

Challenges In Promoting
Agricultural Innovations
Under Public- Private
Partnership: Experiences From
A Project On Enhancing
Sunflower Production For
Poverty Alleviation In
Mvomero And Kilosa
Districts, Morogoro, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

Promoting agricultural innovations and technologies among smallholder farmers can be enhanced through Public Private Partnership (PPP). This study attempted to explore challenges faced while promoting agricultural innovations under PPP based on experiences from a project on Enhancing Sunflower Production in Kilosa and Mvomero Districts in Tanzania. Despite of the benefits attained by partners including farmers having an opportunity to learn new agronomic practices and learning by doing and testing new sunflower varieties through trials conducted under Farmer Field Schools, among the challenges identified include partners' divergent objectives and expectations which stalled the whole process of partnership and necessitated a re-planning of the project.

Key words: Agricultural; Innovations; Promotion; Public-Private Partnerships Sunflower

1. INTRODUCTION

Many governments are adopting Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) as a way of facilitating the development and delivery of agricultural technologies and innovations to address the challenges that farmers in developing countries are facing particularly in raising production and productivity. Collaborative partnerships are seen as an effective way to combine the respective strengths of the public and private sectors to address the challenges that farmers are facing particularly with respect to increasing productivity. (URT, 2009).

Tanzania currently produces about 350,000 tons of sunflower, which meets only 40% of the national requirements for cooking oil, and the rest being imported. Sunflower is one of the most important oilseed crops in Tanzania (ARI Ilonga, 2008; Okoko et al, 2008; RLDC, 2008). It grows in many parts of the country, but especially in the eastern, central, northern and southern highlands zones, which makes it a crop with high potential for poverty alleviation among rural households, especially since it can perform well even in areas with marginal rainfall and with minimal inputs. It is also a suitable crop for mitigating the negative impacts of climate change especially for vulnerable small-scale farmers.

However, in promoting increased production and productivity of the crop, a number of challenges need to be addressed, including increasing accessibility to good quality seed, promoting the adoption of good agronomic practices, and assuring farmers of market access and attractive price. These challenges prompted the project to work with other partners in order to combine efforts to try the possibility of facilitating farmers to produce Quality Declared Seeds since commercial operators have not been able to satisfy farmers' needs, and to test appropriate agronomic practices that can be used to increase productivity and production that can attract other chain actors. The project also tested appropriate sunflower processing technology to add value to their crop, and attempted to link farmers with other chain actors in the sunflower sub-sector to lobby for better policy on

sunflower. Therefore, Sokoine University of Agriculture under Enhancing Pro-poor Innovations in Natural Resources and Agricultural Value Chains (EPINAV) programme sought to partner with Sunflower Development Company (SDC) and Nuziveedu Seed Pvt Ltd (NSL) to address the foresaid objectives to develop a value chain for increasing the productivity and incomes of sunflower farmers in Mvomero and Kilosa Districts and hence contributing to poverty reduction among small scale farmers.

2. WHAT PROMPTED THE PARTNERSHIP

Unavailability of improved sunflower seeds pushed the project to initiate a PPP with Sunflower Development Company (SDC) of Tanzania (sourced seeds) and Nuziveedu Seed Limited (NSL Group) of India (seed breeders), Tanzania Official Seed Certification Institute (TOSCI) and Agricultural Research Institute (ARI) Ilonga (seed testing and certification) with the EPINAV project remaining as technology promoter.

This partnership could guarantee supply of improved seeds which could not be obtained from Tanzanian commercial seed dealers or the Agricultural Seed Agency (ASA) or any other public institution. The partnership was anticipated to offer a way to translate shared research outputs into useful, relevant innovations for the sunflower farmers. It was also expected that the partnership would be a way of pooling resources and expertise in developing and disseminating appropriate practices to enhance sunflower production.

This paper is intended to discuss the benefits and challenges encountered in using PPP in the EPINAV project on enhancing sunflower production for poverty alleviation in Kilosa and Mvomero Districts.

3. RESULTS

3.1 BENEFITS OBTAINED THROUGH THE ESTABLISHED PARTNERSHIP

The project through SDC managed to import three lines of Sunflower Hybrid Seed varieties namely; NSFH 36-SHRESHTA; NSFH 145- SWATHI; NSFH 639 and the project had already produced Quality Declared Seeds (QDS) from RECORD using 40 trained farmers. NSL supplied seeds and gave advice on proper agronomic practices that other partners were expected to transfer to the smallholder farmers under the project. Therefore, both SUA-EPINAV and NSL achieved spreading the new knowledge and assessed adaptability and performance of the new sunflower hybrid seeds and trained farmers how to apply the new knowledge so that they could increase and safeguard crop yields through adapted agricultural management practices. Thus, partnership acted directly by combining expertise from different countries, resulting in economies of scale and faster testing on adaptation of the hybrid seeds.

Apart from the project training farmers on sunflower agronomic practices to enhance productivity, farmers had the opportunity to learn and test performance of the new sunflower varieties introduced by NSL through SDC. Smallholder farmers had an opportunity to compare and evaluate performance of the different Sunflower seed

entries (varieties) and partners were convinced of the performance of the sunflower variety entries and the results recorded NSFH 36-SHRESHTA as early maturing followed by NSFH-145 SWATHI; NSFH-639 and the least was the locally promoted sunflower variety known as RECORD- QDS. Therefore, the partnership enabled SDC to view the potential of promoting new sunflower varieties among smallholder farmers in the country through the linkage established with NSL.

3.2 CHALLENGES OBSERVED UNDER THE ESTABLISHED PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

When all parties had evaluated the performance and had decided on which entries were more preferred, a number of challenges emerged which have currently put the PPP on halt under the project. The challenges include:

Differing goals of partners

The project realized that the partners involved had different objectives they wanted to achieve. While SUA-EPINAV focused on promoting agronomic practices and ensuring increased adoption of the introduced practices and varieties to enhance productivity, and on forming producer groups to promote value chain, NSL were concerned about confirming the performance of their hybrids and the opportunity to expand the market for their products. SDC on the other hand, wanted to make sure NSL products were immediately approved by the government so that they could immediately become the sole importers and distributors of the products and sole buyers of the produce from farmers to feed their processing plants.

Immediacy in achieving partner's individual goals

While SUA-EPINAV remained as technology promoter to enhance productivity along sunflower value chain orientation, the other two partners (SDC and NSL) were business focused. That is, the two private partners were business oriented and wanted to achieve their goal to realize immediate commercialization and up-take of the tested sunflower seed varieties. SUA-EPINAV remained with the intention of first preparing farmers for uptake of agronomic packages to increase production levels and form producer groups to empower them along the value chain

The long time and procedure required by the authorities (TOSCI) in conducting trials and final approval of new sunflower seed importation also discouraged the private partners as it seemed it will take a long time before they could officially commercialize their products and realise profit.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the experience of implementing the project under PPP, it can be concluded that:

- Partners were operating under undefined terms of conditions which later made them realize they had no common goal to achieve. It is therefore important to define a common goal of the partnership right from the beginning so that the basis and goal of collaboration is clear to every partner.

- The long period needed to conduct trials to verify performance and adaptability of crop seed varieties may discourage the commercial-oriented partners who are more interested in quick results.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- The partners involved need to operate under agreed terms of conditions for the partnership to continue smoothly and to build trust among partners like trusting the seed performance reported by the breeders by shortening the trial and verification period to seed registration and release.
- Farmer organisations and producer groups need to be empowered to be able to negotiate on behalf of their members and to play an effective role in the partnership.

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