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PERSPECTIVES ON POLICY INTERVENTIONS FOR THE AGRIFOOD SECTOR IN SURINAME: FOCUS ON THE INDIGENOUS AND TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

May 2024

SDGs:



Country:

Suriname

Project Code:

TCP/SUR/3803

FAO Contribution:

USD 110 000

Duration:

15 November 2022–30 November 2023

Contact Info:

FAO Representation in Suriname
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Implementing Partner

Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries.

Beneficiaries

Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ITPs), extension workers and hinterland communities from Suriname.

Country Programming Framework (CPF) Outputs

CPF “Value chain Development for Strengthening Food Systems”. Output 3.2: Enhanced capacity for entrepreneurship for women, youth, family farmers, rural groups and extension officers.



BACKGROUND

Agriculture is Suriname’s second most important economic sector, accounting for 10 percent of total export earnings. The main crops are rice, bananas and other fruit and vegetables, with rice being the dominant crop both in terms of agricultural exports and acreage cultivated. The trade balance is deteriorating due to the recent decline in international markets and prices for the country’s main exports (oil, gold, aluminium). The government is therefore facing serious economic and political challenges to increase employment, reform the public sector and improve socio-economic living conditions. The Government’s Macro-Economic Reform Plan notes that in transitioning to a Green Economy, focus will be on trade and investments, with priority given to oil and gas, agriculture and food security, services and tourism.

Four distinct groups of Indigenous Peoples living in Suriname’s hinterland are at risk of being excluded because of structural disadvantages, limitations in capabilities and the lack of well-informed policies addressing inclusion, alongside their effective enforcement. The remoteness and difficulties of access mean that agricultural systems in the hinterland cannot rely on agricultural inputs (e.g. fertilizers, agricultural tools) from outside the area. Therefore, there is a need to shift to agricultural production systems that allow permanent cultivation on established fields, and to diversify agricultural products to include agroforestry systems.

During the first six months of the COVID-19 pandemic, Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ITPs) were identified in the United Nations Socio-economic Impact Assessment as one of the 12 groups most vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19. This revealed high levels of poverty, reduced income generation, minimal financial security and a lack of access to basic social services. Moreover, the data showed that there is an urgent need to support government efforts to improve food security and employment opportunities for ITP communities struggling with COVID-19. While food and nutrition (agriculture) policies aspire to guarantee food security and food safety for all, challenges persist in ensuring inclusivity to reduce vulnerabilities and inequality gaps. Within this context, the Government of Suriname requested FAO’s support to strengthen and develop a sustainable food system chain to provide healthy diets for all and promote prosperous and inclusive rural societies.

This project aimed to support this priority area by synthesizing economic and policy information, with the objective of making informed agrifood policy decisions. The project also aimed to support an enabling business environment for targeted innovative crop development. For this, support was provided to the Ministries of Regional Development, Agriculture and Social Affairs to help communities restart or find new income-generating activities, develop their financial resilience, and safeguard food production and food security.

IMPACT

The project significantly contributed to the improvement of income generation by ITPs and their access to shock-responsive agricultural services guided by clear and inclusive policies. Following the project’s implementation, a comprehensive Food and Nutrition Security Policy that informs policy decisions for the ITP communities was approved and is under implementation. The contribution of the project to the development of evidence-based policies and programmes supported inclusive and informed decision-making for ITPs, which will act as an advocacy tool for further resource mobilization beyond the project. Moreover, capacity-building under the project was designed to support knowledge transfer through networking, training, knowledge products and tools.

ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

The project engaged in strategic consultations and analysis between current realities, existing social policies and the food security initiative, to enhance the policy framework that is more inclusive of ITPs. The project was structured on the basis of three outputs designed to respond to the identified problem.

These outputs included actions and activities that aimed to support an enabling business environment for targeted innovative crop development and to help communities to restart or find new income-generating activities, develop their financial resilience, and safeguard food production and food security. The project supported training of extension workers and hinterland communities, as well as the design of didactic material needed for skills training and coaching in more productive and sustainable agricultural practices, as well as introducing appropriate technologies to complement the traditional food system practices to allow for resilience against climate change and biodiversity loss.

