

# **HOW SUSTAINABLE ARE MECHANISMS OF MANAGEMENT ADVICE FOR FAMILY FARMS IN WEST AFRICA?**

## **Summary of the preparatory self-analysis documents for the Bohicon II workshop**

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### **Introduction**

The discussion workshop on MAFF experiences in Francophone Africa revolved around this central question: How to move beyond the framework of pilot projects funded by international donors in order to develop advisory mechanisms to better meet the needs and expectations of family farms, reach more producers and make advisory services sustainable?

To provide a basis for these discussions, various organizations (POs, State services, development projects, NGOs, consulting firms) involved with each of the various MAFF mechanisms were asked to undertake a collective analysis of the issues of sustainability and scalability, and to identify areas for improvement on these issues in the context of their own mechanisms (see ToR in the Appendix). This document presents a summary of the self-analysis documents received from them.

We draw attention to the diversity of contexts in which the MAFF approach has been attempted, present the characteristics of the various types of mechanisms, the limitations faced by actors and their outlooks, and, finally, describe the principal strategies – either implemented or proposed – to make advisory services sustainable and scalable.

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## 1. Diversity of existing mechanisms

In this section, we present the twelve case studies whose experiences in providing management advice to family farms (MAFF) were used as a basis for workshop discussions. We have identified three criteria which allow us to classify mechanisms in order to compare their modes of operation and consider their sustainability and scaling strategies: (1) the technical and financial context of the experiment, (2) the aim of the advisory service, and (3) the institutional anchoring or affiliation of the mechanism.

### 1.1. Contexts of MAFF implementations

Seven countries were involved: Burkina Faso, Benin, Senegal, Togo, Cameroon, Guinea and Madagascar. Each mechanism is presented in Table 1, which lists the name of the organization implementing MAFF and the name of the main entity that provides technical and/or financial support to it (e.g., the UGCPA PO is mainly supported by the FARM foundation). In the case of a programme or project, only the name of the programme is provided. Abbreviations and acronyms are defined in Table 2.

Almost all mechanisms have received funding from AFD to implement MAFF. A majority has received support from either (1) researchers from CIRAD, either for the mechanism's design (case of UGCPA/FARM, UNPCB/SC and BV-Lac) or for the monitoring and evaluation (Procoton, PADYP) or (2) other partners (AFDI, CER, FERT, etc.) for the design and monitoring.

**Table 1: MAFF objectives of the various mechanisms analyzed**

Country	Name of mechanism	Objectives of the MAFF mechanism
<b>Burkina Faso</b>	UGCPA/FARM	Supporting the revitalization of food production
	OP/RG/AFDI	Building an advisory service run by the POs*
	UPPC/SNV	Identifying solutions to soil fertility problems
	PRCPB	Supporting the professionalization of POs, followed by providing support to the cotton sector (series of 2 programmes)
<b>Benin</b>	PADYP	Promoting efficient FFs** with improved management and productivity
	Procoton	Supporting the cotton sector POs
<b>Senegal</b>	CGER-vallée/CER France	Supporting POs for the development of planning for the Senegal River Valley
<b>Togo</b>	ICAT/AVSF	Building a public advisory service for FFs
<b>Cameroon</b>	ACEFA	Improving the competitiveness of FFs
<b>Guinea</b>	FPPD/AFDI	Increasing the incomes of PO members
<b>Madagascar</b>	CAP Malagasy/FERT	In conjunction with POs, encourage and guide sustainable changes in FFs
	BV-Lac	Popularizing conservation agriculture

