

Magazine on Low External Input Sustainable Agriculture



LEIS INDIA



**Farmers as
Entrepreneurs**



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*Young woman using her time and skill creatively
in weaving baskets*

Photo: IDF, Bangalore

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The editors have taken every care to ensure that the contents of this magazine are as accurate as possible. The authors have ultimate responsibility, however, for the content of individual articles.

The editors encourage readers to photocopy and circulate magazine articles.

Dear Readers

Encouraging entrepreneurship among rural population seems to be the buzz word. For that, the emerging pathways seem to be in substituting instead of building on what they know eg. use of ICT etc. There are several areas where farmers are already innovating through their innate abilities while availing new opportunities. This issue brings together diverse and inspiring examples dealing with community owned/community led enterprises integrating value addition, appropriate institutional forms and linkages, value added products and marketing. This reaffirms that what farmers need is a bit of guidance, a bit of support to become rural entrepreneurs. Thanks to our enthusiastic authors, we are able to share these experiences with you.

As you can see, we have worked out on the layout of the magazine to improve the readability. This is based on the feedback we received from our readers as well as our partners. We have also added a new feature – 'In Focus', highlighting independent perspective on a current issue.

As you know, LEISA India completes ten years of dedicated sharing of experiences. Recently we have expanded our outreach to the grassroots by sharing LEISA translated editions in three regional languages. Thanks to the enthusiastic support of readers as well as authors without whom this would not have been possible. We are glad that we could provide you this service of knowledge exchange, free of cost, for ten years. However, we realize that this approach will not help in sustaining the initiative for a longer period. Although the magazine has been distributed free to all those interested, vast majority of you have repeatedly expressed willingness to support the initiative financially. The time has come. We seek your support in all earnest. Please help us generously. We are enclosing a letter to each one of you. We look forward to your positive response.

The Editors

LEISA is about Low-External-Input and Sustainable Agriculture. It is about the technical and social options open to farmers who seek to improve productivity and income in an ecologically sound way. LEISA is about the optimal use of local resources and natural processes and, if necessary, the safe and efficient use of external inputs. It is about the empowerment of male and female farmers and the communities who seek to build their future on the bases of their own knowledge, skills, values, culture and institutions. LEISA is also about participatory methodologies to strengthen the capacity of farmers and other actors, to improve agriculture and adapt it to changing needs and conditions. LEISA seeks to combine indigenous and scientific knowledge and to influence policy formulation to create a conducive environment for its further development. LEISA is a concept, an approach and a political message.

AME Foundation promotes sustainable livelihoods through combining indigenous knowledge and innovative technologies for Low-External-Input natural resource management. Towards this objective, AME Foundation works with small and marginal farmers in the Deccan Plateau region by generating farming alternatives, enriching the knowledge base, training, linking development agencies and sharing experience.

AMEF is working closely with interested groups of farmers in clusters of villages, to enable them to generate and adopt alternative farming practices. These locations with enhanced visibility are utilised as learning situations for practitioners and promoters of eco-farming systems, which includes NGOs and NGO networks. www.amefound.org

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For these women, money does grow on (neem) trees

P. A Chaya

Once, the women of Muddana guddi, a village in Raichur district, in the southern Indian state of Karnataka, suffered from drought and poverty. Cursing their own troubles, they used to migrate to neighbouring states for work. Now, they are earning their own livelihoods by running a business worth hundreds of thousands of rupees. The women collect readily available neem tree seeds, to produce and sell neem cake. They have been so successful that they received a UNDP national award.

Rural Livelihoods – using value chains

Srikantha Shenoy TV

Dry land farmers of Lakkavanahalli and surrounding areas in Karnataka have found an alternative way of generating income. Intervention and initiation of this activity by IDF, an NGO in the area, has reduced the migration of these dry land farmers to urban centres for labour. Realizing the value chain potential has helped these farmers to market their products, sharpen their entrepreneurial abilities and reduce migration.

Eco tourism – an emerging rural enterprise

Inir Pinheiro

Creation of sustainable opportunities for local communities helps in conserving and promoting local cultures, traditions, environment, knowledge systems and lifestyles. Grassroutes, an NGO, through its concept of village tourism, has demonstrated newer opportunities for villagers of Purushwadi and Kohane villages of Maharashtra.



Supportive policies secure a future for family farmers

Sofia Naranjo

Processing food in order to store it, and then selling it for a higher price, is a good way of increasing farmers' incomes. But this approach needs a secure market. The Brazilian national government runs a programme which buys products directly from farmers, and even pays a surplus if farmers follow agroecological farming methods. By participating in it, farmers in the north-eastern municipality of Mirandiba have seen their monthly incomes rise sharply. This has given them hope and enthusiasm to continue farming.



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Farmers as Entrepreneurs

All people are entrepreneurs, but many don't have the opportunity to find that out. – Muhammad Yunus

The typical entrepreneur is depicted as a determined and creative leader, constantly looking for opportunities to improve and expand his or her business; somebody who takes more or less calculated risks, and who assumes responsibility for both profits and losses.

Small farmers too are entrepreneurial in a way. Farmers continuously look for better ways to organise their farm, for new crops and cultivars, better animals, and alternative technologies to diversify production, increase productivity or reduce risks. Farmers have used a variety of ways to develop alternative income earning opportunities. Such incomes may have some link to agriculture, such as the marketing or processing of agricultural products, but are also found outside the direct realm of agriculture. Common examples of this second group include the production of handicrafts, or seasonal migration. In this sense, farmers are and have been “entrepreneurial” for quite some time.

They grapple with several challenges simultaneously - from food and income needs, uncertain weather, depleted natural resources, unpredictable market situations, insensitive policies, inadequate small-farmer participation in decision-making and the globalization and liberalization of agricultural trade. Skewed development policy priorities, pursuit of global solutions to local problems, rapidly changing lifestyles with youth migrating for non-farm pursuits, community led rural entrepreneurship is threatened. Also, every facet of farming is getting increasingly externalized. There is a tendency in international co-operation to overtly prioritise the integration of farmers into export value chains, connecting them to the international markets. Small-scale and marginal rural producers are also constrained by their poor access to technical know-how, credit and weak rural institutions.

In such a context, farmers need to be constantly innovative, derive their own adaptive strategies, survive and make a living. Often, they are left to themselves. Rural credit is not yet organized to support risk taking in agriculture by small holders, extension systems are weak and unprepared for the challenges faced by the farming communities, market information systems are primitive and inaccessible, if at all they are existing. Farming communities find it difficult and are unprepared to traverse the diverse markets being opened up at local, regional and global levels, with tags and mechanisms, both cumbersome and costly, for certifying the quality of produce.

Risk taking requires both innate abilities as well as an enabling environment. The communities need time and space to rejuvenate their own imagination. They need exposure to new ideas and possibilities. They need to understand and operationalise these ideas. The opportunities could be better quality produce, offering

a new rural service for instance, eco tourism, tapping new markets, new mechanisms of organizing themselves as producer organizations. They need to cope with price fluctuations, diversify their product base as well as risk, be involved in value addition to avail the benefits of higher end markets, understand the potential buyers and in short, be able to maximize returns from investments.

Communities cannot become entrepreneurs overnight. Small-scale rural producers need improved and equitable access to productive resources, in particular, land, water and credit, to markets/market information, production/processing technologies as well as social and productive services. They also need capacity building support on group/cooperative leadership and management.

Value addition and value chains

Farmer's earnings can be increased not just by increasing productivity but also through efficient and effective value addition. In India, the difference between price paid by consumers for value added products and farmer's realisation has been increasing rapidly. Lack of backward linkage between farmers and processors and longer chain of intermediaries has resulted in lack of adequate economic benefits to farmers.

There are three ways in which value addition to farm produce is possible – primary level, involving cleaning, grading and packaging – eg., fruits and vegetables; secondary level, which includes basic processing, packaging and branding e.g. packed *atta*, *suji*, rice, and tertiary level the high end, processing which requires supply chain management, processing technology, packaging of processed foods, branding, marketing e.g. potato chips, etc.

The term “value chain” refers to the full range of activities needed to bring a product or service from conception, through production and delivery to final consumers (effective disposal after use). A broader, systems approach looks at the complex range of activities implemented by various actors, from primary producers, harvesters, processors, traders, service providers and upstream suppliers to downstream customers (Verina Ingram, p. 15). Value cannot be added to a product simply by the local communities. They need to know, understand and assess potential opportunities, able to take risks in terms of technical and financial options, necessary training and guidance, investments and facilities, appropriate governance mechanisms.

The value chain involves several stakeholders and the roles need to be defined transparently with focus on benefit to the producers. They can work successfully, if the value chains analysed, roles of each stakeholder examined and partnerships evolved carefully. (Verina Ingram, p. 15). They can be successful when they adhere to certain principles evolving out of experience. Farmers get better prices for their products and more control over value chains when they join together to form and invest in their own agro-enterprises. (Pommathat and Ling, p.8).

Value can be added locally and the product marketed locally (Chaya, p.6). Value addition can focus on better quality produce with certification and marketing locally (Robert Leo and Mathew

John, p.13). The focus could be a specific commodity like honey or in the area of consumer products for urban consumers.

Institutional forms

For all these to work, appropriate organizational mechanisms are needed. The rural poor need to be mobilized and their own local organizations strengthened to support their members in becoming successful rural entrepreneurs.

Local enterprises work best when they are formed by themselves. To strengthen local ownership, outside companies should be restricted from buying shares or having voting rights. Donor co-funding during the business planning stage is also an effective way to enable small agro-enterprises to invest and maintain their independence. (Pommathat and Ling, p.8). An association of several enterprises can also lobby the government more effectively.

Community owned producer organisations are increasingly being recognized as effective means for channelising rural entrepreneurship. They guide farmers through the transformational changes that market participation both requires and is bound to produce. The outcomes of such changes are uncertain, and will probably produce both winners and losers. In any case, they require dialogue, both within the rural communities and between their representatives and other stakeholders involved (policy makers, consumers, business associations, other producers). It is through dialogue, and effective co-ordination, that small-scale farmers become effectively part of the equation. One such example which is meeting rural demands of food, health, energy and employment and also creating market access for rural products is Aharam producer company (Utkarsh Ghate, p.27).

Women enterprises

There are several successful cases which show that women are capable entrepreneurs and come out of poverty when they are equipped with the right kind of knowledge, information and skills. The presence of a number of women Self Help Groups dealing with micro credit provides a congenial institutional base to promote rural enterprises.

There are several successful examples where women have added value to products, their lives and livelihoods. Strong local level groups with strong external support and a supportive environment can help initiatives to take off instantly. For example, the women in Muddana Guddi produced and marketed 100 tons of neem cake with a turn over of Rs. 5 lakhs. This is no less achievement, given the fact that these women are illiterate and live in a remote village in Karnataka. They have been so successful that they were recognized by the UNDP national award.

Women have also been successful in being innovative and adding value to the plant fibres which they have been collecting and selling for years. They learnt the art of making the elegantly designed bags from locally grown plant fibre. IDF, which was facilitating this initiative, further helped these women by forming *Gramya* - a dedicated company for marketing of products. With such a support, these poor women are now able to display and market their products in various national and international sales promotional exhibitions (Shenoy, p.10).

Rural women have found a new way for income generation by application of appropriate technologies in the field of renewable energy and food processing guided by TIDE. Eminently suitable for women, they focused on smokeless household stoves and biomass based dryers (Prabha, p.18), also reducing the drudgery of women.

Women have also been forerunners in an emerging initiative like eco-tourism. Rural communities have been providing services for interested urbanites fond of rural life, cultures, landscapes and environment. For rural communities, this initiative is an opportunity to earn employment and income while preserving and celebrating their own culture and lifestyles (Inir Pinheiro, p.23).

Enabling environment for empowerment

Almost all the articles in this issue point out that it is not just the individual entrepreneurial ability that is important, but supportive systems, policies and environment that are crucial in developing entrepreneurship in small scale farmers. Gender-sensitive participatory development planning, improved rural producers' access to resources and services, pro-poor policies, and handholding during the initial periods will go a long way in helping rural producer groups to take up rural enterprises.

Small scale producers need development committed enabling agencies to help them. Most often, it is the CSOs who have been playing an active role in empowering these communities. They are playing roles such as training, visualizing and operationalising the business and institutional models. Sometimes donors do play the role of providing the venture capital. It could be through an innovative government policy too as in the case of Brazil (p. 28).

At times, it is not just one NGO that could help. A network of organizations can make this happen. For instance, the business model in Aharam Producer Company works through a network of NGO partners that coordinate with CBOs. Also, some specific organisations as well as CSR wing of a private sector organization is guiding farmers to grow high value vegetables and organic products, market them through green outlets as well as buy some produce for their canteen (Reddy, p.31).

Promoting rural enterprises is one of the important means for increasing rural employment, rural incomes and reducing migration to urban centres. The articles in this issue highlight that rural enterprises are not mere instruments of economic empowerment but are also leading to social empowerment. Therefore, rural enterprises programmes need to be promoted as individual and group-based empowerment programs aimed at transforming the most vulnerable rural poor into viable rural entrepreneurs. ■

Reference

- Arno Maatman and Ted Schrader, **Enhancing farmers' entrepreneurship: Creating conditions for growth.** *LEISA Magazine*, volume 25 no.2, June 2009.

For these women, money does grow on (neem) trees

Once, the women of Muddana Guddi, a village in Raichur district, in the southern Indian state of Karnataka, suffered from drought and poverty. Cursing their own troubles, they used to migrate to neighbouring states for work. Now, they are earning their own livelihoods by running a business worth hundreds of thousands of rupees. The women collect readily available neem tree seeds, to produce and sell neem cake. They have been so successful that they received a UNDP national award.

P. A Chaya



Photo: P.A. Chaya

Separating the waste, like all the other steps in the process, is a collective effort.

During summer, when there is little paid agricultural work available, women and children of Muddana Guddi, a village in Raichur district, Karnataka, collect neem seeds and sell them to a mediator who comes to their village. In a week, a woman can collect around 100 kg of seeds and earn 300 to 400 rupees (around US\$ 6 to US\$ 8). It is well known that many tonnes of neem seeds are exported from Karnataka to big industries in the north of India. They are processed into neem oil, which is sold at a high price. While seed collectors get minimal amounts, the mediators earn thousands of rupees. After extracting the oil, the leftover cake is also sold, although it does not have the qualities needed for use as a fertilizer or bio-pesticide.

Identifying promising local initiatives

Farmers use neem cake like any other compost. Although it is called cake, it is actually a powder (see Box, p.7), so it can be added to and mixed with soil at any time, including when ploughing. When the crop is suffering a nutrition deficiency, the farmer will add neem cake to the soil. Observing this, and knowing that local farmers were losing out to the mediators and big business, Neju George, a social worker, thought that if neem cake could be produced and sold locally, poor women may be able to earn some money. To achieve this aim, he and some like-minded friends started an organisation named *Jagruta Mahila Sanghatane* (JMS), which means “women’s organisation with awareness”. Under this JMS umbrella, many women’s self help groups were formed. Each worked on a specific income generating idea, such as making terracotta jewellery or herbal medicines. JMS operates like a federation, providing trainings, publicity, workshops and market facilities for the women. “First we tried to unite the women so that they could organise self help groups. Then we searched for income generating activities. Our main intention was to make the best use of locally available natural resources. At last, we found neem,” remembers Neju George.

In this way, the self help group *Jhansi Rani Mahila Sangha* was formed, of fourteen women from Muddana Guddi. They decided to produce neem cake. But no-one knew how. Neju contacted the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore to ask whether a small machine was available to crush the neem seeds. The answer was: “Yes. But the machine costs 500 000 rupees”. But how could the women, who earn only 10 or 20 rupees per day, afford it? Then they had the idea of crushing the neem seeds with the help of a tractor. This process started seven years ago and till today it is working.

Marketing the neem cake locally

All the fourteen members of the women’s self help group are involved in gathering the neem. Seven teams of two members each go to the surrounding villages. A temple compound or a school will be chosen as a meeting place. Women and children of each village will come to the meeting place to sell their seeds, but this was not always straightforward: “When we went to collect seeds, some mediators turned angry. Some of them assaulted us. They offered other villagers half a rupee extra per kilo of seeds. But the villagers are our friends and relatives; they didn’t fall into the trap. Considering this situation, we increased the purchase price of seeds. The mediators totally disappeared from this trade”, recalls Chinnamma, a group member. After gathering all the seeds together, they take them to Pothnal, a village where another group has provided storage space.