In 2023, FAO made a strategic decision to link as a co-funded project TCP/SUR/3803 and UNJP/SUR/008/UNJ, “Leaving No One Behind, Building Resilience, and Improving Livelihoods of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ITPs) in Suriname”, due to the similarity in aims of both projects. One of the key outcomes of this collaboration was the facilitation of a participatory drafting process of a comprehensive integrated policy framework aimed at strengthening policies and their implementation mechanisms, thereby ensuring gender inclusion and sustainable development of ITPs. In November 2023, the Integrated Policy Blueprint for ITPs was developed with the support of another project, “Perspectives on Policy Interventions for the agrifood sector in Suriname: Focus on the Indigenous and Tribal Communities” (TCP/SUR/3803). The policy blueprint identified gaps and outlined requirements for the implementation of policies that benefit ITPs. Opportunities for the scaling-up of agroforestry to achieve food security and sustainable livelihoods for ITP farmers were generated, with five agroforestry ambassador farmers (three male and two female) from Donderskamp receiving tools and training in sustainable, climate-friendly agriculture practices that aimed to build skills and promote food security and enhanced economic resilience in their community. The training pilot designed for scaling-up exposed the farmers to a diverse set of commodities that could be used as food security and livelihood options for income generation. Apart from this, the training built awareness within communities to identify trees with different purposes for these agroforestry systems.



IMPLEMENTATION OF WORK PLAN AND BUDGET

The project took the necessary actions to address the challenges detected in each phase and to adapt the workplan accordingly. The above-mentioned policy blueprint is the framework for the revisions to the existing policy on food and nutrition, and the document requires feedback from stakeholders in Government and ITP communities. As a result, it was not ready for publication by November 2023, but is instead expected to be completed by June 2024.

In May 2023, the new staff member hired to represent the focal point left the project, while the representative of the Office of Technology Transfer (TTO) retired, resulting in a huge management gap in the representation for Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname, which affected the Steering Committee for the project “Inclusion, Building Resilience and Improving Livelihoods of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Suriname” (UNJP/SUR/008/UNJ) and caused severe delays. These challenges made it necessary for the project to be redesigned and funds reprogrammed.

Other project delays were due to challenges in aligning schedules between the project's many stakeholders and, more importantly, ensuring that Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) protocols were followed when working with ITP groups. Obtaining feedback and decisions from ITP communities proved to be a slow process due to complex, multilevel governance structures and logistical and communication challenges caused by remoteness and language barriers. Another aspect of the work plan that caused delays was the use of a co-funding approach with the UNJP/SUR/008/UNJ project, in which leaders of the ITP communities were involved. Due to the location of the communities, briefings took several months.

FOLLOW-UP FOR GOVERNMENT ATTENTION

The interinstitutional platform for coordination between social policies and agricultural initiatives needs further support to the double social and productive route for the inclusion of ITPs. Under the co-funding arrangement with project UNJP/SUR/008/UNJ and through the Programme Management Unit established for operationalization of activities during the project and further sustainability beyond the project, it is expected that follow-up arrangements will take place to ensure similar representation beyond the closure of the present project.

Consultation sessions with the Association of Indigenous Tribal Leaders (VIDS), the Association of Tribal Peoples in Suriname (KAMPOS) and the Ministry of Regional Development and Sport (MRDS) were completed in 2023, as well as a needs assessment (two focus groups) with nine indigenous leaders and 13 members of tribal communities. The data collected from these activities can and will be used to inform the design of programmes under UNJP/SUR/008/UNJ (co-funded by TCP/SUR/3803), and other programmes for ITPs. The data will also be used to support the development of the Integrated Policy for ITPs, which is being finalised under UNJP/SUR/008/UNJ.

SUSTAINABILITY

1. Capacity development

The sustainability elements under this project are the knowledge products that were developed to promote knowledge-sharing among indigenous communities beyond the project. A syllabus was developed under the agroforestry project for use by indigenous farmers to promote knowledge-sharing towards the adoption and implementation of the approaches learned and to encourage a change in mindset towards innovative and climate-smart approaches to farming. It highlights the topics, objectives and outputs of each module and provides details on the toolkit to be used for plot development and in the training sessions. The toolkit will be used to support the farmer ambassadors' training and in the implementation of agroforestry techniques in the village.

2. Gender equality

The capacity-building activities on agroforestry and climate-resilient solutions provided rural women farmers and smallholders with skills and training in agricultural practices for their development as agripreneurs and for improved economic and climate resilience. The policy development process was also predominantly led by female representatives from ITP groups and the government.

Two out of five agroforestry ambassador farmers were women and the focus groups hosted in ITP communities to collect data for policy and programmes were predominantly women. Furthermore, gender is mainstreamed into the policy blueprint, and gender dimensions have been integrated into all data collection tools, including the needs assessment.



