Scaling up Sweetpotato seed systems in Kenya : Experience from the Accelerated Value Chain Development Project

SEED SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

Kenya Accelerated Value Chain Development Program (AVCD), sweetpotato component has 3 objectives:

- Increasing sweetpotato productivity and production among 65,000 Households(HHs).
- Improve nutrition knowledge and practices utilizing OFSP among 65000 HHs.
- Improve storage and marketing of roots for 30,000 HHs.

The following technologies and approaches are being promoted to address the seed systems stage of the value chain:

a) Adoption of well adapted varieties of Orange Fleshed Sweetpotato (OFSP),
b) Promotion of Net tunnels,
c) Use of decentralized vine multiplication (DVM) approach,
d) Use of Triple ***S for vine conservation***.

Figure 1. : A DVM watering a net tunnel

Figure 2: Child care givers taking home Vines

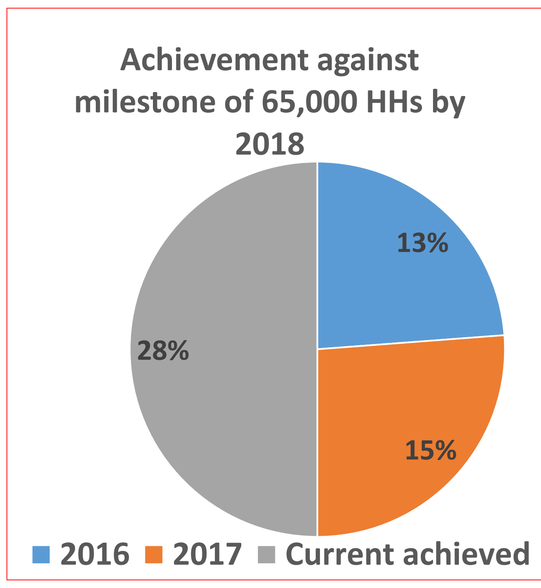
SCALING STRATEGY

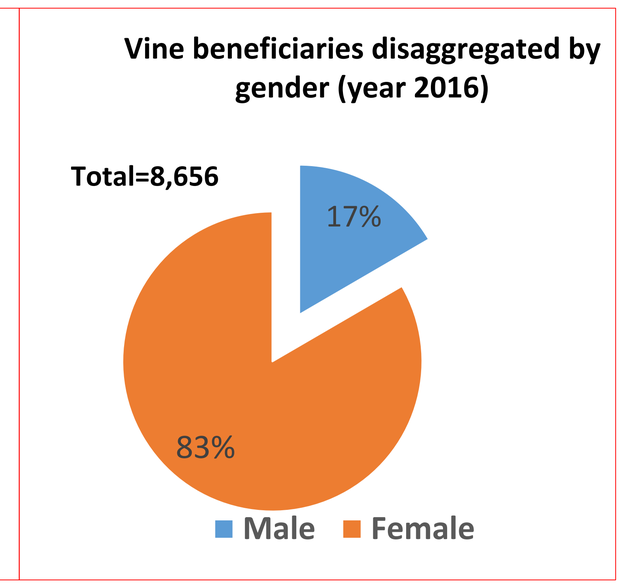
- Project has established 43 DVMs (70% male, 30% Female), selection criteria is a farmer willing to expand to 1 acre of vine multiplication within the project life.
- To speed up production of vines, the AVCD project identified and worked with 13 DVMs that were existing prior to the start of the project.
- Multi-sectoral approach in disseminating vines is being used; County departments of Health, Agriculture, Education and Administration are involved.
- Expansion of market for vines through expansion of end users of roots, including active engagement with bakeries, restaurants, fresh root market and storage facilities.
- Buy in from County governments who are actively supporting use of OFSP as a diet based approach to reduce Vitamin A Deficiency, which is a public health problem in Kenya, has created a good environment for scaling up.
- Training good agronomic practices is being undertaken as a key approach to improve OFSP profitability to favourably compete with other crops, thus pull demand for Vines.

END USERS AND BENEFITS

- The project aims to reach 30,000 households (HHs) at commercial scale and 35,000 HHs for nutrition security.
- The project has reached a total of 18,182 households.
- Commercial beneficiaries purchase vines while those reached for nutrition outcomes receive 200 vines free for a maximum of 2 times during project life.

LEVEL OF ADOPTION OR USE





CRITICAL GAPS

- Limited root markets restricts willingness of farmers to purchase vines.
- Weak business skills among DVMs.
- Distortion of price by NGOs and other development partners.
- Dry weather conditions resulting in frequent loss of vines that demoralize DVMs.

NEXT STEPS

- Sustain behaviour change towards vines purchase
- Strengthen diversified root markets to create a pull force for vines from root producers.
- Enhance DVMs business skills to make informed decisions on pricing and business relations.
- Avail cost analysis of vine production at various stages to potential investors and policy makers.

Figure 3: Diversified activities in addition to vine multiplication cushion losses

Figure 4: Demand creation for OFSP at open air market creates market for vines

KEY PARTNERS FOR SCALING

- County Governments of Homa Bay, Migori, Bungoma and Busia. The project uses the existing infrastructure and human resources to drive activities.
- Farm Concern International (FCI): The lead partner in linking farmers to markets through collective production and marketing.
- Natural Resources Institute UK- The lead partner in establishing commercial storage facilities for roots. This is expected to sustain root commercialization and thus create a pull demand for vines.

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