With many struggles along the way, the group members succeeded in producing seven tonnes of neem cake in 1999, the first year of production. But, where were the buyers? With the brand name of “Chiguru”, Neju planned to advertise the neem cake in a simple style: a three-wheeler with a banner went around the villages. But there also was some aggression from chemical fertilizer companies,

because the banner read “Don’t use chemical fertilizers. They will devastate your land. To increase fertility, use Chiguru neem cake”. Some days passed without any sales. They decided to look for ways of convincing farmers to use the neem cake. They gave about 50 kilos of cake to more than 100 farmers and asked them to pay for it after harvest. However, the farmers did not really understand this method of raising awareness. They just used the neem cake, and it was disappointing to see that none of them refunded the cost.

During this period, there was a lot of publicity about organic farming. The then Agriculture Minister, Shri H.K. Patil, met some farmers, realised the importance of these ideas. This led the Karnataka government to implement an organic farming policy to encourage farmers to adopt sustainable agriculture. This boosted the scope for marketing organic fertilizer and bio-pesticides. *Sahaja Samrudha*, Karnataka’s leading organic farmers’ group, was searching for huge quantities of bio-pesticides and vermicompost. Neju George contacted them and assured them that he could provide whatever quantity of neem cake was needed. So the cake was brought to Bangalore, and then it was distributed to farmers. “*It was very useful for me. My crop was neither attacked by pest nor disease*” says Shivanapur Ramesh, farmer of Devanahalli, Bangalore, who grows mulberry and grapes. From this time onwards, there were no more worries about the market. Now the cake is being exported to other places such as Hubli, Belgaum, Goa, and Maharashtra. Year by year the business is growing. Last year the *Jhansi* women’s group had a turnover of 4,00,000 rupees. This year they reached 5,00,000 rupees by producing 100 tonnes of cake.

Impacts and sustainability

Though it started on a small scale, the impact of this project can be clearly seen. Women who once used to migrate, now remain in the village. From seed collection to export, they perform many tasks. Mariamma, a group member with little formal education, maintains all documents of expenditures and income. After all the cake is sold, she distributes the profit to all the members. “*We used to have to go to big cities in search of food. Now our problems*

Making and using neem cake

After collection, the neem seeds are poured on dry ground. After the seeds have dried, any filth and other waste is removed. A tractor will then drive over the clean seeds until they are crushed. The women then take this material and filter it. For this they use a locally made wire screen like the one shown in the photo above. Around 75 percent of the filtered material will be fine enough for use. The remaining seeds and product will be crushed again until it is all fine enough. The powder that results from this crushing and filtering is called neem cake. Since the women do not extract oil from seeds, the oil content will remain in the cake. This is important in terms of quality, as the active ingredients are found in the oil. If products containing neem oil are used in farming, they can act as an insecticide or a pest repellent, and also provide nutrients. When seeds are crushed in the industrial process, the neem oil is extracted first, but is still sold as neem cake. Farmers say this is no use, and that the industrial product is not of good quality.

have disappeared. We earn money here and are also saving some for the future,” says Sushilamma, a group member, with pride.

In the initial stages, some of the villagers ridiculed the women’s new profession. “*My husband objected, asking why we are doing this work. But when the burden on him of providing money was decreased, then he admired me. Now, he encourages me to go ahead,*” says Huligemma, another proud group member.

The United Nation’s Development Programme (UNDP) has been encouraging rural women’s entrepreneurship. Every year, it recognises small entrepreneurs and gives a national award, known as “Partners in Change”. In 2006, Chinnamma, the *Jhansi* team leader, was proposed for the award, and beat 690 other entrepreneurs to win it. She received the award, worth 2,00,000 rupees, from Mr Kamal Nath, then honorable Commerce Minister of the Government of India.

In this area it is quite natural that every farmer grows many neem trees around his field, especially on bunds. Therefore there is scope for the initiative to grow. Neem is a drought tolerant tree, which does not suffer from pests and diseases, so no inputs like water, pest control or fertilizer are needed. Any farmer with neem trees can earn an income even in years of drought. Previously, farmers did not know about the importance of neem seeds, so they did not earn anything from them. But the situation here has changed. Farmers sell their seeds to the women’s groups rather than the industrial company or their mediators. The farmers wish to help the women of their village, while also earning an income!

Building on successes

Some factors can be identified which contributed to the women’s success. They were keen to earn their own living, they were hard-working and innovative. They have also formed a strong and united group, and had support of local organisations and people. They did not let low education levels hold them back, but were keen to learn. The decision of the Karnataka government to support organic farming also came at the right time for them, when their product was ready but there was little demand.

The *Jhansi* group, still composed of the original fourteen women, now has plans to grow. Getting an adequate place to collect and store the seed, and producing the neem cake are their main priorities. To crush neem seeds they require a machine. “*Setting up a unit for extracting and packing neem oil is part of our future plans,*” explains Neju.

Neem trees planted by villagers decades ago are now giving financial stability to women. A family’s livelihood often depends on these women! Behind this achievement is the humble neem tree, a natural resource which has given life to several villages. ■

P. A. Chaya

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Adding value to local livelihoods

In Laos, farmers get better prices for their products and more control over value chains when they join together to form and invest in their own agro-enterprises. Since 2007, 18 agro-enterprises have been formed.

Kheuavanh Pommathat and Stuart Ling

Northern Laos is changing fast. The rugged mountains, which were once the preserve of isolated tribes living a subsistence lifestyle, are now being carved up by roads, hydropower developments and rubber plantations. Foreign companies, from China, Vietnam and Thailand, are scrambling for land to invest in large agro-enterprises, producing rubber, cassava and maize. They receive the backing of government authorities, who give them land and tax concessions in their drive for foreign investment.

For illiterate and cash-poor small farmers, the options to access these markets are few. They can sign a contract agreement giving the company the right to buy their fresh, unprocessed product for an extremely low price. Or they can give up farming altogether and choose to work as a labourer on company land. However, a new agro-enterprise approach is being piloted by VECO, a non-governmental organisation, with small-scale farmers in the province of Bokeo. The idea is that local farmers form businesses, and take control of the value chain.

The value chain approach

Put simply, the value chain covers every step from the farmer to the final consumer. Each step adds value. This might be a bulk buyer who dries the crop, or a company who repacks a product into attractive bags for the consumer. A simple value chain might be:

Producer → **Middleman** → **Processor** → **Consumer**
group (buyer) group

In the case of maize for example, a farmer sells a green cob for about 700 Lao kip/kilogram (or US\$ 0.08), but the consumer ends up paying 7000 Lao kip/kg by the time it has been processed and packaged into high quality pig food. To understand why farmers are receiving a low price, we first need to look at all the steps along the chain. It is also necessary to understand the institutional environment, such as the impact of government policies (such as taxes) on the chain.

In our maize example, a chain analysis showed that there were many reasons why farmers would receive a low price. Among these, we saw that:

- producers would mix different qualities (e.g. wet with dry), and so receive a low quality rating and price;
- producers had no storage facilities, and so would be forced to sell the green cobs straight after harvest at a low price;



Photo: Chantha Siliphanya

The Pakngao Farmers Enterprise attracted investments from farmers and business people that allowed it to buy a tractor and maize sheller.

- farmers were in debt to traders, and had to sell their maize immediately to pay back their loans; and
- different types of seeds, planting times and growing techniques would cause the maize to ripen at different times, increasing costs for traders and reducing quality.

Agro-enterprises for village clusters

For the pilot, 4-12 villages were strategically clustered. Participating farmer groups identified products with best potential. A small agro-enterprise was set up and a committee selected of

Box 1. Pakngao Farmers Group Enterprise

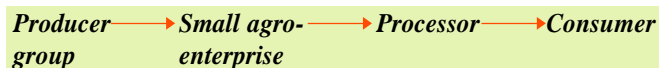
Until 2007, 47 farmers in Pakngao village sold their maize harvest to a Thai trader, receiving a low price because it was unprocessed. The trader captured the benefits of collection, transport and processing.

A local agro-enterprise for maize was set up later that year within a cluster of four villages of the Lao, Khmu and Hmong ethnic groups. The farmers decided to add value to their product to get a better price. Another 24 farmers were recruited to join in the business plan, which proposed the purchase of a tractor and sheller. Each farmer investor was willing to pay the local equivalent of US\$ 735 each for a share in the enterprise, some borrowing money from within the village to finance their shareholding.

The group received a grant of US\$ 4882 from the project. In their contract, these funds were to be reinvested within the group over a 15-year period (that is, it was not allowed to be paid out as profit to shareholders).

By the end of 2008, 120 farmers in four producer groups (one per village) had a contract to produce maize for the enterprise. The increased area, a higher yield as a result of ploughing, and higher prices through shelling resulted in a four-fold increase in their total income compared to 2007. With the resulting profits and even more local investors, the enterprise invested in a truck in early 2009.

more business-oriented farmers. These farmers are highly trusted members of the community who are prepared to invest money in the agro-enterprise. The new value chain therefore looks like this:



The committee needs to encourage farmers to invest in the agro-enterprise (in the form of shares – or community savings) in the hope of seeing a return (profit). They also need to develop a business plan that is passed by all the investors in the group. The enterprises should aim to do more than just buying from farmers – they should also provide services (such as providing seeds, training and crop monitoring) and invest in value-adding (such as post-harvest processing and storage).

Findings of the pilot project

Although only one annual cycle has passed since establishing the agro-enterprises, there have been significant improvements in both product quantity and quality in the areas where they operate. The case in Box 1, illustrate the success of the development process.

The Pakngao Farmers Group Enterprise, described in Box 1, collected savings at the village level to establish an agro-enterprise, in a way that could not be borne by individuals alone. In a place where banks are difficult to access, people were willing to invest their savings into an enterprise. It is unusual that farmers are in a position to invest so much money. However, these farmers, located along the Mekong river, are relatively more prosperous than those of the ethnic groups in more remote areas. Share prices in other village clusters in the programme varied, with some, as low as US\$ 147.

There also seems to be a positive effect when farmers see local businesses investing in their area, building infrastructure or buying processing equipment. Farmers have greater confidence that the agro-enterprise is serious about buying their crops on a long-term basis, so production naturally increased.

Apart from the success of adding value to peanut production, the Nam Phuk Farmers Group Enterprise shows the different solutions that come from considering an enterprise approach. Previously, efforts had been made to train and encourage farmers to produce their own biofertilizer using local materials, with only limited success. Now the enterprise approach had managed to promote sustainable agriculture among the local farmers with only a passing mention of soil fertility. A key factor was that the pelleted biofertilizer is much longer lasting and easier to spread than the unpelleted biofertilizer. As the necessary processing equipment costs about US\$ 2000, it could only be purchased by the collective investment of the enterprise.

Local agro-enterprises and sustainability

Several lessons have already been learned on how to make local agro-enterprises work in a sustainable way:

1. Local enterprises work best if they form themselves, have power over decision making and develop their own rules. In every village, there are farmers who have business potential, and it is

more rewarding to identify those who are outside traditional power structures. Once they have the opportunity, they are motivated to sacrifice a lot of time and energy into making their business successful.

2. Regularly bring different stakeholders together that are either within or influence the value chain. Businesses should not be seen as only exploiting farmers but can be part of the solution.

3. Corruption, unfair taxation or bureaucracy can destroy small businesses. An association of several enterprises can lobby the government more effectively to create a favourable small business environment.

4. Where contract law is absent or difficult to enforce, agreements should be made between producers and enterprises signed by a third party (e.g. local government) to arbitrate in the case of disputes. To ensure the agro-enterprise stays locally owned, outside companies should be restricted from buying shares or having voting rights. Donor co-funding during the business planning stage is also an effective way to enable small agro-enterprises to invest and maintain their independence.

5. There needs to be a mechanism to provide organisational support to the new enterprises for several years. Important aspects are managing finances, understanding contracts, and recording minutes of meetings. The government could play a role by for example, giving tax free start-up periods on condition that profits are reinvested in the enterprise.

Future plans

The existing enterprises still need to be supported for several years, particularly with research, training, and advisory services. As well as facilitating the establishment of new agro-enterprises, VECO will encourage the formation of an association of enterprises which gives members a chance to learn, exchange and lobby for improvements in the local business environment.

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Rural livelihoods – using value chains

Dry land farmers of Lakkavanahalli and surrounding areas in Karnataka have found an alternative way of generating income. Intervention and initiation of this activity by IDF, an NGO in the area, has reduced the migration of these dry land farmers to urban centres for labour. Realizing the value chain potential has helped these farmers to market their products, sharpen their entrepreneurial abilities and reduce migration.

Srikantha Shenoy TV

“We have some hopes now. We need not migrate to cities now for those two square meals. Five years ago, we hardly used to get wages for 60 to 70 days in a year. Now we have our own place and get 250 to 300 days. Our earning has increased from Rs 25 per day to Rs 80 to Rs 150/- now. Earlier Davangere at best was the biggest city we ever saw in awe. Now we have visited many cities. I am now called Dubai Shankaramma. Others have visited Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore several times. We can afford to have our dreams. And, we are confident that we can realize these small dreams” – Dubai Shankaramma

There was no end to the enthusiasm with which Shankaramma and her colleagues from Lakkvanahalli and surrounding villages narrate their experience to the visitors to the natural fibre cluster in the village. They are the active members of the evolving natural fibre cluster covering Lakkavanahalli, Kunikere, Shigehatti, Mayasandra, Hucchavanahalli in Hiriyur block of Chitradurga district in Karnataka. These are non-descript villages largely dependent on dry land agriculture. Ragi or the finger millet is the staple cereal crop limited to one cropping season. There are few sources of income other than farm labour and rearing sheep – goat to the large population of agricultural laborers in these villages. Migration to irrigated belts and cities was common after kharif season – the main cropping season. These villages lacked many of the basic infrastructure – drinking water, housing, health care, transport – the list is quite long.

Few women of such poor families were initially organized as Self Help Groups by Prayog, an NGO. It was part of a women empowerment project of Government of India and Karnataka during 2001. As with most of the SHGs, these SHGs were in the verge of disintegration in the absence of shared vision of their own socio-economic development. Meetings and savings became too ritualistic. When the hopes of these village women were at its low, during 2002, IDF (Initiatives for Development Foundation) another NGO came on the scene to adopt these groups. It explores how the women can take up sustainable livelihood activities as a group rather than as individuals.



Photo: IDF, Bangalore

Young woman using her time and skill creatively in weaving baskets.

Participatory exploration

“The women had little faith on NGOs and the Government officials. It was very tough to build rapport when we came here. We ourselves never had any idea of what the members can and cannot do to augment their income. They wanted immediate, working solutions to earn income!” recalls Shrikanth Hebbal, one of the Executive Trustees of IDF. With little financial base, the poor women were averse to experimentation and risk taking.

Risk mitigation framework

IDF team took on the task of participatory development of ideas on economic activities, and developed a framework identifying a range of economic activities. The villagers preferred activities which are: local resource or skill based; preferably have local market potential or niche potential; allow time and space for women to take up farming work when required; and would not require large capital requirement initially, so that if the going becomes risky, the losses could be minimized. These are nothing but common sense backed risk mitigation strategies.

Business Idea development

Several ideas were discussed and evaluated, ranging from primary food processing to coconut broom manufacture. Only one activity was new to the area - extraction of natural fibre. In these villages, most of the families migrate seasonally to neighboring Mandya and Mysore district to collect an aquatic grass, locally known as ‘Aapu’ (Typha grass). The long mature grass was cut, bundled and brought to the village by bullock cart. In these villages rich in sun shine – higher temperature was the best resource. The grass stems

are sun dried, split into thin strips, bundled and traded in Hiriyyur town. These strips are purchased by traders and farmers and are extensively used in tying the betel leaf vines to the supporting trees or stalks. Being soft and supple, the *aapu* strips allow the growth of the vines without cutting into the stems, yet firmly hold the vine in place and are the best bio degradable alternative to plastic strings.

IDF team tossed ideas of developing utility handicrafts like mats, basketry etc using the *aapu* fibre. Anand Dharwadkar, a textile engineer in the network of IDF, showed how to extract natural fibre from this grass as well as from banana stems. The typha or banana yarn was found suitable for production of handicrafts, either independently or blended with other natural fibers. The extracted fibers can be braided, twisted for use in handicrafts as well as used for making good quality paper. The dried grass can also be split longitudinally in to 5 – 10 wide ribbons that can then be twisted to form beige-colored thick twines, which are used in the weaving of mats.

The twines can be colored with ease using basic dyes, direct dyes. The products made from yarn are completely bio – degradable and have an unusual texture which is very much appreciated by people who have a keen sense of aesthetics.

Hence, that the collective business idea was that, organizations would buy such extracted fibre for further weaving to produce many handicrafts. The women members were not sure whether it would fetch them decent income for all the labour work put in. The fibre had to be shipped to Bangalore using public transport.

Idea to activity

With intense persuasion, IDF team organised a team of 16 women to start fibre extraction from *aapu* and later banana stems. Members put in their money - savings and small loans to purchase the spinning wheel.

