

**Food Security and Rice Producers' Organisations
Project (FSRPOP)**

Midterm review

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive summary	3
Foreword	7
I. Presentation of the project.....	7
II. Activities of component 1	8
1. Activities implemented	8
a) Capacity building of MoFA staff	8
b) Commodity system studies.....	9
c) Developing dialogue between stakeholders and GoG.....	10
2. Comments.....	12
a) Strengths and achievements	12
b) Difficulties and limits.....	13
III. Activities of component 2	15
1. The Lowland Rice Development Project	15
a) Objectives.....	15
b) Implementation.....	16
c) Results	16
d) Comments.....	17
2. Principles of FSRPOP action (component 2).....	17
3. Activities carried out under component 2	18
a) Appraisals studies.....	19
b) Training	19
c) Support to organisation: grassroots co-operatives and apex body	20
d) Relations with external partners (ongoing)	21
4. Comments.....	22
a) Strengths and achievements	22
b) Current limits.....	22
IV. Recommendations	23
1. Project management	23
2. Component 1 of the project.....	24
a) Targeted pilot activities	24
b) Policy issues and monitoring capacity	25
c) Strategic building for GRIB members	26
d) Communication	27
e) Human resources	27
3. Component 2 of the project.....	27
a) Principles.....	27
b) Daily support to long duration activities, technical issues.....	28
c) Organisational issues.....	29
d) Reinforcement of the organisation's self regulation and planning	30
e) Studies and assessments	31
General Conclusion	32
Consulted documents	33
Appendix 1: Evaluation mission program.....	35
Appendix 2: Rough description of the PLAR-IRM methodology	37

Executive summary

The main goal of this project is to reinforce the Ghanaian rice sub-sector.

The project includes three components which are related to: 1) institutional issues agricultural policy and dialogue between stakeholders and GoG); 2) farmers' organisations (following the end of the LRDP Project in the Northern Region) ; 3) Project management.

FSRPOP officially started in November 2002 for a duration of three years. The principal Technical Assistant (project coordinator) arrived in November 2002. A Junior Technical Assistant is in charge of the second component; the first one arrived in February 2002 and was replaced in January 2004. The first payments were disbursed only in May 2003. During the first two years, the activities of the project have been seriously hampered by budgetary restrictions at the French Ministry of Foreign Affaires (400 000 euros available in 2003 and 2004, out of a total budget of 1,4 million euros for the 3 years).

Component 1. The central objectives of the first component are to strengthen national capacity in agriculture strategy formulation and to develop dialogue between stakeholders and public institutions. Three categories of activities were planned:

- MoFA staff training and visits, to develop skills in commodity system analysis and sub-regional and international trade and agriculture negotiations;
- Commodity system studies;
- Stakeholders consultations and exchanges between public and private sectors in order to build a consensus on rice sub-sector strategy.

Emphasis has been laid mostly on the third aspect, with the creation of an inter-professional body in the rice sector. After a phase of stakeholders' identification, a first national meeting set the basis of the Ghana Rice Inter-professional Body (GRIB) in July 2004. By the end of 2004, an assessment of constraints and needs at stakeholders level was done by the Executive Secretary of the GRIB, President and the project coordinator, through several field trips.

Based on this assessment, a Work Plan for 2005 has been proposed. It is mostly focused on direct support to its members: a set of micro-projects oriented towards production, processing and marketing, with special emphasis on improving quality of rice and on creating links between suppliers and wholesalers.

MoFA has been directly involved in the different stages of the creation of GRIB and strongly supports the concept. It provides some material support, such as an office, electricity and telephone. Involvement in this process is a rich experience that contributes to improve knowledge of MoFA staff on rice sector and provides some practical basis for the commodity system approach. But no real training action has been implemented.

Three studies have been done. A synthesis of 10 years of rice studies that gives a general overview of the sector and points out the lack of information on some aspects of the commodity systems is available. A study on import tariffs that gives some detailed data and discusses the issue of on import tax increase has been done. A census and characterisation of active and dynamic stakeholders in production, processing and marketing and identification of potential members of GRIB throughout main producing regions was carried out.

The focus on initiating an inter-profession approach seems relevant, given that budget restriction has imposed a stiff prioritisation of activities. But the capacity building of MoFA staff is still needed. The creation of the GRIB follows a rather "top-down" approach, that can be justified by time constraints but which has its limits. Within about 8 months, first steps

have been taken to gather stakeholders from the whole commodity system. But for now, the inter-profession approach is actually limited to some formal texts and a core of active individuals. Executive members have confused ideas of what an inter-profession approach is supposed to be. The very concrete aspects of the 2005 work plan are appealing. But the risk is that the GRIB may tend to be considered by stakeholders as any project that provides technical and financial support, and not as a collective body with a think-tank dimension.

Component 2. The activities implemented within the second component have to be replaced in the context of the end of the LRDP Project, funded by AFD, which targeted the intensification of lowland rice farming in the Northern Region. Technically speaking, this project registered some success as the yields substantially increased thanks to partial water control (land development by the project) and use of intensive cropping techniques (mainly mechanical ploughing, improved seeds, use of fertilisers) through credit supply to groups of farmers. But all the services were provided directly by the project and when it ended, the co-operatives were far from operational.

FSRPOP was supposed to improve farmers' organisations involved in LRDP, both at the co-operative and regional levels by putting in place an apex body, able of supplying necessary services to its co-operative members and representing the farmers within the inter-professional body.

To make the intensification process sustainable, it is necessary that farmers themselves manage the required services, especially seeds and fertilisers supply, credit access, marketing... To be efficient, these services have to be co-ordinated at the local and regional levels in a complementary way; given the current organisation of the local society, the community is the relevant stage to address land tenure issues, guarantees for repayment, basic capacity building, etc... Trading matters (inputs supply, rice marketing, credit...) would be addressed at regional level to get scale saving. It is also a necessity for organised farmers to develop their own work plans and projects, to exchange information and to co-ordinate activities...

At the organisational level, the effects of the LRDP project have been rather negative and have been a heavy burden for the implementation of the FSRPOP. The problems which are not yet fully solved are related to credit and especially repayment... At present, less than half of the "LRDP farmers" are considered as "all square" with the bank; the others are not eligible anymore to credit supply (and a lot of them do not understand clearly why)...

So, the FSRPOP team has had first to address these issues (to try to clarify the farmers' credit situations and then to get repayment). Currently, NILRIFACU (the apex body at the regional level) handles these issues and will sign a new contract with the Rural Bank to put in place a convenient micro-credit scheme.

At the same time, the FSRPOP team worked hard on capacity building and to improve the basic level of co-operative members through functional literacy classes, and at the apex body level through a "learning by doing" process. They have invested too in supporting the formal organisational process (constitutions, by-laws, election of executives...) and the daily institutional life of FBOs (meetings, book keeping...). Lastly, they support co-operatives and apex body in managing the services previously provided by LRDP to farmers such as fertilisers supply, ploughing contracts...

All these activities are relevant to the objectives of the project as they contribute to reinforce the capacities and autonomy of the farmers. The implementation appears to be globally efficient, even if most of the activities have to be pursued to ensure a sustainable effect (capacity building and farmers' organisation cannot be done in two years). Making use of the current social regulations and getting the traditional authorities aware of the process is obviously a strength in the actual context of the Northern Region (although the co-operatives

have been initially set-up on technical basis – to produce more and better rice). Another positive aspect is the good relations and trust between the farmers and the NGO's facilitation staff who are in charge of the field work.

The weaknesses identified, in our opinion, are mainly linked to the length of the process. These include the following.

- At present, most of the farmers do not yet have a clear picture of the different levels of organisation and their goals (what is the apex body, NILRIFACU, supposed to do, for example).
- Moreover, they still have to design mid-term projects and workplans, both at the co-operative and apex body levels, so to be able to define short-term priorities.
- Lastly, we think that the sustainability of the current approach might be partially compromised by heavy workload on people involved in the project, including project staff, CAPSARD staff and NILRIFACU executives.

Recommendations. Apart from the budgetary aspects, the main constraint faced by the project is that the objectives of capacity building and co-ordination, either at producers' level or at national level, imply long term capacity building processes, whereas the FSRPOP has a short lifetime. These goals indeed cannot be met within 3 years (or even less considering 2 "restricted" years). The FSRPOP mostly has to draw and test methodological bases to be developed further on after the end of the project. Hence, two general recommendations can be made. First, the **FSRPOP should be extended at least up to mid-2006**, or better to end 2006. Second, **it is critical that the forthcoming EU / AFD project integrates capacity building activities initiated by the present project:**

- Strengthening the inter-professional body following three aspects;
 - Provide services to its members as a facilitator to get supports such as technical or management training, credit, commercial contacts...;
 - Improve information dissemination among stakeholders and promote GRIB at decision makers' level ;
 - Develop analytical and advocacy capacity of the executives members and promote dialogue with the GoG.
- Capacity building of MoFA staff on commodity systems analysis and understanding of the national, regional and international economical and political context.

Support to FBOs and apex body. As the future of intensive small farming rice cropping in the Northern Region relies on strong organisation and co-ordination, the current process needs to be supported at least few years more, in order to make FBOs autonomous as well in providing services to their members (credit, input supply, marketing...) as in figuring out their own priorities, and in developing partnership on their own bases (with research, extension services, donors...)

For the last phase of the project, the following recommendations are made.

On component 1:

- Focus on a more limited set of pilot activities in order to strengthen their monitoring and evaluation (at technical, organisational and financial levels) ;
- Improve analytical capacity of GRIB members and MoFA staff through a training session on commodity system analysis (including field case-study) ;
- Monitor some basic indicators on rice sector (imports and prices), in collaboration with relevant services ;
- Strategic building for GRIB members, through implication in the training session, visits to existing inter-professional body in the sub-region, and regional meetings to build consensus on priority for rice sector and objectives of the GRIB.

- Enhance communication among GRIB members, through a newsletter, radio broadcasting and using executive members at regional level as information intermediaries ;
- Adopt as much as possible a participatory approach in decision making within GRIB.

