



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



Strengthening linkages between small actors and buyers in the Roots and Tubers Sector in Africa

Project Inception Workshop Report

Sportsview Hotel, Kigali, Rwanda
13 January 2015



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Sincere thanks are due to the FAO Rwanda office for their support in organizing the workshop and to Pierre Celestin Habyarimana who assisted with the identification of participants and wrote this report.

The FAO project team is very grateful to all those organizations that were visited by their consultant for all the information that was gathered from them prior to the inception workshop.

Many special thanks go to all the participants for coming to the workshop and for their active involvement in the workshop.

Executive summary

In the framework of launching the project “*Strengthening linkages between small actors and buyers in the Roots and Tubers sector in Africa*”, FAO Rwanda has organized a one-day inception workshop to which key stakeholders in the Irish potato value chain in Rwanda were invited. The participants included senior managers from Government institutions, development partners, research institutes, NGOs, the private sector, financial institutions and farmers’ organizations.

The objectives of the workshop included the presentation of the current status of Irish potato value chain in Rwanda, project objectives and activities and the sharing of views and experiences from key stakeholders for effective project planning. Participants discussed whether proposed activities are relevant for the context of the Rwanda potato sector, and they provided suggestions for their implementation in terms of focus and potential partners and beneficiaries.

At the policy level, standards and certification was identified as an important issue, both for seed and ware potatoes. The finalization of the seed law and the development of a strategy to increase access to high quality seed potatoes were considered a high priority. The project could contribute to the improvement of seed quality produced by the informal sector through the FFS programme.

Regarding inclusive business development, the participants recommended that the project focuses on raw potato value chains. Training of farmer organizations on agribusiness management should prioritize female group leaders and training of SMEs should focus on hygiene standards, meeting quality requirement and business management practices.

As several other projects already work on linking farmers to financial service providers, the project should focus on areas that receive less attention such as training financial service providers in the production zones; working with insurance companies to develop appropriate insurance products for farmers and SMEs; and linking SMEs to financial service providers.

On climate change risk management tools, the project should work with REMA and Rwanda Meteorological Services, especially on data collection and statistical analysis of impact of climate on production and price fluctuations and to make this information available to insurance companies and farmer organizations.

Acronyms

ACP	: Africa Caribbean and Pacific
BDF	: Business Development Fund
CIP	: Crop Intensification Program
CIP (2)	: International Potato Center
EU	: European Union
FAO	: Food and Agriculture Organization
FECOPORWA	: Federation of Irish Potato Farmers
FO	: Farmers Organization
MFI	: Micro Finance Institute
MINAGRI	: Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources
MINICOM	: Ministry of Trade and Industry
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organization
R & T	: Roots and Tubers
RAB	: Rwanda Agriculture Board
RCA	: Rwanda Cooperative Agency
REMA	: Rwanda Environment Management Authority
SME	: Small and Medium Enterprise
USAID	: United States Agency for International Development

1. Introduction

FAO Rwanda has organized a one-day inception workshop to launch the project “*Strengthening linkages between small actors and buyers in the Roots and Tubers sector in Africa*”. The event took place on January 13, 2015 at Sportsview Hotel, Kigali City. Different stakeholders were invited and have actively participated to the event. The agenda of the day is presented in annex 1.

The roots and tubers sector (R&T) is one of the most important food sub-sectors in Africa. For many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa (Africa), roots and tubers account for 20% of calories consumed. Crops such as cassava, yam and potatoes are not only important for food security but also increasingly for income for farmers and small businesses - particularly for women.

Market demand for roots and tubers is expected to continue to grow over the next two decades, due to increases in urban food markets. Furthermore, in an effort to support smallholders to transition out of subsistence farming, governments in Africa are placing the commercialization of staple crops at the centre of national agricultural development strategies.

Against this background the project “*Strengthening linkages between small actors and buyers in the Roots and Tubers sector in Africa*” will be implemented.

Its aim is to *improve the livelihoods of small producers engaged in the roots and tubers value chains in selected African ACP countries (Cameroon, Benin, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Malawi, Uganda and Rwanda) through the promotion of linkages to domestic and regional markets.*

The project is funded by the EU under the intra-ACP programme. The project will be implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in close collaboration with the national partners in the concerned countries.

The project is structured around four outputs:

1. Existing national and regional strategies are aligned with initiatives supporting the development of improved regional market integration for the roots and tubers sector in African ACP regions.
2. The competitiveness and viability of R&T value chains is strengthened by improving inclusive business models, sustainable intensification of production, SME capacity and Farmer Organizations’ Capacity.
3. Access to information services and finance is improved for smallholders.
4. Small producers have access to climatic risk management instruments.