3. Environmental sustainability

The project's aim was resilience to the changing climate conditions, contributing to both environmental and economic sustainability and resilience. Farmers were trained in climate-smart and environmentally friendly approaches that also supported increased food security and sustainable livelihood resilience.

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

To mitigate against social risk and programmatic risk, ITP groups were consulted and were part of the decision-making process during all stages of the project life cycle. This also ensured that all activities and expectations were in line with the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and that communication across cultures was effective. The process for the development of the policy framework for ITPs was grounded in human rights, guided by ITPs, for ITPs, with an inclusive approach of ITP organizations as key focal points for planning and implementing the project.

5. Technological sustainability

The project introduced new technologies that increased the capacity of beneficiaries to become self-sustainable. For example, the hydroponics systems are an efficient method for growing food indoors or in small spaces, allowing for more control over how a plant is grown without the need for soil, which has advantages over large-scale commercial agriculture, especially in regions of Suriname with extreme climates or inadequate rainfall.

6. Economic sustainability

Additional resources were mobilized as a result of the decision to combine the funding from TCP/SUR/3803 and UNJP/SUR/008/UNJ. This pairing resulted in a more effective use of resources and increased synergies across the programme for successful delivery of results.



DOCUMENTS AND OUTREACH PRODUCTS

- ❑ Rudi, N, Felicity, F and Anwar, H. 2024. *Policy Brief - Case of Donderskamp*. CELOS, Department of Agriculture, Suriname.
- ❑ Paes de Sousa, R. 2023. *Blueprint and Policy Framework* (draft). Suriname.
- ❑ Anwar, H. 2023. *Agroforestry Syllabus for Indigenous Farmers*. CELOS.

ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS - LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Expected Impact	By 2030, Indigenous and Tribal Communities in Suriname have improved incomes and access to shock responsive agricultural services guided by clear and inclusive policies.		
Outcome	A comprehensive Food and Nutrition Security Policy that informs policy decisions for the Indigenous and Tribal Communities has been approved and is under implementation		
	Indicator	- Revised Food and Nutrition Security Policy and Action Plan approved (Output 1). - Number of meetings organized by the interinstitutional platform for coordination between social policies and agricultural initiatives, in 2024 (Output 2).	
	Baseline	- 0 - 0	
	End Target	- A policy framework/blueprint developed. - 15 meetings.	
	Comments and follow-up action to be taken	<p>FAO promotes a programme approach to implementation in order to achieve the so-called “Four Betters”: better production, better nutrition, better environment and better life. This approach ensures synergies between projects, reduced duplication of effort and maximized use of resources across projects.</p> <p>In 2023, FAO made a strategic decision to utilize the TCP/SUR/3803 funding as co-funding for project UNJP/SUR/008/UNJ, “Leaving No One Behind, Building Resilience, and Improving Livelihoods of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ITPs) in Suriname” due to the similarity in aims of both projects, as illustrated by the Review of Food and Nutrition Policy – inclusion, closing gaps and improving implementation with respect to food security and nutrition and livelihood needs of ITCs.</p> <p>One of the key results under project UNJP/SUR/008/UNJ is “Strengthened policy and regulatory framework to improve inclusion and resilience of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ITPs),”. Under Output 1.1, the project aimed to facilitate and guide a participatory drafting process of a comprehensive integrated policy framework which seeks to strengthen policy and its execution mechanisms ensuring gender inclusion and sustainable development of the ITPs.</p> <p>In November 2023, the integrated policy blueprint for ITPs was developed with support from the project. The blueprint identifies gaps and outlines the requirements for implementation of the Food and Nutrition Policy. It is currently receiving feedback and being validated under project UNJP/SUR/008/UNJ.</p>	
Output 1	Revised Food and Nutrition Policy with increased participation of the Indigenous and tribal communities.		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of policy briefs published.	1	Partially
Baseline	0		
Comments	<p>The policy blueprint has been produced but not published.</p> <p>In 2023, FAO conducted a mission to Suriname to collect data to inform the development of the policy blueprint. Co-funding for its development was also provided by project UNJP/SUR/008/UNJ. The policy blueprint is the framework for the revisions to the existing policy on food and nutrition (agriculture). The document requires feedback from government stakeholders and ITP communities. As such, it was not ready for publication by November 2023, but is expected to be completed by June 2024.</p> <p>Following the loss of the project focal point, a new staff member hired under the programme with little to no handover was thrust into the position. The TTO office was also undergoing a period of transition as the representative retired in May 2023, leaving a significant management gap in the Representation for Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname. The gap in representation affected the Steering Committee for project UNJP/SUR/008/UNJ and the UN Country Team.</p> <p>Under the UNJP project, a recommendation was made to utilize the same consultant already working on the UNJP as communications consultant. This was to mitigate against stakeholder fatigue among ITPs, promote project continuity and ensure integration in all communication aspects within the project. The recommendation was endorsed by FAO prior to May 2023. After her hiring and onboarding, the consultant unexpectedly left the project.</p> <p>This unexpected occurrence caused significant delays, given the consultant's role in meeting the outputs under this TCP. Unforeseen delays were also caused by the retirement of the FAO Assistant Representative and the FAO Representative, both in May 2024. These challenges required a redesign of the project and reprogramming of funds.</p>		