On component 2:

- Produce methodological documents about the project experience, especially the capacity building process (literacy classes, institutional aspects both at the co-operative and apex body levels, ...) ;
- Develop interaction and improve communication between the different levels of farmer organisations; prepare the next general assembly of NILRIFACU so as to get the co-operatives aware of their rights and duties towards the apex body; work to develop better sharing of duties between members.
- Support co-operatives and apex body in designing development strategies and developing mid-term workplans on clear basis (especially addressing profitability,)
- Support a participatory process to make use of farmers' knowledge and experience in development of more flexible technical baskets (extension and/or research services to be main partners of this activity, in strong interaction with project field staffs) ;
- Determine the place of rice in farming systems and the impact of intensification on farms and communities (student work?).

Foreword

The present work is a mid-term evaluation. At this stage, it is too early to assess definitely impact, even efficiency of the activities carried out so far. But it's certainly useful to verify the relevance of these activities to the objectives of the project and the global consistency of the current scheme. The sustainability of the project has to be discussed and the strengths and weaknesses of the project implementation analyzed.

We are very aware of the short time that has been available to attain the objectives. So, the following report must not be read as a criticism of what has been done so far, but moreover as a contribution to face this challenge namely addressing the ambitious targets of the project in such a short time.

This report includes a first part in which the main activities implemented are briefly described and their relevance and efficiency discussed; at the end of this first part, one may find an attempt to assess whether long-term objectives are correctly addressed in our sense, and what the strengths and limits of the current process are (as well as the co-effects if any). We will end by making a few recommendations about the way to manage the activities in the coming months and the priorities to tackle.

I. Presentation of the project

As specified in the project documents, the main goal of FSRPOP (Food Security and Rice Producer Organisations Project) is to reinforce the Ghanaian rice sub-sector and, consequently, to contribute to the designing of a food security policy.

To tackle this goal, it appears that two main points have to be addressed:

- efficiency of the different stages of the commodity chain (mainly production, processing, marketing) have to be enhanced ;
- information, communication and interactions between the different stakeholders involved at these stages have to be improved.

So three components have been defined for action:

- 1) Strategy to develop staple foods sub-sectors, that is institutional issues (agricultural policy and dialogue between stakeholders and GoG) (0,715 million euros);
 - *Training of MoFA staff*
 - *Commodity chains studies*
 - *Inter-professional dialogue*
- 2) Farmer organisation (following the end of the LRDP Project in the Northern Region) (0,4 million euros),
 - *Analysis of the professional movement and of the experiences in supporting farmer organizations*
 - *Pilot actions to organize LRDP farmers*
 - *Training of leading farmers*
- 1) Project management. (0,285 million of euros).
 - *Monitoring and evaluation*
 - *Information*
 - *Communication*

The project officially started in November 2002. The duration is supposed to be three years. The principal Technical Assistant (project co-ordinator) arrived in November 2002. A Junior Technical Assistant (contracted for 2 years) is in charge of the second component. The first JTA arrived in February 2002 and was replaced in January 2004. The first payments were disbursed only in May 2003. In fact, during the first two years the activities of the project have been strongly hampered by budgetary restrictions at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (400 000 euros available in 2003 and 2004, out of a total budget of 1,4 millions euros for the 3 years).

II. Activities of component 1

1. Activities implemented

The central objectives of component 1 are to strengthen national capacity in agriculture strategy formulation and to develop dialogue between stakeholders. According to the initial project document, three categories of activities were planned:

- MoFA staff training and visits, to develop skills in commodity system analysis and to get a better understanding of the sub-regional and international issues on trade and agricultural negotiations.
- Commodity system studies (mostly on rice but also on other food crops)
- Stakeholder consultation (to discuss the results of studies and other relevant issues) in order to build consensus between the public and private sectors on rice sub-sector strategy.

a) *Capacity building of MoFA staff*

No specific training activities were organised in 2003 and 2004. Budgetary constraints imposed severe prioritisation and most of the resources have been concentrated on creating consultation bodies (see below: *Stakeholders/GoG dialogue*). However, several activities contributed to capacity building of MoFA staff.

- The creation of NRDC and GRIB is a very formative experience for MoFA staff involved.
 - The FSRPOP coordinator's counterpart at PPMED is involved in the whole process, the Director of Crop Services is closely following it and some other staff are mobilized from time to time.
 - 2 persons from MoFA (the FSRPOP coordinator's counterpart from PPMED, and a person from the Western Region, Sekondi) carried out a field study to identify active and dynamic rice sector stakeholders that might be involved in an inter-professional body (see below : *Commodity system studies*).
- A delegation of 9 persons (including 3 MoFA agents, 1 from GIDA, 1 from MoTI, 1 from CRI, 2 rice farmers, 1 rice broker) attended a sub-regional workshop on rice competitiveness in May 2004 (PRIAF¹). Two contributions were presented: one on rice sector in Ghana and another on the creation of National Rice Development Committee. The workshop ended with the resolution to create a regional network of rice information and monitoring systems. It was an opportunity to share experiences with other countries, but translation constraints actually limited the exchanges and underlined the language barrier to develop institutional relations within the sub-region.

¹ PRIAF : projet de renforcement de l'information des acteurs des filières rizicoles.

Although these activities are relevant, they are not sufficient to enhance MoFA's capacity in commodity system analysis and rice policy monitoring. A more specific training program is recommended before the end of the project (see IV).

b) Commodity system studies

No overall commodity system analysis was undertaken, as the budget of the project has been limited and previous studies already provide a fair overall characterization and appraisal of the rice sector.

- Synthesis of rice studies (2003). This document which was prepared by the project coordinator is based on a gathering of literature on Ghanaian rice sector from 1996 to 2003 (about 30 references). It has been presented at the first meeting of the National Rice Development Committee (June 2003). It helpfully reports statements and assessments of these studies and formulates some proposals for further investigations and development interventions. Lack of information identified by this synthesis refers mostly to :
 - Conflicting statistics on production, imports and consumption
 - Production costs and profitability of the different production systems
 - Results of milling improvement experiences
 - prices of local / imported rice and shift of consumers preferences
- Import tariffs study (2004). The GoG aimed to reduce import by 30%; meanwhile, imports figures appear contradictory; issue of increasing tariffs has been raised. This study was thus aimed at clarifying functioning and trends of rice imports and analyse the impact of tax increase. Some results can be pointed out :
 - Political commitments of GoG limit possibilities to increase tariffs (pressure from Bretton Woods institutions and ECOWAS). Moreover, impact of such increase on smuggling from neighbouring countries (limited at 10% import tax by UEMAOA) should be considered. For importers, up to 30%, increase in import taxes would have no effect on volume imported. Additional costs for importers would be fully transferred to consumers.
 - Rice ranks second after maize among poor urban consumers (74% households cook rice at least 3 times a week; among poor households, rice consumption increases with per capita income). An increase in price would lead to a decrease in consumption (price elasticity average is -0,94). [NB: to better assess impact of rice price increase, it would have been necessary to analyse substitutions: if consumers shift from imported rice to local food crops should that be considered as a negative impact?]. The impact on production can be significant (high supply elasticity) provided constraints on input availability, credit and marketing are solved.
 - Imported rice is strongly dominant in urban markets in the southern cities, whereas local rice is dominant in northern cities. This preference for imported rice is justified by its cleanness, the second factor of choice being its price (whereas percentage of broken is not a major criteria). Long grain non-perfumed rice emerges first in terms of consumption, followed by long grain perfumed. These preferences explain the dominance of rice from Thailand and USA.
 - Local rice is usually sold at a lower price than imported on. However cheapest imported rice is competing directly with local rice, their prices being similar.

Outcomes of the study of import figures are more disappointing². Analysis of types of rice and prices is not very helpful: categories presented are not convincing and a static

² Customs data should be considered with more caution (no under declarations?). It would have been interesting to get data from inspection companies (like Veritas or SGS), if operating in the country. Analysing monthly imports would give some indications on whether or not seasonality is noticeable, indicating certain degree of substitution between local and imported rice.

comparison of prices is not relevant, given that both local and imported rice prices fluctuate.

- Stakeholder identification (2004). The field study covered 5 main rice growing regions, from March to April 2004; 42 rice-growing locations were visited. It has been of great interest to increase the knowledge of the MoFA officers involved. The results of the study meet the expectation to identify promising FBOs, processors and brokers. However, it would be profitable in the long-term to integrate the characterization of the groups and stakeholder interviewed on a data base, which could be filled progressively by the GRIB.
- Mills assessment (2005). This study, conducted by FRI, assesses 5 mills in the South of the country and makes recommendations for technical improvement. The results were not available at the time of the mission, but according to FRI, no real economic assessment has been done, due to reluctance of millers to give data on price and costs. These data are indeed always difficult to obtain (but not impossible, by cross-checking questions on different periods of the year). Given the prospect of GRIB support in milling investments, profitability analysis will be critical. The contribution of an economist might be needed for the mills assessments planed in the 2005 Work Plan.

c) Developing dialogue between stakeholders and GoG

Main focus of component 1 was to initiate a consultation body in order to increase the involvement of the private sector in rice policy orientation. Different steps were involved in the creation of an inter-profession.

- **NRDC** (National Rice Development Committee) has been created in June 2003. The first meeting gathered 37 persons, including 12 farmers and dawn-stream operators, to discuss its objectives, a business plan and short-term actions. To achieve the ultimate goal of “Drawing up a consensus built policy to develop the rice sector”, the NRDC mandate shall aim to:
 - Share and analyse information ; identify lack of information and design studies
 - Identify the main bottlenecks and constraints to rice sector development
 - Decide priorities for action
 - Coordinate and monitor intervention in the sector

Among short-term actions to be undertaken, five emerge as priorities:

- release new varieties that could compete with US n°5
- assess improved small-scale mills within Ghana and the sub-region, and introduce where relevant
- strengthen rice FBO's
- assess the performing credit schemes within Ghana
- set quality standards for local rice

Participants agreed that NRDC has to comprise representatives of public institutions, projects, farmers' organisations and private operators.

