

Empowering Smallholder Farmers in Markets

“Farmers organizations and researchers in a strategic partnership”

Update February 2012

EDITORIAL

Strengthening farmer organizations in evidence collection and the development of advocacy strategies for policy development

By Giel Ton, ESFIM Programme coordinator

Since the last update of 2011, a number of national farmer organizations (NFOs) started translating the research findings into the preparation of explicit advocacy activities. This included mobilising networks and contacts in the policy arena for consultation and dialogue and public events, meetings with key government officials, and information dissemination about research findings to their members.

In many countries, it is not the wording of the policy, as such, but the implementation of the policy that falls short and needs to be adjusted to generate positive impact for smallholders. Policy instruments and institutional arrangements have to be carefully designed to be effective for smallholders. ESFIM supports ten national farmers organisations in their advocacy on some of these issues providing

research support. These experiences are exchanged between national farmers organisations and feed learning processes and advocacy efforts on the regional and global level.

ESFIM is rolling out an assessment tool to monitor the advocacy capacity of NFOs, this being the key intended outcome of ESFIM-support. Learning from this assessment will

feed into the preparations for a next phase of ESFIM which intends to involve a large number of NFOs partners as well as linking-up with regional farmer organizations.

The first results of the ESFIM programme were shared at various international conferences, such as the EU Forum on Rural Development held in Palencia, March/April 2011, the Platform for African – European Partnership in Agricultural Research for Development (PAEPARD) meeting on ‘Farmers’ organizations and agricultural research for development in Africa, held in Brussels 27 September, 2011, the International Conference on Innovation in Extension and Advisory Services held in Nairobi, November 2011. ●

BENIN

Linking research and advocacy for a competitive maize sector

In Benin, Fédération des Unions de Producteurs de Bénin (FUPRO) participates in the ESFIM programme. Much effort has been placed on using effort research and workshops to advance a major action research programme referred to as Avant Projet Mais (APM), to enable cereal food value chains to become more competitive, sustainable and inclusive.

Specific attention is given to the maize value chains, as maize is the most important staple food in Benin.

ESFIM is oriented to the component of strategy development and lobby and advocacy, whereas the APM programme focussed more on practical action for farmers and their partners in agri-business. These two orientations proved to be valuable and complementary in moving towards the development of more competitive and inclusive value chains. (...)

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Monitoring research and advocacy capacity of NFOs

ESFIM has developed a system to track impacts of its ongoing and future activities. First, the ESFIM team developed a detailed results chain i.e. a ‘theory of change’ that reflected the expectations of the ESFIM programme on impacts on smallholder market access. Key intermediate outcome indicators related with the NFOs organisational capacities are chosen to monitor changes that can be attributed fully or partially to the ESFIM supported activities. The benefits for smallholder farmer households of advocacy activities are indirect and mid-term. It is assumed that the advocacy will enable non-traditional marketing arrangements to emerge and expand (e.g. contract farming, niche marketing, collective marketing). (...)

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(...) The ESFIM action will have impact on the social capital on the level of the farmers' organisations and networks and their strengths in organizing market access for smallholders, reflected in five capacities. These five capacities are based on the 5C-framework developed by ECDPM (Heather and Morgan, 2008). ESFIM dedicates resources to research that seek to enhance the capacities of NFOs to influence and shape a more conducive institutional environment. The impact of these activities will be that these NFO's are more closely involved and proactively approached in the design of public policy, research agendas and the donor community programmes.

To assess the change in advocacy capacity of the NFOs, a monitoring tool has been developed to collect panel data on the key dimensions relevant to organizational strength and advocacy efficiency. In 2012, in an auto-evaluation workshop, the baseline-position of the partner NFOs advocacy capacity will be assessed using this tool. ●



(...) To date, these activities have resulted in ten contracted research assignments, where fact-finding and policy challenges are identified. These include:

- Direct purchase of food crops by institutional buyers responsible for food stocks
- Institutional measures for improving service provision to farmers and their local organizations (research and extension, credit, etc.)
- Transparency/monopoly of the fertilizer sector
- Investment in seed production and multiplication
- Incentives for stimulating effective adoption of storage and post-harvest practices
- Respect of regulations for cross border trade and reduction transaction risks and costs
- Institutional measures for encouraging private enterprises to source directly food crops from (organized) farmers.

