



Sweetpotato Seed Systems and Crop Management Community of Practice



Regional Technical Support Platform for East, West, Central and Southern Africa
9th Consultation Partner Progress Review of Sustainable pre-basic Seed Production
under SASHA Sub-Grantee Agreements
Hotel Villa Portofino in Kigali, Rwanda
May 14, 2018
Compiled by Faith Njoki Njunge; Edited by Margaret McEwan



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Cover photo: Participants of the ninth SGA consultation meeting in Kigali, Rwanda. Phot credit (Faith Njung'e)

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Acronyms

CRI	Crops Research Institute
COP	Community of Practice
DARS	Department of Agricultural Research Services (Malawi)
DVM	Decentralised Vine Multipliers
EGS	Early Generation Seed
IIAM	Instituto de Investigação Agrária de Mozambique
INERA	Institut de l'Environnement et de Recherches Agricoles de Burkina Faso
KEPHIS	Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
NaCRRI	National Crops Resources Research Institute (Uganda)
NARI	National Agricultural Research Institute
NRCRI	National Root Crops Research Institute (Nigeria)
OFSP	Orange-fleshed sweetpotato
RAB	Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Board
PBS	Pre-basic seed
PI	Principal Investigator
SARI	Southern Agricultural Research Institute (Ethiopia)
SASHA	Sweetpotato Action for Security and Health in Africa
SPHI	Sweetpotato for Profit and Health Initiative
SS-CoP	Sweetpotato Seed Systems and Crop Management Community of Practice
TARI	Tigray Agricultural Research Institute (Ethiopia)
TC	Tissue culture
ZARI	Zambia Agricultural Research Institute

Executive Summary

The Sweetpotato Seed Systems and Crop Management Community of Practice (SS-CoP) Ninth Consultation was held on 14 May 2018 at Hotel Portofino, Kigali, Rwanda. The planning and review meeting was attended by the Sweetpotato Action for Security and Health in Africa (SASHA) project pre-basic seed (PBS) system sub-grantees. There were 25 participants from 11 countries - Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria and Zambia. The participants were predominantly sweetpotato breeders, and seed systems scientists implementing business plans for sustainable production of sweetpotato seed.

The objectives of the meeting were to

- review progress with implementation of the Early Generation Seed (EGS) business plans for year 4 (June 2017 – May 2018); and areas of improvement to ensure that there is a sustainable business by December 2018;
- plan to have updated narrative section of the business plans by September 2018;
- review status of financial reports and address any questions;
- review marketing strategies, development of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) & next steps; and
- provide an update on sweetpotato knowledge portal.

Eleven National Agricultural Research Institutes (NARIs), one private sector and one regulatory body are beneficiaries of financial support through Sub-Grant Agreements (SGAs) to develop models for sustainable production of pre-basic seed. So far, procedures in tissue culture labs and screen house have been strengthened to ensure a consistent supply of pathogen tested pre-basic cuttings. In addition, progress has been: in improving technologies to increase multiplication rates and reduce the costs of seed production; and in promoting demand to increase the willingness to pay for quality seed. Most institutions have also supported capacity strengthening of their staff. The evaluation of the meeting indicated that majority of participants felt that their expectations had been met and that the technical content was good.

Introduction and objectives of the meeting

Eleven NARIs, one private sector and one regulatory body are beneficiaries of financial support through Sub-Grant Agreements (SGAs) to develop models for sustainable production of sweetpotato pre-basic seed by the end of 2018.

The objectives of the SGA meeting held in Kigali on 14th May 2018 were to;

- Review progress with implementation of business plans – June 2017 – May 2018
 - What do we need to do to have a sustainable PBS business by December 2018?
- Planning to have updated narrative section of the business plans by September 2018

- Financial reporting: questions and answers
- Review of marketing strategies & next steps
- Update on the sweetpotato knowledge portal (www.sweetpotatoknowledge.org)

1. Progress review of pre-basic seed components

Moderator: Margaret McEwan; Rapporteur: Rosemary Kihiu

The annual reports and updates covered the period of June 2017 to May 2018. Prior to the meeting all the 13 sub-grantees submitted power point presentations based on a specific template. These presentations were printed out and displayed in a poster format. Participants had one hour to walk around and visit each poster. During this time, each person provided short written feedback on the poster, using post-its. This is called silent feedback.