\*PO: producer organization; \*\*FF: family farm

**Table 2: List of entities involved in MAFF mechanisms**

<b>Abbreviations and acronyms</b>	<b>Name [French name]</b>
<b>Producer organizations (POs)</b>	
UGCPA/BM	Union of groups for the marketing of agricultural products of the 'Boucle du Mouhoun' region [Union des Groupements pour la Commercialisation des Produits Agricoles de la Boucle du Mouhoun] ( <i>Burkina-Faso</i> )
UPPC	Provincial Union of Cotton Producers [Union Provinciale des Producteurs de Coton] ( <i>Burkina Faso</i> )
FPFD	Federation of Producers of Fouta Djallon [Fédération des Producteurs du Fouta Djallon] ( <i>Guinea</i> )
RG	Management Network: network of advisory service POs [Réseau Gestion] ( <i>Burkina Faso</i> )
CAGEF	Centre for Management Support for Family Farms [Centre d'Appui à la Gestion de l'Exploitation Familiale] ( <i>Burkina Faso</i> )
<b>External financial and technical support</b>	
AFD	French Development Agency [Agence Française de Développement]
FARM	Foundation for World Agriculture and Rurality [Fondation pour l'Agriculture et la Ruralité dans le Monde]
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
AFDI	French Agriculturists and International Development [Agriculteurs Français et Développement International]
FERT	Association for the Blossoming and Renewal of the Earth [Formation pour l'Epanouissement et le Renouveau de la Terre]
AVSF	Agronomists and Veterinarians Without Borders [Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières]
CIRAD	Centre for International Cooperation in Agriculture Research for Development [Centre de coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement]
CER	Centre for Rural Economy [Centre d'Economie Rurale] ( <i>France</i> )
CA	Chamber of Agriculture [Chambre d'Agriculture] ( <i>France</i> )
CCFD	Catholic Committee for the Fight against Hunger [Comité Catholique de lutte contre la faim]
<b>Programme or Project</b>	
PRCPB	Project for Strengthening the Cotton Sector in Burkina Faso [Projet de Renforcement de la Filière Cotonnière du Burkina Faso] (Financed by AFD and CEF; co-managed by the sector and UNPCB)
UNPCB	National Union of Cotton Producers of Burkina Faso [Union Nationale des Producteurs de Coton du Burkina Faso]
SOFITEX	Burkina Faso Textile Fibre Company [Société des Fibres Textiles]
ACEFA	Programme to Improve the Competitiveness of Family Farms [Programme d'Amélioration de la Compétitivité des Exploitations Familiales Agropastorales] ( <i>Cameroon</i> ) (Financed by AFD and CEF; co-managed by the profession and the administration)
BV-Lac	Project to develop and protect the Lake Alaotra watershed [Projet de mise en valeur et protection du bassin-versant du Lac Alaotra] ( <i>Madagascar</i> ) (Financed by AFD; contractors: BRL, AVSF, ANAE, BEST)
BRL	Bas-Rhône Languedoc company, Madagascar [Société Bas-Rhône Languedoc Madagascar]
ANAE	National Associations for Environmental Action [Associations Nationale d'Actions Environnementales]
BEST	Company for Social Expertise and Technical Dissemination [Bureau d'Expertise Sociale et de Diffusion Technique]
Procoton	Programme to Strengthen Cotton Producer Organizations [Programme de Renforcement des Organisations de producteurs de coton] ( <i>Benin</i> ) (Financed by SNV; national partners: FUPRO and ANPC)
FUPRO	Federation of Producer Unions of Benin [Fédération des Unions de Producteurs du Bénin]
ANPC	National Association of Cotton Producers [Association Nationale des Producteurs de Coton]
PADYP	Project to Support Development of Production Dynamics [Programme d'Appui aux Dynamiques Productives] ( <i>Benin</i> ) (Financed by AFD; contractor: Sofreco; national partners: POs and NGOs)

### Advisory entities

CGER-Vallée	Centre for Management and Rural Economy [Centre de Gestion et d'Économie Rurale] (Senegal) (Associative status, established with the support of AFD)
CAP Malagasy	Malagasy Agricultural Adviser Proximity [Conseil Agricole de Proximité malgache] (Private entity, established by FERT)
ICAT	Institute for Agricultural and Technical Advice [Institut de Conseil Agricole et Technique] (Togo) (State entity)

