

Scaling up technologies in orange-fleshed sweetpotato using the Agricultural Innovation System

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❖ The Problem: Are women and youth losing out on OFSP business opportunities?

Sweetpotato production and marketing has commonly been an arena for women. However, with various new initiatives, sweetpotato has suddenly become more lucrative, with increased participation of men especially in the wholesale and processing functions. This project uses an Agricultural Innovations Systems (AIS) approach, to support capacity strengthening among in-country stakeholders for OFSP value chain development and up-grading. In turn, stronger platforms have been identified in order to seize market opportunities in the OFSP sub-sector.

Key to this is the application of the Participatory Market Chain Approach (PMCA). The application of PMCA provides a systematic approach to the diagnosis and up-grading of value chains. PMCA also offers space for interaction among different value chain actors, joint planning and delivery of new products, services or institutions arising out of commercial, technological or institutional innovations. Through joint market assessments and market development, trust is built amongst value chain actors who work together in common interest thematic groups to leverage a specific market opportunity.

However, methodological gaps were identified during the use of the PMCA approach in the OFSP-AIS project. While the PMCA has advantages in using participatory methods for value chain development; it is 'silent' on gender equity. The PMCA assumes that men and women will benefit equally from participation in the platforms and it does not have an explicit strategy to promote women's participation in marketing activities. Yet women and youth face gender specific, as well as more general, barriers to engaging in markets, as compared to men. This is in addition to production constraints such as restricted access to land, credit and inputs. Focusing on gender equity in agricultural value chains makes business sense and is good for women, the youth, and society.

In applying the PMCA, country partners have jointly analyzed various business options, selected



■ Attending PMCA Phase 2 event in Kenya (credit S. Mayanja).

one to pursue, and have subsequently developed business plans that will guide the actualization of these opportunities. A key challenge, however, now lies in the fact that with increased interest of men in the Sweetpotato value chain, will women and youth lose out?

❖ What do we want to achieve?

We are working to achieve more effective and gender-equitable sweetpotato value chains, ensuring that as the commercialization of sweetpotato increases, the benefits are equitably shared among men, women and young people. We want to document the lessons from using an agricultural innovation systems approach in the promotion and dissemination of OFSP technologies and share these widely in the East and Central Africa region.

❖ Where are we working and who are we working with?

The project is being implemented in Western Kenya (Ugunja and Gem Districts), Lake Zone Tanzania (Muleba and Missenyi Districts) and Northern Uganda (Kitgum and Pader Districts). The Lake Zone Agriculture Research and Development Institute (LZARDI) of Tanzania leads the implementation of the project. The International Potato Center (CIP) provides technical support and capacity-strengthening. In Kenya, Ugunja Community Resource Centre (UCRC), an NGO which is developing information-based products and services leads, supported by the Kenya Agriculture Research



The Sweetpotato for Profit and Health Initiative (SPHI) is a ten-year initiative designed to improve the food security and livelihoods of poor families in Sub-Saharan Africa by exploiting the untapped potential of sweetpotato. It seeks to reposition sweetpotato in food economies of Sub-Saharan African countries to alleviate poverty and under-nutrition in 10 million African families in 10 years.

Institute (KARI). In Uganda the international NGO, BRAC, which has expertise in the provision of micro-finance training and credit, leads with support from Gulu University. In Tanzania, LZARDI leads with support from KOLPING Society of Tanzania an NGO.

✦ How are we making it happen?

We are applying gender based analytical tools to determine gender-based constraints that could deter women, and men, from fully taking advantage of market opportunities.

Three tools: the gender mapping tool, the gender constraints and analysis tool and the risk-benefit tool have been applied during the three phases of the PMCA.

✦ What have we learned so far?

Gender sensitive value chain development and upgrading requires a number of strategies including skills acquisition to apply gender tools, integrating information obtained from the gender analysis into the PMCA, and monitoring the effect on the market chain actors and the chain itself.

The gender mapping tool enabled more in-depth analysis of the chain and assisted us in understanding

- (i) who does what in the chain
- (ii) which nodes had higher concentration of women and men
- (iii) where the greatest profit or value was
- (iv) where the power laid
- (iv) and the main blockages in the chain.

In Kenya, the tool was applied to the vines, roots and processed products chains. The tool revealed that very few women engaged in the vine chain while the root chain was dominated by women, except in the wholesale function. The blockage hindering transformation of the root chain was identified to be lack of quality planting materials, while power was concentrated in the male dominated wholesale function. The processed products gender map revealed that women were 'invisible actors', and were engaged in time consuming activities like peeling, chipping and drying, while men dominated in chain functions that required larger capital outlay such as processing and distribution. The blockage was identified to be an inconsistent supply of roots, and the power base in the chain was with the processor.

The information obtained from the **gender mapping exercise was further analysed using the gender based constraint analysis tool**, to identify



■ Displaying quality OFSP vines for sale at a field day in Ugunja, Western Kenya (credit: S.Mayanja).

the gender based constraints that could limit the opportunity to supply OFSP vines to institutions and large buyers. For women, the major constraint identified was inability to access land suitable for vine production especially during the dry season. Access to quality starter materials was another challenge since quality vines were found at distant research stations. The interventions suggested were the establishment of primary multiplication sites within the community, as well as sensitizing men to allow women access to productive land. Limited capital to invest in equipment to irrigate their plots during the dry seasons was identified as the critical constraint for men. The potential action was to link vine producers to microfinance institutions in order to procure irrigation equipment. The information obtained from this exercise was used in two ways: (i) to further refine analysis and selection of market opportunities (ii) the potential actions and strategies were included in the business plan for the selected market opportunity.

We have learnt that women and men face different kinds of constraints in taking advantage of business opportunities, which therefore required differentiated strategies to address them effectively. We have also learnt that there should be a careful choice and application of tools, as additional time and skills are needed to ensure that mixed or single sex focus groups are used appropriately, and that the data and information gained can be interpreted and translated into actionable strategies.

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