- **GRIB creation.** From the beginning, the NRDC was expected to evolve into a rice inter-professional body, with a legal status. Informal discussions between FSRPOP coordinator and resource persons (Crop Div. Director at MoFA, IFAD, JICA) led to the conclusion that the real members of the inter-profession should be only the direct stakeholders (with farmers being in majority); the administration and support institutions being only observers. A Consultant with long standing experience on rice sector, former director and of LRDP, was hired by FSRPOP to conduct GRIB creation. His position has been maintained as executive secretary of the GRIB.
 - ✓ Based on the results of the identification study (supra), a two-day meeting of rice industry stakeholders was held in July 2004. Participants agreed on both the name of the organisation, to register it as a Limited liability company. Proposed regulations

were discussed, corrected and adopted and executive members were elected in the following ratio: 5 producers, 4 marketers and 2 processors. A commitment fee of c 200 000 per member (group or company) was decided. Presentations were made to provide information on ongoing projects. A first work plan for GRIB was proposed. Main points were:

- Information and sensitization of stakeholders in order to increase membership
- election of office holders among executive members and official registration of the GRIB
- Rice development actions: variety inventory and promotion of selected varieties, pilot actions for quality improvement, linking producers to farmers
- ✓ Executive committee met in August 2004 to elect officers, further discuss the work plan and identify sub-committees in charge of the implementation of the different actions. GRIB was officially registered in October 2004.
- ✓ Four field trips were organised in October and November³ to inform stakeholders about GRIB creation and to identify major constraints and possible solutions in order to draw up a work plan for 2005. Almost all the pre-selected members, following the identification study, were met. In January 2005, GRIB had about 30 registered members.
- ✓ 2005 Work Plan was presented and discussed at the Executive Committee at the end of January 2005. Main targets of the year are the following.
 - Official launching, 2 executive committee meetings and a general assembly meeting.
 - Sensitisation of more stakeholders to become members (a second stakeholder identification study in remaining regions, more sensitisation and assessment trips).
 - 25 pilot actions, include:
 - production intensification (power tiller and thresher introduction, Sawah technology, input shop) ;
 - quality improvement (perfumed rice variety evaluation, parboiling equipment and training, mills upgrading and millers training, colour sorter introduction) ;
 - marketing and credit (linking farmers to marketers, negotiating credit access for marketers and repayment condition for farmers).
 - Creating a Rice Development Fund (one of the financial source would be an additional 0,5% levy on imports).
- **Donors meeting on rice sector** (Nov. 2003). The FSRPOP organised a meeting that brought together main donors (AFD, BAD, CIDA, DFID, FAO, IFAD, JICA) and MoFA. It gave the opportunity to exchange information on past, ongoing and planned projects. The issue of creating an inter-profession and the proposal to create a basket fund were discussed. AFD, UE, IFAD and JICA demonstrated significant interest and suggested that the AgSSIP should provide the funds (JICA actually supported GRIB by providing computer equipment).

³ In Volta and Greater Accra Region, Western Region, Eastern Region, Northern Region.

2. Comments

NB: we will focus here on the consistency of project orientations with initial objectives, and on relevance of the implementation of activities. As mentioned above, for many aspects it is too early to assess efficiency. Additional recommendations are suggested in chapter IV.

a) *Strengths and achievements*

Many projects have supported land development and rice production; some have been focused on processing and quality. But little work has been done before on the overall commodity system, whereas one of the main challenges of the rice sector in Ghana is to market the rice produced and to supply urban consumers with acceptable rice in quality and price. Improving quality, which is one of the big issues, implies collective actions and coordination from production to distribution. The market-oriented approach of the project is then fully consistent and innovative. It is also consistent with the government objective to reduce rice imports by 30%.

The creation of GRIB is the main achievement of this component, paving the way to the development of dialogue and collective actions among stakeholders and between the private sector and GoG. The consensus on the need to create an inter-professional body seems rather great. It is supported by MoFA; the Minister and the Crop Service Director demonstrated personal commitment for this initiative. Material contribution was provided to the GRIB (office, electricity and telephone, car) and some MoFA staff is involved in the activities. The effort to involve other donors is getting some success: JICA brought direct equipment contribution; AFD and UE are open to the idea of including support for GRIB in the LRDP2 project; IFAD is following the process with interest.

The GRIB benefits from a qualified and active “leading team” (the project coordinator, the permanent secretary and the president) and substantial financial support from the FSRPOP, that enables it to operate properly. The president is strongly committed. Being one of the most important wholesalers of local rice, he has a very good knowledge of the sector and can contribute very significantly to develop local rice markets through his own business and his links with GNPA⁴.

Although newly born, the GRIB brings together stakeholders from all over the country, from producers to wholesalers. A set of potential stakeholders to be involved in GRIB’s activity has been identified and contacts have been established.

The GRIB “leading team” is very concerned with building the credibility of GRIB on concrete actions and not to create a “talk body” that would only organise meetings and make recommendations. Pilot actions can demonstrate to new and potential members the individual benefits of belonging to the organisation. These actions rely on FSRPOP technical and financial support to test or disseminate some innovations. They can practically create a network of relations between rice sector operators and technical and financial institutions.

The project and some MOFA staff closely involved are getting a good overview of rice sector, based on previous study, complementary study on imports and field trips.

⁴ GNPA : Ghanaian National Procurement Agency (state shops disseminated all over the country).

b) *Difficulties and limits*

Strong budgetary constraints have limited the activities within the first two years. In this regard, the decision to concentrate activities on developing consultation with operators and creating an inter-professional body is relevant.

Capacity building of MoFA staff

Skills on commodity system analysis need to be strengthened within a comprehensive methodological framework. This means methodological training of MoFA staff (peculiarly PPMED) and case studies to increase field investigation experiences.

Learning by doing through involvement in the creation of GRIB is indeed formative but it is concentrated mostly on one person – the project counter-part (although the Director of Crop Services is closely following the process and some other staff is involved from time to time).

Commodity system studies

Available analyses are insufficient on the following aspects:

- Up-dated profitability of rice for the different production systems and rice position compared to other activities in the farming system.
- Processing costs and performances for the different technologies available.
- Marketing costs and flows within the country, from the production areas to the consumption centres (quantities of parboiled / white rice marketed; relations and coordination between the different categories of agents of the marketing channels).
- Price differentiation by quality (for local and imported rice) and seasonal price fluctuations.

GRIB

The first limit is that building an inter-profession is a long-term process whereas FSRPOP has a short lifetime. There is no large scale organisation either at production, or at processing and marketing level, and only little at smaller level and only for farmers, making the challenge even more difficult.

Inter-professions are becoming rather “fashionable” among donors. Massive withdrawal of State rather destabilized agriculture; encouraging institutionalized forms of coordination among private sector stakeholders and with the State is expected to contribute to better regulation. But in the sub-region, no really successful experience of inter-profession can be cited as a reference. There is no “ready to use” methodology available, mostly in the case of a very atomistic commodity system structure. This makes the GRIB experience stimulating but not easy!

But the creation of GRIB has been fast and according to a rather “top-down” approach. The objectives of the organisation, priority actions, and then the work plan have been designed by the project, driven by the concern for efficiency. They were discussed during the first stakeholders meeting and the two executives meetings, but members did not have time to assimilate this new concept of vertical coordination body and to contribute with their own input. Sensitisation trips permitted exchanges, but they were more oriented towards a general assessment of needs, than towards inter-profession building. Thus, members (even in the executive committee) are not really conversant with the objectives of the GRIB. Although the first executive committee meeting decided that the executive members would be directly involved in sensitizing mission in their regions, so far they have been almost limited to the President. Time constraint limited the involvement of members in the design of each stage of GRIB but the trend must be reversed. Otherwise members will remain in a position of

“consumers”, and will never understand that GRIB must be a collective endeavour to be efficient.

The heterogeneity of education level of executive committee members makes it difficult to have open and balanced discussions. Few members really give their point of view. That should be taken into account when conducting meetings ; participatory approaches should be applied. Less educated members should be paid special attention (complementary explanations, specific discussions...). Each executive meeting should be an occasion for members to ‘learn’.

One central question has been preoccupying from the beginning: the scope of an inter-profession. Should it be composed only of private sector operators involved in rice? Should private service providers such as input and equipment traders, financial institutions be included? Should the State be included? No clear position was taken at the NRDC first meeting, but it seems that it was rather understood as a large forum of different categories of stakeholders (and not only private). Further reflection and discussions at project level tend to limit GRIB’s membership to private operators directly involved in rice activities. The others are considered as observers. Again, no “good” answer is available and different options exist in the sub-region. Different possible objectives of an inter-profession can be considered:

1. To build up economic actors performance;
2. To develop professional relations among the economic actors relying directly on the same commodity;
3. To build consensus among these actors on their vision for the future and the support they expect from the State;
4. To negotiate between the economic actors and the State (possibly with the contribution of donors) interventions that would match private interest and national policy,
5. To contribute to coordinate interventions.

NB: enhancing information flow and sharing is not an objective in itself. It is rather a means to the attainment of these different objectives.

Except objectives 2 and 3, all these objectives involve both the private and the public sector. Decision on any action involving public intervention cannot be taken without the state. Moreover, dialogue shouldn’t be idealised. Conflict of interests might be strong among economic players, from production to distribution (mostly concerning prices) and negotiating power is not balanced. Thus public mediation can be helpful even in trying to get to a consensus within the private sector.

In its by-laws, GRIB’s objectives include a policy dimension but so far, dialogue between stakeholders and GoG representatives has been limited. The relationship between GRIB’s decision-making and execution organs and “observers” members should be specified. And policy dialogue activities should be more directly included in the work plan.

The 2005 Work Plan focuses mostly “pilot actions”. These actions can be carried out efficiently to promote the GRIB as a technical and commercial service provider for its members, and therefore to secure more registrations. The main objective of improving quality and developing links between farmers and market are relevant. But the concern to get short-term results with a wide range of actions risks creating a non replicable context for each pilot action (because project support at financial and institutional level will get to an end). Moreover, 25 actions at a time in different regions of the country will be very heavy to conduct and evaluate. Another weakness that must be stressed is that most actions designed to link FBOs or local marketers to urban distribution rely on one wholesaler, the president. His

commitment to mobilize his distribution network is definitely a great opportunity for GRIB but his position is atypical and links have to be developed with other rice wholesalers (even much smaller ones).

III. Activities of component 2

Note : These comments are based on two main sources of information : the project documents and reports (especially the synthesis note written by Marie-Aude Even in mid-January 2005, see appendix for full list) and the information and data that we got during our five- day stay in Tamale (see appendix for the agenda). We want to thank all the persons we met, for their availability and the quality of their contributions.