The production was uneven, the enthusiasm of members and IDF field team was short lived as most of the fibre produced was rejected due to un-even quality and low volume. And when small part of it was sold, the income was very meager. Only four members persevered, though their earnings were less than Rs 8 per day, whereas the wages if available were a minimum of Rs 20 per day. Banana stems were not available in the village. They had to travel nearly 10 – 15 KM to irrigated belts and bring banana stems during harvest season. Extraction of fibre – the lowest end of the value chain was a very low key activity for nearly nine months. The activity was about to be scrapped.

Value Chain potential

The study by the IDF team showed that value added natural fibre based life style products had high market value in cosmopolitan cities. As a first step, the rural women had to be motivated, provided skills to climb each node of value chain leading to marketable products. Persisting, IDF teamed recruited Pandurang Wali, a master crafts man to train the women in weaving the yarn produced in the village. To learn new skill, out of curiosity, women who had left the group, came back to the group. They borrowed the



Women extracting fibre from 'Aapu' grass.

abandoned weaving equipments from the government training centers, got it repaired and underwent hands on training on weaving.

None of the women had prior experience in weaving. The first products though were rough, gave them some confidence that they can do something about the new economic activity. Acquisition of new skill and looms were also a matter of social prestige and basis of recognition to them, as most of the women were from the Dalit community. They had pride in their new found identity as skilled artisans than as laborers, a basis for upward social mobility.

Bankers Trust

Responding to the enthusiasm of producer women, Chitradurga Grameen Bank released a subsidy linked loan of Rs 2.5 lakh (About \$ 6500) to the group during 2004. The group hired a vacant shed in the village. The collective earnings during the year were less than Rs 25,000 (\$ 660). NABARD recognized the opportunity to develop the cluster and encouraged the activities.

Turning point

The products were simple runners which were purchased by few designers in Bangalore. IDF realized that, as an NGO, it cannot support marketing of the products. The State Government could not carry forward the idea of community owned marketing organization for self help group and artisanal products. Hence, promoters of IDF, incorporated *Gramya* - a dedicated company for marketing of products from the deprived community.

Gramya facilitated display of products and participation of producer women in various national and international sales promotional exhibitions. The simple products were noticed by lead marketers like Fab India. The bulk order of Fab India during 2006 for Rs 5 lakh (about \$ 13000) boosted the morale of the producer women.

Evolution of the natural fibre cluster

Lakkavanahalli became the nucleus of natural fibre based cluster. Networking and liaison of IDF and Gramya team brought more

visibility by the print media, brought more visitors from the local and state government, NGOs, Banks. More women and more villages joined the evolving group enterprise as they started getting regular work, income and social respect interacting with urbane people. Ms Linda Mani, a young US citizen and fellow of Indus Corp stayed with the producer women for more than a year to learn about the evolving enterprise as well as help the women build their vision about themselves.

Climbing the value chain

As the women gained experience, incremental skills were imparted through various skill and design development workshops at the villages. Help from Ambedkar Hasta Shilpa Yojana from Government of India and NABARD cluster development programme came in hand to meet part of the cost of various training and exposure visits services. Diversity in the product base and aesthetic appeal came with the involvement of social minded designers with a keen sense of market, ecology and aesthetics in developing the capacity of the neo artisans.

Says the England returned Savita Parikh, a designer now intensely associated with this activity "I was simply bowled over by the looks and feel of these natural fibres. They are rustic, eco friendly and yet very contemporary. And these are produced by deprived women struggling to have decent living standards. I met these producer women in a Tribal fair and I made a decision that I can contribute value to this emerging group enterprise in design development and market linkage". Savitha teamed up with a Bangalore based designer Rajashekar Narayan who is helping the IDF – Gramya team to develop contemporary products using various blends of natural fibres which has niche markets especially for corporate gifts and packaging.

Expansion

The product base expanded from simple yarn to now aesthetically beautiful handcrafted range of utility handicrafts such as runners, window blinds, yoga mats, files, folders, coasters, dinner mats, pillow covers, bedspreads, lamp shades. Now there are 152 women actively involved in various levels of economic activity in the value chain. There are 25 working looms and 72 women have joined into the venture, learning the basics of production at the lowest value chain. During 2008, the group enterprise collectively



produced and marketed products valued to Rs 30 lakh. All the producer members are now share holders of Deccan Crafts and Weavers Pvt. Ltd., a subsidiary of Fab India. All of them have now Life insurance coverage. IDF Financial Services has made available need based micro finance services and bridge loans to the women members for developing their own working shed, office and meeting working capital. A solar lighting system has been put in place with the part investment from the producer women.

Impact on farming

All these developments however did not adversely affect the farming activity in these villages at current scale of operations. Most of the women still work as agricultural labour during sowing season and harvesting season, as farming is part of their socio economic culture.

The new found confidence of women borne not merely out of economic power, but also due to social empowerment has brought in indirect impact on agriculture economy and local infrastructure. The banana farmers no longer sell the banana stems free. Now the women need to buy them. After extracting the fibre, the waste is now being composted as value of vermi-composting is known in the village. Due to the development of the village as a cluster, unemployed youth have found viable self employment ventures running regular auto rickshaw, setting up telephone booth, small eateries and kiosk etc.

Challenges ahead

Traversing along the poor women in this journey of exploring sustainable livelihoods, IDF – Gramya team is very much aware of the challenges ahead, foremost being the institutionalization of the group enterprise and community ownership of various spheres of entrepreneurial activities, especially the finer nuances of niche and distance marketing of the products and financial risk management. As various activities in the value chain gets specialized to specific groups, focused efforts would be needed for robust integration of cluster workings as complementary activity with the culture of dry land farming which otherwise would be lost due to labour shortage. The visibility to the activity and benefits to the poor women, does also bring initial derision, later claims for leadership from the petty politicians which can be effectively tackled only by strong community ownership of all the spheres of the economic activity.

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Adding value to life

Indigenous communities in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve area have improved their livelihoods by appropriate farm practices and value addition. The community is enjoying the benefits of getting together by enhancing their capacities in adding value to lives and livelihoods.

Robert Leo and Mathew John

The Nilgiris is a mountain area which is part of the Western Ghats of South India, a home range for six primitive tribal groups. Most of them are either pastoral or have been hunter gatherers. The region is dominated by plantations of tea/coffee and commercial vegetable cultivation. Approximately 55% of the land is under the Forest Department. The average rainfall varies between 2000 mm in the west to less than 500 mm in the eastern and northern sides. Land use change has taken place in the Nilgiris over the past 200 years, with a constant move towards commercial species, both in the forest and in agricultural lands.

The Arakode region of Kotagiri taluk is a rain shadow area and the Irula community is predominant in the region. This valley was a gateway to the Nilgiris range by the British and the traders during the 18th century. There are over 350 families in the valley and hold approximately 550 acres of traditional land. The Irulas cultivate minor millet, vegetable and fruit trees in their community land holdings. The millets are always grown in a mixed cropping system - a combination of different cereal, pulse, tubers, vegetable crops and numerous uncultivated food crops, as food and nutritional security. Millet cultivation is taken up as a community activity - labour for clearing land, crop guarding against wild animals and post harvest processing is shared. This provides a strong bond, socially and culturally. Rainfall and crop raiding by wild animals is a huge determinant in their food security. Many times, these threats have forced the community to discontinue farming practices leading to large tracts of land becoming fallow and semi-wild.

Interestingly, the overall land use change which has taken place across the rest of the mountains has not affected this region to a large extent, except that the community transformed their land, partly, into coffee cultivation. Coffee is grown largely with a number of fruit trees, shade trees, pepper vines, silk cotton trees and wild trees - a rich diverse system. The few non tribal farmers who live in the region have also practiced a similar crop pattern. In addition, collection of non-timber forest produce (NTFPs) is an important traditional activity to meet their livelihood requirements. Earlier, the entire family used to go into the forest for collecting gooseberry, soap-nut, gallnut, barks, roots and phoenix leaves, seasonally, which would be sold to small traders.

A few of the villagers have developed excellent skills in making fruit baskets, winnowing baskets, granary and mats from locally collected bamboo. Goat rearing is widely practiced, usually, among elderly people. Children are very much associated with this practice - this is also a reason for poor literacy amongst Irulas. Small traders

visit the village to buy farm produce, goats and forest collections and sell cloth, small groceries as well finance their emergencies and festivals. Usually, the interest rates are extremely high while the purchase rates offered for buying produce are extremely low.

Arakode Women and Land Development Group, Banglapadigai

Keystone Foundation, an NGO, has been working in the Nilgiri Biosphere region since 1995 with indigenous communities on eco-development initiatives. In developing enterprises, Keystone has been focusing on promoting local marketing, facilitating organic certification and enabling value addition.

In the year 1998-99, a group of farmers and NTFP collectors requested Keystone Foundation to assist them in a legal battle with a nearby private estate to secure their traditional land holding (80 acres). Legal consultation support was provided and this became instrumental for the revival of traditional mixed farming, starting up a farmer's revolving fund and community level value addition centre.

Major crops grown are pepper, coffee, silk cotton, fruits, vegetables, millets, pulses and soap nuts. The farmers were encouraged to grow crops organically with training on compost, vermi-compost and preparation of bio-pest and disease control inputs. Soil and moisture conservation techniques were incorporated to ensure soil health. Micro irrigation through HDP hose pipes and sprinklers were introduced for efficient water utilization and sharing amongst users. So far, the Foundation has trained 113 farmers in coffee cultivation.

In the year 2004, a revolving fund account was started in a bank, through which savings, lending loans, purchase of seeds and bio-inputs are facilitated. Interest free loans are provided to the group members. These funds are used to procure the primary produce and engage in the process of value addition.

Production levels reached upto 2.5 tons of coffee, 5.5 tons silk cotton, 0.5 tons of pepper, 1 ton millets and 2.5 tons of vegetables and fruits. The farmers were encouraged to supply coffee, silk cotton, pepper, fruits to the value addition centre at fair prices. The harvests from the farms like vegetable, greens, tubers and fruits were procured under an Organic Bazaar-marketing venture for farm fresh produce.

Value addition

A level of value addition used to happen at the village but it was always at an individual level e.g., ginning of silk cotton would take place in home using vessels - it meant that the skill level was there but an addition of technology as well as scaling it up, was required. The emphasis has been on parameters like sanitation, quality, appropriate tools, packaging which has allowed them to bring their products into the open market.

Initially, the value addition activity was done from a rented house and gradually grew to have its own building in 2005. There are 11 women (directly) and three men (partly) involved in processing and packing of silk cotton mattresses, pillows, coffee powder, pepper & gooseberry products, making pickles, spice packing, millet processing and broom making by using phoenix leaves.

Certification and marketing

The farmers of the village have registered themselves under **PGS certification** (Participatory Guarantee System) ensuring sustainable farming conditions. The value addition groups have **shared a ratio of profit** with all farmers and collectors who have supplied the raw materials for value addition. Through value addition, the value of the product increased 5-7 times within the village premises, itself.

Keystone is a member of the PGS Organic India Council and has thirteen groups registered under it. Produce from these groups (mainly coffee, pepper & silk cotton) can use the PGSOIC logo on their products. Right now, coffee packing has the logo printed on the packing.

These products are directly sold to the Enterprise section of Keystone which provides access to regular employment and enables direct payments to the group. It helps in linking the clientele through the Green Shops and facilitates the centers for local marketing through organizing outlets.

Keystone has its own chain of four shops which are called 'The Green Shops' – based in Kotagiri, Coonoor, Ooty & Mysore (recently opened in Sept 09). These shops are primarily targeted at the middle class segment of consumers. The production groups have also begun selling through their own outlets which go under the name 'The Honey Huts' – these are in Masinagudi, Mettupalayam, Barliyar, Bannari and Hasanur. Apart from these, Keystone has tied up with retail shops in different places – the main ones are in Salem, Auroville & Pondicherry with limited supplies to some others.

Impacts

There has been a price advantage due to value addition reflecting on the income earned by the farmers. By adding value, the price of one unit of silk cotton of 1000 silk pods increased from Rs 140/- to Rs.265/- Further value addition by producing pillow or mattress will further fetch a three fold increased price. Similarly, with roasting and grinding Coffee fetched a price of Rs 75/- per kg as against Rs. 50-60/-. Pepper, which earlier fetched Rs. 85/-per kilogram is now being sold at Rs 130/-, with value addition. The

value of other products like honey and gooseberry has doubled and in some cases has increased three times.

The human resource skills and attitudes have enhanced not only the production processes but overall family and village development. Technological intervention have increased efficiency in ginning cotton, solar driers and dehumidifiers for fruit processing, husking machine for millet processing, mixers and grinders for pickle and spice packaging. This women's group has now started a small grocery in the premises to cater to the village's needs with some principles, like not selling tobacco.

The value addition group members often visit all the farms for interaction and procurement. Besides farming, 36 farmers have also undertaken beekeeping to increase income opportunities. This has also enhanced crop productivity through crop pollination. Though diseases like the Thai Sac Brood Virus remain a constant threat, the potential continues to encourage the beekeepers. These initiatives have reduced the traders' influence.

The value addition centre acts as a central pivot around which social, cultural and economic linkages are bound. This production and direct participation is a critical backward link to the Organic/Green Enterprise which Keystone hopes will bring the customer & the market, closer.

However, this extremely strong effort at the village has not come without its share of difficulties. Such a holistic approach is constantly challenged by a few farmers' practices. Hard market realities force them to grow short term mono crops like cultivation of beans to deal with cash requirements.

There is still a long way to go but they are slowly picking up. What is crucial is building their stake into the centers.

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Value addition of products

Produce procured from farmers	Process involved in value addition	Finished produce for market
Coffee parchment	Graded, sundried, peeled & polished, roasted, grinding into powder and packed	Marketed as powder Marketed as roasted beans
Silk cotton pods	Removal of pods, dried, Ginned, filling in stitched bags	Marketed as Mattress, pillows, cushions and as ginned cotton
Lime fruits	Cleaned, removal of seeds, pickled, or added with sweeteners	Marketed as pickle / Marmalade
Pepper	Cleaned, graded, pickled, dried and powdered, dried and packed as whole	Marketed as Green pepper preserve, powder and whole
Ragi	Cleaned, powdered	Marketed as powder, cereal mix, biscuits
Bees wax	Melted, filtered, value added as Balms (nine different types), hand rolled candles. Soaps,	Marketed as Balms, candle and soaps
Honey	Filtered, graded, batched, value added with spices, added with fruits, nuts	Marketed as honey, flavored honey

Bees, trade – and success

Honey production is frequently promoted as a pro-poor income generation activity as it is accessible to many members of a rural community, has low start-up costs and requires little land or labour. But while apiculture (bee-keeping) presents an opportunity for many African farmers, the potential to create a significant livelihood from selling honey often remains out of reach. Without access to a market and with limited transformation, the expected benefits do not materialise. These were the major issues considered by a small organisation in Cameroon, leading to results that were recognised by the SEED Awards.

Verina Ingram

As in many other countries, the honey sector in Cameroon has long been a traditional and small-scale activity. However, the last decade has seen a dynamic change in this sector. This is largely thanks to a series of projects aimed at conserving this country's natural resources and developing income generation activities. Thanks to the trainings provided to local organisations and communities, there are now hundreds of beekeepers, in particular, in the Western Cameroon Highlands, producing more than 3000 tonnes of honey and 50,000 kg of wax (with a value of at least 3 million euros). Recent years have seen increasing volumes of wax exports to Europe, the organic certification of honey, the establishment of a certificate of origin system, and the approval of national legislation for securing honey quality standards. A growing number of apiculture groups have been recorded and sale prices are increasing. Notwithstanding, all those involved feel that apiculture could play a far larger role, both in terms of income and poverty alleviation, and in terms of the country's natural resources.

Tackling the major bottlenecks

A few years ago, the Western Highlands Conservation Network, a group of 22 NGOs concerned with conservation, farming, agroforestry and sustainable livelihoods, decided to work together with private and public bodies in order to tackle what was seen as the major difficulty: honey marketing. A thorough market study was carried out with the help of the Netherlands Development Organisation, SNV, showing both the productive potential of the Cameroonian apicultural sector, and also the poverty within which the producer communities live. Since then, one of the major catalysts in the development of market links has been the organisation called "Guide d'Espoir", or "Guiding Hope", which groups together most of those involved in this study. Although only legally established in May 2007, its members have more than 15 years of experience with the promotion of apiculture, the production of organic honey and bee products, and their commercialisation in West African and European markets.



Photo: Verina Ingram

Higher quality gives producers a reason to argue for a higher prices. Here different products are displayed in a market stall in Yaounde.