Figure 1 Silent feedback session

Using different colours of post-its, participants provided positive feedback and raised any concerns in the form of a question. Each participant was expected to provide at least two positive comments and two questions for each poster.

Each person reviewed and synthesized the comments on their poster and prepared their responses which were presented and discussed in two groups.

Group 1: [TARI](#), [NaCRRI](#), [SRI](#), [RAB](#), [INERA](#), [NRCRI](#), [ZARI](#)

Group 2: [SARI](#), [IIAM](#), [DARS](#), [CRI](#), [BioCrops](#), [KEPHIS](#)

1.1 Group one plenary discussion

Rapporteur: Rosemary Kihiu

Discussion points:

Five years ago, we had the same challenges. What are the new innovations?

Some Koussao: Do we now have techniques to reduce infection of planting materials?

Mary Ndomba: In Tanzania there is the problem of sweetpotato scab we discarded all open field planting material and used materials from screen house.

Jude Njoku – We are using pig manure.

Jean Ndirigwe - The more root farmers bulk their planting materials, this reduces demand from DVMS. How do we discourage farmers from bulking their material?

- **David Talengera:** We are still at the level of OFSP sensitization before aggressive marketing. We have targeted big farmers; how do we capture the small farmers who take small quantities then bulk them. This is a negative disincentive for private entrepreneurs.

- **Margaret McEwan:** We need to build these scenarios into the business plan; farmers will not buy seed from DVMs every year, but maybe every 3 years. The experience of farmers using /3- node cuttings has not been very good because rapid multiplication technologies require high management.
- **Jean Ndirigwe:** We are discouraging farmers from buying directly from RAB.
- **Beyene Demstu:** We cannot discourage farmers; the farmer is his/her own boss. What we can do is educate them that what they are doing is not good.
- **Jude Njoku:** Encouraging farmers to bulk their own vines will be self-defeating because of virus load, which takes a long time to resolve.
Beyene Demstu: Farmers have to be encouraged to buy seed. We can encourage the farmer that we have something good, which encourages the farmer to work with the DVM. The existing seed business is a function of many things e.g. institutional buyers, politics of the country etc. Our focus should be on the best way to have the farmer constantly looking for quality seed.
- **Jean Ndirigwe:** The goal is quality seed thus the need to encourage farmers to go to DVMs where there is better management of the type of seed.
Joanne Adero: It is not easy to discourage farmers to bulk as they are potential multipliers. The seed is often kept more than one season.
- **Marian Quain:** Farmers wait until they see the first rain, so when we find a farmer (as opposed to a DVM) who can buy material the whole year (with irrigation) we sell to them. We conduct demonstrations showing the difference between clean and recycle seed, but we have not got to the extent of determining how many cycles they can go before they should back for clean material.
- **Margaret McEwan:** This depends on context i.e. high virus/low virus, food secure/food insecure, production for household consumption or for commercial purposes.
- **Jan Low:** You need to consider new clientele every year and accept that only 10-20% will be return customers.

Jan Low: What is the current process for tackling army worm?

- **Kennedy Masamba:** Spraying, but this does not get to the army worms under the leaves. Escalated this to the entomologist to see how to best address the problem.
- **David Talengera:** Advice on pesticide use: keep changing formulation, alternate pesticide to keep the use of pesticides effective.

What do we need in order to have sustainable business by December 2018?

- We looked at having a pull system so as to create a demand (challenge is that we don't do root production which would in turn create demand for seed).
- Main solution - creating demand, sustainability can be achieved by consistently increasing market awareness of the need for clean seed.

1.1.2 Group two plenary discussion

Rapporteur: Rosemary Kihiu

New Lessons on technical production

- Use of organic manure and drip

- Watering interval in Nigeria. Watering at 3 days interval increased their production of planting material.
- In Tanzania use of 2 node cuttings for pre-basic production

Multiplication calendar

- Cycles are correct but the calendar needs to be flexible and needs constant updating of the cycle depending on situations that arise.