The project will work with a wide range of stakeholders and partners such as producers and their organizations, input suppliers, processors, traders, transporters, store managers, agribusiness and financial services providers, NGOs, research institutes, government staff, chambers of commerce and regional economic communities.

During the project formulation stage, valuable contributions have been received from the concerned countries through the FAO representations in these countries and through the ambassadors in the ACP group in Brussels. Nonetheless it has been foreseen to organize an

inception workshop in each beneficiary country to refine the activities indicated in the project document.

The main objective of this 1-day inception workshop was to launch the project and make a more detailed country-specific work plan for the implementation of the project activities. More specifically, the objectives of the workshop included the following activities:

- Present the general project's objectives and outline to the participants;
- Share and capitalize the achievements to-date and the lessons learnt from the actors/projects/partners in R&T sub-sector which could support the implementation of the project;
- Identify how the project can build on earlier achievements and build synergies with and be complementary to ongoing initiatives
- Present and discuss the proposed activities identified in the project document; adapt them to the local context and identify more specific activities and potential beneficiaries and project partners (both public and private sector)

The participants to the launch workshop are of various profile including senior managers from Government institutions (MINAGRI, MINICOM, RAB, RCA), development partners (USAID, EU), research institutes, NGOs, the private sector, financial institutions, farmers cooperatives and farmers organizations. A detailed list of participants is in annex 2.

2. Project Launch

The project launch activities were coordinated by Mr Otto Vianney Muhinda, Assistant Representative of FAO Rwanda in charge of programs. In his introductory remarks, he welcomed all participants and invited them for a brief introduction. Afterward, he invited the FAO representative and the delegate from the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI) for their opening remarks.

Mr Attaher Maiga, FAO Representative witnessed his pleasure to welcome all the participants to the inception workshop for the project. He indicated that in Rwanda, the project will focus on the Irish potato sector. He expressed his gratitude to the European Union for the trust placed in FAO to fund the project. He also expressed the gratitude to the ACP group of states for their endorsement of the project under the EU/ACP Programme.

The FAO Representative highlighted the project background, vision and objective and the objective of the workshop. He then invited the representatives of the various stakeholders to share their experience, knowledge and priorities to help FAO in developing a work plan for Rwanda under the project's framework. He wished the participants a fruitful deliberation and he was looking forward to a well-designed project work plan.

In her project introduction, Mme Siobhan Kelly, Agribusiness Officer, FAO Rome focused on project objective and scope, project approach, background and justification, relevance for national goals and FAO strategic objective and output areas.

MINAGRI Representative, Mr. Norbert Sendege, the Director General of Extension expressed his gratitude to FAO and the European Union for this project which will support Government efforts in developing the Irish potato sub-sector. He highlighted that Irish potato is one of Government priority crops under the Crop Intensification Program (CIP).

He indicated that one of the big challenges in Irish potato value chain is insufficiency in quality and quantity of seeds. He therefore wished that this project could play a key role in addressing that issue.

3. Presentations

3.1 Session 2: Technical Session: Current Situation

Presentation on the policies and strategies governing the Irish potato sector and the status of Irish potato production and seed system in Rwanda,

By: Dr. Telesphore Ndabamenye, Deputy Director General of Rwanda Agricultural Board.

Dr. Telesphore observed that potato has become the country's second most important source of calorie intake after cassava. The cultivated area under potato had increased to 130,000 ha in 2010, but since declined due to lack of quality seed.

The key pillars of the governments' Irish potato strategy are:

- Strengthening the potato national research program,
- Large scale multiplication of quality potato seeds,
- Organization of the seed market, advisory services to seed producers and potato farmers,
- Development of post-harvest and value addition activities for Irish potato.

The production of certified quality seed of Irish potato is very limited (2% of total seed planted) with low involvement of the private sector due to low effective demand from farmers. He recommended that the new seed law should separate the roles of quality control services and seed production and to aim for an active participation of the private sector in seed production.

Overview of the Irish potato value chain, lessons from past support and ongoing initiatives

By: Mr. Pierre Celestin Habyarimana, FAO Consultant

Rwanda is among the top five Irish potato producers in Africa. More than 62% of the total national production of Irish potato is concentrated in 4 Districts located in the volcanic zone (Nyabihu, Rubavu, Musanze and Burera).