Guiding Hope was created to strengthen the link between the disadvantaged producers of high value apiculture products and the market; guiding them with information and opportunities; facilitating processes and providing support; and sharing the risks and burdens of selling to a non-local market. Their business strategy is to use socially responsible, sustainable and profitable production, and transformation and trading in apicultural products, as a catalyst for improving the quality of life of the producer communities. It aims to become the missing link in the commercial chain, bringing hope to producers by engaging transparently with them. It also aims to provide the rigour and quality control required to get access to the international markets and return profits to the community. A small organisation, Guiding Hope has 6 members who manage the business (and form the Directive Council), and 22 employees. There are also occasional consultants and service providers. In 2008 it had 10 bondholders, three of whom are also members, who have invested money into the business. All working capital has come from these bondholders and reinvested profits.

Box 1. The SEED Awards

The SEED Award is not a monetary prize, but a 12-month package of support services tailored to recipients' needs, to strengthen and scale up activities. The SEED Initiative is a global network for action on sustainable development partnerships, founded by IUCN, UNEP and UNDP, to deliver concrete progress towards the internationally-agreed goals in the United Nation's Millennium Declaration and the World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002. SEED focuses on locally-driven, entrepreneurial partnerships in developing countries. Its goal is to inspire, promote and build capacity to support the innovative ways in which groups work together to improve incomes and strengthen livelihoods; tackle poverty and marginalisation; and manage and conserve natural resources and ecosystems. For more information, see Networking, p.35.

In September 2008, Guiding Hope won one of five global SEED Awards for Entrepreneurship in Sustainable Development for its work to scale up social, environmental and economic impacts (see Box 1). SEED is supporting Guiding Hope to grow, providing capacity building and technical advice. Whilst it is too early to provide an evaluation, this award has helped Guiding Hope to rewrite the business plan, provided an incentive to formalise and audit accounts, and consolidate agreements with partners and suppliers. It has also helped establish links with potential buyers, produce public relations materials, gain media attention, and prepare three proposals for financing. Such support is necessary to provide credibility to a small, young, unknown organisation. It also allows us to increase our contacts in the international market and obtain access to affordable capital.

Chains and partners

The importance of marketing convinced Guiding Hope to follow a value chain approach, as one that can ensure sustainable trade (providing sustainable profits to shareholders, attractive rates for employees and fair prices for suppliers). This approach is also expected to avoid any environmental impact, and to have a “social multiplier effect” by allowing the involvement of men, women and youths from all socio-economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds. The group’s business model is based on the establishment of collaboration relationships with three main groups. One of these is a development organisation known as PAELLA (or *Programme d’Appui aux Initiatives Locales à L’Auto-Emploi*). They provide the technical assistance needed to meet standards and legislation set in Europe, and train and support all producer

communities. Another important partner is a small honey and wax importer and trader in the U.K., Tropical Forest Products, with whom a long term trading partnership is being negotiated.

The third, and by far the largest, group is formed by the 755 bee-keeping households who supply raw honey, comb and propolis, with whom Guiding Hope has signed agreements. These are poor, rural farmers and beekeepers, with an average annual income of approximately 400,000 CFA francs (or US\$ 800). Bee-keeping represents almost half of their total income. Guiding Hope assists them to group together, and provides training in both the technical aspects of production and the organisational aspects (such as quality control, administration and accounting). This support is based on their specific needs – from creating clean water sources to building community halls that double as collection centres. This type of empowerment means they can develop their own apiculture based activities, work together in community development projects, and have the negotiating power to sell their products at fair prices. Trainings and demonstrations on product processing also allow communities to add value by increasing the quality of honey, and especially increasing the value of honey by-products. Guiding Hope has introduced new (for the region) wax production techniques, European buyers, and is stimulating production of goods such as soap, creams, and candles. The organisations can sell these locally. If they are of sufficient quality, Guiding Hope proposes to incorporate them into its honey trading network in major cities in Cameroon and potentially, for export.

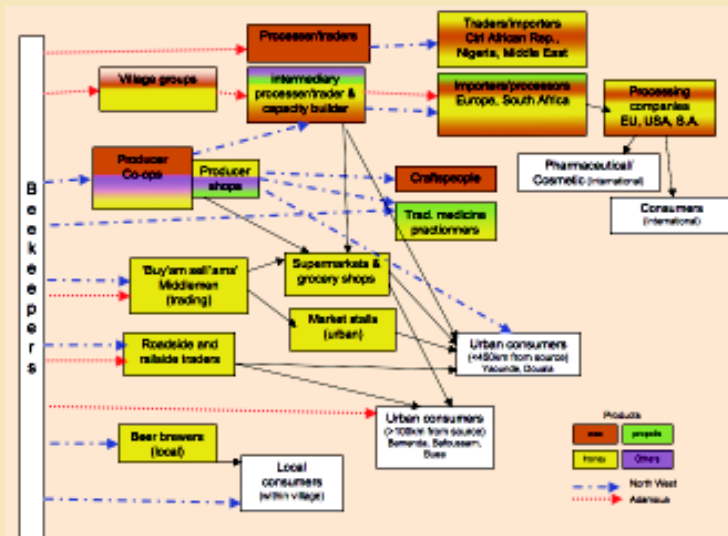
While Guiding Hope is equally interested in working with farmers in the North West region, a zone of mountainous forests with a

Box 2. Value chains

The term “value chain” has been used for more than twenty years. It refers to the full range of activities needed to bring a product or service from conception, through production and delivery to final consumers (and ultimately disposal after use). A value chain can be the way in which a firm develops a competitive advantage and creates shareholder value. It can also demonstrate the interrelation and dynamics between individual businesses. A narrow economic-based definition of value chains involves identifying the series of value-generating activities performed by an organisation. A broader, systems approach looks at the complex range of activities implemented by various actors, from primary producers, harvesters, processors, traders, service providers and upstream suppliers to downstream customers. This is also known as a value system.

Value chain analysis encompasses issues such as organisation, co-ordination, power relationships between actors, linkages and governance aspects. These issues can be analysed by individual organisations, as well as between actors within a chain. Drivers of value chain activities include economies of scale, learning, capacity utilisation, linkages among activities, the degree of vertical integration, timing of market entry, geographic location and institutional factors such as regulations, union activity, or taxes.

The value chain approach has been a very useful analytical tool for taking a more objective look at an organisation’s position in a



Cameroon apiculture value chains.

market. It allows for examining the consequences of empowering one group (the producers) and identifying how to link them to importers and consumers. It enables analysis of the implications of who does what, at which stage in the chain, and what this means for risks, capital needed and margins. It can also help to identify with whom to form partnerships in the chain.

tradition of producing high quality honey, most of its work is now carried out in six villages around Ngaoundal, Djerem Division in the province of Adamaoua. This is a transition zone between the tropical south and the Sahel, and is the largest honey production area in Cameroon. Adamaoua is home to at least 14 different ethnic groups. Bee-keeping was traditionally an activity carried out by the Gbaya, one of the most numerous groups, but is being taken up more and more by other groups as they see its many advantages. Most families practice a mix of activities, combining beekeeping with farming, cattle trading, fishing and hunting. Bee-keeping also involves young and old, men and women, with honey sales providing seasonal cash income. Bees are also vital for agriculture, being one of the major pollinators of the local staple crops and also of important fruits such as mangoes and avocados. Bees are also critical in pollinating forest trees.

Enabling entrepreneurship

To date, Guiding Hope has developed a range of products for the national market (marketing soap, candles and two types of honey: “Savannah Miel Royal” and “White Mountain”), and has exported more than 100 tonnes of beeswax to Europe. They are now preparing to export honey to Europe. In 2009, they plan to send at least 50 tonnes, once the Honey Monitoring Residue Scheme, submitted in February 2009 to the European Union, is approved. Guiding Hope, as instigator of the Cameroonian Union of Apiculture Exporters, has been the leading organisation working with the government in setting up this scheme. The group also invested in setting up an organic production system which could be certified as such. In November 2008 they received the organic certification for honey, wax and propolis from the U.K.’s Soil Association. The organic label increases the selling price by almost 50 percent, resulting in higher incomes. Through “preferred supplier contracts”, Guiding Hope is also aiming at the fair trade market, establishing long term agreements.

Similar attention is being given to the need to upscale this approach, and benefit more villages. Guiding Hope plans to continue working with the villages in Adamaoua, broadening out to other villages once the full production capacity of the first villages is reached. This assures quality control and traceability, and makes better use of the limited resources available for an integrated sustainable development and business approach. This model will then be expanded to the co-operatives in the North West, three of which have already shown interest. While they have different needs for organisational and business support, and they face various environmental threats, their production potential is high. The approval of the Honey Monitoring Residue Scheme provides even more possibilities, as it sets a basic framework and opens up the market for other organisations to export to Europe. This will be expanded upon with the development of national honey and apiculture standards, helping promote a high quality product among consumers in Cameroon and abroad. This is a joint initiative started with the National Beekeepers Federation, with which the national government is getting even more involved. Only a few years ago, it was unclear which government agency was to be contacted, or which one should be involved. Thanks to a series of meetings and

discussions, the roles and responsibilities within the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries are now clear.

And while the benefits in terms of income are obvious, Guiding Hope also believes that bee-keeping can lead to positive environmental and agricultural services (such as pollination, forest regeneration and conservation), all of which contribute to sustainable trade. Consultations with villagers showed that they are equally interested in working with these interactions. In joint efforts with PAELLA and various government agencies (such as the Ministries of Livestock and Commerce and Small Enterprises), environmental education has been made a priority. This includes setting up community nurseries and reforestation activities, and agreeing on community regeneration and beekeeping zones. The support of the SEED Award will help Guiding Hope create more conditions which are favourable for beekeepers and for the environmental situation in general in the area. This will have positive knock-on effects for agriculture such as increased pollination and the possibility of making compost from honey and wax wastes. Farmers are looking to diversify and secure cash incomes through bee-product processing. This has led to changes in apicultural practices, with innovations such as new hive designs that facilitate harvesting and resist animal attacks, and energy efficient stoves. Communities are also designating unproductive and degraded land for agroforestry, growing species which can provide hive materials, fuelwood and protect water catchments.

Time will tell the true tale, but it appears that small-scale rural entrepreneurship in the apiculture sector is already resulting in far-reaching institutional and sectoral changes. We believe that it has the potential to result in incomes and community development on a sustainable basis.

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Empowering women with efficient technologies

Rural women have found a new way for income generation by application of appropriate technologies in the field of renewable energy, food processing and sustainable agriculture. Applied technologies coupled with capacity building have enhanced their confidence levels and decision making abilities.

R Prabha

Women have to perform several roles, both in the family as well as in the society. In response to these roles and responsibilities, innovations that address the practical and productive needs of women as well as their strategic interests become crucial. Innovations accompanied by enabling mechanisms for their achievement is the route to social transformation, especially for women's empowerment.

TIDE is a not-for-profit society committed to sustainable development through various processes including technology development, awareness creation, technical and enterprise training, initiating and nurturing income generation activities. It has been working with women in Karnataka and Kerala by helping them in income generation, by the application of appropriate technologies in the fields of renewable energy, food processing and sustainable agriculture. TIDE has played an innovative role in initiating women in these technologies so that the rural communities, for whom they have been designed, can benefit. It works with grassroot NGOs in identifying women who require support.

The technologies selected are suited for women as the activities are traditionally performed by women and are not difficult to learn. Most of the activities that women were trained in were already being done by them using traditional methods. For example, drying foods in the sun is something that women have been doing for years. By introducing a biomass based dryer, TIDE has helped women to dry the food in a shorter time, producing better and cleaner quality, without addition of much cost. A few more examples of the technologies being used by women for income generation are **smokeless household stoves, processing of cashew, greenhouse horticulture**. Presently, 60 women are engaged in varied livelihood activities through TIDE projects and their collective income from the year 2003 to date is Rs. 14 lakhs. The experience of promoting smokeless stoves and biomass based drier is described in this article.

Case 1 - Smokeless stoves

The conventional stoves would emit a lot of smoke inside the house causing indoor air pollution and health problems. Since women best understand the needs and expectations of a cook-stove, and as communication between women is most effective, stove

construction was believed to be an ideal income generating activity for women.

Before introducing the smokeless stoves, TIDE conducted a study to understand what women needed in a stove. Based on the findings, it developed a dissemination strategy for smokeless household stoves, where women become the agents of change. The reasons to make women as stove entrepreneurs were several - the users of household stoves are women; they communicate their cooking needs much more openly and comfortably with other women; the need to build capacities locally.

TIDE began training women in household stove construction in 2003. The women have been trained in the construction of the Sarala stove. It was designed by scientists at the Centre for Sustainable Technologies, Indian Institute of Science.

More than 100 women have been trained in stove construction. Ten women were trained as trainers to train others in stove construction. Since women face a number of socio-cultural obstacles that prevent them from moving out of their homes, the number of drop-outs among women were high. As of now, two women are actively engaged in stove construction as a means of their livelihoods, while eight other women build the stoves whenever someone asks them to.

The stove entrepreneurs understand the design of the stove and hence do not modify the basic design. They do make small alterations to suit the user needs, not changing the efficiency of the stove. The stove entrepreneurs have been trained to make provisions, depending on the users needs. For instance, if the user wants a pan of smaller size to suit the size of her vessels, the stove entrepreneur fixes reducers in the opening, so that the small vessel can fit. In one case, the user needed a stove in which she could cook for a large family. So, the stove entrepreneur, Lalithabai built 2 stoves adjacent to each other, but with a common chimney. i.e. both the stoves opened into the same chimney. Thus, the user got two stoves without too much additional expense.

The **Sarala stove** as its name suggests is easy to build, easy to use and easy to maintain. It is a 2-pan stove, with a single fuel-feeding port and a chimney to carry the smoke out. The stove is built using a mould, which ensures that there are no deviations from the design that will affect the performance of the stove. Locally available materials are used for the construction, essentially mud and bricks. The design of the stove ensures that the smoke that is generated when biomass is burnt does not enter the kitchen, but is carried out of the house through the chimney. This reduces the indoor air pollution. The stove has been designed to ensure efficiency of burning and to prevent smoke from coming back into the kitchen. The use of a mould ensures that the dimensions of the stove are adhered to.

A case of Lalithabai

This is the story of Smt Lalithabai, 45 of H.Muddenahalli Tandya of Tumkur district in Karnataka. Her primary occupation was agricultural labour. During the lean agricultural season, she worked in stone quarries around the village. In 2002, through BAIF in Tiptur, she was trained by TIDE in construction of smokeless stoves called *Sarala* stove. At Rs 200/- per stove she knew that it would be affordable by even the very poor in small villages. She judged that she could earn a good income by building these stoves, while at the same time reducing the work and improving health of women like her. Thus, began her entrepreneurship. She found that the income she earned was more than double of that she earned by agricultural labour or as a quarry worker. This was important for her, as she wanted to educate her daughter to become a teacher. Lalithabai travelled across the state – from Tiptur taluk to villages in Dharwad district (about 400 km away) to build stoves. Like all women, she had family responsibilities, but her ambition for her daughter was enough motivation for her to manage

things in such a way that stove construction did not come in the way of these responsibilities.. In 2 years, she earned Rs. 50,000/-, which helped her daughter to complete teacher training course and become a government school teacher.

In recognition of her efforts, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Bharti Foundation conferred upon her the Woman Exemplar Award 2007 for Micro-entrepreneurs.

Lalithabai continues to build stoves and today has built nearly 3,000 stoves. Her earnings amount to close to Rs. two lakhs. Her success comes not only from her skill as a stove builder, but also due to her ability to understand users needs. This established her reputation as a stove builder. She got rid of her inhibitions to market her skills as a stove builder, thus getting further orders. She participates in all stove construction-training programmes of TIDE to motivate other women to take up stove construction and become entrepreneurs so that they may become like her.

The two active stove entrepreneurs travel to villages where they get orders. While they prefer the villages close to their homes, they do not hesitate to travel to far off villages too.

All the women sell their products directly. TIDE helps them initially by developing market linkages through various strategies like conducting promotion campaigns, awareness meetings, meeting potential buyers etc. Once market linkages are established, the women carry on their enterprise.

Training as well as initial marketing and promotion support helped to build the self-esteem of the women. And today, there are women

who have improved their economic status by pursuing this activity. All put together, the women stove entrepreneurs have built about 5000 stoves so far and have earned more than Rs. 3.5 lakhs and a clean environment.

Case 2 - Biomass based dryers

Women in Kerala were trained in the use of biomass based dryers to produce dried prawn and fish, and assisted to establish enterprises in these dried products. In Karnataka, women are being initiated into enterprises for drying areca, coconuts, etc. Although drying food products is not new to women, drying them in a dryer ensures hygiene and hence better quality of the dried product. The women can also dry produce all round the year, including during the rainy season. Products are sold mainly in the local markets. One group used the opportunity that came their way. They participate in the Trade Fair at New Delhi and sold dried prawn.

Challenges and learnings

It has been our experience that if 5% of women who undergo training take up the activity as a vocation, it is creditable. Knowing that women have to overcome several social and family situations, we train a large number of women, so that at least a few would take up the activity as a vocation. Women play several roles in the society. Including one more role of entrepreneur should not be an additional burden.