MAFF is used specifically to build the farmers' capacity to better manage their farm resources, but it generally forms part of projects or programmes with broader objectives which have been defined by some actors (usually the donors). We note that these objectives vary quite a lot. Most often, they are part of the continuity of actions to support farms and agricultural businesses in a given region. In some cases, the MAFF approach has been used in the framework of agriculture-support programmes in order to help disseminate new agricultural techniques or to improve existing practices (ACEFA, BV-Lac, Procoton, PRCPB). In other cases, the MAFF approach was tested to identify solutions to a given problem (soil depletion for the UPPC/SNV mechanism; revitalization of food production for UGCPA/FARM). Finally, it was also tested in a broader objective of designing advisory services for family farms, with a diverse range of objectives (design of a public service for ICAT/AVSF; design of an advisory service to be provided by POs for OP/RG/AFDI; design of an advisory service to be provided by an entity dedicated to advisory services such as Cap-Malagasy supported by FERT).

#### 1.2. Aims of MAFFs

We can classify the different experiments according to the aim of the advisory service as perceived by the lead organization controlling it: serving POs, family farms, the State, a sector or private companies (Table 3). This helps explain the concerns of various actors to improve their MAFF mechanisms. Indeed, the lessons drawn from the various self-analysis documents are quite heterogeneous. They are either problems that are focused on the difficulty of (1) 'getting across technical messages' (PRCPB; SNV), (2) 'identifying problems of agricultural farms' (BV-lac; CAGEF; UGCPA), (3) 'mobilizing and involving POs' (CAP Malagasy; CGER) or (4) 'reaching more people' (ACEFA). Table 10 summarizes the different MAFF aims advanced by the different mechanisms.

**Table 3: The different aims of the advisory services**

Aim of the advisory service	Objectives of the controlling organization	Examples
Serving POs	Helping develop their projects, building capacity	CGER
Serving the State	Implementing the State's vision of agriculture	Acefa
Serving the FFs	Helping and guiding them in their projects and building up their capacities	UGCPA /FARM CAP-malagasy
Serving private companies	Increasing production (quantity, sometimes quality)	PRCPB
Serving a sector (ambiguity regarding ultimate beneficiaries)	Getting across technical messages on one or more productions (intensify or diversify)	Procoton PadyP UPPC-SNV

### 1.3. Institutional anchoring of different types of advisory mechanisms

Five types of mechanisms were distinguishable on the basis of the mode of governing the advisory service (Table 4).

**Table 4: Typology of mechanisms presented at the workshop**

<i>Types</i>	
<b>A</b>	<b><i>MAFF implemented and controlled by multiservice POs</i></b> FPDF/AFDI <i>Guinea</i> (1995 /2004) UGCPA/FARM <i>Burkina</i> (2009) UPPC/SNV <i>Burkina</i> (2002) PO/RG/AFDI (2001)
<b>B</b>	<b><i>MAFF implemented by an entity devoted to providing advice and with participation by POs in its management</i></b> CAGEF/AFDI <i>Burkina</i> (1996/2001) CAP Malagasy/FERT (2004 /2011) CGER/CER <i>Senegal</i> (2007/2009)
<b>C</b>	<b><i>MAFF implemented by advisory entities and with joint control (State-Project)</i></b> BV Lac (2010) PADYP (1995/2008)
<b>D</b>	<b><i>MAFF attached to a sector-strengthening programme and controlled by a PO</i></b> PRCPB (1993/2012) PROCOTON (2009)
<b>E</b>	<b><i>Public service MAFF</i></b> ACEFA <i>Cameroon</i> (2008) ICAT <i>Togo</i> (2010)

We highlight here the institutional nature of the organization that implements MAFF, the role played by the PO (implementation and/or upstream control), the connection with production chains, and the role of the State. By implementation, we mean the technical translation of needs expressed by a ‘sponsor’, the search for solutions and methods adapted to the problems encountered, and the mechanism’s operational performance. By control, we refer to mechanisms for taking strategic decisions and for anticipating problems, and to the persons responsible for the operation of the service, planning and evaluation, cost control, etc. Usually, the mechanism is steered jointly by the funding entity, the client, the project and sometimes the POs.