Component 2 deals with rice farmer organisations and its activities are implemented in the Northern Region. The main objective as stated in the project document is “to strengthen farmer organisations that have been involved in LRDP”.

It would be noted at this stage that the 2 LRDP and FSRPOP teams were supposed to interact for more or less one year. But, due mainly to the delay in FSRPOP kick-off and the lack of finance, this collaboration has not been effective.

Let us first consider the situation at the end of LRDP .

1. The Lowland Rice Development Project

a) Objectives

This project was funded by AFD. Its specific purpose was to “establish lowland rice production and processing methods which are economically viable and sufficiently attractive for Farmers and the Women Processors responsible for processing and marketing this production. Production and processing systems had to be sufficiently flexible for reproduction and transfer to other regions” (Project document). It matches the concern of the Ghanaian government to improve the rice self sufficiency of the country and to improve livelihood of poor farmers.

To achieve this objective, the project worked mainly to support the intensification of lowland rice cropping, through:

- The land development of about 1000 Ha of lowlands; we are speaking of “mid-cost” development, that is bunding (+ water regulation structures if needed); as opposed to irrigation schemes, these techniques do not allow full water control.
- The extension of an intensive technical package in order to make the most of this improved water control and to substantially increase the yields.

Two hypotheses underlie these choices:

- Intensification is profitable for small scale farmers ;
- The obstacles to progress are mainly technical : if one shows farmers how to crop, and gives them the means (credit) to use the “right techniques”, they will reproduce the model and everybody will benefit ...

To complete the scheme and improve processing and marketing, support has been provided to women processors to raise the volume of their business.

b) Implementation

Land development has been carried out by the project (with heavy machines), without consequent involvement or contribution of the farmers. Given the hydrological characteristics of the lowlands, the schemes are always based on bunding. When needed, water regulation structures are built (those are dykes with wooden or metal gates to regulate the level of water). Then a technical package has been extended: intensification is based mainly on mechanical ploughing (tractors), use of long variety improved seeds, and application of fertilisers.... The extension method has been quite top-down, and the instructions very strict (amount of fertilisers, cropping calendar...).

To enable small scale farmers to buy inputs or services, it was necessary to provide them with credit. For this purpose, mutual guarantee groups have been set up on a neighbouring field basis. The credit contracts have been negotiated for these groups then established directly by project staff with the bank (ADB).

c) Results

The technical results have been quite impressive as the mean yields jumped from about 800 kg/ha to about 2 t/ha on average.

At the end of the Lowland Rice Development Project (in December, 2003), farmers were convinced about the benefits of intensification, and were able to implement intensive rice cropping. A few of them have also been trained to produce good quality seeds so as to become autonomous.

But, at that time (December 2003):

- They were unable to adapt the technical choices to soil or annual weather conditions. In cases where the land development scheme is no more (or less) effective –erosion of the bunds for instance, - or when the ploughing is delayed for diverse reasons, they do not change the variety or the level of fertilisation. Above all, they do not have an idea of the profitability of these choices (even of their effective cost);
- The sustainability of the development schemes was not ensured as farmers were not aware (or convinced) that they were in charge of maintaining the bunds (and that they can do it manually);
- Most farmers were not clearly aware of what a credit scheme is, what they were grouped for, and what their commitments to the bank were (see above);
- The project staff have managed most of the tasks related to use of external services or contact with partners such as ploughing, inputs supply, marketing... The consequence is that the farmers are not autonomous on these issues. Moreover, it looks like some part of them thought that they were working for “the project” and not for themselves.

At present, these constraints are still hampering the implementation of FSRPOP.

It has to be noted that the LRDP project had a positive impact on the processing section: in fact the women processors made the most of credit opportunities created by the project.

But the post-harvest stages of the production process sometimes compromise part of the results: a lot of quite good paddy is produced on field but then post harvest stages such as poor conditions of threshing, insufficient winnowing, etc... jeopardise the quality of the paddy which is sold on the market.

d) Comments

Although, it is not our mandate to assess LRDP results and methods, at this stage we have two main comments:

- The first one addresses the weaknesses of the credit scheme that has been put in place by LRDP.

Groups were supposed to constitute a mutual guarantee basis; but the members were not sufficiently informed, and especially of their mutual responsibility; nor were they informed about the credit regulations such as interest rates, guarantee, consequences of non or partial repayment.

Another point is that the amount of credit was established on forecast basis; it was calculated on the basis of the area that each farmer declared “to have planned to crop” at the beginning of the season. For instance, if Mr X said that he would sow 2 acres, he was supposed to borrow an amount of money Y to allow him to pay ploughing, n kgs of fertilisers (quantity calculated automatically to respect the “right” technique), seeds... If a modification occurred later (the farmer does not want or is not able to take all the fertilisers, or sows only 1,5 acres for example) , it is not always (never ?) taken into account , and the farmer is expected to reimburse the “official amount”, whether he used it or not.

Lastly, farmers did not see the money that they were supposed to benefit from (suppliers contract with the project staffs and are paid directly by the bank). We said above that farmers were not clearly informed of the regulations which were never discussed (they were presented to them, which is not the same...). As a consequence, the amount of money that each farmer was supposed to repay was not clear for any of them...

- The second one addresses the intensification choice :

We must recall that, in the 70's, intensive rice cropping was promoted by the socialist government in collective structures using mechanical techniques, high use of inputs, etc. When the system collapsed, private enterprises carried on with these practices in large areas (several hectares –20 and more- each). Nowadays, when we talk of improving rice yields in the region, people (especially farmers, even small scale farmers) do not imagine hand techniques or low input rice cropping; one is in an all/nothing situation.

But, the technical package that has been extended by LRDP is quite rigid and this has consequences on the level of risk endorsed by farmers. There is neither opportunity nor means to adapt technologies to specific conditions. In fact, although technical objectives have been more or less fulfilled during the first years, the sustainability of these results have to be considered : using long varieties and high amounts of fertilisers increases the risk of getting low yields in case of cropping calendar delays (because of rain shortage, late ploughing, or other reasons...). This point greatly affects credit matters: the more risky the cropping system, the higher the risk for the farmer not to be able to repay...

2. Principles of FSRPOP action (component 2)

The strategic orientation note written by the ATs (Olivier Maes and Olivier Bouyer) in December 2003, recalls the main principles:

“Transfer of responsibilities to rice farmers and to their organisations is supposed to ensure the sustainability of intensive lowland rice cropping. To make this transfer a reality, we have to base our actions on the following key principles:

- *The project has to support farmers for a sufficient duration (at least 3 seasons)*
- *Learning has to rely both on training and doing, training being not always an obligatory first step*

- *Indigenous knowledge (agronomic, economical, organisational, etc....) has to be recognised and made good use of. Right of testing and making mistakes have to be recognised.*

Support to rice farmer organisations has to be close and rigorous (supervision of storage structures, credit management, and compliance with regulations established within the rice farmer organisations)⁵”

Given these strategic orientations, actions were carried out according to the following practical bases:

- The project has contracted with a local NGO (CAPSARD) to support the co-operatives. There are five CAPSARD staff involved in the project: four field officers and one (part time) research officer. The NGO is strongly involved not only in the FSRPOP field work and daily implementation, but also in planning and brainstorming, especially on capacity building issues. The field officers provide regular facilitation and support services to co-operatives, to make farmer organisations progressively more efficient and more autonomous ;
- The geographical organisation derives from the LRDP scheme : the three valleys which constituted the LRDP intervention area were divided into 4 zones, each of them under the supervision of a field officer ;
- The co-operative members are “LRDP farmers” who have been able to repay their loans (roughly)and agreed to the new regulations, that is: to move from simple groups of farmers to proactive and recognised organisations with constitutions and by-laws ;
- Given the context of the Dagbani Society, project staff chose to consider traditional authorities as partners of the project. They are especially considered as official witnesses in the credit process ;
- Some of the necessary functions that the rice farmers (and their co-operatives) are waiting for cannot be managed at the community level. It is thus necessary to support the creation of an apex body, capable of managing and co-ordinating activities at the regional level and entitled to represent rice farmers.

3. Activities carried out under component 2

We do not want to give an exhaustive and detailed report of the activities of the project (they are fully dealt with in the synthesis note written in January 2005). We will just recall here what we think are the main points to discuss to prepare the future...

To achieve the goals of the project, three groups of activities were identified in the project documents: 1) to determine the scope of the existing organisations and the support they get from NGOs and other services, 2) to support farmer groups set up by LRDP, and 3) to train farmers’ leaders.

⁵ Le transfert de ces responsabilités aux riziculteurs et à leurs organisations doit pouvoir assurer la pérennité de la culture intensive de riz de bas-fonds. La réalisation effective de ce transfert nous oblige à intervenir selon les principes clés suivants :

- L’accompagnement des riziculteurs par le projet doit se faire dans la durée (3 campagnes au minimum) ;
- L’apprentissage doit se faire par l’action et la formation, la formation n’étant pas forcément un préalable à l’action ;
- Les logiques endogènes (agronomiques, économiques, organisationnelles, etc.) doivent être comprises et valorisées. Les droits à l’expérimentation et à l’erreur doivent être reconnus ;

L’appui aux organisations de riziculteurs doit être rapproché et rigoureux (on pense au suivi des structures de stockage, de la gestion du crédit mais aussi au respect des règles énoncées au sein des organisations des riziculteurs, etc.).

a) *Appraisals studies*

Studies, carried out by students in 2003, address the first point and give the scope of the traditional and modern organisations.

Briefly, they establish that:

- Generally speaking, traditional structures are still present and pro-active at the community level. They have a strong influence on the daily life of rural populations, both in the social and in the technical sectors. Up to the present, traditional regulations and organisations are strong driving factors of social life.
- At the same time, most “modern organisations” appear to be artificial and opportunist. They are set up, either on initiative of external actors to get made-to-measure partners for specific projects, or on an opportunistic basis, to benefit from donor support. The support that these organisations benefit from NGOs and other services does not result in a tangible capacity building at the community level.

b) *Training*

To address points two and three of the workplan related to farmer organisations and capacity building, the project staff had initially to face several challenges. The more important of these were:

- the very low level of education of farmers, with very few literate persons either in Dagbani or in English, which is an obstacle for group management and autonomy of organisation;
- the burdens of the past (especially LRDP), weak understanding of credit mechanisms, wrong habits and gaps in repayment which make a lot of farmers ineligible for new credits ; these issues interfere strongly with co-operative management

As such, project staff and their partners allocated much time to basic training and clarification of credit matters.