Women's empowerment is very visible through greater participation in community activities, greater decision making and acceptance of the changing role of women in the households. The women have learnt a new skill that has helped them not only to earn a livelihood but also to add to their status in the society. The enhanced economic and social status has developed the confidence levels of the women and ultimately led to their empowerment.

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A case of Sreedevi Mukesh

Sreedevi Mukesh, 33, a resident of Anapuzha in Thrissur district of Kerala is another woman who stands tall today, thanks to her enterprising spirit and the biomass dryer that she uses to dry fish and prawn. She and her group were engaged in sun drying sea fish on the beach near her house. The group contributed financially towards installation of the biomass dryer and went through a period of product standardization and trial production. With initial assistance of TIDE, Sreedevi and her group (she was the undisputed leader) began marketing the dried fish and prawns. She understands the uniqueness of her products and talks of quality assurance as her USP. Kudumbashree recognized the dried fish and prawns made by Sreedevi as quality products. With their support, Sreedevi participated in exhibitions in Kerala and even at the Kerala Pavilion in the India International Trade Fair, New Delhi. The group has processed about 15 tons of fresh prawns and sold three tons of dried prawns in the last three years earning a profit of Rs 98,320 for the group.

Sreedevi has a high sense of social responsibility and mentors other women's groups. Her work has inspired other groups to take up fish and prawn drying and today there are 5 groups operating in Kerala who are trained by her. She is sought for conflict resolution in the community especially among women's groups. She is also committed to serving her community and participates in meetings and the panchayat. Her vision and her 'never say die' attitude helped her to overcome all the obstacles and make a success of her enterprise.

Climate debate can't ignore small farmers

Pandurang Hegde

By adding organic matter into soil, in the next 50 years, we could capture 45 billion tonnes of CO₂.

The recently concluded United Nations meeting on climate change in Bangkok has missed the opportunity to evolve a consensus on the burning issue. As the deadline for Copenhagen summit is fast approaching, the developed and developing countries are locked in a deadlock over the fixing of targets for the emissions and financing of clean energy. Amidst this chaos, there are encouraging reports of how farmers, especially the ones with small land holdings, can contribute substantially to address the issue of climate change.

Scientists from the developed countries have been alleging that farmers from developing countries are responsible for adding methane emissions, especially in cultivating food crops like paddy in Asian countries.

The world is aware of the fossil fuel guzzling lifestyles of the US and other developed countries, which do not want to give up these comforts. However, the most shocking revelation is the way the industrial farming in developed countries like the USA and Europe is responsible for contributing up to 40 per cent of the green house gas emissions.

The factory farming, driven by the profit motive of multinational agri business corporations, is polluting the soil, river and oceans with high amounts of nitrogen, pesticides and other fertilisers. The forms of nitrogen provided by chemical fertilisers are readily transformed in the soil, resulting in emission of nitrous oxides into the atmosphere. The scientific findings have confirmed that these nitrous oxides are 300 times more damaging than CO₂ in contributing to green house gas emissions. Worst still is the fact that they destroy ozone layer.

Giant footprint

If these real time calculations of industrial farming are incorporated, the carbon footprint of USA, which is estimated to be 18 per cent, jumps to 30 percent. Obviously, the so-called 'wealth' created by the only super power is at the cost of damaging the fragile ecosystems of the Earth. Ironically, the developing countries are trying to imbibe this industrial agriculture as a way to resolve the crisis in the farming sector.

A recent study by Barcelona-based international organisation GRAIN (Genetic Resources Action International) has done



research to see how the farmers can contribute towards addressing the issue of climate change and mitigation. The findings show that the key component to mitigate the crisis in agriculture is to increase the soil organic matter (SOM). The living soils function through a mixture of substances that originate from decomposition of plant and animal material. In common language this is called farmyard manure used for millennia in Indian and Chinese agricultural systems. They have the capacity to absorb 100 times more water and nutrients to be released to the plants later. The accumulation of organic matters in the soil is the key factor in lowering the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere.

The sustainable agricultural systems that survived for thousands of years in the east were those, which were able to maintain the regular cycle of SOM in their soil. This was done with the integration of the farming system with livestock, forestry and green manure. Once this cycle was broken by adoption of industrial agriculture, it led to depletion of the SOM resulting in poor quality of food, diseased soil and adding emissions.

GRAIN has calculated that by adding organic matter into our agricultural soils, in next 50 years we could capture 45 billion tonnes of CO₂, more than two thirds of the current excess of CO₂ in the atmosphere.

But how and who are capable of fixing the SOM in the soil? The methodology for enhancing the organic matter needs to be based on decentralised animal husbandry that is integrated into diversified crop production. It is only the small farmers who have the capacity and willingness to work it out on the fields.

Fortunately, small and marginal farmers in numerous regions of India are specifically practicing this technique. Imagine the contribution of diversified cropping systems with millets, organic manure and livestock integrated together in several eco regions. These resource and knowledge rich farmers would be able to get some benefits from the business of carbon sequestration. Unfortunately, we stamp them as 'primitive' farmer who is not progressive enough into adopting fossil fuel based chemical agriculture.

This is a very positive case for the farming community world wide. Countries like India can take it to the logical end in the Copenhagen summit to press for policies to mitigate the crisis of climate change. But it is doubtful if our policy-makers would be willing to even consider this as a possible solution. Small farmers are ready to cool the Earth, but who cares?

Source: Deccan Herald 16.10.2009

Shri Panduranga Hegde is a renowned freelance journalist and a pioneer of "appiko" movement, a replica of "Chipko" movement in Karnataka. He can be contacted on email: appiko@gmail.com

Plenty of fruit, but also plenty of hurdles

Many types of fruit grow in the Uluguru mountains in Tanzania. And the sunshine needed to dry them is plentiful and free. The combination of these facts could mean a good business for farmers. But it is not so simple. Even the most entrepreneurial and dedicated of people will still have plenty of hurdles to overcome. To sell a bag of dried mangoes, you need not only preservatives and packaging, but also quite a few official permits and certificates.

Anders P. Pedersen

Farmers form networks and unions for better marketing options. Many seek to improve their situation through meetings, projects and training, and also access to loans. However, results are limited. Many organisations seem to care more about the benefits for their employees than for their members. But some farmers are innovative and make additional efforts to pursue new ways of making their daily income.

One such farmer is Mr Ramadhani Fufumbe from Kinole District in the Morogoro region. He has been an individual member of MVIWATA, a farmers' network, for more than five years. Ramadhani is 55 years old, of Uluguru tribe origin, and speaks Uluguru and Swahili. He is married to Rehema and Sinavyo. They have six children, three of whom help on the farm. Rehema works mainly in the field while Sinavyo looks after the children and prepares food for the family.

The Uluguru mountains

Mr Ramadhani lives in Mfumbwe, a village in the Uluguru mountains. It is a remote place with scattered huts, and is difficult to get to. Although chiefdoms were formally abolished upon Independence in 1961, most people in Tanzania still respect tribal chiefs. The Uluguru chief resides in Kinole town, which gives the town a special flavour among Tanzanians.

Soils are reddish or black, each of which has different properties and crop suitability. A good rainfall of 2000 mm per year at a modest altitude of 400-500 metres in hilly terrain provides a varying microclimate. Farmers grow a wide variety of crops: highland rice, lowland rice, chilli, pepper, coconut, maize, jackfruit, oranges, beans, groundnuts, bananas and tomatoes. Most families do not depend much on cash; food is bartered and work is shared in various ways. Most farmers grow a variety of crops, so for most of the year, households have food. However, farmers are poor and rely on what they can grow for themselves. There is neither electricity nor piped water. In a nearby village there is a solar panel where people can come and recharge batteries for 100 Tanzanian shillings (TSh), about US\$ 0.06.

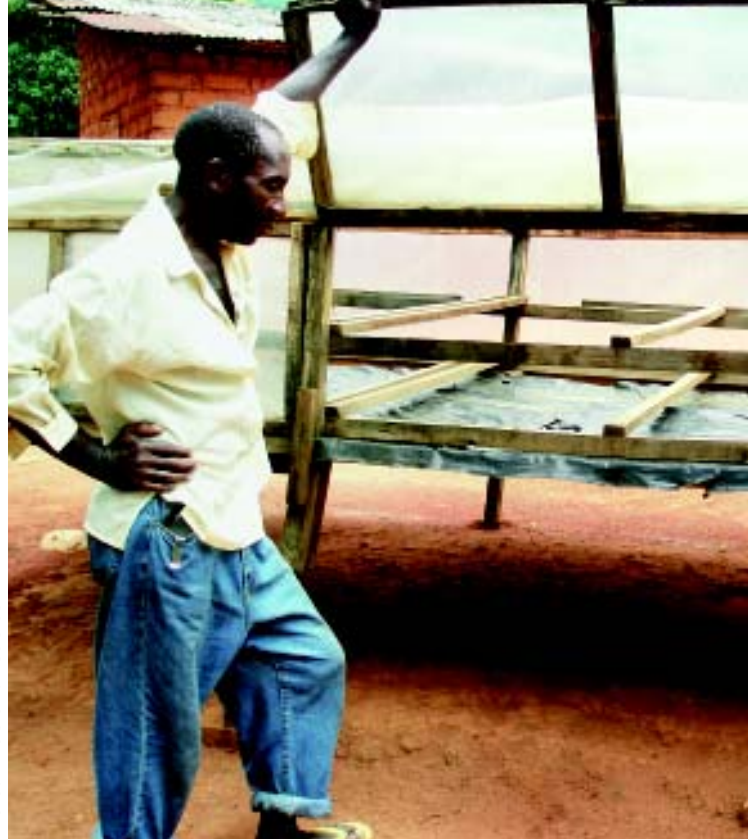


Photo: Anders P. Pedersen

Mr Ramadhani with his second sun drier. There are airing holes in the top of the plastic sheeting, and a device on each leg of the drier to prevent ants climbing up.

Producing dried fruit for the market

In the mid-1990s, an effort to set up a juice factory in nearby Mkuyuni failed because the local farmers did not manage to raise their share of capital. Equipment that was left behind (such as a sundrier design and trays) was given to those few local farmers who were interested to continue working with local fruit processing, one of whom was Mr Ramadhani. Dried fruit production started in 1997. You would think that it was easy to set up a fruit-drying business here. Not really. Despite a relatively short distance to town (45 km), the road conditions are tough. During heavy rains, the area is cut off due to bridges and roads becoming impassable. Fruits for the town market may arrive too late or not at all. They may rot, or may never find any market due to transport hurdles and costs, or there may be excess supply from other villages. Mr Ramadhani does not despair and has tried a new way to overcome the difficulties.

Mr Ramadhani dries, packs and sells jackfruits, pineapples, bananas, mango, mizaituni-fruits (a fruit said to come from Central America, but grown here for ages), tomatoes and lemon grass. Since these fruits have different ripening seasons, it means he can spread his efforts throughout the year. Mr Ramadhani has two sun driers, 30 trays, a cupboard, a mobile phone, and an "office" of a few square metres. No electricity, no generator, no vehicle, no fuel, no piped water, no scales, no thermometer, and no local supplies (except for the fruits): these are the conditions a small-scale farmer typically faces.

The mobile phone is a striking innovation and three or four people in the village have one. The batteries can normally be charged at

the local shop. SMSs are used to minimise the costs of communication. Without the mobile phone, Mr Ramadhani would not have been able to be in constant contact with customers and suppliers. He would have wasted time looking for people to buy his produce.

If all goes well

Fruits are cut and spread out on trays while fresh. They will be ready for packing in two to three days – if all goes well. The weather may be overcast, there may be excessive rains, or ants may claim their share of the harvest. At times trays of fruit become “burnt”. It might be that temperatures are too high, but the reason for this is not fully known and the problem is frequent and unpredictable. At times up to half of the trays need to be discarded. Fruit like mango need a chemical (potassium metabisulphite) to maintain the colour. This chemical is applied at a rate of 2 g per kg fruit. It is imported and expensive, but if it is not used, the mangoes turn black and cannot be sold. A friend at university has assisted Mr Ramadhani with this so far. However, in the future he may not be able to get hold of the chemical so easily, so he might not be able to continue preparing dried mango unless he finds an alternative method of maintaining colour.

Producing a bag of 100 grams of fruit requires up to 2 kg of raw fruit. The 100 gram bags are sold at a wholesale price of 400 Tsh. A small outlet for farmers with several similar products (food, spices, juices, etc.) is found in Morogoro at Boma Road. Here, the price reaches 500 Tsh. Other ad hoc sales opportunities are used as they arise; when Mr Ramadhani travels he always carries a display and small stock of his products.

Finding good bags for packaging is a headache. Even poor quality bags have to be imported from Nairobi. A better quality can be bought from the town of Moshi, 600 km away. Bags and labels often cost more than the value of dried fruit. Fruits are collected, packed in plastic bags, labels are filled out (with a production and expiry date), and sealed with the flame of a candle.

It appears that Mr Ramadhani is making a profit. However, if all costs were included, his net profit would be zero.

Risk of imprisonment

Mr Ramadhani insists he can improve the situation by following the proper legal channels – which is quite a task. In order to have his business approved and legalised he has to be (and is) a registered producer. For registration he needs a health certificate for his products. This is a must for domestic and export sales and is quite an obstacle for a producer in a remote area. Firstly, he needs to visit many offices. Then, samples of the fruit need to be analysed, at a cost of 100 000 TSh per sample (around US\$ 75). This soon adds up to quite a total for six kinds of fruits/vegetables, and prevents most farmers becoming registered and legalised. But, Mr Ramadhani pursues this issue relentlessly and has invested everything. Eventually, he succeeded in getting his Registration and Sales permit. This was very important, as without registration, he faces imprisonment if his products are sold outside the Morogoro region.

Box 1. Mr Ramadhani's turnover for year 2006

Income, all sales	750 400 Tsh
Costs (excl. labour and time)	563 640 Tsh
Gross profit	186 760 Tsh

As he is currently forced to travel out of the village to gather information and to purchase labels, bags, chemicals and other crucial materials, Mr Ramadhani is losing time and money. This may make his fragile business unfeasible. The profit may never be substantial unless the quantity increases and workload is shared, for example through the involvement of other local farmers. Mr Ramadhani could specialise in a single product instead of six. This would give bigger volumes, ease marketing, and provide more profit – but at a higher risk, which Morogoro farmers do not like.

Support is distant and insufficient

Despite various strategies and policies aimed at alleviating poverty among small-scale farmers, the existing regulations pose serious challenges, even for the most innovative farmers. It has been realised that the number, costs and pace of the official requirements make it all but impossible to comply with the necessary legal conditions. Such requirements include business registration, laboratory tests of current products, quality control, quality certificates, local levies, and government tax, each requiring plenty of documentation. A poor smallholder, living in a remote mountainous region, in a house with clay walls and no furniture, simply does not have the means to fulfil the conditions required.

Most often, community and civil society organisations do not deal with the bureaucratic issues that innovative farmers with growth potential need. The local agricultural extension service seems to play an insignificant or invisible role. In most cases, the only potential partners are from commercial business, from the research sector or if a development project should appear on the scene. The commercial sector often loses interest if the products come in low volumes, or if weather and logistics prevents accessibility. Many research projects are too small and do not take farmers' interests and sustainability into account. Farmer organisations have a tendency to get involved in local politics and move away from the interest of their members. Their key role –alleviating farmers' technical and operational needs– gets snowed under a whole lot of other tasks. Thus, as a paradox, the small-scale farmer, who actually was targeted for support in becoming an entrepreneur, becomes the loser, and often gets left behind by all those who originally wanted to help him or her.

Farmers in remote areas need improved technical and administrative support to enable them to continue improving production, yield, their storage capacity, and market access. In addition, networks and organisations need to be more co-productive and sensitive to their needs, for minimising costs and providing other support. Taking these issues into account will make farmers like Ramadhani Fufumbe even more successful.

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Eco tourism – an emerging rural enterprise

Villagers in Purushwadi have set up colourful tents in natural surroundings for tourists to stay.

Creation of sustainable opportunities for local communities helps in conserving and promoting local cultures, traditions, environment, knowledge systems and lifestyles. Grassroutes, an NGO, through its concept of village tourism, has demonstrated newer opportunities for villagers of Purushwadi and Kohane villages of Maharashtra.

Inir Pinheiro

In rural areas, most villagers have farms which keep them busy for 8-10 months in a year. Besides farm income which is meager, they need additional income to manage other requirements like costs of education, health and social events. To be able to access this additional income, rural communities have had to adopt various survival strategies. Very often, these strategies lead to exploitation of already over stretched natural resources, migration to towns and cities and most importantly, erosion of local cultures, traditions and lifestyles. All this happens owing to 'lack of opportunities' in the place they live in.