FUPRO invested in regional member consultation and strategic workshops to share research results and share concerns in market access and consolidation. With the support of a write-shop, these efforts translated into policy briefs, popular communication articles and concrete advocacy strategies. The actual lobby strategies and development activities will be further elaborated under the joint ESFIM and APM effort. The endeavours indicate the potential of FUPRO to steer positive change in value chains and making markets more accessible for smallholder farmers. ●

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<http://fupro-benin.com/accueil.html>



Policy briefs

One component of the ESFIM programme comprises a 'Comparative Research' element. This focusses on developing insight and evidence on various topics, resulting into Policy Briefs.

These Policy Briefs serve two purposes: 1) informing the advocacy strategy of participating NFOs about successful practices and challenges concerning different aspects of market access; 2) directly informing policy

makers, decision makers and the donor communities on these practices so that it can feed into dialogues.

Three Policy briefs have been produced:

- Innovative Financial Models
- Incentives in Collective Marketing
- Risk Insurance Models

These Briefs are both available on the ESFIM website and distributed to a wide audience at events, seminars and workshops. This Comparative Research of ESFIM has already lead

to and fed into other initiatives. The activities around Incentive Systems for Collective Marketing have transcended the initial phase of drafting policy briefs and have contributed to a larger process of case-studies research in Bolivia. The development of the Policy Brief on Risk Insurance Models has brought the AGRINATURA – ESFIM knowledge and partners together in a large EU funded programme entitled 'Accessible systems to manage risks in family agriculture in Africa', that will launch in 2012 in Zambia, Tanzania and Burkina Faso. ●

URUGUAY

CAF revitalising the role of cooperatives in agricultural innovation

Uruguay has a vibrant agricultural sector with an important cooperative sector. However, cooperatives face decreasing influence, as their traditional economic services (input supply, storage and marketing) are increasingly delivered through contract farming arrangements by corporate food companies.

This urges cooperatives, the main instrument for family farmers for collective action in markets, to adjust their internal structure to face the changing dynamics of markets and service provisioning needs.

In 2009, CAF (Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives) invited ESFIM to focus on the identification of good practice on the management in the cooperative sector and the opportunities and constraints for adopting such practices including incentive structures for collective marketing.

Several workshops were organized to exchange innovative practices between cooperatives, in particular innovations to increase members' commitment and loyalty in using the cooperative as their economic instrument.

In 2011, the research has broadened towards the study on the capacities in the cooperative to link-up with the national research agency the Agencia Nacional de Investigacion y Innovacion (ANII). CAF decided to allocate ESFIM funds to study the constraints in 'innovation capacity' from the perspective of the cooperative sector. A contracted researcher prepared a tool to map the problem, and four sector specialists helped to focus the research on strategic innovation challenges in each sector, where cooperatives need to upgrade their capacities in order to catch up with their competitors. ●

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<http://www.caf.org.uy>



NASFAMs concerns about access to certified quality seeds and accurate market information

The National Smallholder Farmers Association of Malawi (NASFAM) identified that one of the major challenges that smallholder farmers in Malawi face is access to certified quality seed, especially for legumes.

The small production of certified seeds makes certified seeds scarce on the market with resulting high price. As a result most of the farmers resort to saving their own seed. This greatly affects productivity and yield with yield potential reduced by 80% due to reduced vigour and increased pest and disease incidence. In some parts of the country, the availability of seeds in the right quantities and delivered before the first rains becomes a challenge due to poor distribution. This is also impacted by the poor road infrastructure that renders most of the roads impassable during the rainy season. Coupled with this is the issue of packaging into quantities that farmers are able to afford. NASFAM seeks to redress the issue of access to seed through advocacy and lobbying for an improved seed supply system. As a starting

point, NASFAM spearheaded research to identify lessons learnt about smallholder commercial seed multiplication.

