operational and it will generate interest due to its direct benefits for crop production and resilience to climate change. Specifically for women, the project team expects that the flexibility offered by this technology, such as reduced weed, pest, and disease challenges, will encourage more women and youth to adopt it, ultimately leading to increased production.



DOCUMENTS AND OUTREACH PRODUCTS

- ❑ **Nourice, B.** 2023. *Proposed procurement list for the Department of Agriculture* (excel table).
- ❑ **Nourice, B.** 2023. *Renovation of existing SIAH shade house to an ornamental plant production nursery.*
- ❑ **Nourice, B.** 2023. *Updated pesticide application form for the Department of Agriculture.*
- ❑ **Nourice, B.** 2023. *Survey form for gender-based gap and need analysis in CSA and agriculture production in Seychelles - TCP/SEY/3801 and UN Women.*
- ❑ **Nourice, B.** 2023. *Training needs assessment for nursery management and soil nutrient management and nutrition education.*

ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS - LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Expected Impact	Improve national food and nutrition security and strengthen small farmers' resilience in Seychelles against the worsening situation in the post-COVID 19 era		
Outcome	Restore agricultural production systems, and livelihood sustenance, through seed distribution		
	Indicator	Number of registered farmers brought into cultivation.	
	Baseline	575	
	End Target	600	
	Comments and follow-up action to be taken	<p>The absence of annual reports from the Department of Agriculture has made it difficult to verify whether the target was effectively achieved. This challenge is primarily due to a lack of data needed to measure the final target under TCP/SEY3801. To address this, a clear reporting mechanism must be established within the Department of Agriculture in Seychelles to ensure systematic data collection from the sector, along with a well-defined verification and validation methodology. This is crucial for ensuring that the project indicator is based on well-documented data sources, enabling effective measurement of the final target.</p> <p>This concern has already been raised with the Department of Agriculture, and steps have been taken, including the establishment of a new unit dedicated to managing data collection and dissemination.</p> <p>Also, it is recommended that FAO considers supporting the country in future projects by helping to establish a national farmers database.</p>	
Output 1	Agricultural production systems are revitalized and strengthened		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of hectares of land under agriculture.	300	Yes
Baseline	200		
Comments	<p>According to the most reliable agricultural report, the Seychelles Census of Agriculture 2011, farmland accounted for 1,152 acres or 466 hectares. This figure surpasses both the baseline, and the end target established in the TCP/SEY3801 project document, which is why the achievement level is marked as "Yes" despite the absence of more recent data. Other institutional reports, such as those from the World Bank, have also indicated a higher area of agricultural land than that mentioned in the project document.</p> <p>Despite this achievement, the challenge remains that Seychelles lacks a well-established data-gathering system, leading to discrepancies and inconsistencies in the reported agricultural land area. This makes it difficult to confirm the reliability of the figures. For this terminal report, the project team has relied on the 2011 census, which was based on a clear methodology, validated by the Department of Agriculture, and received extensive participation from the agricultural sector.</p> <p>FAO should consider supporting the country in subsequent projects to establish a national farmers database, which would help reduce ambiguity in reporting.</p>		
Activity 1.1	Analysis		
	Achieved	Partially	
	Comments	<p>A survey form was prepared (available upon request) to bring clarity on training needs in the agricultural sector. However, due to a lack of coordination among the various UN institutions involved in the project, significant delays occurred, leading to the expiration of the consultant's contract. As a result, completing the analysis became challenging, and the required data was not obtained. Therefore, a second phase of the project to finalize the survey and analysis is highly recommended to accurately assess the status and needs of small growers, including home gardeners.</p>	
Activity 1.2	Training of small farmers		
	Achieved	Partially	
	Comments	<p>The survey results would have served as the starting point to identify training needs and subsequently conduct the training. As mentioned earlier, the survey form necessary for this analysis was prepared; however, the training for small farmers was not carried out. Given the importance of this activity to the country, as a crucial step to support small farmers and home gardeners, it must be completed in a second phase of the project.</p>	