Grassroutes is a social enterprise involved in the development of a network of over 200 'responsible village destinations' across India

where in the local village communities 'own, manage and run' these village tourism destinations. Grassroutes believes that responsible rural tourism is a means of creating sustainable opportunities as recognized by the government too. For the past three years, Grassroutes has been working with the tribal communities of Kohane and Purushwadi villages in Maharashtra on community managed rural tourism which has yielded promising results.

The Grassroutes model

- Suitable locations are identified followed by village level meetings
- Orientation programs are done followed by exposure visits.
- Primarily, women and youth are involved. Women are trained as cooks and the youth as guides and housekeepers.
- Infrastructure is built to accommodate tourists (e.g. washrooms)
- Institutions like the village tourism committees are formed and trained to manage tourism in their villages.
- Monitoring and quality control systems ensure quality of the hospitality services.

Grassroutes has been primarily involved in facilitating the development of the village as a tourism destination; marketing and product development of tourism in the village and quality control and monitoring of tourism in the village.

Kohane and Purushwadi villages have been developed as village tourism destinations. Kohane has 150 households and Purushwadi has 109 households. Presently, over 15 households in Kohane and 50 households in Purushwadi have been involved in tourism.

The process

After these two villages were selected based on certain criteria, several rounds of village meetings were organized. It takes about 2-3 months of orientation before the community decides to initiate the program with the support of grassroutes.

While developing the village as a tourism destination, the uniqueness of the villagers' lifestyles is documented and is showcased. Infrastructure support, training programs and institutional building programs are followed after the community gives the green signal. Around 65 households in Kohane and Purushwadi have been trained on different skill sets as guides, housekeepers and as cooks. Some of the training modules are handled by hospitality experts while most of them are done by Grassroutes staff.

Tents and empty homes of villagers are made available for tourists to stay. Each accommodation has clean mattresses, linen, chairs, water containers and dustbins. Toilets and bathrooms have been constructed. Lighting is provided through solar lanterns.

A village tourism committee comprising of representative of various sections of the village is formed to oversee the functioning of tourism in the village. The village tourism committee is a committee that oversees the management and the running of tourism in the village, comprising of representatives of different sections of the village. For instance, Purushwadi tourism committee consists of 6 members. There are 2 women in the committee along with 2 youth as well. The committee currently meets every 2 months.

Role of women

The women of the village cook traditional food, very seasonal in nature. The food is traditionally cooked on chulas. Their meals are very simple food comprising of roti (made from bajra, jowar, rice, wheat or nachni) dal rice and the occasional vegetable, pickle and onion. "What quantities to cook?" and "what to cook?" "how to serve – initially, the women who undertook the responsibility of cooking faced many such uncertainties. Feedback from the tourists along with the knowledge and experience sharing among women has resulted in more efficient cooking.

With interaction with tourists, women have understood the tastes of tourists who visit them, and have made several changes not only in the way they prepare food but also in the way they serve. Women no longer prepare food too spicy. They have learnt to prepare tea without sugar and provide sugar in a separate bowl. They have realized that city folk eat lesser amount of food as

Zunkabai is one of the 2 landless laborers in village Purushwadi. She is a widow and a mother of 4. Her main sources of income are as a migratory laborer and tending to other villager's goats (she takes care of other villagers' goats for Rs. 20 per month). Being a migratory labour means she cannot attend to the needs of her children. Zunkabhai was the first woman to be selected as a cook for the 'community managed tourism' project. Prior to the guest arriving, she was asked to freshen up her appearance and hygiene. The change in Zunkabhai was so obvious, that most villagers complimented her on her change. On the first day, she was visibly shy, while serving food to the tourist group. However by the end of the second day, she was chatting with the tourist and telling them the story of her life. Even her children who normally had a messed up appearance were smiling and clean. Zunkabhai's effort of cooking for the tourists for 2 days has ensured her the same income that she would have received if she had migrated for 15 days to work elsewhere.

compared to an average villager. This awareness has resulted in less wastage and more returns of income.

Initially, women used to cook in the common kitchen. Later, cooking and serving in the cook's home was tried out, which evoked positive response from the tourists. This was liked by tourists as well as the cooks. By this arrangement, women started enjoying the security and comfort of working at home.

Women were also responsible for housekeeping, initially. An important part of the housekeeping responsibilities involves heating of hot water for bathing. Water used to be heated in the housekeepers home and then brought in steel mudkas to the camp site of the tourists. This was turning out to be very laborious. The villagers themselves came out with a possible solution. They bought a big container, placed near the campsite of the tourists, thereby reducing the labour needed. Gradually, the housekeeping responsibility was shifted to youth of the village, also as a means of involving them in the initiative.

Quality control mechanisms

Quality control is to ensure that the various tourist groups get a certain quality of services. Also, monitoring enables to modify the marketing strategies (in term of sensitizing tourists groups), as well as develop systems which would ensure that a clash of civilizations does not occur. Quality control systems involve trained village supervisor who is from the same village, to ensure quality checks for the cooks, housekeepers and the guides. Monitoring systems ensure that the socio-cultural change brought about in the village is desirable and controlled. For this, meetings are organized with various service providers and with the village tourism committee at least once a month. Tourists also provide their feedback which helps in maintaining the quality.

Marketing and promotion

While designing the marketing strategy for each village, special emphasis is paid on the uniqueness of the villagers' lifestyles, cuisine, culture, knowledge systems and biodiversity. The marketing of villages to various target groups also includes

Gangaram's story

Gangaram, as with most of the people in Purushwadi, speaks only Marathi. When Gangaram was appointed as a guide, he did not know what to do. He was nervous and mostly quiet throughout the first visit. He was shy of even speaking in Hindi. However, with encouragement and training, and interacting with more groups of tourists, Gangaram has not only fine-tuned his communication in Hindi but now attempts the 'queen's language'. He cheerily greets tourists with "good morning" and "How are you?" Gangaram's aspirations have turned a new chapter. He is currently studying to become a teacher.

sensitization of village realities and sensitivities to each target group. The programs are popularized through the website www.grassroutes.co.in.

Attracting tourists

Around 500 tourists have visited both the villages. Around 95 % of the tourists have been domestic urban tourists, primarily from the cities of Mumbai and Pune. The tourists include, corporate teams, youth groups and college students and small groups of families and friends. Around 5 % of them are individual travellers as well. Tourist groups have thoroughly enjoyed staying in the village.

The villagers showcase the following activities/ systems to attract the tourists

- Local lifestyles
- Daily chores like chopping wood, cooking, collecting water
- Livelihoods like farming, cattle rearing
- Local cuisine - Organic, locally grown seasonal foods cooked traditionally over fire wood
- Local environments – the landscape – Trekking, swimming in local ponds, vantage views, places of solitude
- Local site seeing to historical, natural and religious places. Explorations are organized - Locating a Banyan tree, 55 Km from Purushwadi, which is over 1.5 acres big. The sites are located in a forest and known only to the locals. Several other legendary locations, some based on local belief systems.
- Local festivals, legends and celebrations
- Local plants & insects, how they interact and could be useful for medicine

Benefits to communities

Payment to services, has substantially increased the income of households. Tourists pay Grassroutes in advance who in turn pay the service providers. Presently, in Purushwadi 50 of the 109 households have been directly involved in tourism, and have benefited with a 20 – 30 % increase in annual household income. These villages have an average annual household income of Rs. 12,000-16,000. It is estimated that at least 50 households would benefit with an increase in annual income by 4,000 – 5,000 a year. On a conservative estimate, a direct average annual inflow of over



Photo: Grassroutes

Tourists learning in the field.

3-4 lakhs per village is envisaged after 3 years of intervention. This is besides the village common fund of Rs. 2 -3 lakhs per year.

Tourism has a great multiplier effect for the local economy. During the last financial year, over 700 person days of employment were created due to tourism in the village.

One of the most important benefits that the communities perceive is the positive development of the youth in the villages. Out of 15 youth trained as guides in Purushwadi, 7 of them have started going to college.

Enhanced demand for poultry, kitchen gardens, agricultural goods like grains, medicinal plants, and processed village food like pickles has been created.

There is a positive impact on the environment too. The villagers are given an incentive to conserve their biodiversity and also showcase their beautiful environment.

The locals realize that the tourists relish and enjoy their local culture and traditions and love to hear out local stories and local treatments. There is a sense of pride in the villagers as they share their lifestyles and traditions with the tourists. This has led to a revival of traditional culture and knowledge systems in the village. The youth have revived the local theatre of the village and have won 2nd place in the local market festival last year.

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Market Access Centres make the difference

The Analanjirifo region in eastern Madagascar offers a unique and extremely wide range of agricultural products. Local production of cloves, lychees, vegetables, rice and honey represents a source of wealth. Despite this potential, the area's poor farmers have to cope with many problems, most important of which are marketing their produce and finding permanent partnerships. Market Access Centres are being set up to address these problems for farmers, including bee-keepers.

Benoît Thierry and Emeline Schneider

High agricultural potential and harsh living conditions for farmers: this is the paradoxical situation of the Analanjirifo region. The cause is the rural area's lack of infrastructure and technical skills, limiting investment and hampering the professionalisation of the various value chains. Most growers have difficulty accessing commercial inputs as they are too expensive, and not available locally. In addition, productivity varies with the climate, giving farmers an uncertain income. The situation is made worse with the absence of regional-level storage facilities and post-harvest processing infrastructure. Products cannot be conserved, preventing farmers and producers from responding adequately to demand.

Since 2004, the Rural Income Promotion Programme has been running in the eastern province of Toamasina. Financed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OPEC) Fund for International Development and the Government of Madagascar, its objective is to improve the income of poor farmers in two regions. The programme's activities consist mainly of supporting farmers' groups, through the development of "partnership poles" for value chain management. These poles bring together local government authorities, producers' groups, exporters and microfinance institutions. Seven poles are at present in service in the Analanjirifo region, and three others are in preparation for the Atsinanana region. Within a pole, producers' organisations are grouped into agricultural co-operatives, which have the task of managing a "Market Access Centre" (MAC).

The aim of the MACs is to organise collection systems, improve small farmers' negotiating strength, and the quality of their produce, and develop sustainable partnerships with traders. Each centre manages the marketing of the commodity that passes through it, and negotiates on behalf of producers in exchanges with traders. The manager in charge of the MAC is responsible for receiving the farmers' produce and selling it, and also for seeking out the best market opportunities.

An advisor made available by the programme manages marketing within each MAC. The advisor also provides training to those in

charge of the centre on topics ranging from simple management to product traceability. The Market Access Centres differ from one pole to another, developing their own strategies depending on the potential and constraints of the zone. Their main challenge is to function effectively enough to gain the confidence of producers and traders.

Improving honey production

Malagasy honey used to be highly prized in Europe, but lost its market share because of the lack of a sanitary surveillance system, so that exports to the European Union stopped. Many initiatives have been launched by the support programme to improve the quality of honey and thus relaunch the honey sector on the external market. As part of this effort, bee-keepers in the Analanjirifo region have been included in the MACs since 2004.

The first improvement in the honey value chain has been to upgrade the method of bee-keeping. In the region, the traditional manner has been for households to own between one and five hives. The quantities produced (5 kg per hive per year) do not bring in enough income. Mr Nosy, a bee-keeper for more than ten years, explains the problems relating to the traditional system:

"I have always worked with traditional hives set up in hollow tree trunks. You rub the inside with citronella leaves and then put in wax to attract swarms. Upkeep and gathering are difficult, and after extraction the honey has many impurities."

The programme decided to provide 500 Langstroth-type hives with movable frames to farmers, training them in the use of the modern hives. One modern hive can produce 10 kg per collection, three times a year. The main criteria for eligibility were the motivation and organisation of producers' groups. Besides improving the bee-keeping methods, the post-collection treatment received attention: the honey is extracted by centrifugation (using a machine with a rapidly rotating container to separate liquids from solids), it is then filtered and stored in plastic buckets suitable for containing food.

MACs help farmers with marketing

A Market Access Centre facilitates the marketing of the honey intended for national and international markets. The MAC collects honey (and other products) from members of the co-operative at a price slightly higher than the market price. It then finds the most profitable purchasers. If profits accrue from the sale, these are distributed among the members and help to develop the Centre. The member farmers have adopted this partnership system and new groups continue to be created. At the time of publication, nine Market Access Centres are successfully marketing different products of 4000 farmer members.

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Value addition – key to better incomes

Self sustainable models of CBOs have created newer opportunities for small farmers and rural entrepreneurs to increase and sustain rural incomes. This innovative initiative by CCD has helped in meeting rural demands of food, health, energy and employment and also creating market access for rural products.

Utkarsh Ghate

The problem of lower incomes in agriculture is due to lack of local value addition. Much of the produce is sold raw. Value addition happens in the cities often reaching back the village at a higher price. This can be avoided by setting up value addition facilities at villages and marketing value added products to cities at a higher price. Value addition as a rural enterprise has a potential to generate more local jobs, better income and services also reducing rural migration.

Aharam Producer Company

CCD, an NGO working in Madurai district in Tamil Nadu, facilitated the formation of a farmer owned organization - *Aharam Traditional Crop Producers Company Limited*, to help small farmers and rural entrepreneurs to increase and sustain their incomes. *Aharam* is dedicated towards empowering small farmers and rural entrepreneurs through the coordination of Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and the delivery of integrated value chain services. *Aharam* combines market access for rural products through collective purchase from suppliers, providing access to credit and building capacities by a coordinated network of NGO partners.

Aharam has a profit sharing business model that links 3 levels of the agricultural economy – the markets, the NGOs and the CBOs. The *Aharam* Business Model works through a network of NGO partners that coordinates CBOs to collectively purchase inputs, process outputs and uniformly brand their product. The NGOs then facilitate the sale of the processed goods to *Aharam's* wholesale buyers or regional and local retailers under the *Aharam* brand name. *Aharam* Company manages these transactions through logistical coordination with bulk buyers and partner NGOs. *Aharam* also engages in the wholesale purchase of CBO output for value added resale (higher profit margins are obtained in the products' off season or in regions where the product is in high demand).

Few hundred families of villagers near Madurai started bulk purchase of grocery (pulses, oil & spices) at a discount, from quality suppliers. They are members of self help groups (SHG) promoted by CCD. CCD helped them in buying this produce and processed it through selected SHGs. CCD used project grants that remain unused for few months to buy the farm produce. This was paid

back into the project accounts for training activities, after recovering from sale of the produce.

CCD also helped in building infrastructure to enable farmers to generate additional income. Processing machinery such as dhal mill, flourmill, oil mill, pulverizer were established. A team of women were trained on processing. Consumers get items at 5% lesser price than the market. Producers (farmers) get 10-15% extra income owing to elimination of middlemen and cutting losses in pilferages like faulty weighing. This consumer co-operative began with 300 families each consuming Rs.500 worth groceries amounting to about Rs.1.5 lakh per month. The enterprise has now grown ten times and involves around 3000 families with monthly grocery budget of Rs.300 each. Thus, the monthly turnover is Rs.9 lakh and annual turnover is one crore.

Apart from sales, *Aharam* has also set up Business Development Services (BDS) to impart training to farmers in low cost farming and teach traditional recipes that have been long forgotten. Farming costs were reduced by 20% (savings from pesticides, fertilizers and seeds) while simultaneously farmers' income raised by 20% (10% increase in yield and a 10% increase due to direct sales to buyers).

Marketing Processed Products

Also, the groups have ventured into processed foods. Farmers 'aggregated' and 'pooled' their produce such as chilly and mango. Initially, it was sold raw with a margin of 3-4% profit. Also, losses were incurred due to transport delays, loss of weight during transport, storage etc. But, after 4 years of trading in fruits, the company has set up mango pulp making factory and is selling pulp to companies like Parle Agro. Generally, these companies sell the 'Frooti'. The price of two kilos of village variety mango fruits cost Rs. 10 and equal amount of processing charges (labor, factory, canning loan interest etc.). Hence, the pulp production cost is Rs.20/- per kg but sales price is 22/- indicating 10% profit. Similarly, chilly and turmeric valued at 7 to 10/- per kg as raw produce earns Rs.80-100 per kg when sold as powder to SHGs, with 10% profit. The processing units also create rural jobs and prevent migration to cities.

Aharam Company has been recognized globally and is shortlisted as a finalist in 2006 round for the Equator award of the United Nations that promotes biodiversity conservation based business. CCD's successful initiative is a source of inspiration to many NGOs and CBOs to take up eco-friendly rural enterprises.

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Supportive policies secure a future for family farmers

Mirandiba, in north-eastern Brazil, provides few opportunities for family farmers to make a living. With long dry seasons, few local jobs and poor access to markets, it is difficult to meet a family's needs. Men often migrate in search of work. However most return after finding they are still unable to escape poverty. This situation repeated itself for many generations. Now, an innovative government policy is breaking the cycle by giving family farmers the opportunity to earn a decent livelihood from their independent work in agriculture.

