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2014-2015 SFOAP ACTIVITIES UNDER IMBARAGA FARMERS

ORGANISATION

A brief introduction

SFOAP project which is funded by IFAD and EU through EAFF is organized around the potato value chain in IMBARAGA Farmers Organization. It is implemented in Rubavu and Nyabihu districts from the western province of Rwanda. These mentioned districts are far from being productive as far as potato value chain is concerned. Following the agronomic requirements of the identified region, the project actually started in December 2014 because the good times of potatoes planting are March-April for the season B and August to September for the season A.

Below is the synthesis of the main achievements, constraints and lessons learned from the field work activities.

SFOAP Achievements

Since we received funds under SFOAP project, the following activities have been realized:

1. Identification of beneficiaries

As the project was designed for Rubavu and Nyabihu districts, we proceeded by the choice of farmer groups who have FFS-related prerequisites in order to hopefully getting good yields. It is at this level that we had identified eight Farmer Groups by each district that is to say 16 farmer groups for both districts. These farmer groups had to be located in the sectors with great production of potato. We had to gather 15 persons in each Farmer Group for a total of 120 people per district that is to say a total of 240 farmers who have direct access to the services of

SFOAP project. These farmers should have the fundamentals of the FFS in order to technically well manage the project activities on a day to day basis.

2. The baseline survey and membership satisfaction survey

After determining the farmer groups and the population under this project, we have conducted the baseline survey and membership satisfaction survey as expected in the contract details. Thus, a hard work of translating the tools in Kinyarwanda language took time before we apply them. The filling up of the questionnaire gathered a total number of 231 farmers who issued their views. This activity was closely monitored as clarifications were provided to those who expressed difficulties to understand the required information. From this survey, we got the necessary information as the starting point of the project. During the data deduction, we found that some farmers are still having problems with application rate of fertilizers while others do have problems to know what they have invested in their farming (their cost of production) in order to determine their profit or loss. These key issues will be tackled during the trainings aiming at increasing the skills of farmers with modern techniques of farming.

3. Establishment of the demonstration sites

As indicated above, we have also established 16 demonstration sites (FFS) in the mentioned districts that is to say 8 FFS in each. This activity is very complex as we have first of all made a choice of FFS sites; chosen the variety of potato seeds to sow, bought the seeds and fertilizers, etc. The sowing phase in all FFS has been done in March 2015. Thus, we established the experimental protocol separating the traditional techniques with the modern ones in order to help farmers to well differentiate the results at the end of the production process. Currently, the FFS have a very good vegetative state and we are in the process of applying pesticides to fight against pest and diseases.

It is very important to note that after analyzing the FFS management, we have, with the beneficiary farmers, identified FFS Facilitators who will technically assist them especially during the main activities such sowing, spraying, earthing up, beating up, etc. For this reason, we have chosen two Facilitators in Ruvabu district because farmer groups are scattered across distant sectors and one Facilitator instead of two in Nyabihu district because all the farmer groups in this region are in neighboring sectors and easy to cover for one person. The mentioned Facilitators

will get facilitation fees to cover their communications, transport and other necessary charge in order to well facilitate each and every farmer group in its main activities related to the FFS management.

4. Trainings

The other main activity is the trainings to be held under this project. After analyzing their content and consulting the beneficiaries, the training themes have been grouped into three categories naming the “Training about Potato agronomic practices”, “Improved techniques of seed production” and “Post-harvest handling techniques”. Under this activity, we have already realized the first training where 236 farmers have been trained about land preparation techniques, fertilization, plantation, plant-care, etc. Farmers knew how to increase their production both in quantity and quality using few means. Thus, they identified key factors leading to the low volume of production such as bad seeds, the non-respect of the agricultural season, pests and diseases, low usage of fertilizers, non crop rotation and mixing potatoes with other crops. After analyzing these factors in details, farmers adopted measures to overcome those threats to their production. This training was very important as it helped farmers to know the exact rate to use while applying fertilizers as far as potato value chain is concerned. This training showed that farmers do also have problems of not knowing the seed size that is technically accepted in the modern agriculture. The trainer had clarified the dimension of a good seed. Similarly, we provided technical sheets that summarize the main plant diseases that threaten potatoes on one and rates of fertilizer application on the other side.

The results of the training were that farmers set their objective of getting between 20 and 30 tons per hectare instead of 7 to 15 tons per hectare at their family holding. The remaining two trainings are scheduled in the late of this April 2015 as their contents are related to seed production and post harvest handling.

Ongoing and Remaining activities

1. Assessment of the potato market in Rwanda

During the remaining period of the project implementation, we plan to get information from an assessment of the potato market in Rwanda. We have already prepared the ToR (terms of

references) to hire the consultant who will carry out this activity. He/she is supposed to conduct this activity within this April till mid May, 2015.

2. Inception workshop

Imbaraga Farmers Organization plans to launch the SFOAP project as we were not yet disposing the results from the market assessment prior to the inception workshop. In this regard, we have got contacts details of one donor naming International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and its representative accepted to be part of the launch of the project when we will convene the event.

3. Working with media

Finally but not least, we plan to work with Media from the launching of the project up to its end as it was very difficult to call journalists while preparing the main activities under this project. Media will be part of the project since the inception workshop and will get, since that period of time, news to produce articles about SFOAP project particularly and Imbaraga in general.

Conclusion

Nowadays SFOAP project runs well within Imbaraga Farmers Organization. The main intervening parts such as the State agricultural services at the sector level are involved in implementing all project activities undertaken in their working area. We hope and think that Imbaraga will be able to meet the deadline of implementing all expected activities.

Done at Kigali, April 13, 2015

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