Activity 1.3	Agricultural inputs distribution		
	Achieved	Partially	
	Comments	<p>A list of agricultural inputs was prepared by the consultant and validated by the Department of Agriculture for further action, including procurement and distribution. However, this activity was later revised at the request of the Department of Agriculture of the Seychelles, which called for greater emphasis on enhancing the human and structural capacity of the Seychelles Institute of Agriculture and Horticulture (SIAH).</p> <p>As a result, a training needs assessment for SIAH was conducted, identifying specific areas requiring development. This has highlighted the necessity for a second phase of the project to continue the delivery of these activities.</p>	
Output 2	The practice of household home gardening contributing in part to their daily food consumption is boosted		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of households engaged in home gardening.	12 000	No
Baseline	8 000		
Comments	<p>Once again, establishing a reliable baseline and end target proved to be very challenging. This difficulty stemmed from the lack of coherent data on this type of production. Since there is no well-documented and reliable dataset on home gardeners in Seychelles, the project team cannot confirm that the baseline set was indeed accurate.</p> <p>Ultimately, at the request of the Department of Agriculture, this activity was adjusted, with a greater emphasis placed on enhancing SIAH's human and infrastructure capacity.</p> <p>This output will be included in the second phase of the project, as it represents a fundamental aspect of food production resilience that must be firmly established.</p>		
Activity 2.1	Identification		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	A change in project activity led to the indicated level of achievement.	
Activity 2.2	Training of households		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	A change in project activity led to the indicated level of achievement.	
Activity 2.3	Procurement of agricultural inputs		
	Achieved	Partially	
	Comments	Following a request from the Department of Agriculture to redirect the funds towards SIAH, this activity was only partially implemented; specifically, only the procurement list was completed.	
Activity 2.4	Agricultural inputs distribution		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	A change in project activity led to the indicated level of achievement.	
Activity 2.5	Technical assistance to the households		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	A change in project activity led to the indicated level of achievement.	

Output 3	Eleven secondary schools have school gardens		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of schools with a garden.	11	Partially
Baseline	0		
Comments	A list of agricultural inputs was prepared by the consultant and validated by the Department of Agriculture for further action, which was intended to include procurement and distribution. Yet, following a request from the Department of Agriculture to redirect the funds towards SIAH, this activity was only partially implemented; specifically, only the procurement list was completed. The project has since been taken over by the Programme Coordination and Development Section (PDCS) and the Ridge to Reef initiative, which will oversee its completion.		
Activity 3.1	Acquisition of agricultural inputs		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	A change in project activity led to the indicated level of achievement.	
Activity 3.2	Set up school gardens		
	Achieved	Partially	
	Comments	The high-tech greenhouse for SIAH has been procured and is currently being cleared at Victoria Port. The foundation for the greenhouse is 90 % complete, with only levelling remaining. It is important to note that the SIAH greenhouse is part of the UNJP/MAG/109/UNJ Project (emergency fund), a collaboration between FAO, UNDP, and UNWOMEN.	
Activity 3.3	Consolidate nutrition education		
	Achieved	Partially	
	Comments	For this activity, only the training needs assessment was conducted, utilizing previous interviews with lecturers and a desk study. This output will be part of the second phase of the project. This step is crucial in our efforts to promote local and healthy eating habits.	
Output 4	The capacities of institutions for prevention and emergency preparedness are improved		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of emergency and contingency plan developed.	1	No
Baseline	0		
Comments	This output was modified at the request of the Department of Agriculture, with an emphasis on enhancing SIAH's human resources and infrastructure capacity.		
Activity 4.1	Training		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	A change in project activity led to the indicated level of achievement.	
Activity 4.2	Develop the Action plan		
	Achieved	Not achieved	
	Comments	A change in project activity led to the indicated level of achievement. It would be ideal to have FAO's technical support to fulfil this activity.	
Activity 4.3	Support the information system		
	Achieved	Not achieved	
	Comments	The change in project activity developed in the indicated level of achievement. Likewise, it is believed by the project team that in the subsequent project, FAO should provide technical support to ensure the successful completion of this activity. Both activities are critical components of food system resilience and sustainability.	

Partnerships and Outreach

For more information, please contact: Reporting@fao.org

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