



BRIEFING NOTE 15

Local Expressions on Impact from Learning how to Improve Marketing

Sometimes what local people say conveys more about impact than columns of figures can. Here we share a number of interviews¹ with the participants of our "Firstmile Project" in Tanzania². The First Mile project is all about local people, small farmers, traders, processors, and others from rural villages and towns learning how to build a marketing chain from producers to consumers. Key to their learning is the development and exchange of their local experiences and good practices.

Work on improving small holder farmers' access to markets started in August 2005 following training courses for AMSDP staff and beneficiaries in: a) how to facilitate face-to-face action learning; and b) how to share local experiences using the LLL online learning support service at www.linkinglearners.net. In March 2006, after eight months of learning-by-doing, those involved came together and assessed the impact of their work on market chain development. In what was in effect just one season they had the following to say about impact of the 'firstmile' on their access to markets, production and incomes.

Improving Farmers' Access to Markets

"Yes the farmers have better access to the markets because they use the mobile phone. Some are trying or have already opened an email address and will use this for the next season because they will see that a mobile phone limits them when finding a market outside that area. So when you use the mobile phone you have to know who you are going to contact but when you use the email you can spread more information without knowing who are going to, especially with the LLL system."

Michael Matambe, AMSDP District Focal Person Mbeya District.

¹ Interviewed by Anne Dennig made at the First Mile Assessment Workshop. Morogoro, Tanzania, March 22nd -24th 2006.

² The First Mile project is a one year pilot initiative of the Agricultural Marketing Systems Development Programme (AMSDP) of the Government of Tanzania, supported by IFAD and the Government of Switzerland and with technical assistance provided by the International Support Group (ISG).

"We have achieved access through giving the farmers hand sets they can use to communicate with the market places and the traders. Also we have introduced the market centres in our local areas we have five groups which have thirty members each. So from there we have 150 members who are in this programme. The income has increased because they sold more and this income also goes to the particular households in the groups."

Seme Anyubatile, AMSDP District Focal Person Mbarali District.

"The farmers now see the importance of having bulking centres instead of everyone selling on his own and fortunately this coincides with the introduction of the warehouse receipt system which in conjunction with bulking centres will assist very much in increasing the price and increasing the earning of our farmers. Our farmers have also seen the importance of working in groups; previously everyone was working on their own. We have seen the importance of coordinating the information within their groups and also seeking for market information from outside. They have seen the importance also of using the Internet. Therefore one of our groups has an e mail Internet address, which will be used assisted by myself because it is a new address and the person is not yet very competent of using the Internet. So I will be assisting him in opening the internet and conveying information to the Nakahogo group which is a paddy group in Songea. The information received from the Internet is printed out and taken to the groups and then the reaction is sent back to me and put again into the Internet."

Job Eliushi Mushi, Partner Agency in Songea District.

"We saw that fishermen were getting low prices due to their fish not being well processed. They are using the method of drying fish on the sand and by doing so it reduces the price. People do not want to eat sardines having sand you see. We taught them to construct driers by using local materials which are available in that place. They now have a bamboo stand for drying fish and for drying sardines they used just wire mesh. The result of the drying method improved the quality of fish and sardines so that enabled the fishermen to attain the high price. We have three groups, with 84 members, which are dealing in sardines processing that improved the quality of fish and raised their income by providing the best quality. Now fishermen want us to help them obtain modern fishing gear by providing loans. So we are helping them to form a strong savings and credit societies."

Salvatory Mayoka District Market Monitor, Nkasi District

"Before the firstmile all the middlemen came to say now this is maize or sunflower I can buy for this price. But after getting knowledge and the marketing skills farmers have knowledge to say no or to say with one voice according to production costs and gross margin calculations this much is the price. So that if the trader came to the village and want to buy the crop they have to pay the price otherwise the farmer will sell it to another market. They have the opportunity to sell at the village level or sell outside the village. If they heard from the radio about the price they have the power to collect the produce together find the transport and take it to that market."

Nuswe Nyanzali, AMSDP District Focal Person, Mufundi District

Increasing Crop Production and Family Incomes

"There has been change especially for maize. The farmers, they have used a warehouse system to store their produce so that they can gain more profit than when they were not using the warehouse system. For example this year about 15 producers stored their maize in the warehouse about 22.5 tons. After six months they gained a profit as they sold this for 5.2 million shillings. This is a profit because before they were selling their produce at a farm gate price to the middleman and getting less than 2.1 million shillings for the same amount of produce. So they are getting more than twice the amount. They have gained a profit and they have gained an increase in their household income."

Michael Matambe, AMSDP District Focal Person Mbeya District.

"Yes because farmers when they sell for their profit they increase the size of their farms and they can get farm input easily. So there are changes in production. We have not so much changed the type of crops but the quantity has increased."

Seme Anyubatile, AMSDP District Focal Person Mbarali District

"Through the Core group we managed to communicate to a buyer of pigeon peas in Arusha who gave us some seed which was used by the Songea farmers groups, who then managed to produce them. Eleven tons were sold and farmer groups for the first time from this new cash crop realised 2.9 million shillings which is something that was different from previous experiences. This experience has increased the morale for producing this new crop as an alternative cash crop to tobacco which was previously a cash crop in Songea. Also our farmers have realised more money because the production cost of these pigeon peas is around 68 -70 shillings per kg, compared to maize which is almost 100-120/= per kg. Therefore the difference makes more earning for a farmer who produces pigeon peas than that farmer who produces maize. Last crop season our farmers realised about 200,000/= income compared to

the previous years when they just depended on maize and tobacco which was less."

Job Eliushi Mushi, Partner Agency in Songea District.

"The changes in crop production are visible because before the introduction of firstmile the production was low. This was because the farmers did not know where to sell their crops. Because the idea of producing more to market was not in their mind so they produced only for food with a remainder to sell for their cash income. The changes of the farmers came by giving them knowledge of marketing and helping them so that they can sell somewhere. The market needs good quality, frequent delivery of the crop so that they can make a contract with them so that they can benefit more. So through telling them that if you want a good price it must be good quality changed their minds. Also the farmers grouped together to get bulk and reduce transport costs. If you are transporting just two tons your transport costs will be too high. Yes I can say the income of the householders has increased because you notice changes. For example, farmers were dressing poor but after firstmile even the physical view is that the family is dressing good and even the house. You can now see iron sheets on the roof. Yes you can see the changes."

Nuswe Nyanzali, AMSDP District Focal Person, Mufundi District

For more information contact:
clive.lightfoot@linkinglearners.net
uscheuermeier@dplanet.ch
kevin.gallagher@fao.org