

PRO-PLANTEURS factsheet: Professionalizing Organizations of Cocoa Producers

Introduction

PRO-PLANTEURS is a joint project of the Ivorian Conseil du Café-Cacao (CCC), the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO) and the German Government (Ministry for Food and Agriculture and Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development). The objective of the project PRO-PLANTEURS is to professionalize 20,000 families of small cocoa farmers and their organizations. The project works with 35 organizations in the eastern, southern and south-eastern regions of the Ivorian cocoa zone.

Farmer organizations are key actors in the cocoa value chain. They play an essential role in the development of small producers and their communities and contribute to poverty reduction in rural areas.



Professionalization of farmer organizations within the project PRO-PLANTEURS is oriented towards improving the management and organization of farmer organizations. Trainings are implemented by the international NGO TechnoServe. The professionalization program of PRO-PLANTEURS is developed in three phases:

Initial and final assessment

Theoretical and practical instructions divided into several sessions over the duration of the program

Coaching over a period of 10 to 15 months

This factsheet analyses the learnings from the first cycle of trainings with 18 farmer organizations of the PRO-PLANTEURS project.

Activities by the PRO-PLANTEURS project



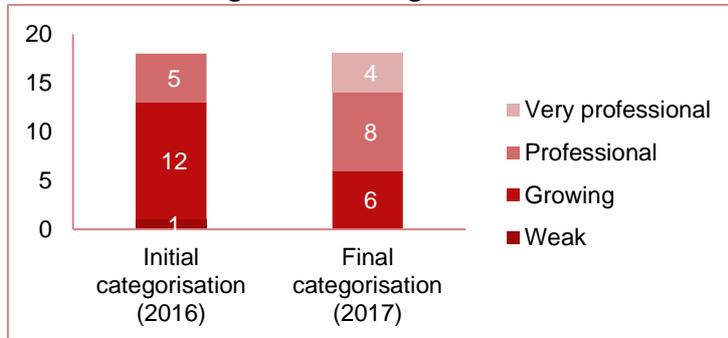
Submission of certificates for participation (September 2017 in Yamoussoukro)

Between August 2016 and February 2017, 74 executives of the 18 PRO-PLANTEURS farmer organizations were trained and coached by TechnoServe. The CoopAcademy training program strengthens the management skills of their heads. The training covered strategic planning and management, social marketing (recruitment and support of members), funding and organizational development.

Accomplishments

In 2017, after the training courses had been completed, an independent and external analysis of the performance of farmer organizations was conducted. These analyses were carried out according to *SCOPEinsight's SCOPE@Basic* assessment methodology, which allowed for a classification of farmer organizations into four (4) categories according to their level of development (see graph below).

Results of training and coaching

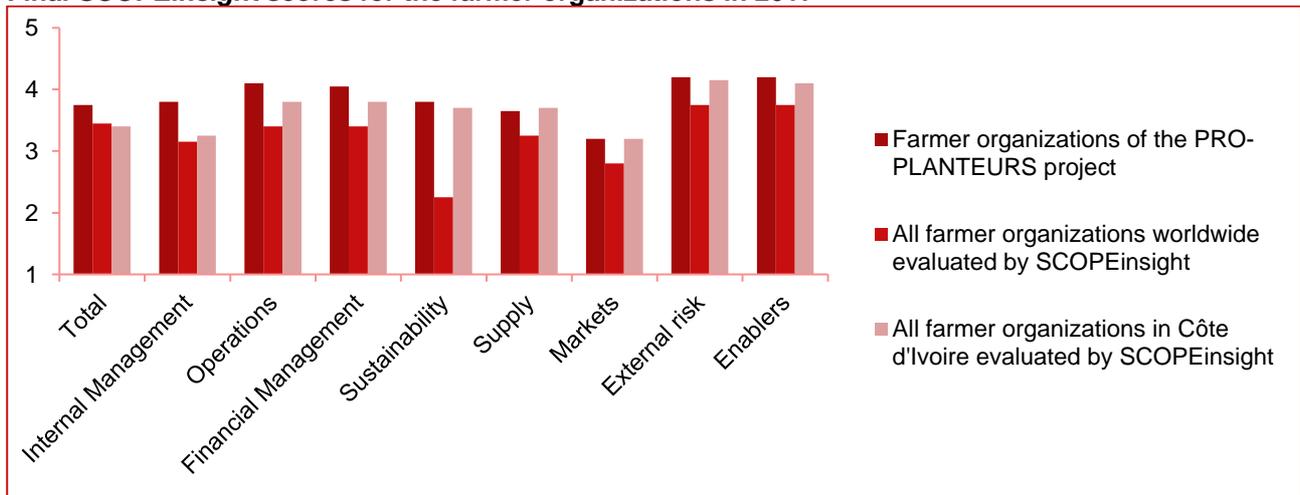


The evaluation of the 18 farmer organizations according to *ScopeInsight's* methodology showed that the **situation of all farmer organizations improved between the beginning and end of the training program**. Since then, 66% of farmer organizations are considered professional compared to 22% at the beginning of the project; the remaining 33% are growing.

