

PRO-PLANTEURS factsheet: Drivers for Competitiveness

Introduction

PRO-PLANTEURS is a project co-financed by the Conseil du Café-Cacao (CCC), the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO), and the German government (BMZ and BMEL). The objective of the project PRO-PLANTEURS is to professionalize 20,000 families of small cocoa farmers and their organizations to improve their living conditions. The project works with 35 organizations in the eastern, southern and south-eastern regions of the Ivorian cocoa zone between 2015 and 2020.

One of the objectives of the PRO-PLANTEURS project is to professionalize the project's farmer organizations and increase their competitiveness. Another objective is sharing experiences and joint learning. For this reason, **the PRO-PLANTEURS project analyzed its experiences concerning supporting factors for the development and competitiveness of farmer organizations** within a framework of joint learning.

To analyse the experiences of the project partners, the project organised **three regional exchange workshops** in 2017. The main participants were farmer organizations, GISCO members, and the technical partners of the project. The workshops focused on the issue of **characterizing a professional and competitive farmer organization**.

Following the regional workshops, a **feedback workshop took place in collaboration with the Public-Private-Partnership-Platform (PPPP)** of the CCC. Participants were the farmer organizations of the PRO-



PLANTEURS project, development institutions of the cocoa sector, e.g. the Direction for Agricultural Organizations (DOPA) in representation of the Ivorian Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER), the implementing partners (ANADER and TechnoServe), certifying organizations (UTZ, Rainforest Alliance, and Fairtrade), and private project partners (e.g. OLAM and WCF).

Identified drivers for competitiveness

The participants identified three crucial drivers for the development and competitiveness of farmer organizations: **(1) Good governance and good management of farmer organizations, (2) financial autonomy, and (3) the quality and quantity of production.**

Further significant factors identified to be important for the professionalization of farmer organizations were the capacity and role of umbrella structures, the classification of farmer organizations according to their chosen structure for a precise targeting of interventions, banking and membership of farmer organizations.

Good governance and management of farmer organizations



Good governance and good management of farmer organizations are based on existing and functioning statutory bodies:

- Good administrative, financial, and accounting management
- Clarified and respected roles and responsibilities within the organization and transparency of management
- Good planification of activities

Measures and interventions needed to facilitate and promote good governance and management factors are **training of managers, implementation of management tools, regular audits and controls, and technical support. Communication and strategic planning** must support the capacity building process.

Replication mechanisms to allow more cooperatives to be affected by the values generated by a project like PRO-PLANTEURS are: **implementing activities to share experiences, networking, creating a union of cooperatives, supporting the harmonization of procedures and approaches between and within farmer organizations.**

Financial autonomy

The executives of farmer organizations as well as the other participants put financial autonomy at the centre of the professionalization of farmer organizations. Financial autonomy requires:

- Generation of reserves
- Effective payment of shares
- Diversification of activities
- Good use of the premium from certified production

Measures and interventions suggested by the participants, which are necessary to achieve financial autonomy are **raising managers' awareness of the need to build up reserves, respecting the deadlines for paying up shares, increasing share capital and finally developing savings.** These interventions remain rather general and not very specific.



As replication mechanisms, it was proposed to **organize a workshop to share experiences on mobilizing internal financial resources and developing partnerships.** The project took up the recommendation and organized further training on access to finance and development of partnerships with in the financial sector. The results are positive and more information on this can be found in the PRO-PLANTEURS factsheet on "Access to Financing".

Production quality and quantity



The factors that promote professionalization and competitiveness in terms of production quality and quantity focus on the identification and evaluation of existing production through:

- Improved data bases
- Supporting the producers through trainings on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)
- Fostering loyalty of producers towards their organizations through which production quantity can ultimately be increased

Measures and interventions proposed to achieve production of higher quality and quantity include training in **Good Agricultural Practices** in Farmer Field Schools. In addition, the **assessment of production potential and the development of a campaign plan** are necessary.



A replication mechanism proposed was to **establish and extend a communication network between farmer organizations** to benefit from positive experiences and good practices in all areas.

Following the workshops, the results on competitiveness of farmer organizations were integrated into the project strategy.

TESTIMONIES

“For a cooperative to be very professional and competitive, it must first contribute to the training of its members, train its leaders, mobilize internal financial resources and try to mobilize means of collection.”

N’Guetta N’Guessan, Project Manager, Directorate of Professional Agricultural Organisations (DOPA) at the Ministry for Agriculture, Côte d’Ivoire



“For the farmer organization to be professional and competitive, at least two criteria are required. Firstly, we must encourage our producers to save, and not to spend all the fruits of the efforts resulting from the sale of coffee and cocoa. If they are encouraged to save, I think the farmer organizations could be stronger. Today, all producers who have problems make the structure responsible, but if they sell cocoa and can save a small part, I think the farmer organization could begin to breathe and move towards empowerment. Secondly, the producers must be encouraged to be loyal to the farmer organization. When you have a program with an exporter, you have to respect the tonnage you have decided to sell. If the producer happily sells part of the yield on the side, we cannot honour the commitments made with exporters. If these two points are achieved, our farmer organizations will be more competitive and professional.”

Mathieu Eponon, President of the Board of Directors of COOPCA YEYOBIE in Abengourou, Côte d’Ivoire

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