Stakeholders meeting

- This needs to be incorporated in the calendar, need to think about having contracts for established markets. Need to plan before production with stakeholders.

Marketing

- Need to plan for field day activities or advertising on the radio
- Use vehicle wheel covers of vehicles, or motor cycle mud- flaps for advertising
- Incorporate NGOs in stakeholder meetings so that they are aware of limitations when they come at the last minute (without prior notification of their requirements)

Procurement planning

- Needs to be done in good time. Procurement takes a long time in most countries.
- Need to think about getting extra stock of insect proof nets, (for rehabilitation or repairs), bio safety measures e.g. foot bath, and double doors

Adjustments to determine pre-basic seed requirement

- Have stakeholder meetings at an appropriate time and identify how to conduct meetings in cost effective way
- Track the demand, produce varieties that customers want to use; keep updating customer data base.

Challenges

- Estimating demand - appropriate timing of stakeholder meetings
- Once-off customers (continue multiplying their own materials) - solution reach out to more buyers
- How to sustain the market, most customers are institutional buyers e.g. projects with predetermined lifespans - institutionalize the business, involve more private sector players in the seed market.

Key actions

- Reaching out to private entities for seed production - becomes target market for pre-basic seed for basic seed production
- Seed production is viewed as a project, as opposed to a business that can bring in money; there is a need to change this mindset
- Zambia is on this path – ZARI has created a seed unit to take up this as a sustainable business once the project is over.

1.1.3 Discussion

Jan Low: How many institutions think it is necessary to produce basic seed (in addition to pre-basic) for financial sustainability?

- Demand in Ghana is increasing. Last year with breeder's activities, roots were produced which were sent to schools and hospitals for breast feeding mothers. There was very high demand. But we have had demonstrations for farmers to pick it up (increase adoption).
- A lot is happening in the North with the Jumpstarting project.
- **Some Koussao:** Why we did not start basic materials is because our source material is old and needs to be restarted. We will include basic seed in the next cycle.
- **Margaret McEwan:** In Burkina Faso there is also a big private seed company doing basic seed
- **Martin Chiona:** Cost was initially prohibitive so now going to basic.

Jean Ndirigwe - How do you update your multiplication calendar?

- **Martin Chiona:** We bring in stakeholders early enough.
- **Joanne Adero:** We face different challenges e.g. prolonged rainy season, so we make adjustments as much as possible.
- **Beyene Demstu:** For example last year we did not do stakeholder meetings at the right time so demand was not correctly projected. Reduced pre-basic and targeted to multiply basic but then we had the first meeting with NGOs and BoA, suddenly there was great demand for cuttings. For that reason, it needs to be at the beginning of the seed production cycle. To resolve this I had to go to a private TC lab to multiply. I was forced to rapidly multiply. I am now forced to work backwards, multiply as a response to marketing demand as opposed to market demand projection.
- **Some Koussao:** Most multiplication calendars only have the rainy season; now there are people in Burkina Faso using irrigation. So, if the research institution is not ready, such farmers buy PBS for root production as opposed for vine multiplication.
- **Margaret McEwan:** So in that example we might need to look at scenario C to match irrigated root production (in addition to scenario A and B).
- **Margaret McEwan:** Another example is if country's early warning system forecasts that rain will be below normal; then it is possible to respond by reducing irrigation and fertilizers to slow down vine growth.

2 SPKP skills update – Twitter & Facebook

Rapporteur: Marian Quain *Presentation Link: <http://ow.ly/WKFT30liEaV>*

Faith Njoki gave an update on the current analytics of the Sweetpotato Knowledge Portal and social media. Only three participants had not registered on the portal and they did so with Faith's assistance. Of interest was the social media training participants signed up for twitter accounts and had chance to learn how to tweet.