Activity 1.1	Review of the Food Security Policy and Action Plan.	
	Achieved	Partially
	Comments	The review of the “National Policy and Regulatory Framework on Food and Nutrition Security” was completed in 2023 by the international and local policy consultants hired jointly under project UNJP/SUR/008/UNJ and co-funded by TCP/SUR/3803. In 2023, as part of the process for the development of an integrated policy framework for ITPs, the National Policy and Regulatory Framework on Food and Nutrition Security was one of the four policies reviewed. The framework outlines the plan of action for the (agriculture) policy and aspires to guarantee food security and food safety for all, develop a sustainable agricultural sector, and increase agriculture’s contribution to GDP and economic development. The document has not been published as is still in the process of finalization under project UNJP/SUR/008/UNJ. The linking of the TCP and UNJP projects allowed additional time for feedback, validation and finalization.
Activity 1.2	Strengthen data collection Infrastructure	
	Achieved	No
	Comments	Due to the change in scope of work and design of the activities under this project, this activity was not completed.
Activity 1.3	Strengthen data collection Infrastructure	
	Achieved	Yes
	Comments	The linking of activities between this project and UNJP/SUR/008/UNJ was crucial. The consultative process on the Policy Framework began in 2023 and continues in 2024 under UNJP/SUR/008/UNJ. In 2023, consultations for endorsement of the policy blueprint were held with ITP groups VIDS and KAMPOS. The policy framework was also shared for feedback and input by United Nations partner agencies and government partners. In October 2023, virtual consultations were held with VIDS and KAMPOS to gather information on policies and programme priorities for the ITP peoples. Further to this, in November 2023, an in-person policy consultation meeting was held with the MRDS during the joint mission to Suriname by FAO/UNWOMEN. The ITPC leaders were involved in the project, however the remoteness of the communities meant that briefings took several months to be completed. Conflicting priorities of key partners impacted the scheduling of the consultations by the policy consultants and the food security and livelihoods consultants. These consultations were the pre-requisite to the validation sessions for the policy framework. Additionally, policy inputs and project timelines were impacted, causing significant delays in implementation. Some of the project risk due to delays was mitigated by switching to direct implementation. Consultations in ITP communities were completed by March 2024, with the policy framework endorsement process completed by June 2024. A policy brief based on the experience of Donderskamp was developed. This was informed by interviews and focus groups hosted by CELOS and held with the indigenous farmers.

Output 2	Inter-institutional platform for coordination between social policies and agricultural initiatives to support the double (social and productive) route for the inclusion of indigenous and tribal peoples.		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	- Number of meetings organized by the platform in 2022 and 2023. - Number of ITPs organizations and community representatives consulted.	- 12 - 2	- Yes - Yes
Baseline	- 0 - 0		
Comments	The interinstitutional platform for coordination between social policies and agricultural initiatives took the form of a Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee established under UNJP/SUR/008/UNJ. Both platforms were used to share information, exchange ideas, agree on decisions and solicit input from government and ITP communities on the advancement of the policy framework. Members of the Steering Committee include representatives from the Ministry of Regional Development and Sport, the Gender Bureau, VID and KAMPOS, the Medical Mission and the United Nations agencies that are a part of the joint programme. The Technical Committee was focused more on day-to-day project decisions and activities. The Steering Committee focused on strategic level decision-making.		
Activity 2.1	Develop Format and working arrangements for the Platform.		
	Achieved	Partially	
	Comments	Under co-funding from the UNJP/SUR/008/UNJ project and through the Programme Management Unit established for operationalization of activities during the project, and sustainability beyond the project, it is expected that follow-up arrangements will take place to ensure similar representation beyond the project.	
Activity 2.2	Elaboration of a draft Work plan for 2022.		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	See explanation in comments section of Activity 2.1.	
Activity 2.3	Enabling environment to support concrete Platform Decisions.		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	See explanation in comments section of Activity 2.1.	
Activity 2.4	Support with training for management of the Platform.		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	See explanation in comments section of Activity 2.1.	
Activity 2.5	Conduct 12 Sessions of the Platform.		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	See explanation in comments section of Activity 2.1.	

