



Episode Three: The input shop

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Synopsis

An input shop is a small enterprise whose aim is to facilitate access to inputs for farmers and supply a local service. These shops are autonomous entities run as associations or cooperatives; they are owned by grassroots producers' organizations (PO), unions or PO federations.

Characters

Idi: a small-scale farmer

Saidou: manager of the input shop (IS)

Chair of the IS management committee

Secretary of the IS management committee

➤ Scene 1

Driven by curiosity, Idi (a farmer who does not generally use fertilizer) goes to an input shop to inquire about conditions for purchasing and using fertilizer. Saidou, the store manager, explains the products he sells, as well as the local services that the input shop can offer.

Music: *Cue in theme music. Keep for 20 seconds and crossfade.*

Idi: *(to the manager, after the traditional greetings)* I have just left my cousin Mintou; she was in her field, the small plot that her uncle Niandou made available to her. You'll remember that when they divided up the inheritance, she did not receive any land because she married out of the family.

Saidou: Hmm, that's a delicate subject. I think it's very unfair on women when it comes to the issue of inheritance. But I don't suppose it was that you came here to talk about?

Idi: You're right. That's not why I came. As I said, I was in Mintou's field. And it looked very good. The millet, the beans, the sorghum – everything she has sown is growing so well! I wonder what she uses to make it grow like that?

Saidou: It's very simple. She uses fertilizer! Didn't you know?

Idi: Fertilizer! What kind of fertilizer? I use fertilizer too. Rouga the herder's flock spends half the dry season in my field.

Saidou: Organic manure fertilizes soil, but it's not always enough. You have to apply mineral fertilizer as well.

Idi: Mineral fertilizer. Alhaji Manou sells it in his shop; I'll run and buy some.

Saidou: *Hey té lakkal* (be smart). You are looking at the prophet and you run off in search of paradise elsewhere? What is this shop called? The input shop. Take a look. What do you see?

Idi: Sacks, cans, even some ploughs.

Sound of men and women farmers arriving to buy inputs

Saidou: Look Idi, these sacks contain fertilizer, and these cans contain products for treating crops. The hoes and ploughs are used for working the fields. In short, here you have everything you need to improve your agricultural production. And this shop is open every day.

Idi: Is it free?

Saidou: No, of course not! But the prices are a lot lower than market prices. And what's more, you have the guarantee that you are buying a good product.

Idi: I do want to buy a bit of fertilizer; but look at my wallet. I've only got enough to buy a few kilos.

Saidou: The shop sells quantities for customers with low budgets. See? The products are divided up into small packets. That's to answer the fertilizer needs of farmers who don't have much money to spend. How much do you want to buy?

Idi: Here (*sound of Idi getting out coins*), give me what I can buy for this amount.

Saidou: (*searching in the shop*) Idi, I think you should join our union, the Bokki union. That way, you could take advantage of the many benefits that union activities offer, especially the input shop.

Idi: What are the other advantages of belonging to the union?

Saidou: You want to know? Come tomorrow. The union is holding an important meeting. You could use the opportunity to get your membership card. I'm expecting the members of the IS management committee soon, to go over the accounts before the meeting.

Sound of IS management committee members arriving

➤ Scene 2

Enter the Chair and the secretary of the IS management committee, who have come to carry out an audit of the IS accounts.

Chair of IS management committee: *Salama alaïkoum* Saidou! How are things today. I hope business is good.

Zali (*the secretary, interjecting*): We noticed a big crowd in front of the shop. I hope you have enough fertilizer left to satisfy all the demand?

Saidou: Thank goodness, we still have stock left. But it's time we thought about renewing it.

Chair of IS management committee: The general assembly is going to rule on this issue tomorrow. It's mainly to renew orders that the union has called this general meeting (*see fourth episode on group orders*). I hope we're up to date with our accounts. You know that the union members trust us and we mustn't let them down.

Saidou: They won't be disappointed. Everything is in accordance with the general assembly directives. Here are the accounts papers. Take a look.

Chair of IS management committee (*talking to the secretary*): Take these documents Zali, since you have studied, and see if the accounts are in order.

Sound of the treasurer looking over the accounts and, after 30", speaking to the Chair: "I think it's all in order, Chair".

➤ Scene 3

Idi, who has been watching the exchange, interjects in the discussion.

Idi: (*addressing the chair of the IS management committee*) Chair, your organization seems interesting. At first, I didn't believe in it. But now I want to take full advantage of the services offered by the input shop. I will take part in tomorrow's meeting. But before all that, can you explain the purpose of the input shop. I thought it belonged to Saidou?

Chair of IS management committee: Let me do my best to explain it to you. If needs be, Saidou can add to what I've said. First of all, you should know that the input shop belongs to our union, The Bokki union. We set it up to facilitate access to inputs for small-scale farmers. This IS also offers many other local services, but its main purpose is to sell fertilizer. You have seen – all the men and women farmers come here to buy their fertilizer.

Idi: Yes I have. I've also noticed that there are more women than men, but that they buy small quantities.

Chair of IS management committee: They make their purchases according to their needs. As well as fertilizer, the IS sells other agricultural and veterinary inputs, to improve agricultural and livestock production. That means fertilizer, but also seed, phytosanitary products, agricultural tools and material, animal husbandry and veterinary products, etc.

Idi: But where do you get these agricultural inputs? Are they good quality? How are they different from those sold by Alhaji Manou?

Chair of IS management committee: Saidou explain how we make our orders.

Saidou: In order to ensure quality inputs, the Bokki input shop likes to order from the supply centre for inputs and agricultural materials (CAIMA). As regards quality, all the shop's products are checked and analysed before sale. If you will allow me Chair, I would also like to tell Idi that the input shop produces and multiplies seed, organizes group orders, hires out agricultural and veterinary material and also offers phytosanitary treatment carried out by recognized handlers.

Idi: Actually I was just wondering what I could do to stop these grasshoppers, which are attacking the ears of my millet.

Chair of IS management committee (*to the manager*): Saidou, suggest a good product for him. Tomorrow, the handler will go and treat his field. If it interests you, you can also hire small-scale agricultural and veterinary equipment (donkey-drawn hoes, seeders, furrowers, motor pumps, treatment applicators). You can rent them for as many days as you like.

After a short silence

Chair of IS management committee: Idi, I am really surprised that you don't have all this information. But our radio does daily broadcasts with information on the types of inputs available in the shop and their price, and all the information is displayed at the IS. Also, the manager, a facilitator or a government extension agent carries out training sessions on how to use inputs and rented agricultural equipment.

Saidou: *(confirming the Chair's suggestions)* As manager, I can provide technical agricultural advice (fertilizing, weeding, etc.) and advice on local animal husbandry treatments (deworming, livestock vaccination). We can also arrange for other resource people to carry out demonstrations, for example of applying fertilizer in microdoses.

Idi: If I have understood correctly, you can tell me how to care for my animals when they are sick, even though you are not a vet?

Saidou: No, of course I am not a vet, but we have received appropriate training. Idi, you must definitely come to the general assembly tomorrow. Everyone will be there: the union members, facilitators, government trainers etc. It will be a big meeting, during which we will renew our group orders. Start thinking about what you are going to order, all right?

Idi: All right! I will be there, *Incha Allah*

Music: *Cue in closing theme music. Keep for 20 seconds and crossfade.*

End of Episode Three.