Important to note;

- Participants should consciously try to tweet and do Facebook posts to promote their work
- Actively upload content on the sweetpotato knowledge portal

3 Financial Reporting

Rapporteur: Florence Munguti Presentation Link: <http://ow.ly/EXdN30IF5yS>

Emily Ndoho presented on the status of financial reports for all the institutions implementing SASHA SGAs. Highlighting the institutions that have pending reports.

3.1 Discussion

- Many partners have pending quarter 3 reports that need to be submitted together with the supporting documents, for verification by CIP.
- Partners to use the new templates for reporting
- There is need for timely submission of reports
- There is need to report if 70% of funds have been utilized to ensure faster transfer of the next tranche of funds.
- Countries to ensure financial report for Y4Q4 together with the supporting documents are submitted before June 2018.

4 Pre-Basic & Early Generation Seed (EGS) progress on marketing strategies

Moderator: Jan Low; Rapporteur: Jude Njoku Presentation link: <http://ow.ly/EKYr30liEdg>

4.1 Revision of NARI Business Plans

Why the update

- The initial business plan was done using the recall method, with the work done in the recent past, it is possible to now use describe actual processes and costs
- Good practice is to revise business plans at least after 2 years for them to remain relevant business tools.

Areas of new knowledge

- Update on facts e.g. sweetpotato production figures in the country
- Increase in the number of varieties produced and the reason why
- Improvement in the processes of carrying out business e.g. investment in irrigation equipment
- More detailed description of marketing strategy and proposed activities.

Table of contents for revised NARI business plan

Executive Summary

Glossary

Background-sub sector analysis, possible organization profile

Business Model

- What is the product-is it pre-basic seed, basic seed or both?
- Diagram on technical aspects of production stage 0
- How do you do business
 - Market analysis, customers/segment, competition, distribution channels
 - Market performance-market sales volume of business. Sales revenue trend
 - Pricing strategy

Operations Plan

- Definition of multiplication calendar the 2 scenarios and reasons for the 2 scenarios \
- Linking production to customer requirements and market analysis
- Production targets for the 3 periods and 1 period post project
(Narrative describing excel sheets)

Financial analysis (2 pages maximum)

- Cost structure
- Include consolidated table Srinu presented at a DDG presentation, include that with margin and mark-up columns, and price formation. Describe the process from the table in a narrative format (references CRI and KEPHIS)
- Total production, total expected revenue (Narrative explaining excel sheets)
- Revolving fund-how this is linked to financials (income/expenditure statements) prick from assumptions, carry forward balance

Appendices

Figure 2 Proposed Table of Content

4.1.1 Discussion on the KEPHIS revised business plan

How do you have such a healthy revolving fund just selling pre-basic seed? We are increasing, multiplication by trailing and focusing on pre basic and putting efforts towards it for quality planting material.

Please explain more about the demo plots - We have borrowed a lot from what is happening with Irish potato. We do demo plots with specific varieties and show farmers so that they can have interest on that variety and buy it.

Projection workshop and promotion, is it the same as stakeholders meeting? We opt to have both during meeting.

Margaret McEwan: KEPHIS really understands their customers and uses that information in its marketing strategies.

How did you come up with the breakeven price? Breakeven price is the amount of money for which an asset must be sold to cover the costs of acquiring and owning it. It can also refer to the amount of money for which a product or service must be sold to cover the costs of manufacturing or providing it.

Follow up: Rosemary will be in contact to plan how to update the narrative part of the business plans by December 31st. Most of this work should be done by September. Jan added for the countries that don't have one to have one.

Florence Munguti is available for more questions over email.

4.2 Individual work to revise marketing strategies and identify key performance indicators

Presentation link: <http://ow.ly/gqCv30liEhd>

Highlights were presented on whether the NARIs reported back on whether they were on target for sales and revenue comparing the periods: January-March, 2017 and January – March, 2018. The responses were low with only two institutions responding as directed.

The need to advertise on Facebook and other social media was emphasized as strong marketing strategies but the message still needed to be clear. These are very effective considering the number of people that visit these sites.