Literacy classes

The number of illiterate people among co-operative members is a major obstacle to living democracy (choice of executives, control of books...) and efficiency of organisation (ability to and self confidence in negotiating with literate people such as bank officers ...). This difficulty is common to all the co-operatives, and it was decided to support a literacy campaign for the co-operative members.

Adult-targeted literacy classes had to be focused on functional knowledge. So, a partnership with NFED (Non Formal Education Division) was initiated to develop a specific scheme on the following basis:

- use of Dagbani language,
- voluntary facilitators belonging to the communities,
- logistic support from the project (lights, manuals),
- heavy investment in capacity building for facilitators through support from NFED (regular visits) and workshops. During these workshops exchanges between facilitators are encouraged and technical documents are presented to be used during the classes (see below)
- development of specific pedagogical tools (leaflets, posters) to allow functional capacity building of co-operative members on technical issues such as credit scheme, profitability...

The literacy classes match the willing of many people: there are 20 to 30 regular attendants per class, four times a week, in the night evening (8 p.m. to 10 p.m.)...; the scheme seems to be convenient and the impact will probably be great.

Training of leaders

Several activities contribute to capacity building of leaders, including cooperative executives and apex body members:

- Training workshops for literacy facilitators are also attended by co-operative secretaries; so, these executives benefit from the “technical” part of the training.
- Specific workshops for co-operative executives or apex body members were organised on diverse themes (mainly organisational issues : constitutions and by-laws, executive election process, book keeping, but also technical topics such as credit schemes, ...).
- In addition, what is more important in our opinion, and probably more efficient, is the “training by doing” process both at the co-operative level and at the apex body level. The issues that have been addressed mainly include: Accounting, Book keeping (financial and organisational matters), Organisation and facilitation of meetings, Laying down & enforcing repayment conditions, Organisation of services.

It has to be noted here that the impact of a learning by doing process depends mostly on the quality of relations between the facilitator and the farmers. The ability of the former to be patient is important, especially to allow mistakes to be developed, then to get lessons from the experience. Currently, these conditions are partially met. The farmers trust the facilitators who are strongly involved in the support process. The facilitators are open-minded to participatory methods and do their best to let farmers work by themselves. In fact, the implementation of the project has contributed to reinforce capacities of CAPSARD staff in facilitating a participatory process.

But our feeling is that the schedule is too tight. Moreover, the strong will to overcome the past might be a break to let the mistakes develop. These two points are still hampering full benefit from the learning by doing process.

c) Support to organisation: grassroots co-operatives and apex body

Strengthening the farmer organisation is the main objective of component 2 of the FSRPOP. The farmer groups that the project is supposed to work with, are those that have been involved in LRDP. These groups have been put in place as partners in the rice cropping intensification process and they have a role to play in it...

FSRPOP is not supposed to provide technical support (which is the mandate of MoFA extension staff). However, co-operatives have to carry out technical tasks. Then, project field officers help them in facilitation, the learning by doing process, and all the problems, technical or not, which are linked with organisation ...

Practically, at the co-operative level, after (or in addition to) clarification of credit issues for the previous years, the work so far has been related to:

- formal institutional issues, that is writing and adoption of constitutions and by-laws, election of executives, holding of regular meetings, book-keeping ...
- “technical services” to rice cropping (to “replace the project”) :
 - Making credit requests, preparing invoices for credit disbursements;
 - Setting & implementing credit repayment system;
 - Determining the lists of inputs requested;
 - Identifying ploughing needs;
 - Facilitating ploughing (get tractor owners, negotiate with them, manage their payment);
 - Organising collective storage (Bagging, labelling) and marketing;
- Several co-operatives went further and began to perform other functions by putting in place water management committees ;

A few of them implemented other activities and/or began to develop projects and work plans...

To assess the efficiency of these activities at organisational level, several questions have to be answered: what are the farmers grouped for? What kind of services are they expecting from their organisation (or are in need of)? How is the organisation working? To do what?

We think that at this stage, project staff and farmers would probably not have the same answers to the two first questions: If you ask the question to a grassroots farmers group today, they would say that they want to get credit, inputs supply, management of services (ploughing, marketing), and perhaps technical advice, which were the services provided by LRDP. And they will ask for financial support (to buy tractors...) or for technical support... So, there is still a contradiction (at least a gap) between the objectives of the project endorsed by staff and the farmers' expectations. Farmers are still in a short-term perspective, without worrying so much about the sustainability of the co-operative (another donor will come?). The project staff are looking forward ...

The organisation itself is certainly close to attaining its objective : members of co-operatives attend meetings regularly; they have quite a clear idea of their constitution and by-laws, of the roles of the local executives ...In fact there is a great improvement compared to the situation at the end of LRDP : groups are becoming organisations...

At the apex body level, FSRPOP provided two types of support :

- On institutional issues : to design the general scheme of the organisation, to find the name NILRIFACU (Northern region intensive lowland rice farmers co-operative union), to discuss the regulations, to organise general assemblies, to elect the executive bureau, to begin discussions about the constitution and by-laws, to manage the "ordinary tasks" such as book keeping, communication, representation ... All these topics have given rise to learning by doing training sessions for bureau members and to make the apex body a reality....
- At the same time it was necessary to support the executives in performing the technical functions that farmers and co-operatives look forward to, that is mainly :
 - To establish convenient relations with the bank (to solve the repayment issues, then negotiate new contracts) ;
 - To get information about prices of fertilisers ;
 - To negotiate ploughing contracts (price & services),
 - To link up with rice brokers;
 - To enforce repayment (by meeting co-operatives to ensure repayment)....

Obviously, trying to target these two categories of goals at the same time is probably too much to allow for full efficiency, but there was no way else... The consequence is that most of these topics have still to be dealt with. Time has to be taken to consolidate the results already achieved. Capacities are probably still fragile and we would say that " it is urgent now to slow down" so as to improve the sustainability of the process...

d) *Relations with external partners (ongoing)*

These activities have already been mentioned above, as they are in principle, in charge of the farmer organisation.

In fact, external partners still consider FSRPOP a partner just like (and even more than) the farmer organisation. The project has to initiate contacts as long as the farmers have no time, or no means to do it themselves.

This is the case with regard to:

- Contacts with Rural bank to set a convenient credit scheme on the basis of an appraisal study made by CARE ; the scheme is based on principles of micro-credit (mutual guarantee

groups, flexibility, capacity building, appointment of a field advisor by the bank to maintain contact with the farmers and pre-empt repayment problems ...

- Pilot action with FRI and MoFA staff to test the feasibility of marketing high quality parboiled rice in Accra. Production of high quality paddy, good processing, marketing by linking up stakeholders with contracts (technical specifications) were initiated in 2004; It should be noted that this action is part of component 1 of FSRPOP...

- Contacts with other stakeholders, such as MoFA staff involved in the processing centre project

4. Comments

We have already made specific comments for the different activities listed above.

Here we want to make a few general comments about the following question: do the past and current activities match the general principle of component 2 that is “To give priority to capacity building within a demand driven and process oriented implementation making use of indigenous knowledge”?

a) *Strengths and achievements*

Although most activities have not yet ended, some results have already been achieved. These are mainly capacity building and institutional aspects which are essential steps towards building sustainable organisations.

So, the co-operatives exist and are recognised at the community level. Constitutions and by-laws have been discussed and adopted. Executives have been elected through a well defined process. The capacities of the members are improving thanks to literacy classes and daily work on technical and institutional issues.

Co-operatives have been involved in developing the apex body, and electing the executives. Lastly, intensive rice cropping is seen by many farmers as a potential motor for development.

NILRIFACU's executive members are rapidly improving their organisational management capacities and their capacities to provide services to members, and to develop relations with partners. Thanks to their strong involvement, they have become more and more autonomous in the general management of the organisation (meetings, book keeping...) and the difficult issue of repayments ...

b) *Current limits*

Although the organisation appears to be on the right path, we think that several points have to be raised as they may constitute weaknesses in the future:

- Organisational issues

At co-operative level:

-the understanding of NILRIFACU's role is still insufficient: apex body is seen mainly as a replacement of the project structure;

-Members do not yet have a clear vision, and/or projects, for mid-term perspectives;

-Project is still seen as a registration desk for requests

At apex body level:

-NILRIFACU is still missing mid-term forecasting or planning (or it is too weak);

- Executive members do not have a clear idea of what GRIB is about, how they can use GRIB and how GRIB can use them (as members);

- Mainly technical issues are to be raised at the co-operative level. These include the following:

- Repayment issues are not yet completely clarified (and many farmers are practically ineligible for credit access: how will this situation be corrected?);
- Sharing of responsibilities has to be discussed and regulations established: not all of the farmers are yet able or convinced to fulfil their commitments (to see the problem with paddy supply for FRI pilot study); collectively, they scarcely assume responsibility for the maintenance of the water management schemes (they do not know how to do it, they do not think they have to, they have other priorities?);
- There is not enough flexibility in the technical management of rice cropping ; farmers have to be supported to take consistent initiatives ; for now, they are not able to establish production costs and to make use of it to take decisions (fertilisation level, etc....) ;
- The same tools have to be used to discuss the relevance of asking for co-operatives' tractors.

- Methodological issues

- Generally speaking, the initiatives are still more or less top-down : Farmers are not given enough time to do it their own way, ask their questions and develop their solutions : it is necessary to work towards increasing facilitation and less support ...
- Farmers do not yet trust their ability to do things themselves, to discuss with partners (cause or consequence of the previous point?)
- In a situation where very few people have been trained, it might appear easier (and more efficient) to leave these persons in the same position (executive) for a long time, and to gradually improve their capacities. But this option is risky: what will happen when time comes to elect a new executive –which is the normal democratic process- ? The only way to address this concern is to reinforce capacities at the grassroots level so to make members able to check the work of their executives. To this end, the literacy program is especially relevant; its efficiency will have to be evaluated later, but we trust that its impact will be strongly positive.
- Concerning project staff, the current method of work is not fully sustainable because of the heavy workload..