Improvements after training and coaching can be observed to varying degrees across all eight dimensions measured by the **diagnostic tool: internal management, operations, sustainability, financial management, market, procurement, external risks and resources**. Today, all 18 farmer organizations have a business plan, a development plan and other management tools that are updated regularly. In addition, an analysis of the cost structure allows farmer organizations to understand the costs of the different activities they carry out, such as evacuation expenses or bank transaction expenses, and thus to consider cost optimization measures.

In addition to improving their performance, in 2017, **the farmer organizations of the PRO-PLANTEURS project exceed the average performance of all farmer organizations assessed by *SCOPEinsight* in Côte d'Ivoire and worldwide** (see graph below). The above-average performance may be the result of overall benefits for farmer organizations through the project. The close support and project activities, such as training of producers or support for financial access seem to have a positive effect on the motivation of the farmer organizations' managers.

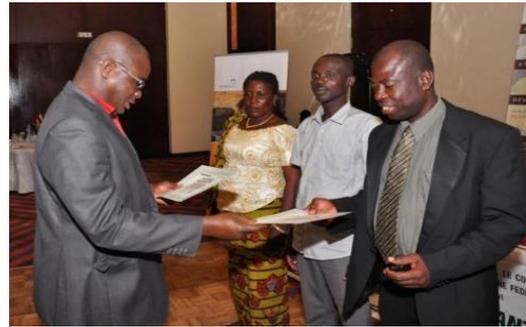
Final *SCOPEinsight* scores for the farmer organizations in 2017



Note: The evaluation uses scores from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest). 18 farmer organizations that are part of the PRO-PLANTEURS project were assessed. Source: *SCOPEinsight*. 2017.

Success Factors

The coaching phase is essential. It responds to the specific needs of the farmer organization and, further, promotes a good level of understanding and adoption of the tools for professionalizing managers of farmer organizations. In addition to the quality of the trainers and the pedagogical approach (Business Edge), the relevance of the modules was crucial for initiating change within farmer organizations. **Participants particularly appreciated the leadership module.** Missing positions of responsibility were filled under the impetus of training, thus facilitating change in the farmer organization. Understanding the extent and limits of each actor's role and responsibilities and their acceptance was another factor considered



Submission of certificates for participation

Lessons learnt during the project implementation

The analysis of the project highlights several key aspects to be taken into account when training farmer organizations for professionalization:

- The **coaching phase is the flagship activity of the methodology**. While the assessments and trainings are necessary to situate the farmer organization in their efforts to progress and to establish the necessary theoretical foundations, it is the coaching that provides real direct support to farmer organizations.
- **Access to financial resources remains a constraint for the farmer organizations.** Having observed the challenges, the farmer organizations face on their way to receive financing, the project adopted additional activities to overcome these challenges. Thereafter, access to finance has improved, however, stays an obstacle for the professionalization of farmer organizations
- **The inclusion of women remains a weakness in cocoa communities:** the PRO-PLANTEURS project advocates targeted activities for the empowerment of women. The mere awareness and implementation of a diversity strategy as practiced in the current professionalization scheme is not sufficient for a significant impact. The activities currently underway with the *World Cocoa Foundation* as part of the PRO-PLANTEURS project aim in part to address these challenges.
- **Farmer organizations still hold a weak position within the value chain.** There is no continuous relationship with buyers, reinforced by a significant fluctuation of staff within the farmer organizations. In addition, the reliability of cocoa farmers is still low.

Testimony



'The entire management and especially the accounting of our organization had major problems. We did not even have an accountant. After the training as part of the PRO-PLANTEURS project, the board of directors saw the importance of hiring an accountant and of providing him with an office as well as all available data on the organization. Nowadays, our farmer organization has an accountant who was recruited with the approval of the board of directors.'

Mamadou Zie Bamba, Director of the farmer organization KGS in N'Zikro, Aboisso

PRO-PLANTEURS is a joint project of



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