Venturing into business requires defining and setting up goals that are specific, measurable and realistic. Key performance indicators (KPI) are guides to realize these goals. **KPI is a type of performance measurement that helps you understand how your organization or department is performing in relation to your strategic goals and objectives.**

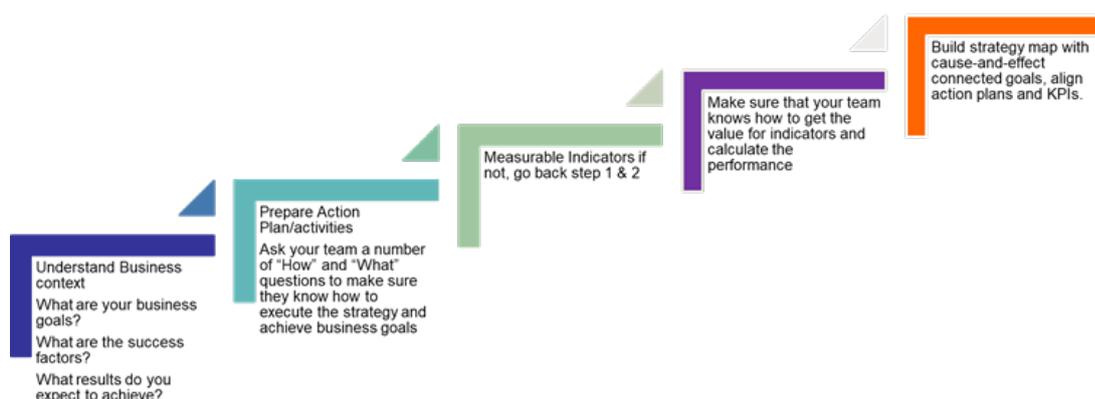


Figure 3 Steps to build Key Performance Indicators

Follow these steps when defining a KPI:

- What is your desired outcome/objective/goal?
- Why does this outcome matter?
- How are you going to measure progress through indicators?
- How can you influence the outcome?
- Who is responsible for the business outcome?
- How will you know you've achieved your outcome?
- How often will you review progress towards the outcome?

Srini illustrated an example of when you do a radio program, what is the outcome. In general, whatever activity you carry out, there must be an outcome that should be measurable. Mistakes made when setting KPIs were highlighted such as: strategies are not linked to the KPI, putting up indicators that are easy to measure and not involving the organisation's management team in setting up KPIs.

4.2.1 Group Work

A group exercise was carried out where three groups were formed to carry out an exercise on crafting KPIs that will be useful to achieve goals before December 2018 (anticipated exit of SASHA project). Group one had the goal to know the demand for 50% of sustainable pre-basic seed production. Group two did an exercise on the goal to sustain the revolving fund by targeting two million cuttings by December 2018. The question of whether the two million cuttings are achievable was raised. Group three worked on how to significantly increase the amount of basic seed sold. These exercises are intended to enable institutions to come up with KPI's that will be achievable by December 2018.

5 Meeting Evaluation

The SGA partner progress review meeting was held on 14th May 2018, at Kigali, Rwanda. Participants were requested to evaluate the quality of the sessions and the general logistics that went into setting up the meeting. A total of 18 out of 25 participants responded to the evaluation. The evaluation was carried out using paper and the data subsequently digitized using MS excel and analyzed using statistical software STATA Version 14.1.

The age of the participants ranged from 31 to 62 years. The majority of the respondents were male at 61%, with female respondents standing at 39%.

The majority of the participants said that the meeting completely met their expectations, while 100% of the participants said that most of their expectations were met. Most of the participants felt that the quality of the meeting in terms of technical content was at least good. 100% of the participants felt that the meeting organization was either good or very good.

94% of participants reported that usefulness of the silent feedback approach looking at progress of the different countries was at least good and above. The session on progress review of pre-basic seed components (i.e., session 1) which focuses on silent feedback emerged as the most useful followed by the session on review of marketing strategy (i.e., session 2). These sessions received 60% and 30% votes respectively.

Participants were asked to list the two least useful parts of the meeting, most of the participants (more than 70%) declared that they didn't have any least useful topics from the meeting.