Starting dates are also specified. The majority of these mechanisms form part of previous experiments or pilot projects for advising family farms or POs (technical extension services for crop management, FFS, T&V, management advice). The date in blue indicates the start of advisory activities and date in red indicates the date of implementation of a MAFF mechanism, funded and designed around the MAFF principles defined at the Bohicon I workshop.

## 2. Characteristics of each type of advisory mechanism: limitations and outlook

For each type of mechanism listed in Table 4, we will summarize the issues concerning governance, financing, methods and skills that have been formulated by the mechanism’s actors and reported in the self-analysis document.

### 2.1. Type A: MAFF implemented and controlled by a ‘multiservice’ PO

These are small-scale mechanisms (affecting relatively few producers), driven by a PO and supported by a funding agency or a technical partner. Usually contact farmers<sup>1</sup> or farmer extension workers are

<sup>1</sup> A contact farmer is a farmer who acts as point person; he communicates information from top to bottom and vice versa. He may also act as a facilitator and, when necessary, as an extension co-worker.

mobilized in large numbers. The MAFF is an overall advisory service, closest to the MAFF principles, which is not focused on any particular production.

The initiative for trying out a MAFF arises from the identification of an agronomic problem or a constraint to increased production or profitability (low soil fertility, poor access to services such as the supply of inputs, marketing difficulties, inadequate mastery of agricultural technology and over production costs), susceptible to mitigation by support and advice.

**Table 5: Characteristics of type A mechanisms (FF = family farm, PO = producer organization, NP = data not provided, X = not relevant to the mechanism)**

PO name	Number of FF members	Number of PO members	Number of advisers	Number of farmer extension workers	Cost/member/year
<b>UGCPA/FARM</b> <i>Burkina (2009)</i>	240	10	5	11	165€
<b>FPPD/AFDI</b> <i>Guinea (1995 /2004)</i>	845	X	13	52	67€
<b>UPPC/SNV</b> <i>Burkina (2002)</i>	1934	X	X	385	11€

The main lessons learned by these mechanisms focus on issues related to financing of adviser activities and the adaptation of the MAFF approach to best respond to the diversity of member profiles and needs. Three points came up repeatedly:

- The nature and quality of services is highly dependent on the direction provided by funding entities who are often actors external to the country. Thus POs are frequently forced to reorient their intervention methods in the field: for example, FPPD first promoted T&V with the World Bank and then management advice (MA)-turned-MAFF with AFDI and funding by AFD. Several POs complain about the lack of strategy and consistency in building their advisory services because of multi-donor approaches. Attempting to self-finance, at least partially, their mechanisms (via the introduction of member fees or levies collected on all services) remains one of their priorities.
- When the PO grows, technicians engaged in MAFF can no longer provide advice in addition to fulfilling their other functions, such as the important responsibilities of providing access to credit and inputs, to meet member demands (FPPD). The PO may then have to rely on contact farmers or farmer extension workers (FEW). In some cases, the FEW may directly meet certain MAFF principles, such as the proximity principle favoured by the FPPD. Calling on FEWs will, above all, reduce costs and reach a much larger public. For example, UPPC, with support from SNV, has a mechanism entirely based on the training and use of endogenous leaders.
- The methods used are mostly group activities organized around campaign assessments. It is in this type of mechanism that we can observe several methodological innovations that have been developed to address problems encountered by MAFF members (groups which have very heterogeneous educational levels, not diligent enough, etc.). UGCPA has tried out some Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), mainly video media, to convey messages. The POs belonging to Réseau Gestion have segmented the target population on the basis of the problems they face and their need for support (food security, agricultural production) in order to provide more targeted advice.