IV. Recommendations

These recommendations should be read bearing in mind that the project is moving toward its end (within 12 to 18 months).

1. Project management

Considering the budgetary constraints that affected the first two years of the project, **the end of the project has to be postponed at least to mid 2006.**

Strong interactions must be developed with LRDP 2.

Capacity building activities at different levels initiated by the present project will be vain if they are not continued by the coming project:

- Include a component that aims to strengthen the inter-professionnal body ;
- In the Northern region, include a strong component on capacity building of FBO's;
- Leaving behind the top-down methods : going from a results-oriented project to a process-oriented one;

- To rely on the network of operators developed and strengthened by FSRPOP (FBOs, NIRLIFACU, GRIB, CAPSARD, SARI, FRI, RADU North...) and limit the size of the project staff itself.

FSRPOP budget will be bigger this year than before, and there is the likelihood that planned activities will be implemented with much enthusiasm and hurry, in order to meet quantitative objectives.

2. Component 1 of the project

Principles

- Capacities building of MoFA staff in commodity systems analysis and case studies on rice sector are necessary. Contribution to field study and discussions of the results will contribute to develop dialogue between GoG and the GRIB.
- The GRIB needs to be consolidated in three aspects of equal importance:
 - Pilot actions to be designed to demonstrate the capacity of an inter-professionnal body to undertake practical actions for the benefit of its members. But these actions will be relevant only if they are replicable, financial, organizational and technical aspects duly considered.
 - The sustainability of the GRIB will depend on the “maturity” of its members: that is on their ability to have a clear vision of what they expect from this organization, to determine priority actions, to formulate well-argued requests in order to get support from different partners...
 - Communication media must be developed among members (active and potential members) and to promote GRIB at decision-making level.

a) *Targeted pilot activities*

The challenge is to test - by the end of the project - a set of innovations, with successful results (as much as possible!). But above all, it is to determine the conditions of their success or failure and to provide the “tools” to support the dissemination of these innovations.

25 pilot actions are identified in the “2005 work plan”; this means 25 different sites and often several organizations or individual operators involved in each action. This seems too ambitious to achieve within one year or thereabouts.

A selection of the most feasible pilot actions seems necessary. Prioritisation and a first screening could be done before launching systematic feasibility studies. Some suggested criteria could be:

- Technical feasibility:
 - Is it possible, within one year, to fill the technical gap between the present situation and the expected results?
 - Is the required equipment available in the country or easy to import?
- Financial feasibility: can local credit institutions finance this kind of action (now or in the near future, when it proves to be profitable)?
- Organizational feasibility:
 - Are all the stakeholders already identified?
 - What is their present level of organization, in relation to what is expected of them?
- Geographical feasibility:
 - How far is the site from the location of the institutions responsible for activity implementation? How many trips will be needed?

- Are there other similar actions in the same area that will allow for grouping of some support interventions?

- Risk / cost (considering financial cost and time needed to implement the action)

As most of these criteria are subjective, a rapid appraisal of each project could be done collectively by the key persons that have been involved in the stakeholders identification and the sensitisation trips (project coordinator + its counterpart + GRIB President + GRIB executive secretary) + 1 or 2 technical advisors (FRI, SARI...). Feasibility studies will then give more detailed figures for the pre-selected actions. Some actions should be selected either at production level, processing level and marketing level. But it would be better to avoid dissipation in too many kinds of actions (if an action is tested only with one case, it will be very difficult to determine its conditions of success).

The pre-selection should be approved by the next steering committee (or at least the methodology of selection).

Credit design must be an integral part of pilot actions. Many actions involve investment in equipments or marketing credit. It would not make sense for the project to give this equipment as a grant. It would give a false image of what GRIB is supposed to be and it would create a bias in evaluating if the action is replicable or not. GRIB should not become a credit provider. Its role is to be a facilitator. FSRPOP could possibly provide GRIB a guarantee fund to secure funding requests. The previous experiences of the project coordinator should be very helpful to design and negotiate different credit mechanisms. ADB or Rural banks should be approached to discuss credit conditions. The results of the study done by CARE with rural banks (to provide credit to FBOs) might give some indications. CIDA provided a fund to ADB and rural banks to support private processing and marketing in agriculture. The possibility of benefiting from this fund must be investigated.

Training tools must be elaborated. All the pilot actions will be supported by training of the beneficiaries (small project design and submission, technical training, management training). When not already available, training material that could be used for further dissemination of these innovations should be elaborated by the persons that will support the beneficiaries. When possible, training sessions should not be limited to the direct beneficiaries of the project but extended to similar stakeholders in the same area.

Monitoring and evaluation of the pilot actions is critical. Project coordinator and GRIB executive secretary should pay special attention to this aspect.

b) Policy issues and monitoring capacity

The expected budget of FSRPOP for 2005 should give the opportunity to undertake capacity building in food security policies, which had to be frozen during the two previous years. In the "2005 Work Plan" document, 4 actions are planned: (i) to negotiate an additional levy of about 0.5% on rice imports (and create a Rice Development Fund), (ii) to negotiate a reduction of tariffs on electricity for rice production, (iii) to be involved in feasibility study of the LRDP2 and the master plan designed by JICA, (iv) to make annual recommendations to MoFA in terms of rice policies. These are the kind of questions that an inter-professional body can tackle. But to be credible, the proposals of the GRIB must be well-argued and backed on a consensus among stakeholders. As far as policy's decisions are concerned, public institutions must be able to give their point of view.

Two kinds of activities could be developed to improve analytical capacity of GRIB members and MoFA staff.

- A training session on commodity system analysis (including case-study). The objectives are:

- . to give some basics elements of commodity system analysis to GRIB executives, as they can have a clearer view of rice sector and an increased capacity to formulate proposals ;

- . to give more technical basis to economics analysts on the same issues;

- . to apply the methodology through field investigations oriented on some aspects of the rice commodity system that need to be clarified or updates⁶

- . to develop a common think-tank on rice sector with private and public sector.

Thus this training process could involve GRIB executive committee members and MoFA staff (PPMED, SRID) at different stages. Some others “technicians” involved in economics analysis could be attending (Min. of Commerce, FRI, SARI, university... to be detailed by the project), in order to create a pool of expertise in commodity system analysis.

International expertise should be required.

- Monitoring some basic indicators

Neither the FSRPOP nor the GRIB are supposed to replace statistical services but some critical data need to be regularly available for a minimum monitoring of the rice sector.

- . Imports. The “Tariffs and Rice Development in Ghana” study showed that the different sources gives different figures. An official request from MoFA to GPHA (Ports) and CEPS (Customs) and an agreement with the importers association should allow to gather and to compare monthly data.

- . Prices. SRID collects weekly retail and wholesale prices in at least 14 places around the country. But they are difficult to interpret as there are no details on qualities. FSRPOP could give a methodological support to SRID (and if needed a complementary financial support) to focus on the more relevant qualities and places, for local and imported rice.

The GRIB and MoFA also have to rely on the existing information systems. MISTOWA (Market information system and traders organisations in West African), funded by USAID, is setting up a web site where information relevant for agricultural trade at sub-regional level will be available. RIZAO, a network of rice information and monitoring systems in West Africa is another source of information and experience sharing.

c) *Strategic building for GRIB members*

At present, GRIB members have very few opportunities to discuss and think about what they expect from GRIB, how it should be managed, how it can be funded etc... To be sustainable, GRIB needs to have a clear position concerning these different aspects. It cannot expect to be self-funded before long (if ever) ; but to mobilize financial support, it needs to have a well argued strategic plan and a set of prioritised actions for the medium term, based on broad-based consensus.

- The discussion that will be held during the training periods, as well as the results of the field studies can be used as a base to elaborate this strategic action plan. When the results of the training process will be available, decentralized meetings with members should be organized in the main regions, to present the results and discuss the objectives of GRIB.

This kind of meetings should be more efficient in terms of creating a common body than individual visits to members by the executive bureau.

- Experiences should be shared with other existing inter-professional bodies in the sub-region. In Burkina Faso, rice (CIRB) and cereals (CIC) inter-professions have been were created in 2001 (for rice) and 2004 (of cereals). In Benin, the CCR (Comité de

⁶ At first sight: production costs, quantification of paddy and rice flows, supplying circuits to the main consumption centers.

concertation des riziculteurs) has been recently created by rice farmers from the national apex body FUPRO. In Guinea, the CNOP (farmers' apex body) has created a rice committee. All these organisations are young and none of them can be considered as a reference, but sharing experiences and approaches could be an interesting way to learn.

d) Communication

- Local sensitisation campaign to be done carried out by the executive members (with the support of including a leaflet presenting GRIB) - as agreed at the 1st executive Committee Meeting in Aug. 2004.
- Executive members should become local intermediaries of GRIB:
 - . Organise local meetings to inform local members of ongoing activities (after each meeting of the executive committee, for example), discuss expectations of the members and forward suggestions to the executive committee,
 - . Receive and dispatch GRIB's newsletter,
 - . Act as intermediaries, if necessary, between the executive secretary and beneficiaries of pilot actions...
- Newsletter (English) + radio broadcasting (local languages)
 - . FSRPOP and GRIB activities;
 - . Technical information (eg: processing equipment available in Ghana, cost, commercial contacts, recommended varieties, condition of access to credit...);
 - . News about other projects;
 - . Summary of recent studies on rice sector;
 - . National and international market briefs (price trends, production figures...);
 - . Experiences from the sub-region (contacts with PRIAF).

e) Human resources

The working program of the executive secretary of the GRIB will be very dense (monitoring all the pilot actions, implementing some of them, ensuring communication between GRIB members...). Support for secretarial tasks and book-keeping would be necessary.

GRIB is "young and inexperienced" whereas its executive secretary has long standing experience in project management in the rice sector. But he must always encourage the involvement of the members and make them understand that GRIB will be what they make it (and is not the creation of a project – although it is initially the case...). Thus, it is critical that he adopts as much as possible a participatory approach in decision-making.