Photo: Sofia Naranjo



Outside the Conviver office, farmers arrive with sacks full of produce to be delivered to schools and hospitals through the Food Acquisition Programme.

Sofia Naranjo

Located in Pernambuco, Mirandiba is a typical rural municipality that shares many characteristics with other poor rural areas around the developing world. Half of Mirandiba's population of 13 000 people live in the rural area. From the working population, 57 percent are engaged in agricultural activities. In 2000, it was found that 76 percent of the population earned less than the monthly minimum wage. Poor family farmers generally do not own any land and live as sharecroppers or tenant farmers, whilst also working as casual wage labourers.

In this semi-arid region there are prolonged dry periods of around six months each year, and recurring droughts. Farmers grow their staple food, cowpeas (*Vigna unguiculata*), in a diversified system with maize and other crops like pumpkins and melons. During the short rainy season farmers try to produce the maximum quantity of cowpeas and maize. However they are rarely able to meet their families' yearly food needs. At times they are forced to sell some of their produce in order to buy clothing and medicines. Access to markets, however, is limited, and they must rely on middlemen who pay them low prices. When the farmers' cowpeas reserves start to run out they are forced to buy more, but at higher prices. Consequently, family farmers are not able to be food self-sufficient despite their best efforts, and cannot make a living from selling their products.

Before the new government policy started, the main and often only way farmers in Mirandiba were able to earn an income was working

as casual wage labourers for meagre daily rates. Local casual work was irregular and limited to the short growing season, forcing farmers to neglect their own family farm. During the dry season it was commonplace for men to migrate in search of jobs, usually to large irrigated horticultural plantations. Sometimes entire families would migrate to these plantations for several years and the whole family, including children from the age of ten years, would work. For decades, these families lived in great deprivation. They felt they had no future in agriculture, but no alternative to it either, particularly as the majority of adults are illiterate.

Local initiatives

It is against this backdrop that the grassroots non-governmental organisation *Conviver no Sertão* (Living Together in the Outback) started its work. This NGO originated from another Brazilian NGO, AS-PTA (*Assessoria e Serviços a Projetos em Agricultura Alternativa*, Consultancy and Services to Projects in Alternative Agriculture). AS-PTA worked in Mirandiba in 1998 for two years. When they left, the local staff formed *Conviver no Sertão*. Successfully securing national and international funding, *Conviver* worked on water resources and home gardens, expanding into new areas. In 2003 *Conviver* set up a small fruit pulp factory and managed to convince farmers from four local communities to collect and process a native plum *umbu* (*Spondias tuberosa*) into pulp.

The aim of the pulp factory was to add value to local products and provide farmers with an alternative income. Unfortunately they did not have a market for the pulp, so it simply accumulated in the

freezers. Unwilling to give up, in 2004 Conviver secured funding to buy equipment for a larger processing factory. That year they were also able to make a deal with the local town council. The council agreed to buy 300 kg of pulp a month to distribute at local schools to make juice for school dinners. The factory however, was producing far more pulp than was being sold. The town council also started to falter in their agreement by delaying payments or requesting decreasing quantities of pulp each time. By 2005 more family farmers had got involved in the pulp factory, less was being sold to the town council and the stock had built-up to over 12 000 kg with no market to go to.

Fruit pulp production by family farmers had been successful but its commercialisation had not. A tiny town in the remote semi-arid region does not offer a substantial market demand, nor provide easy access to other markets. The answer to their commercialisation problem appeared in 2005 when Conviver learned about the Brazilian government's innovative policy, the Food Acquisition Programme (*Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos*) or PAA.

The Food Acquisition Programme

The PAA was created in 2003 to address hunger and poverty by buying products directly from family farmers at prices that would benefit them and using these products to feed people in schools, nurseries, care homes, hospitals and other social service institutions. Funds come from two Brazilian ministries: the Ministry for Social Development and Fighting Hunger (*Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome* - MDS) and the Ministry for Agrarian Development (*Ministério do Desenvolvimento Agrário* - MDA). The agencies in charge of purchasing the products are the MDS in some cases and the Brazilian National Agricultural Supply Company (*Companhia Nacional de Abastecimento* - CONAB) in others. There are five different arrangements through which these agencies can buy from family farmers. CONAB manages one of the arrangements which was created in 2003 and re-named in 2006 as "Purchase from Family Agriculture with Simultaneous Donation" (*Compra da Agricultura Familiar com Doação Simultânea* - CPR-doação).

The way the CPR-doação works is simple. Associations or cooperatives of family farmers must first establish a contract with CONAB. This specifies which farmers will participate, which products they will produce and in what form (raw or processed). They also note which social institutions will benefit from the donations. The prices for all products are negotiated and agreed in advance, a total value for the contract is settled and resources earmarked for it. The farmers have a year to produce and deliver the products until they reach the total value of the contract. Once the goods are delivered to the social institutions the funds are released and the family farmers receive their payment on a monthly basis. This way the farmers have a previously established contract, a guaranteed purchase at defined prices, and a major incentive to produce. The PAA promotes agroecology through a price increase of 30 percent to farmer associations that prove they employ agroecological farming methods. Since August 2006 the maximum amount a family farmer is allowed to earn through the PAA is 3500 reais (R\$) a year (approximately US\$ 2065), equal to the

Brazilian minimum wage at the time (previously the limit was R\$ 2500 a year).

Encouraging participation through success

Conviver found out about the PAA in 2004 and immediately went to meet with CONAB of the state of Pernambuco. They set up a contract worth R\$ 250 000 (close to US\$ 150 000) as they aimed to include 100 farmers. However it was difficult to convince enough farmers to join. They were reluctant to produce and deliver products in advance, based on the trust that the government would eventually pay them. As a result only 82 family farmers from eight farming communities in Mirandiba joined. Since Conviver had the pulp factory running for over a year they were able to include fruit pulp in the contract, and being a value-added product, it received a high price. Pulp production extended to other fruits aside from *umbu*, for example papaya, mango, acerola (*Malpighia glabra*), caju (*Anacardium occidentale*) and caxi (*Lagenaria siceraria*). Conviver knew some farmers produced a few of these fruits and distributed tree seedlings to those who did not. The PAA offered the opportunity to market other products as well. Therefore Conviver included in the contract vegetables that the farmers had been growing in their home gardens (green pepper, aubergine, lettuce, coriander and beetroot) as well as products that farmers produced traditionally (pumpkin, cassava, sweet potato and goat meat). The products were taken to the Conviver office by the farmers and delivered in local schools, nurseries and homes for the elderly. Product deliveries began in February 2005 but by the time the contract period was over, they had not managed to reach the total value of the contract. Fortunately CONAB allowed them an extra six months and the farmers were able to achieve the contract value by the end of June 2006.

As commercialisation proved to be successful and others saw the participating farmers were being paid regularly and receiving good prices, interest in joining the PAA grew enormously: a total of 240 families got involved in the second contract. Although it took six months for CONAB to officially approve the contract, the farmers were enthusiastic about this new entrepreneurial opportunity and a large number continued producing and delivering products despite having no guarantee of payment. In December 2006 the contract was approved for a value of R\$ 760 000 (around US\$ 450 000) which amounted to 371 tonnes of food products delivered from July 2006 to November 2007. For the third contract, which commenced in December 2007, 393 farmers from 18 farming communities in Mirandiba signed up.

Increased food self-sufficiency and better livelihoods

Research in two participating communities found that for the majority of farmers, their situation started to improve around 2004. This was due to various social policies implemented by the Lula government, such as the *Bolsa Família* (Family Bursary) and the retirement pension. The *Bolsa Família* provides funds for bringing up children. The maximum a family can get is R\$ 122 (US\$ 72) a month but on average they tend to receive around R\$ 95 a month. The pension provides a minimum wage (R\$ 380 a month) to the elderly. These policies raised the income of farming families. However, they were solely assistencialist; they did not require or

give an incentive for families to work and simply provided money. The PAA, on the other hand, required farmers to produce in order for them to increase their income and improve their living conditions. Furthermore, it was an incentive for hundreds of farmers to get involved in local commercialisation. The 240 farmers who participated in the second contract earned on an average R\$ 106 a month, an amount comparable and often higher than the amount provided by the Bolsa Familia. These farmers had never had access to a market that allowed them to make a decent livelihood from selling their own produce. Even the few farmers who engaged in a small agroecological fair in the town of Mirandiba found that the income and benefits they got from the PAA were far more significant than those from the fair. In general, the farmers perceived the PAA as a guaranteed unlimited market that would buy any amount they produced; therefore they felt encouraged to increase their output as much as possible in order to maximise their earnings.

The PAA also enabled farming families in Mirandiba to be more food self-sufficient. The families claimed that their higher income permitted them to reduce substantially, or eliminate completely, their need to work as casual wage labourers or to migrate in search for jobs. This meant that farmers had more time to dedicate to their family farm, increasing their production for consumption and for commercialisation through the PAA. As they ate more food from their own production, they spent less of their limited cash on purchasing food, freeing up money for other important uses. Even during the dry season, farmers who had access to water preferred to stay in their communities and continue producing vegetables for the PAA instead of migrating.

A crucial impact of the PAA is that it gave farmers renewed hope and enthusiasm to make a living from independent family farming whilst at the same time increasing their self-esteem and happiness. The setting up and running of PAA contracts was led by a few hardworking, ambitious farmers who encouraged others in their communities to participate. The PAA provided the opportunity for several farmers to acquire or improve a range of business and managerial skills and to take on new responsibilities and jobs. Although not all participating farmers fully embraced the PAA and a small number actually abandoned the contract, in general, the PAA has enabled hundreds of farmers to flourish – especially those who were willing to put in the effort. It has renewed their enthusiasm for family farming and awakened an entrepreneurial spirit, encouraging farmers to dedicate more time and make investments in their farms and home gardens. Many farmers expressed their joy of being independent family farmers and claimed they wanted to continue farming for the rest of their lives as now they felt they have a future in it.

Sustaining the benefits for the future

Despite the substantial improvements, these farmers have experienced, they are not blinded by success and are fully aware that the PAA might change or end at any point. This is why the farmers' associations from the 18 communities involved in the third contract formed a large co-operative. This co-operative has two aims: to facilitate the management of future PAA contracts,



Photo: Sofia Naranjo

Vitoria, Eliana and Edeneide (from left to right) - the whole family gets involved in the home gardens and fruit orchards.

and more importantly, to search for alternative markets to the PAA, so that they are able to continue living off their independent agricultural production, even if the PAA is discontinued.

The PAA is a telling example of how a government policy, that provides a guaranteed institutional market to poor family farmers, can significantly improve their lives and allow them to continue farming. The PAA has enabled hundreds of farming families in Mirandiba to leave the cycle of poverty behind, and allowed them to survive and progress as independent family farmers. Several governments throughout the world, as well as some development agencies, have school feeding programmes and similar projects to provide food to populations in need. If this food were purchased from local family farmers, then both farmers and consumers would benefit. In a world where industrial agriculture and globalised food markets offer little hope and opportunity for poor family farmers, such institutional markets could provide them with a feasible and effective alternative which enables them to stay on the land and have a future as independent and diversified family farmers. ■

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Rural entrepreneurs

Villages were self sufficient in getting most of their requirements. After the industrial development, gradually the cottage industries have started disappearing and now a situation has been created that not only pots, tools, cloth and soaps, even food grains and vegetables are bought from cities. Most of the villages are becoming old age settlements. Young people, both men and women, are going away to cities in search of jobs, since it is no more economical to stay and work in the villages. If the same trend continues, there could be dangerous problems in cities to provide housing, water, sanitation, health, law and order. Thus, it is very important to encourage cottage industries like food processing, wood carving, pottery, herb collection and processing, small scale nurseries, bee keeping, backyard poultries and dairy, even small scale aquaculture, vermicomposting etc.

Ravi at Sathyamangalam in Erode District, Tamil Nadu and Dumballi Sivamma, of Shimoga district, Karnataka have proved that, with vision and commitment, even the poorest of the poor can lead a comfortable life. Both of them started vermicomposting about 10 years ago and are now successful in their ventures and in turn have inspired many people to start vermicomposting.

Dumballi Sivamma, a young widow, owned a small piece of land. After learning vermicomposting techniques on her own, she started practicing on a small scale basis in her backyard. She now produces 10 tonnes of good quality vermicompost per week and gets a net income of Rs. 1500. She owns 10 cattle, which produce enough cowdung for her vermicomposting unit and now employs five people of the village. With technical and organising support of Bharatiya Agro-industry Foundation (BAIF), Tiptur and Dharmasthala Shri Manjunatheswara Rural Development Project in Karnataka, many women self help groups have undertaken crafts activity.

The organizations have arranged for marketing of their products and providing employment to the weaker sections of the village population. A few unemployed young women agriculture graduates have started nurseries to raise vegetable seedlings. They not only lead a comfortable life, but have helped many local farmers to grow high value vegetables and make a good profit.

T V S Academy at Hosur has taken lead in educating about 1500 farmers to grow organic vegetables and making all sincere efforts to help them in marketing, apart from buying a part of the products for their canteens in their various industrial units. In Bangalore, a combinedly organised green shop by name "Era Organic", at Dollar's colony sells certified organic products only. This is mainly



done to directly access organic products from growers by providing transportation and a premium price. Technical support is provided in establishing shade nets and green houses to grow high value vegetables organically. This is not a business, but a service for both producers and consumers. So, if such efforts are made by NGOs, individuals and administrative bodies of agriculture and horticulture, universities and research institutions, through network in their services, we can inspire rural youth to start village based enterprises and avoid migration to cities.

It is very important to empower rural India to establish stronger rural economy. If we really think seriously about the plight of the society which dreamt of modern industrial progress, one should be ashamed of the development that has happened in this country which benefited only 5 % of the population. According to media reports, many people have lost their jobs in Gulf countries and are leading a dismal life. A similar situation is arising because of migration from rural areas to urban centres in our country. People who migrated to Surat from Orissa and from Tamil Nadu to Singapore, face the same problem. This is due to the collapse of the rural economy system. Therefore, building rural economy is crucial. Otherwise, we will have to face more hardships in future.

Shri Narayana Reddy is a legendry organic farmer and is one of the most sought after resource persons on ecological agriculture.

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Farmer First Revisited: Innovation for agricultural research and development by Ian Scoones and John Thompson, 2009. ISBN 978-1-85339-682-3. Practical Action Publishing Ltd. Schumacher Centre for Technology and Development, Bourton on Dunsmore, Rugby, Warwickshire CV23 9QZ, U.K.

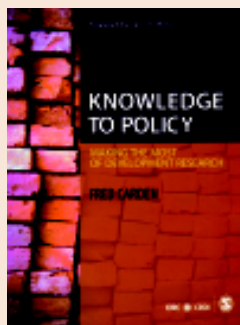
Back in 1987, the Farmer First workshop, held at the Institute of Development Studies, IDS, brought together a number of “pioneers” from all over the world, all of them interested in participatory approaches to agriculture. Much has changed since then. Quoting Robert Chambers, Farmer First “became a movement”, but many challenges still remain. This book is a collection of all the papers presented at the Farmer First Revisited workshop, which took place 15 months ago. This aimed to look at the achievements and failures seen in the past 20 years, and at the same time tried to assess the current situation. Covering experiences from all over the world, the papers look at innovation systems, networks and partnerships, extension and education, assessments and evaluations. Resulting in a broad and detailed overview, this is very interesting reading for all development practitioners.

The impact of Fair Trade by Ruerd Ruben (ed.), 2008. ISBN 978-90-8686-083-8. Wageningen Academic Publishers, P.O. Box 220, 6700 AE Wageningen, the Netherlands.

All those involved in the development of the global Fair Trade movement can be very proud of the results achieved: after 20 years of sustained growth, it is now estimated that more than 600 producer organisations, in 55 countries, are benefiting from it. Even more surprising, annual sales are estimated at 1.6 billion euros. But while these figures are impressive, they only give a partial view. What is the impact at the household level? Does Fair Trade strengthen local organisations? And how does it contribute to sustainable development? This book tries to answer these questions, focusing on different case studies (bananas in Peru, coffee in Costa Rica, herbs in Kenya), and comparing the results of producers who are part of the Fair Trade chain with those of “conventional” farmers. With ample statistical evidence, these studies confirm the many benefits of Fair Trade. As a whole, this book is of interest to a wide public. It provides a very comprehensive base for a broader (and necessary) analysis, focusing on issues such as the relationship of Fair Trade with certified organic production, the need to “mainstream” it, or the need to further develop local markets.

Knowledge to policy: Making the most of development research by Fred Carden, 2009. ISBN 978-81-7829-930-3. SAGE Publications/International Development Research Centre. P.O. Box 8500, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1G 3H9.