Also, NASFAM considers information asymmetry as one of the major hindrances to market access by smallholder farmers in Malawi.

Whilst efforts in gathering and distributing of market information are present in Malawi, there has been little progress on getting appropriate information to the farmers in a relevant form and in a timely manner in order to facilitate their decision-making processes.

This has led to the second theme of research, namely reviewing current smallholder and provider experiences with market information systems (MIS). ●

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www.nasfam.org



Advocacy on special policies for economic smallholder organisations

ESFIM works with the national platform of economic smallholder organizations, the Coordinadora de Integración de Organizaciones Económicas Campesinas (CIOEC), in Bolivia. This apex organisation comprises more than 200 economic grassroots organisations that engage in collective marketing and processing.

In 2004 CIOEC submitted an initiative to legislate a Law for the legal recognition of Rural Economic Organizations (OECAs). It aims to achieve legal recognition of OECAs and to promote their development through production, processing and / or joint marketing of goods and services, with emphasis on the regulation of the constitution, organization and organizational functioning of the OECAs and tax rules (special rules for OECAs). After years of stagnation, due to the discussions around a new Constitution by the Morales Government, this 'OECA Act', has been re-introduced by CIOEC during the consultations about the *Ley de Revolución Productiva Comunitaria 144*, in June 2011, and the *Cumbre Social de Cochabamba*, in December 2011.

Complementary to this, and as part of the ESFIM Comparative Research component "Incentive Structures for Collective marketing", a series of 50 case-studies, randomly selected, have been completed by two Bolivian researchers, to detail the incentive mechanisms and organizational intelligence

in collective marketing that farmer organisations developed in the last five years. This research is co-funded by ICCO, ESFIM and LEI-Wageningen, and is part of an impact study of a small-grant fund FONDOECAS, co-managed by CIOEC, AOPEB and ICCO (www.fondoeocas.org). The results are sum-

marized below, where the ten 'tensions' that are inherent in collective marketing are presented. ●

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www.cioecbolivia.org



Testimonies on YouTube

ESFIM developed an innovative way of sharing impressions and experiences of the different participating countries.

The AGRINATURA researchers were asked to reflect on the research and advocacy development process from their own point of view, and in their role as support agents to the NFOs. For each of the countries, video-taped interviews reflect on the highlights and challenges of each

country process. The interviews were edited and uploaded to YouTube and the ESFIM web-site. The testimonies indicate that the ESFIM approach is contributing to creating an interface between the NFO, research institutes and the policy arena. This 'social capital' can be considered as one of the main assets of the programme. ●

Read more

www.youtube.com/user/EsfimVideo



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ESFIM - A FARMER DRIVEN RESEARCH AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The ESFIM programme aims to strengthen smallholder farmers capacity to generate remunerative cash income from markets by strengthening the lobby and advocacy capacity of National Farmer Organisations (NFOs). ESFIM stimulates this through a combination of action research and evidence collection, policy and case-study analysis, and dialogue and cross-learning between participating NFOs. With these activities ESFIM contributes to the formulation of evidence-based policy propositions and advocacy strategies to adapt the institutional environment of markets in the benefit of smallholder farmers.

Currently, ten NFOs participate in the ESFIM programme. These are based in Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, Madagascar, Benin, Uruguay, Peru, Costa Rica, Bolivia and the Philippines. The ESFIM programme is coordinated by the AGRINATURA consortium specifically the Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR), Netherlands; the Natural Resources Institute (NRI) UK; and CIRAD, France.

COUNTRIES INVOLVED IN THE ESFIM PROGRAMME

- Benin
- Bolivia
- Costa Rica
- Kenya
- Madagascar
- Malawi
- Peru
- Philippines
- Uganda
- Uruguay



Main Partners in the ESFIM PROGRAMME

- IFAD – International Fund for Agricultural Development
- Dutch Ministry of Economy, Agriculture and Innovation
- AGRICORD – Alliance of Agri-agencies
- CTA – Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU

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