3. Component 2 of the project

a) Principles

The following recommendations aim to address the two main points that have been highlighted above:

- sustainability is still uncertain (at the end of the project) and even more uncertain is the reproducibility (with other staff if any), due to the amount of work and the diversity of tasks currently implemented or planned within the project ;
- The autonomy of the co-operatives still has to be reinforced; co-operative members have neither a clear vision of the future (most often they have no project except "to get their own tractor") nor of the role of the apex body ... Distribution of tasks between grassroots co-operatives and apex body has to be clearly defined.

A third challenge has to be tackled in our opinion: FSRPOP can be considered as a pilot experience in organisation of farmers in the Northern Region. So, there is a responsibility for people involved in the project (staff and farmers) to make their experience useful for the future (especially for upcoming “LRDP 2”). This implies that there is need to develop and edit the tools that are used (literacy classes, organisational issues...), write methodological reports, share lessons arising from the experience....

It is important to put the activities in a mid-term perspective, and to give priority to methodological issues rather than implementation of activities themselves (for example, not necessary to attend all the meetings, but just ensure that they would be held, and then get reports on the main conclusions (oral or written)).

In fact it is time to progressively allow farmers (co-operative members and executives, apex executives) do and decide by themselves, and provide support on technical aspects, if need be, through MoFA staff (water management committees for example, maintenance or rehabilitation of bunds).

Given that the current activities appear relevant to attain the goals of the project, we suggest that none of them should be dropped but that staff workload should be reviewed. On this point, several categories of activities can be identified.

b) Activities which need less “project time” than before: daily support to long duration activities, technical issues

This can be due to the following:

- Because FBOs are already “autonomous” or almost autonomous (even if financial support is still necessary); this is the case of literacy classes where not much involvement of Project staff is needed, as NFED staff are doing very well; concerning the “support” workshops, project staff (JTA) have to let them go on with CAPSARD and NFED staff; they just need a bit of time to discuss the themes of the workshops with facilitators, and if necessary to help to produce guidelines...

Of the many themes to be considered as a basis for pedagogical documents, we think that profitability studies and cropping costs are particularly important and still have to be worked on, because farmers have to use these tools as a basis to discuss the convenience of the project...

Material Support to carry on: fuel, documents, per diem for workshops...

- Because there are skilled people (already officially in charge of these issues or not) to manage them. In such cases, they just need to ensure that the method used is appropriate and consistent with project goals: a participatory working approach is needed so that co-operative members can become more autonomous, more pro-active in developing appropriate technologies, in order to improve the sustainability of the systems. If staff are not familiar with these methods, one might consider the idea of a workshop to strengthen their capacities in participatory methods (moderated **for example** by SARI or CRI staff who have been involved in the PLAR IRM⁷ process, funded by WARDA -IVC⁸ two or three years ago).

This is the case with actions related to maintenance or rehabilitation of development schemes (bunds and water regulation structures) which have to be tackled quite quickly. These

⁷ PLAR IRM : Participative Learning and Action Research approach for Integrated Rice Management , see appendix for a short description of the method

⁸ to get in touch with IVC NCU (Inland Valley Consortium, National Coordination Unit, previously managed by Dr Ernest Otoo)

activities would involve mainly MoFA staff who have already been involved in land development with LRDP Project. It is particularly important to ensure continuity between LRDP 1 and 2. We think that the work to be done begin with stock taking with the farmers on the status of the schemes developed, so as to determine the actions to undertake: what is necessary, what is urgent; what farmers themselves can do (hand work), what can be managed with tractors, what needs heavy machines as graders...

This survey will be used as a means to sensitise farmers about their responsibilities. It would be an opportunity to support water management committees when they are operational, and to put them in place or strengthen them when they are weak or do not exist at all...

Material support: fuel and expenses for field tour?

CAPSARD field advisors might be involved in the methodological aspects, as it is a crucial point for the co-operatives... Then, depending on the local situation, decisions will be taken to solve the problems, with external support if necessary (when graders are needed for example...). If there is any opportunity to get support out of FSRPOP, it would be interesting to encourage farmers to make use of it (so as to make them able to do it again in the future...)

The other technical stages of rice cropping such as testing rice varieties, fertilisation management, etc... (to be conducted by MoFA extension staff with the support of SARI) also have to be addressed. There is a need to strengthen the capacities of farmers in a more flexible management of technical choices. We suggest to work on it in the same way (PLAR-IRM process).

c) Activities which have to be continued in a different perspective: organisational issues – let people do their own experience, including mistakes and failures

Support to co-operatives: (CAPSARD staff)

The short term work related to the cropping season (management of ploughing, fertilisers ordering, seeds supply...) has to be put in perspective, and focused on the sustainability of the process: the concern is not mainly (only) to solve the problems for this year but to put in place decision-making mechanisms which are reproducible. So, advisors have to push co-operative members to discuss not only the organisation/implementation for the next cropping season but to address the general question of funding (what they can do or finance by themselves,...) and organisation.

Support to the apex body (JTA)

The work would be based on the following principle: to let executives and members act. Errors and failures are part of a learning-by-doing process; obviously, it is necessary to accompany this process so as to get lessons of the experiences, but, at the end of the day, it is often more profitable to have analysed and corrected a problem than to have prevented it...

There are activities where apex executive members wouldn't will not need much project staff support (or support but not much time):

- Bank issues : to end with ADB (in one way or another) and contract with Rural Bank (to get enough flexibility, to consider the sustainability, to discuss about the revolving fund to be put in place by the project)

It is necessary and urgent to finish with this point, but we feel that NILRIFACU executive members are able to manage it with little support (especially as the Rural Bank process includes a pedagogical aspect); in fact the process has already been initiated and seems to be on a good footing.

- FRI Pilot study: whereas FRI staff will first (not only) focus on the technical aspects of the study, FSRPOP staff have mainly to focus on organisational issues. Care should be taken to facilitate “disciplinary decisions” which have to be taken by NILRIFACU against the co-operatives that did not supply the paddy they contracted for. We insist on the importance of letting farmers find their own answer to this problem. To be fair the decision has to be justified. It has to be as objective as possible. To clearly understand what happened (and to get a pedagogical positive co-effect of this bad experience) it would be useful to have discussions within the co-operatives on the following points: why did several co-operatives respect the contract while others did not? How could respect of the contract been facilitated? How can we manage this type of contract in the future so that it will be profitable for everybody?⁹

The discussions at the co-operative level would be facilitated by CAPSARD field staff, (ideally one CAPSARD staff + one apex body executive), apex body executive members supported by the JTA. The final decision has to be taken by the General Assembly.

- “Ordinary” work: technical work (organisation of ploughing, fertilisers supply...) and organisational work (ordinary meetings).

d) *Activities needing strong support: reinforcement of the organisation’s self regulation and planning*

We feel that it would be profitable to focus on facilitating brainstorming on the institutional aspects, mainly:

Preparation of the next General Assembly

To ensure real democracy, members have to prepare the general assembly: the agenda has to be known, the deliberations to be prepared through discussions within the co-operatives ...

-About NILRIFACU organisation

- It is important to clarify the roles of apex body and co-operatives, and, generally speaking, to make it clear what farmers are expecting from their FBO, and what they want to do of it...
- A new management scheme has to be discussed in order to improve communication (from grassroots to executives, from executives to grassroots): make use of valley level?
- Consider ways to delegate or share the work: put in place working groups – each group including one executive - (supported by MoFA staff, when needed?): ploughing, fertilisers, bank, FRI pilot study It would be a means of involving more people ... Executives would then have to concentrate on communication (links with GRIB, for example) and policy...

- About by-laws: measures to be taken when a co-operative does not honour its commitments...

Designing work plans

At the co-operative and the apex body levels, mid- and long-term work plans have to be developed: this presupposes not only one meeting but several, with autonomous brainstorming in-between, to get questions and expectations of the farmers...

It would be important to forget (or at least to discuss about) “tractor dreams”

The advantages for co-operatives to be involved in other activities in addition to rice cropping has to be discussed (especially to find income generating activities).

⁹ It’s strongly constraining to fix a price in advance; it’s highly probable that farmers will miss if the market price is substantially higher than the contracted one. If the priority is to get high quality rice (and if there is a market for it, which has yet to be checked)

In the case where the end of FRSPOP is not postponed, the priorities would have to be reconsidered as follows:

- JTA would have to find time to increase assets, that is to invest in written documents, guidelines, manuals, etc (glossary) ...

-CAPSARD staff would have to quickly initiate (to see how to manage it during the cropping season, which is not easy...) mid-term brainstorming about priorities: to design a work plan to submit to the future LRDP project (to make the co-operatives ready to discuss with it from a pro-active position). In fact, it would be preferable that NILRIFACU (co-operatives and apex body) would be involved (at least to feel concerned and brain-storm) in the identification process of the project. It would be an occasion for NILRIFACU to reinforce links with GRIB.

If FSRPOP continues till mid 2006, these two points will constitute the major activities of the next dry season...

e) *Other activities to be led by “non project” people : studies and assessments*

We feel that_ it is necessary to define the position of rice cropping in the farming systems. It would be useful to propose to the farmers options that are consistent or compatible with their farming systems (for example, to properly address the question of maintenance of bunds, which is labour intensive during maize sowing...).

In fact, the conclusions of this study will be mainly useful for LRDP 2. Nevertheless, we feel that it is the responsibility of the current project to make use of its field knowledge to supervise such work (to be implemented by a student for example? or a couple of students on the model of what has been done in 2003).

Issues to be considered

At the end of this work, we still have a few concerns or remarks to make, which can be beyond the limit of the scope that we were supposed to address, within the “external but inside” evaluation process. These are related to the partnerships, the impact, and the use to be made of the current experience and the lessons to be learned...

- We feel that the contract with CAPSARD has to be reviewed in a more realistic way: the current one is probably too demanding for an NGO, which has not enough means to pre-finance salaries during funding shortages ; so there is a risk that the staff who are not paid enough to easily face irregular salaries and who work hard under difficult conditions (poor maintenance of “small” motor bikes) will get tired (and given the goals and the methods of the project, it will be advisable to avoid turn over at this stage).
- In a mid-term perspective, we think it is necessary to address the question of impact on technical aspects (reliability of the yield enhancement), economic aspects (profit, risk management?), environmental aspects (natural resources management) and overall sociological aspects (land tenure issues, gender issues). It would be convenient to put in place a follow-up assessment process, led by FBOs so as to allow the future project to be evaluated “in real time” by target groups and their partners...
- It is important to clearly manage the relationship with existing organisations that is, practically, traditional leadership (as there is in fact no living and/or pro-active modern organisation). Relations based on transparency have been put in place at the community level but there is always a risk of “hijacking” by one group or another (the way land tenure issues

are managed in developed lowlands is not always satisfactory for example). Co-operatives have to find a mid-term between ignorance and dependence in the face of other groups.