Below is a list of two areas for improvement:

First area (Multiple responses – open-end questions)

1. Utilization of revolving fund
2. More time for discussion
3. Marketing strategy

Second area (Multiple responses – open-end questions)

1. Fast-tracking cleaning-up of planting materials at KEPHIS
2. Tracking seed distribution

The following top three topics were suggested for the next meeting:

First topic (Multiple responses – open-ended questions)

1. Successful business plan
2. Role of gender in the EGS business
3. Labeling and seed distribution
4. PPP model for RTB crops

Second topic

1. Economics of QDS seed production
2. Investment opportunities in the EGS business
3. Sandponics Vs other conventional methods

Third topic

1. Involvement of private sector in TC lab
2. Management of weeds
3. Successful marketing strategy
4. Technical versus economic feasibility in recommending different techniques for PB production. I.e. Sandponics can produce more vine cuttings per unit time than conventional method. However, the cost structure is slightly high.

Some additional comments provided by participants;

1. Evaluation on whether exchange visits had any true impact
2. Additional time in the evening for participants to visit any historical place such as the museum.

In addition to above comments, most of the participants felt meeting was good and well organized.

Annexes

Annex 1 Meeting Agenda



**Sweetpotato for Profit and Health Initiative-
Regional Technical Support Platform for East, Central and Southern Africa
Sweetpotato Seed Systems Community of Practice: SGA partner progress review meeting Kigali, Rwanda
14th May, 2018 AGENDA**

TIME	SESSION	Responsible
Monday 14th May		
8.00-8.15	Registration and housekeeping	Emily Ndoho and Bernice Wairimu
8.15-8.30	Introductions and objectives of SGA review meeting	Margaret McEwan (CIP-SSA)
Session 1: Progress review of pre-basic seed components - Moderator: Margaret McEwan; Rapporteur: Rosemary Kihiu		
8.30 – 10.30	Annual reports & updates: (see guide) 1. Introduction to session: Power point slides will be presented as posters 2. Peer review and silent feedback on each PPP (45 minutes) 3. Discuss and collate response for plenary presentation (1 hour) 4. Each institution writes up comments received on their ppt poster (15 mins)	Group 1: TARI, NaCRRI, SRI, RAB, INERA, NRCRI, ZARI Group 2: SARI, IIAM, DARS, CRI, BioCrops, KEPHIS June 2017 to May 2018
10.30 – 11.00 tea/coffee break and group photo		
11.00-12.00	Plenary presentations and discussion	Group 1: 15 minutes Group 2: 15 minutes Discussion: 30 minutes
Session 2: SPKP skills update – Twitter & Facebook. Rapporteur: Marian Quain		
12.00 – 13.00	Update on the Sweetpotato Knowledge Portal	Faith Njung'e
13.00 – 14.00 Lunch		
Session 3: Financial Reporting: Rapporteur: Florence Munguti		
14.00 – 14.30	Financial Reporting: presentation and Q&A	Emily Ndoho
Session 3: PB & EGS -marketing strategies – progress. Moderator: Jan Low; Rapporteur: Jude Njoku		
14.30-15.00	Updating narrative of business plans – KEPHIS example	Rosemary Kihiu, Florence Munguti, Srin Rajendran
15.00-15.30	Review of marketing strategies – successes & challenges	Srin Rajendran & Rosemary Kihiu
15.30 – 15.45 Tea/coffee break		
15.45 – 17.00	Individual work to revise marketing strategies	All
17.00-17.30	Feedback and wrap up	Review of two country examples
End of SGA Review meeting		

Annex 2 Participants List

SGA Seeds Systems Participants List 14 th May, 2018										
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The **Sweetpotato for Profit and Health Initiative (SPHI)** is a 10-year, multi-donor initiative that seeks to reduce child malnutrition and improve smallholder incomes through the effective production and expanded use of sweetpotato. It aims to build consumer awareness of sweetpotato's nutritional benefits, diversify its use, and increase market opportunities, especially in expanding urban markets of Sub-Saharan Africa. The SPHI is expected to improve the lives of 10 million households by 2020 in 17 target countries.



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