Some new processing initiatives include: Nyabihu Potato Company which plans to produce chips, crisps, peeled potato and cleaned potato; Hollanda FairFood Ltd will produce crisps; and Life Secret Company produces starch and flour.

Financial services for value chains

By: Ms. Diana Kareba from the Business Development Fund (BDF)

BDF has funds for grants and guaranties dedicated to agriculture actors. Ms Kareba explained the eligibility conditions for the various grant and loan guaranty options and has clarified that actors must work with financial institutions in partnership with BDF.

Activities by other organizations and participants' experiences

After the presentations, the moderator invited participants to share their experience on challenges and opportunities in the value chain.

The representative of the national farmer organization IMBARAGA observed that the real production and yield figures are unknown; statistics on the potato sector should be improved.

The International potato centre (CIP) is testing farmer preference for varieties, is promoting more efficient seed production techniques such as hydroponic and has introduced seed storage techniques with IMBARAGA and RAB for the formal and the informal sector.

The IFDC Catalist programme in Rwanda partners with RAB and extension services to find and recommend good fertilizer combinations. The programme supports 20 cooperatives of the Federation of Irish Potato farmers (FECOPORWA) on business management and seed production and supports entrepreneurs to build screen-houses for basic seed production.

The Private Sector Federation - Rwanda (PSF) is an umbrella organization of 9 professional chambers, including the chamber of agriculture (of which FECOPORWA is a member). It provides capacity building, information sharing (e.g. market intelligence) and advocacy services.

Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM) is supporting the establishment of collection centres and they are organizing traders in Kigali to buy directly from farmer organizations. Three trader organizations joined in one union, KIPTRACO, which signed a contract with 5 farmer unions. KIPTRACO has the ambition to also reach international markets.

The USAID Private Sector Driven Agricultural Growth (PSD-AG) project provides technical assistance to all actors along the chain, e.g. to input suppliers, to farmer coops and agribusinesses, who can also apply for grants. USAID also works with the Belgian technical cooperation (BTC) and MINAGRI on extension services.

The Rwandan Cooperative Agency supports FECOPORWA cooperatives that face challenges in managing collection centres as farmers still sell individually. Similarly, the representative of the Rwanda Development Board (RDB) explained that cooperatives collectively buy inputs, but the harvest revenues go to individual farmers. Thus the financial circle is broken. A MFI observed that in a pilot providing working capital loans to farmers through coops, the maize farmers repaid their loans but the potato farmers did not.

RDB packages information on investment opportunities for investors and distributes it on its website and through other channels. They assist prospective investors in their decision making. Agriculture and Climate Risk Enterprise (ACRE) provides weather index, area yield index, and satellite-based index insurance. They create links between farmers and MFIs, and to obtain a loan from the MFI farmers have to be insured. They now have almost 100,000 farmers insured.

Agriprofocus is a network aimed to facilitate farmer entrepreneurship. The network functions both online and face-to-face, bringing together actors to discuss business deals. Other participants included companies involved in input supply, service provision and processing (ENAS, TOPSERVICES, ECE, Hollanda fairfood Limited, KAUKO).

3.2 Session 3: Project Planning

Cora Dankers, FAO, introduced the proposed project activities for each of the four output areas and the selection criteria for private sector partners and beneficiaries. After this presentation, participants were divided in four groups and each group was tasked to refine the proposed project activities as follow:

Group 1

Output 1: Strategies are aligned with regional market integration for the R&T sector in African ACP regions

Group 2

Output 2.2: Sustainable market-led production intensification,
Output 2.3: Producer organizations agribusiness management

Group 3

Output 2.1: Inclusive business models,
Output 2.4: Strengthened SMEs in value addition and business practices

Group 4

Output 3: Access to information and financial services,
Output 4: Access to climatic risk management instruments

Group inputs were filled in the handed work plan template and each group was requested to present the three most important activities.

Group 1 considered the mapping and analysis of key policies very important, which should among others include a review of the Internal Trade Law, the 2008 instructions on agricultural Product trade, the 2014 cross border trade strategy. Important topics to include are standards and certification and packaging materials.

The second important activity was capacity development in policy formulation and implementation, which should be based on a training needs assessment and focus on internal and external trade policies for Irish potato and quality issues

Group 2 suggested that a diagnostic study on the status of existing seed systems, inputs, and agronomic practices within the potato cropping system is of high priority and based on that a strategy should be developed to increase access to quality potato seed.

Farmer Field School (FFS) modules for potato already exist, but more trainers need to be trained and also additional training of farmer through the FFS is of high priority, which should also include techniques to improve the quality of farmers' own seed production, e.g. through positive selection.