- What are the prospects in terms of scaling up, that is using the same process in a larger area or a larger amount of farmers in similar conditions, and of scaling out, that is making use of experiences in other parts of the country?

In conclusion for component 2, we want to note that most of the recommendations have more or less already been made. It seems so, at least, when we read the report, but we feel that too many good ideas are not put into practice; that is the case, for example, of water management committees initiated in August 2004, but not effective; this general points to the need to define priorities so as to have time to implement them properly ...

General Conclusion

The strengthening of the Ghanaian rice sector depends mainly on the reinforcement of the capacities of the different stakeholders, on a better organisation of these stakeholders and on the improvement of dialogue between the different groups.

On these aspects most of the activities implemented within FSRPOP, as well as within component 1 and component 2, appear to be particularly relevant. In fact the stakeholders are involved and interested in the current trend; but there is still a long way to go.

In fact, speaking of capacity building and organization, the short duration of the project constitutes a major constraint. Moreover, the gaps between the different projects carried out successively in the same sector are counter-productive. At this stage, we would like to highly recommend postponement of the end of the project. We feel it is also very important to ensure continuity and consistency between FSRPOP and the forthcoming LRDP II.

But more time is not enough to secure maximum impact from the hard work done by project staff and their partners. It is essential to give a clear picture of the project and to avoid managing too many activities at the same time. Choices have to be made, to define priorities and concentrate available means on them. Among the priorities, we feel that communication and production of methodological notes and reports on the project experience have to be considered.

The capacity building process has to be continued with the farmers of the Northern Region and ways to scale up and scale out results have to be found. The GRIB has to be reinforced, building-up the capacity of members to have a clearer overview of rice sector and to set well-argued priorities for collective action and policy negotiation.

Partnership with MoFA staff is in place; it has to contribute to the reinforcement of skills in the commodity chain approach so that FSRPOP may have a sustainable impact on the Ghanaian rice sub-sector

Consulted documents

Various FSRPOP internal documents: minutes of meetings, notes, constitutions of cooperatives, term of references...

AICAF 2004 (march). Study on agricultural development for sustainable food production in Ghana *Interim report*

AIDOO J 2003 (oct) Technical support to Agricultural Development Bank TAMALE

Anon. 1998. Improving the competitiveness and marketability of locally-produced rice in Ghana. DFID, NRI, Project R6688 - Several volumes:

1. Marketing of rice in Ghana
2. Rice production systems in Ghana
- 3.3.A technico-economic evaluation of rice processing
- 3.4. A preliminary study of consumer preferences and price/quality relationships

Anon 2004 (Aug). Report on proposed law to permit registration of district based organizations in Ghana

CAPSARD 2003 (June) Technical and financial proposal for supply of NGO services for the implementation of the FSRPOP proposal

FSRPOP. 2003 (June). 10 years of studies on the Ghanaian rice sector – Synthesis. Ministry of Food and Agriculture. 35 p.

FSRPOP (MAE) 2005 (January) Synthesis note on the support provided to the FBOS

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GERGELY Nicolas 2004 (July) LRDP SOFRECO Backstopping mission report

GLG Consultants/SOFRECO. 1997 (Feb.). Bottom-Land Rice Development Study. Detailed Economic Study of Paddy Production, Processing, Rice Supplies and Marketing in Ghana. MoFA, AFD. 95 p.

GRIB. 2005 (Jan.). 2005 budget, financial guidelines, bylaws.

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GIMENEZ André 2003 Etude sur les conditions nécessaires à la mise en place d'Organisations Paysannes au Nord Ghana "diagnostic socio-anthropologique" *mémoire CNEARC*

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GRET 2002 (Nov) LRDP External Evaluation *Draft report*

KAZ Engeneering. 2001 (Sept.) Subsector study on the local rice industry in the northern region. Tamale, 42 p.

KRANJAC-BERISAVLJEVIC G. 2001 (Apr.). An overview of rice production in Ghana. ODI, IDS. 36 p.

Ministry of Food and Agriculture. 2004 (June). Report on nation-wide study tour focused on rice sector stakeholders. Supported by FSRPOP.

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NFED / CAPSARD : Methodological and pedagogical documents/ activity reports memos and leaflets

NILRIFACU : APEX meetings minutes and reports

OICT management 2003, (june) Implementation of capacity building activities to strengthen rice producers' and processors' groups within four districts of the Northern region of Ghana proposal

QUAYE W., GREENHALGH P., MANFUL J., HAMMOND L. 2000 (Dec). Rice paraboiling in Ghana – A socio-economic survey; project R7543, NRI Report n° 2577, FRI, NRI

RAFAMANTANANTSOA A Hasina 2003 Analyses des systèmes agraires dans la région du Nord Ghana Mémoire DEA INAPG

SRID / MoFA. 2004 (Sept.). Agriculture in Ghana. Fact and figures (2003).

SOFRECO. 2000. Updating of the detailed economic study on production, processing, rice supply and marketing in Ghana.

TOMLINS K.I., MANFUL J.T., LARWER P., HAMMOND L. 2004. Urban consumer preferences and sensory evaluation of locally produced and imported rice in West Africa. Food Quality and Preference, Elsevier.

Appendix 1: Evaluation mission program

	Expert 1 : Rice sub-sector	Expert 2 : Rice FBOs
Day 1 Sunday 23 rd of January	Arrival at Accra	
Day 2 Monday 24 th	1. French Embassy : Olivier Robinet (introduction, scope of the mission) 2. Director of Crop Services (MoFA) : Dc. Poku (institutional context) - FSRPOP (general presentation of activities, mission schedule, bibliography)	
Day 3 Tuesday 25 th	3. GRIB Executive Committee (approval of budget and work plan for 2005) 4. GRIB executive secretary : Tetteh Bio (GRIB activities)	
Day 4. Wednesday 26 th	Field visit with GRIB president, executive secretary and FSRPOP coordinator. Meeting with rice stakeholders in Hohoe (Volta Region). (3 farmers groups, 1 miller)	Departure to Tamale Meeting with Mr Adongo, Regional Director (MoFA) Meeting with MoFA staffs Visit to the processing center initiated by former LRDP staffs Visit to the literacy training workshop Meeting with NFED
Day 5 Thursday 27 th	Field visit with GRIB president, executive secretary and FSRPOP coordinator. Meeting with rice stakeholders in Hohoe (Volta Region). (visit of KPong irrigated project, 1 miller, 1 brokers group) - MoFA : Angela Dawson (PPMED)	Working session with Marie-Aude Even Attendance to the Closing ceremony of the workshop Meeting with the Rice Cooperatives Apex Body (NIRILFACU). Meeting with ADB Meeting with Bonzali rural bank
Day 6 Friday 28 th	- AFD : Caroline Piquet (LRDP2) - Eurata mission : Hans Hack, Eric Verlinden (LRDP2) - FRI : John Manfuld and collaborators (rice quality improvement program) - UE : Koen Duchateau (LRDP2) Working session on: → GRIB documents (work plan, budget, by-laws) → information gap on the rice sector → rice information system.	Meeting with CAPSARD. Field visit to 3 Rice Farmers Cooperatives (Zomnayli, Taha and Dingoni). Visit to 3 literacy classes with NFED staffs

Day 7 Saturday 29 th	Working session on: → FSRPOP and GRIB documents → information gap on the rice sector	Meeting with Mr Yakubu, FRI staff, responsible of the pilot study on high quality parboiled rice Field visit to Rice Farmers Cooperatives (in Kukuo, Satani and Zugu) and rice processors groups (in Tamale and Kunbungu)
Jour 8 Sunday 30 th		Meeting with Mr A.I. Tonko, micro-credit specialist Working session on documents (FSRPOP documents, Apex body meetings documents, students' reports) Working session with Mr Luke Nayi, FBO's desk officer,
Day 9 Monday 31 st	5. IFDC : Patrice Annequin (MISTOWA) 6. MoFA : Zalia Zemparé (PPMED, FSRPOP)	Working session on documents Discussion with Mr Eddy, MoFA technical engineering officer Departure to Accra.
	Exchange of Information between both teams Work on the presentation of the results	
Day 10 Tuesday 1 st	7. Presentation of the findings of the Mission in Accra (MoFA, French Embassy, AFD, RADU Tamale, NIRILFACU, GRIB, CAPSARD, NFED) 8. Steering committee - French Embassy : Pierre Jacquemot (debriefing) Departure	

Appendix 2: Rough description of the PLAR-IRM methodology as developed by WARDA

This method aims to make farmers in position to **develop by themselves** appropriate technologies for integrated rice cropping. It is a “ **learning by doing** ” process, conducted within **groups of farmers** during at least one full cropping season . Interaction between farmers are very important (to each problem that a farmer meets, another farmer has developed a solution) . The person who is accompanying the process (who can be an extension staff or a farmer) is a facilitator and not a trainer...

First a group of interested farmers (cropping in the same place) has to be identified. Then this group will meet once a week all the campaign long, with the support of a facilitator. The agenda is determined by the ground situation : a curriculum has been developed and a manual is available to help facilitators and farmers, but these tools have to be used in a flexible way.

Each meeting is focused on a specific theme which has been identified as relevant during a diagnosis sequence ;

A typical sequence is organised as followed :

- first, the facilitator discusses with the group the relevancy of the theme, given the field situation;
- Then he provides (or reminds) basic knowledge to address the theme (for example, identification of insects, or specific role of nutrients , etc...);
- At the end, the whole group goes to the field to compare ground situations, to discuss about solutions, to demonstrate techniques if necessary, to propose trials or tests to address the main problems encountered by farmers, sometimes to implement field activities ...

For further information, to get in touch with IVC National coordinator in Ghana or with WARDA .