## **2.2. Type B: MAFF implemented by an entity devoted to providing advice and controlled by POs**

These MAFF mechanisms are implemented by an entity devoted to providing advice: management centre (CGER), advisory centre (Cap Malagasy, CAGEF). One or more POs control the mechanism, i.e., they define the advisory needs. This is not yet the case with CGERs (Senegal) but they are trying to work towards this goal.

The initiative for experimenting with MAFF follows different rationales:

- For CGERs, the challenge is to professionalize the POs responsible for developing the valley's planning (management advice), then to move to the individual level with MAFF to strengthen FFs and disseminate improved crop management techniques.
- CAGEF is a PO but it works like a centre dedicated to providing advice. Member FFs use agricultural services provided by other POs in the same region, which CAGEF is unable to provide due to lack of experience (mainly UGCPA but also UNPCB): *'This new mechanism attracts many producers because, in addition to MAFF, UGCPA offers other services such as the supply of inputs and group marketing of products.'* *'CAGEF has to weigh the realistic chances of success in a niche such as marketing alongside UGCPA which offers this service with great success and enjoys more expertise and resources.'*

In general, the organization of these MAFF mechanisms is the result of the evolution that has taken place after many experiments. Co-management was chosen both from the perspective of professionalization of advisory services as well as the sustainability of the service (financial sustainability targeted through the supply of services). Farmer-intermediaries form the link between the advisory structure (advisers) and POs.

MAFF is one of the methods – but not the only one – used by the advisory entity: management advice in CGERs, 'proximity advice' from CAP. In the self-analysis documents, the emphasis is placed on the advantages and disadvantages of the different methods of advising farmers (group, individual) and strategies for training advisers.

**Table 6: Characteristics of type B mechanisms (FF = family farm, PO = producer organization, NP = data not provided, X = not relevant to the mechanism)**

Entity name	Number of FF members	Number of PO members	Number of advisers	Number of farmer extension workers	Cost/member/year
CAGEF <i>Burkina (1996/2001)</i>	277	X	3	X	72€
CAP Malagasy <i>Madagascar (2004 /2011)</i>	3188	248	17	28	32€
CGER <i>Senegal (2007/2009)</i>	52	29	2	4	NP

### **2.3. Type C: MAFF implemented by advisory entities and with joint control (State-Project)**

These are MAFF mechanisms financed by donor-funded projects of limited duration.

MAFF implementation is delegated to operators (NGOs such as CADG or GERME or MRJC in Benin; design consultants such as AVSF or BRL in Madagascar) and is managed by a project coordination cell (Sofreco in Benin, CIRAD in Madagascar). The POs have no management or steering role but can sometimes be implementation contractors (case of PADYP with the mobilization of POs such as FUPRO). They are also beneficiaries of MAFF.

Each operator in charge of the implementation of the advisory service meets the specifications set down by the coordination cell but can adapt its approach (internal governance, methods, objectives). Therefore, it is more difficult to obtain an overall picture of the advice provided by such a mechanism because there exists some diversity of approaches more or less specified and interconnected (each operator or service provider also has its own goals and interests) and thus sometimes difficult to characterize.



**Table 7: Characteristics of type C mechanisms (FF = family farm, PO = producer organization, NP = data not provided, X = not relevant to the mechanism)**

Project name and duration	Number of FF members	Number of PO members	Number of advisers	Number of farmer extension workers	Cost/member/year
BV-Lac (2008-2013) (2010)	486	X	18	70	NP
PADYP (2008-2013) (1995/2008)	19,176	NP	75	216	52€

Self-analyses were undertaken by project coordination cells. The main lessons learned are focused on methods and improvements to them since the governance model itself is inflexible and not open to question (fixed by the contract between the funding entity and the project and the contracts between operators and the project cell). The same applies to the mode of financing, which is not sustainable since it depends on funding by the funding entity.

