

## Session 7

### Effective Adoption of Agroecological Principles

#### **Group Consultation**

**Scalability:** How would you scale projects that incorporate agroecological principles out and up?

- Moving the needle on these programs will have to involve advocacy on the part of the US government. We need to create a constituency, a demand, a value proposition for this within the development community, which will require engaging with the Hill, the administration, and USAID. There are champions in all of those places that we could tap into. We need to have a description of how this is market friendly and we need to have the data to support it. If we follow through, this becomes a policy shift and a part of our official food assistance framework.
- USAID could allot time at the start of a grant to assess the problems and context-specific issues before building a program. This period is critical for us to truly be able to integrate components and achieve a more holistic outcome. When local or U.S. partners change, being able to efficiently to incorporate new partners into the program.
- If we can work with our staff to understand the principles behind compost, the field staff can be more nimble in adapting when problems arise. CAN is doing these two week exchanges between communities—it really allows them to share lessons learned.
- We need for a mixed-methods approach – focus on using inputs like fertilizer to produce during first couple of years, with the idea being that you gradually decrease that input as organic matter increases and soil fertility is improved.

**Gender:** How would you ensure a project that incorporates agroecological principles also addresses gender?

- How would you ensure a project that incorporates agroecological principles also address gender? Need to look at time, energy use, how these things impact nutrition. Sometimes program activities lead to “settling” with gender norms, and some are transformative in nature.
- We think of gender as multi-faceted. You can't just pull at one string and expect everything to be beautiful. It's much bigger than these one-off projects. And that gets at the power and communication issues between men and women. Getting people to be heard. Dialogue and mapping can help us to pick apart some of this. This can't happen in every community because not every community is willing to do this.

**Time-bound:** How would you address the balance of short-term vs. long-term results within time-bound projects that incorporate agroecological principles?

**Measurement:** How would you measure and evaluate the impact of agroecological principles? How would you capture the short-term impact on food insecurity and the long-term impact on sustainability to various stakeholders (Congress, donor, farmers)?

- Start with a problem statement: we need to find metrics that are not overly burdensome but still effective in capturing the results of a program. We then need to be able to share these with Congress and donors. We want to see success years after we leave, so there needs to be some research to indicate success after we leave. Because of our time-bound constraint, we don't have a lot of research that goes back years. We need to be able to see over time how the projects work.

**Market development:** How would you incorporate a focus on agroecological principles and market development into the same project?

- The ultimate goal doesn't have to be the global commodity market. At a very local level, there's a great market opportunity.
  - In Brazil, there is a network of farmers' markets that are supported by municipal government. This system of governmental support is now embedded in the Brazilian Constitution.
- There is a decision to be made on selling to local markets or export/global markets. You need to have something as a differentiator if you're a farmer (i.e., Fair Trade seal). But then again, is there really a demand for that in say, Tanzania? The end consumer is really important. Who is the final consumer?
- Getting farmers interested in market participation is just as important as creating the actual market.
- Explain why market development of higher-value niche products is important for the farmer compared to selling more of undifferentiated cash crop. Encourage the concept of selective selling.
  - On a project with the Arbor Day Foundation, Steve Moore saw first-hand the power of this branding. The project reported that consumers were willing to pay a high premium for their coffee when they saw that their purchase went towards education, community health, and ecosystem restoration.

- Use a core cash crop, like coffee, at the center of a broader agroecological approach. Farmers should not rely solely on cash crop production, but produce it alongside nutritional crops that will help improve farmer food security.
- Farmers in FFP programs are usually the most marginalized. The more they can engage in agroecological practices, the better their food is going to be – better looking, more nutritious, etc. We've seen that at farmer markets—those who are selling high-quality produce attract the most customers. There is huge potential for an agroecological market that models itself after the success of the local foods movement. By having a close connection with the consumer base, the farmer can also increase awareness about the agroecological principles (i.e., link between nutrition and agro biodiversity).
  - Side note: Practical Action (UK-based NGO) has been working with International Development Enterprises on building an advocacy alliance group in Europe around Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). If there are NGOs in US who are interested, contact Glen Burnett, Director of US Operations.