While it can be easy to conclude that all researchers are interested in contributing to the existing body of knowledge, we can also say that one of the major objectives of those involved in social studies and development research is to influence public policy and decision making. Many organisations are carrying out specific research, and many others are funding their work. Not all, however, can say that they have been effective in influencing governments, or in generating changes in the local, regional or national administrations of developing countries. Looking in detail at 23 case studies, from Asia, Africa and Latin America, the author shows how research can



contribute to better governance. Considering common difficulties found (related to, for example, frequent staff turnover or a lack of autonomy), he also points to the many factors that minimise the effect of social research and its influence in terms of policy and governance. Clearly pointing at what works, and at what does not, this is a very interesting book for those wanting to help policy makers make better choices.

System of Rice Intensification: An Introduction (English) by K Senthil, V Suresh, K Parimala, S Arumugasamy, March 2009. Centre For Indian Knowledge Systems – CIKS, No. 30, Gandhi Mandapam Road, Kotturpuram, Chennai – 600 085, India, phone : +91-044-24471087 / 24475862, E-mail : info@ciks.org / ciksorg@gmail.com, website : www.ciks.org. Price: Rs. 25.00/- (Postage: Rs. 8/-)

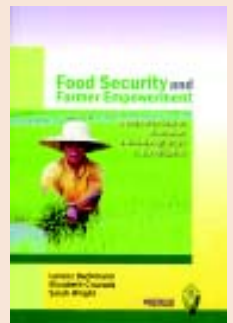
This book highlights System of Rice Intensification (SRI), which is gaining popularity in recent days. It talks about the prominent features and advantages of SRI method of rice cultivation, such as reduced water consumption, low requirement of seed and labour. Information on ways to implement SRI method of rice cultivation organically has been compiled in this booklet.



Food Security and Farmer Empowerment by Lorenz Bachmann, Elizabeth Cruzada, Sarah Wright, 2009, ISBN 078-971-94381-0-6 published by Magsaka at Siyentipiko para sa Pag-unlad ng Agrikultura (MASIPAG), 2611 Carbern Village, Anos Los Banos, Laguna 4000 Phillipines, Phone : 6349 536 5549, e-mail : info@masipag.org, website : http://www.masipag.org

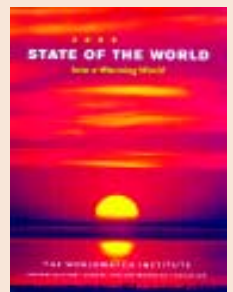
(A study of the impacts of farmer-led sustainable agriculture in the Philippines)

This book contains the results of a study of farmer-led sustainable agriculture in the Philippines. Incorporating the experiences of 840 organic, partially organic and conventional farmers, the study is one of the largest ever undertaken on organic rice-based agricultural systems or on sustainable agriculture in Asia. The book investigates organic farming through the work of a Filipino farmers’ network called MASIPAG.



State of the world: Into a Warming World, a Worldwatch Institute Report on Progress toward a sustainable Society. Indian edition by Centre for Environment Education, 2009, ISBN 9780393334180. CEE, Thaltej Tekra, Ahmedabad-380054. Price Rs 295/-.

The Indian edition has articles on women and climate change by Lorena Aguilar, India’s take on climate change by Malini Mehra, a Chinese perspective on climate and energy by Yingling Liu. The book also comprises articles pertaining to trade and sustainability in the climate change context by Tao Wang and Jim Watson. Ambika Chawla’s article highlights about climate justice and state of movements related to it.



Livelihoods diversification and enterprise development: An initial exploration of concepts and issues by Patrizio Warren, 2002. LSP Working Paper 4, Livelihoods diversification and enterprise development sub-programme, Livelihood Support programme, FAO.

This paper, downloadable from the FAO website, looks both at agricultural intensification and rural livelihood diversification as logical responses to the difficulties which farmers face. From this introduction it goes on to compare wage labour with the establishment of rural enterprises, showing the important role of the latter as a pathway to livelihood diversification. Rural enterprise development, however, needs farmers (or outsiders) to invest money and entails higher risks, from which the author concludes that this is an option suited for better-off farmers, and not for the poorest. Though brief (and written back in 2002), this is an interesting analysis, which might have benefited from some real-life examples.

Chain-wide learning for inclusive agrifood market development: A guide to multi-stakeholder processes for linking small-scale producers to modern markets by Sonja Vermeulen, Jim Woodhill, Felicity Proctor and Rik Delnoye, 2008. ISBN 978-90-8504-964-7. International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and Wageningen University and Research Centre, Wageningen, the Netherlands.

All over the world, the relationship between food producers, retailers and consumers is changing, and the emergence of “modern” markets seems inevitable. Analysing the link between small-scale farmers and the national and international markets is therefore a logical thing to do. Considering that these links need to be strengthened if we are interested in reducing poverty in rural areas (or in not letting poverty levels increase), the authors provide a methodology that can help create strong relationships. This method follows a six-step approach which includes mapping all actors involved and the existing flow of products, identifying those factors which may influence change, and exploring possible future scenarios. The guide finishes with a series of tips for facilitating workshops which include all the persons and institutions involved in the commercialisation processes.



Origin-based products: Lessons for pro-poor market development by Petra van de Kop, Denis Sautier and Astrid Gerz (eds.), 2006. ISBN 90-6832-1668. Bulletin 372, Royal Tropical Institute, P.O. Box 95001, 1090 HA Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

For more than three years now, origin-based marketing has been supported by European Union regulations, all of which aim to “maintain rural vitality”. Can regional identities and origin-based labelling help to develop marketing options for small scale farmers in developing countries? By putting together examples from Peru, South Africa, Costa Rica and France, the editors show the advantages of these products, as opposed to global brands. Each case shows different aspects (such as the strategies followed, the use of local resources, or the importance of official recognition), from which the editors map the major opportunities and challenges. This is interesting reading for all those involved in marketing niche products.

Living countryside: Rural development processes in Europe by Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, Ann Long and Jo Banks (eds.), 2002. Elsevier Bedrijfsinformatie BV, Doetinchem, the Netherlands.

Beautifully presented, the editors bring together an interesting collection of articles. All of them show “the impressive heterogeneity of current rural development processes in Europe, covering small scale initiatives in agritourism, crop diversification or marketing”. The result of a large scale research programme, this book includes contributions from Ireland, Germany, Wales and the Netherlands. They all show the different ways in which the European countryside is changing, the entrepreneurial spirit of its farmers, as well as the many benefits this is bringing in terms of rural development.



Beyond agriculture – making markets work for the poor by F.R. Almond and S.D. Hainsworth (eds.), 2005. Proceedings of an international seminar: Crop Post-Harvest Programme, Natural Resources International Limited, and Practical Action, U.K.

The international seminar from which this book derived took place in London in 2005, bringing together practitioners, policy makers and researchers. All of them looked at the possibilities small scale farmers have in accessing markets, and at the likelihood of these markets actually “working” for poor people. The discussions among participants followed four theme papers, all of which are included in this publication (covering linkages and trust, information needs, the role of producers’ organisations, and the need to help producers meet the standards demanded by buyers). The section written by Jon Hellin, Alison Griffith and Mike Albu describes the Market Map, as an interesting tool for understanding how markets work in the rural areas, and how best to respond to them. Researchers and development practitioners can benefit from a tool which helps them focus on processes and institutions, competencies and relationships; all of which is then referred to as “market literacy”.

Sustainable procurement from developing countries: Practices and challenges for businesses and support agencies by Marije J. Boomsma, 2008. ISBN 978-90-6832-745-8. Bulletin 385, Development. Policy & Practice. Royal Tropical Institute, KIT, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Many projects have been implemented with the objective of linking small-scale farmers to international markets, focusing on the steps these farmers must take in order to succeed. This book covers the same aim, though focusing on the role of the companies who buy the products. By looking at three specific cases of products reaching Europe (ginger from Sierra Leone, mangoes from Mali and citrus from South Africa), the author analyses the way in which large multinational companies make sure that they are supplied with products coming from sustainable agriculture farms. This takes into account the growing interest which large companies are showing for social and



environmental concerns, and for what is known as corporate social responsibility in general. The result is a very interesting analysis of the “other side” of the chain.

Entrepreneurship and Rural Development in India by Jegadeesan G, Santana Krishnan R Publisher: ICFAI, No. of Pages: 288, EAN: 9788131414286, 2008, Rs 956/-

The book attempts to give a clear picture on various perspectives and issues affecting development of rural entrepreneurship. It discusses entrepreneurship in rural India in the context of integrated rural development, role of entrepreneurship, woman entrepreneurship and meeting of capital needs of entrepreneurs by financial institutions like NABARD, nationalized banks and Khadi and Village Industries Corporation. Factors relating to marketing, micro finance, innovation and awareness of science and technology and ways to develop entrepreneurial skills for rural masses are also discussed. It highlights factors that lead to or promote entrepreneurship under different perspectives as sustaining development, empowering women, enabling means of livelihood, role of NGOs, establishing gender equity by eliminating risks and hurdles faced by rural woman entrepreneurs in particular and male entrepreneurs in general.

Entrepreneurship and Rural Development by S K Sinha, Shree Pub, 2007, ISBN : 81-8329-197-X, \$47.00. www.vedambooks.com

The book is a collection of research papers contributed by eminent scholars of their respective disciplines, highlighting issues related to rural and entrepreneurship development in the changed economy. It consists of topics written by various authors. Some of the chapters include “Strategy for sustained development: challenges ahead” by

G.C. Agarwal, “Need of micro financing of SMEs for rural tourism entrepreneurship development: a North East Indian perspective” by S.S. Khanka and Anjan Bhltan. It also comprises of topics on entrepreneurship and economic development, written by P.K. Yadav, P.B. Singh and Uvesh Singh. An overview of rural entrepreneurial development in India by Anirudh Thakur, Manish Kumar and Mukesh Kumar and some case studies pertaining to Mizoram and Manipur have been included.

Addressing poverty through local economic and enterprise development: A review of conceptual approaches and practice by Junior Davis and Catherine Rylance, 2005. Working Paper 3, Enterprise, Trade and Finance group, Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich at Medway, Central Avenue, Chatham Maritime, Kent, ME4 4TB, UK.

Aimed at academics and researchers, this document looks at the different aspects which need to be considered when fostering local economic and enterprise development. It starts with an historical review, looking at the different approaches followed, finding common elements (such as the need to enhance competitiveness) and also looking at the current limitations (such as those coming from a rigid division between urban and rural livelihoods). This leads the authors to show the importance of an integrated approach which “incorporates the institutional framework, governance and stakeholders, market access and linkages”. These ideas are illustrated with different examples from South Africa, Bangladesh and from within the E.U. They all show the advantages to be gained from a favourable environment.

Themes for LEISA India

Volume 11 no. 4, December 2009

Scaling up and sustaining the gains

The next issue of LEISA Magazine will look at how sustainable agriculture practices have developed and spread over time. We want to look at initiatives that have been taken to scale up successful methods and approaches. Equally, we will look at the factors that have hindered the spreading of sustainable agricultural practices. And we want to learn about what it is that has helped some sustainable practices to continue while others have not. We would like to pay attention to the different dimensions of upscaling. What characteristics does a good practice need for it to be disseminated and picked up by others? What institutional arrangements are important (for example collaboration between farmers’ organisations, government extension departments, private sector and/or NGOs)? And what are the policies that encourage or inhibit scaling up processes? How do they come about? How does relevant information reach those in charge of drafting them? Have successful advocacy campaigns influenced local policies?

Please send the articles to the Editor, at leisiandia@yahoo.co.in.

Deadline for submission of articles - January 1st, 2010

Volume 12 no. 1, March 2010

Small-scale livestock production

Animals play an important role in rural life: besides milk, meat, eggs and wool, they provide manure for growing crops, and they also serve as a savings account for people. In the first issue of the coming year, we are interested in showing how small-scale farmers manage their animals in their farming systems and how they link it with other economic activities. What advantages does such an integrated approach bring in terms of food availability, productivity, efficiency or sustainability? Current developments in the world’s food production and consumption systems make this all particularly relevant. Meat consumption is growing drastically, leading to serious problems in terms of, for example, deforestation and emission of greenhouse gases. What role can small-scale farmers play in order to ensure food security? Can small-scale farmers avoid the risks that characterise industrial production (for example, in terms of wide-scale animal diseases and even danger to human health)? And how do they manage livestock where land competition is high? We are interested in highlighting different production approaches, including all those issues related to sustainable fodder and feed production. Lastly, we will look at the role of local organisations (co-operatives, networks) and we will consider interesting examples of local, regional and national livestock policies.

The SEED Initiative

www.seedinit.org

The SEED Initiative aims to support entrepreneurs and partnerships for sustainable development. In their own words: “The SEED Initiative inspires, supports and researches exceptional, entrepreneurial, nascent, multi-stakeholder partnerships for locally-led sustainable development.” The SEED Awards is an annual global scheme providing recognition to promising enterprises. Award winners then receive various support packages through the other three activities. Support includes access to technical assistance or developing business plans. The website itself has lots of information, such as papers summarising critical factors for success in new ventures, and tips for developing successful partnerships. In the near future, new tools and online resources for entrepreneurial partnerships will also be available on the site. We highlight one award winning project on p. 15.

RuralInvest

www.fao.org/tc/tci/ruralinvest_en.asp

RuralInvest is a toolkit developed by FAO. It aims to provide support for preparing successful rural development projects. The toolkit is made up of training courses, manuals and custom developed software. The manuals and software are currently available in English, French and Spanish. Russian, Turkish and Portuguese are in preparation. There are various modules to choose from, and the website is clear and easy to use. The toolkit is aimed at projects, organisations and agencies rather than individuals. This is reflected in the costs associated with the training courses, which must be completed before the software can be downloaded. Visit the website to register your interest or contact FAO directly for further information via the e-mail address above.

Rural Finance Learning Centre

www.ruralfinance.org

This website is dedicated to providing access to the best materials for capacity building in rural finance. Managed by rural finance specialists in FAO, the content of the site is freely available to all. If you register you will receive the Rural Finance Update each month and can suggest resources to the editors. There is an impressive range of capacity building materials available such as a reference library, training and study materials, online videos, and distance learning opportunities. All are clearly labelled and the site is easy to navigate.

Farm Concern International

www.familyconcern.net

Farm Concern International is a market development agency aiming to enhance economic growth among poor communities. With a focus on sub-Saharan and Eastern Africa, they offer technical advice, and implement market oriented programmes. Their implementation approach is based on “The Commercial Villages Approach”, a model aimed at commercialising villages across sub-Saharan Africa and establishing market linkages with formal, semi-formal and informal buyers. The website provides information on this approach and discusses marketing and business options. Reports from previous projects are also available.

International Development Enterprises

www.ideorg.org

This is an international non-profit organisation, which, through following a market-based approach, has enabled millions of poor farmers to permanently escape poverty. IDE provides market access, training and water-control technologies. The website clearly outlines

the principles by which they work, and also has a variety of success stories and further information on working with farmers to improve productivity sustainably, and get produce to market. They use water as an entry point, believing that a lack of control over water is a constraint facing a large majority of farmers. Hand pumps, water filters, and health information become the starting point for improving agricultural production and increasing market participation. IDE works in Africa and Asia.

KickStart

www.kickstart.org

KickStart was founded by two development professionals with long-term working experience in Africa. Their experiences led them to develop a different way of looking at development, which they have outlined on the website, and developed into a five-step process. They believe that encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit is a longer term solution to poverty than giving things away. They develop, launch and promote simple money-making tools that poor entrepreneurs could use to create their own profitable businesses. They believe that it is more effective to sell these tools than give them away, and have the figures to prove it on the website. Based in the U.S., they also have offices in Kenya, Mali and Tanzania. The website is clear, easy to read and provides lots of thought-provoking information about development practice, as well as descriptions of tools they develop, and success stories to date.

Ashoka

www.ashoka.org

Ashoka supports and encourages what they call social entrepreneurs – “individuals with innovative solutions to society’s most pressing social problems”. They support economic development ideas, but also work in the fields of environment, health and human rights for example. Ashoka supports individual social entrepreneurs, promotes group entrepreneurship, and also works at the level of building the infrastructure to facilitate the spread of social innovation globally. The first individuals were recognised in 1981, known as Ashoka Fellows. The organisation and its Fellows work in 60 countries on five continents. The website provides information about the types of work carried out by the social entrepreneurs, how to nominate a Fellow and what support they provide.

Changemakers

www.changemakers.net

This website provides resources needed to help everyone become a changemaker. It presents stories looking at the principles of successful social innovation from around the world. It describes itself as an open source community, bringing new social innovations to light and then collaborating to refine and implement these solutions. For example, you can enter your innovation into the themed collaborative competitions, and you can become a member, so that you can comment on other innovations, and discuss your own ideas. You can also use the library to access a wide variety of material on social change, with topics ranging from governance to health, to HIV/AIDS and arts and culture. It is a source of inspiration for anyone interested in social entrepreneurship. Changemakers is an initiative of Ashoka.