For capacity building for farmer organizations on agribusiness management, they were of the opinion that training of female group leaders should have the highest priority.

Group 3 identified the activities under the inclusive business models approach as high priority. They recommended to focus on raw (unprocessed) potatoes, and geographically to focus on the Northern and Western provinces (production zones) and Kigali City (main demand).

The regional lesson learning workshop should focus on cross-border trade and training of SMEs on business management, hygiene standards and value addition to meet market quality requirements also has high priority.

Group 4 considered the identification of information gaps and building the capacity of financial service providers as a high priority, with the recommendation to focus on training insurance companies and linking them to SMEs.

High priority was also accorded to: guidance to ministries and financial regulatory bodies on legal frameworks and enabling environments that improve access to finance and inclusive investment in food staples value chains; a workshop to define mutually accepted principles for responsible agriculture investments; and, analysis of climate impact on potato production and price fluctuations in collaboration with the Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA) and the Rwanda Meteorological Services.

More details on group work results are enclosed in the group presentations and scanned group work templates in annex 10

4. Conclusion

This one-day inception workshop to launch the project “*Strengthening linkages between small actors and buyers in the Roots and Tubers sector in Africa*” has been successfully conducted and expected outcomes achieved. Most of invited key stakeholders have attended and have actively participated and given their valuable contributions.

From the presentations and participants’ contributions, the challenges in the Irish potato sector may be summarized as follow:

- *The insufficient access to quality seed* due to the insufficiency of production and storage infrastructure and low involvement of the private sector in this sub-sector. It is difficult to ensure seed quality in the dominant informal system.
- *Coordination and planning in the seed sub-sector*: Due to a lack of planning, seed storage and linkages between seed producers and farmers, sometimes farmers cannot find seeds during the planting season whereas seed producers sometimes face marketing problems when they have seeds available out of the planting season.
- *Limited knowledge of production techniques and lack of resources* leads to the use of substandard seeds, lack of crop rotation and lack of use of appropriate fertilizers and pesticides and this affects productivity. Some of farmers harvest immature tubers which affect their conservation and quality.
- *Lack of storage infrastructure* at farmers and traders level. As a consequence, the Irish potato price is low during harvest as farmers sell all their harvest quickly to avoid damages.
- *A long chain of intermediary traders*, who sometimes only buy and sell on and do not add value, increases the inefficiency in the chain and the price difference between retail and farm-gate prices.

The overall project framework has been validated to address many of these challenges. Participants identified which activities were already done by institutions or other projects and which activities are of high priority.

At the policy level, standards and certification was identified as an important issue, both for seed and ware potatoes. The finalization of the seed law and the development of a strategy to increase access to high quality seed potatoes were considered a high priority. The project could contribute to the improvement of seed quality produced by the informal sector through the FFS programme.

Regarding inclusive business development, the participants recommended that the project focuses on raw potato value chains. Training of farmer organizations on agribusiness management should prioritize female group leaders and training of SMEs should focus on hygiene standards, meeting quality requirement and business management practices.

As several other projects already work on linking farmers to financial service providers, the project should focus on areas that receive less attention such as training financial service

providers in the production zones; working with insurance companies to develop appropriate insurance products for farmers and SMEs; and linking SMEs to financial service providers.

On climate change risk management tools, the project should work with REMA and Rwanda Meteorological Services, especially on data collection and statistical analysis of impact of climate on production and price fluctuations and to make this information available to insurance companies and farmer organizations.

With this input, the FAO project team, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, will be able to develop a work plan that is adapted to the context of the Rwandan potato sector. This will be shared with participants.

Annexes

Annex 1: Agenda

Annex 2: Participant list

Annex 3: FAOR welcome speech

Separate in zip file

Annex 5: Presentation Siobhan Kelly on introduction of project

Annex 6: Presentation Telesphore Ndabamenye, RAB on policies and status of seed system

Annex 7: Presentation Pierre Célestin Habyarimana on the Irish potato value chain

Annex 8: Presentation Diana Kareba, BDF on financial services

Annex 9: Presentation Cora Dankers on project activities

Annex 10: Group presentations and Templates with comments from all groups.