Output 3	Intercultural capacity development programme designed and validated to support the economic and productive inclusion of tribal and indigenous communities		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
Baseline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of extension workers trained. - Number of revised training materials (manuals, infographics, videos etc.). - Number of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Organizations consulted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 25 - To be determined. - To be determined. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No - Yes - Yes
Comments	<p>Under Output 3, Project Activity: “Creating Opportunities for scale up of Agroforestry to Achieve Food security and sustainable livelihoods for ITP farmers - Techniques in Shifting cultivation system in Suriname for Lead Indigenous and Tribal Farmers of Donderskamp, Suriname, in 2023”, five agroforestry ambassador farmers (three male and two female) from Donderskamp received tools and training in sustainable, climate-friendly agriculture practices aimed at building skills and promoting food security and enhanced economic resilience in their community.</p> <p>The training pilot designed for scaling-up exposed the farmers to a diverse set of commodities that could be used as food security and livelihood options for income generation. Apart from this, the training built awareness within communities to identify trees with different purposes for these agroforestry systems. For the purposes of sustainability, a key element of the training was the training of the farmers to network and promote a changing mindset in their communities towards adopting these approaches and similar innovative climate-smart approaches for farming. Details of the training activities were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction of agroforestry - Design of agroforestry systems - Non-traditional plant propagation techniques of cassava, plantain, sweet potato, ginger, vegetable seeds, tree seedlings. - Soil health management. - Trees in agroforestry systems. - Set up of tree nurseries and nurseries management. - Field visit to the CELOS agroforestry field. - Market and agroshop visit. <p>One of the outputs from this activity was the creation of a syllabus to be used as a guide by indigenous farmers for the transfer of information to other farmers.</p> <p>Five farmers were coached for a period of three months after completion of the training via distance learning. In addition, a coaching model was developed by the CELOS agroforestry team. Six months after planting the model plots, the five farmers would organize a field demonstration day for other farmers of Donderskamp. This is under the in-kind contribution from CELOS in collaboration with VIDS.</p> <p>Consultation sessions with VIDS, KAMPOS and the MRDS were completed in 2023, as well as a needs assessment (two focus groups) with nine indigenous leaders and 13 community members from the tribal communities respectively. The data collected from these activities will be used to inform programmes that are aligned with the needs of ITP peoples. Due to the delay in completing the consultations and needs assessment, analysis, programme identification, design and validation activities had to be rescheduled to 2024 under the co-funded project UNJP/SUR/008/UNJ.</p> <p>There was a delay in hosting the consultations, however, in an effort to accelerate the project, the decision was taken to switch to a direct implementation modality.</p>		

Activity 3.1	Culturally appropriate capacity development plan.	
	Achieved	Partially
	Comments	<p>The sustainability element under this project is represented by the knowledge products that were developed to promote knowledge-sharing among indigenous communities beyond the project. A syllabus was developed under the agroforestry project for use by the indigenous farmers. It highlights the topics, objectives and outputs of each module, as well as details on the toolkit to be used for plot development and in the training sessions. The toolkit will be used to support the farmer ambassadors' training and in the implementation of agroforestry techniques in the village.</p> <p>A syllabus was produced under the project to promote knowledge-sharing towards the adoption and implementation of the approaches learned and to encourage a change in mindset towards innovative, climate-smart approaches to farming. The broad outline of the syllabus is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training Module 1: Introduction to agroforestry. - Training Module 2: Participatory agroforestry design. - Training Module 3: Non-traditional plant propagation techniques. - Training Module 4: Agroforestry extension. - Use of the Agroforestry training kit.
Strengthen Data Collection Infrastructure		
Activity 3.2	Achieved	No
	Comments	This activity did not take place due to the change in scope of the project under this outcome. See Impediment Output 1.
Skills enhancement for extension officers in specific technical areas.		
Activity 3.3	Achieved	No
	Comments	This activity did not take place due to the change in scope of the project under this outcome.

Partnerships and Outreach

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

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