Annex 1 Workshop Agenda

Strengthening Linkages between Small Actors and Buyers in the Roots and Tubers sector in Africa

The Potato Value Chain in Rwanda Inception Workshop, 13th January 2015

Agenda

Time	Item	Responsible
Session 1: Official launch of the project		
09:00	Welcome remarks	FAO
09:10	Keynote speech and official project launch	MINAGRI
09:20	Project objectives and output areas	FAO
09:45	<i>Photo moment and Coffee break</i>	
Session 2: Technical session: current situation		
10:15	Current status of Irish potato sector, policies and strategies, and lessons from past programmes	RAB
10:40	Overview of Irish potato value chains and ongoing initiatives.	Mr Celestin
11:00	Financial services and risk management for small actors in the R&T sector	Business Development Fund
11:15 –	Plenary discussion on synergies with ongoing initiatives	
12:00	<i>Lunch</i>	
Session 3: Project planning session		
13:15	Proposed project activities and plenary discussion	FAO
13:45	Development of work plan for Rwanda Group 1: Policies & regional market integration Group 2: Production and seed systems and farmer organizations Group 3: Value chain development and SMEs Group 4: Financial services and climate change risk management tools	
14:45	Coffee break	
15:00	Group presentations (5 min each) and plenary discussion	
16:00	Conclusions on overall work plan	
16:30	Wrap-up and next steps	FAO
16:45	Workshop closure	MINAGRI

Annex 2. List of participants

No.	Name	Institution	Position	Phone	E-mail
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Annex 3 Welcome speech FAOR

“Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends,

It is my pleasure to be able to welcome you to this Inception workshop for the project “*Strengthening linkages between small actors and buyers in the roots and Tubers sector in Africa*”. In Rwanda this project will focus on the Irish potato sector.

We are grateful to the European Union for the trust placed in FAO to fund this project. We are also grateful for the ACP group of states for their endorsement of this project under the EU/ACP programme.

Project background, vision and objective:

Roots and tubers crops and in particular crops such as potatoes and cassava have traditionally been an important source of food security in Rwanda. These crops are set to become an increasingly sought after food commodity as urban population, and with it urban food markets, not only in Rwanda, but across the region are set to grow rapidly.

The objective and vision for this project is to prepare stakeholders to take advantage of the opportunities that will continue to emerge from growth in the Rwandanese food sector.

The project will also benefit from progress in the Agricultural sector in Rwanda on the back of sustained public investment in the sector in the form of programmes such as the Crop Intensification Programme, the Land Consolidation Programme, and the National Post-harvest Staple crop strategy.

Against this background the objective of the project is to improve the livelihoods of small producers of potatoes through the promotion of linkages to domestic and regional markets.

In line with the project title “*strengthening linkages between small actors and buyers in the Roots and Tubers sector*” the project will not only strengthen the capacity of smallholders but will also focus on building the capacities of other small fragmented private sector actors, such as agro-processors and traders. These actors contribute to the delivery of potatoes, raw and processed, to the end consumer and they play a crucial role in linking smallholders to the broader market. In this regard, the project will also contribute to the government’s objective of a modern agriculture sector led by the private-sector by 2020.

This project will also be implemented in cross-border districts of Uganda with a focus on potatoes. As such the project will build on the results of the former FAO project on Food Security through Commercialization, funded by the Italian government which also focused on improving the livelihoods of smallholders in the potato value chain.

In addition to Uganda and Rwanda the project will also be implemented in Malawi, Ghana, Cote d’Ivoire, and Cameroon but with a focus on support to the Cassava and Yam value chains.

This objective of this workshop is to:

- Launch the project
- Consult with key public and private sectors stakeholders that have technical, commodity and context specific insights relevant to the project’s objectives.
- Develop a work plan for Rwanda under the project’s framework which includes four broad result areas;
 1. Existing national and regional strategies are aligned with initiatives supporting the development of improved regional market integration for the roots and tubers sector.

2. The competitiveness and viability of the potato value chain is strengthened by improving inclusive business models, sustainable intensification of production, SME capacity and Farmer Organizations' Capacity.
3. Access to information services and finance is improved for smallholders.
4. Small producers have access to climatic risk management instruments.

These result areas are broad and need to be populated with specific interventions which;

- are based on new developments in Rwanda,
- capitalize on past and ongoing public and private sector activities and lessons on what works and what doesn't work.

We have therefore invited you as representatives of the various stakeholders, to share your experiences, knowledge and priorities to help us with this planning.

Participants include representatives from government, development partners, research institutes, NGOs, the private sector, financial institutions, and farmers' organizations.

Today's programme is divided into three parts:

- project launch
- presentations to give an overview of the current status and ongoing initiatives in the potato sector
- planning session

Dear Friends I wish you fruitful deliberations and look forward to a well designed project work plan.”