#### 2.4. Type D: MAFF attached to a sector-strengthening programme and controlled by a PO

These are MAFF mechanisms designed and funded within the framework of limited-duration programmes aimed at strengthening a particular sector (cotton sector). Even though controlled by the umbrella PO of the concerned sector, these MAFF mechanisms are tightly framed by the programmes they are part of. Umbrella POs are UNPCB (National Union of Cotton Producers) in Burkina Faso and FUPRO (Federation of Producer Unions) and ANPC (National Association of Cotton Producers) in Benin. In Burkina Faso, cotton companies intervene on behalf of UNPCB (they provide the advisers and help to build the content of the advice), while in Benin they do not intervene.

Despite similarities in the form of governance, these two programmes differ greatly in the nature of support that is provided. SNV has provided methodological support for strengthening the skills of POs (methods, training of advisers and farmer extension workers) so that they become empowered and self-sufficient in providing advisory services. Under PRCPB in Burkina Faso, the mechanism was actually more driven by the cotton companies who favoured the inclusion of economic issues, with advice largely focused on technical support to cotton producers (crop management techniques).

**Table 8: Characteristics of type D mechanisms (FF = family farm, PO = producer organization, NP = data not provided, X = not relevant to the mechanism)**

Programme name, duration and starting date of MAFF	Number of FF members	Number of PO members	Number of advisers	Number of farmer extension workers	Cost/member/year
PRCPB (2007-2013) (1993/2011)	5117	X	21	<i>Not functional</i>	134€
PROCOTON (2009)	3237	140	34	140	119€

In the case of PRCPB, the lessons drawn from the self-analysis documents have to do mainly with the impact of MAFF on strengthening the sector. The implementation of MAFF allowed the various industry actors to discuss and organize together to provide an advisory service. However, the impact on production (and producers) across the sector is considered negligible (only 2% of producers affected). The role that the MAFF can play does not thus seem very convincing and remains unclear. In the case of PRCPB, the problems encountered (governance, implementation, funding) arise from a lack of consensus between cotton companies and the POs on the role of MAFF and its objectives: according priority to crop management techniques for cotton or to support strategies of overall development of farmer families?

In the case of Procoton, it was mainly the mechanism for building PO skills that has been explored through the implementation of MAFF, with significant improvements in methods and profiles of the advisers deployed. The farmer- extension worker plays a central role in this scenario.

## 2.5. Type E: public advisory services

These are advisory mechanisms set up and controlled by the structures of the State, through its Ministry of Agriculture in the case of Cameroon or a technical institute (ICAT) dedicated to advisory services in Togo and benefitting from state subsidies,.

**Table 9: Characteristics of type E mechanisms (FF = family farm, PO = producer organization, NP = data not provided, X = not relevant to the mechanism)**

Programme name, duration and starting date of MAFF	Number of FF members	Number of PO members	Number of advisers	Number of farmer extension workers	Cost/member/year
ACEFA <i>Cameroon</i> (2008)	32,900 (of which 500 receive individual advice)	170	1972	0	69€
ICAT <i>Togo</i> (2010)	62	X	21	X	NP

In Table 9, the figures for the ACEFA programme encompass the entire advisory mechanism because the MAFF approach is mobilized on demand, whereas those for ICAT only concern the MAFF mechanism, which is separate from ICAT's overall advisory mechanism. It is only used in individual counselling at the moment. Several advisers have been trained but advisory groups have not yet been created. Taken in its entirety, ICAT's advisory mechanism reaches more than 100,000 producers.

In both cases, MAFF is only one advisory mechanism amongst others. In ACEFA's programme, it is primarily advice to producer organizations (POs) and collective advice to agricultural farms that is provided. Individual advice provided to farms is used as observatory to monitor and evaluate changes in FFs. This programme is aligned with a 'training' programme on specific request from FFs, POs, or farmer groups, with strict criteria for selection of beneficiaries. The nature of the advice given will vary depending on the beneficiary's request. It thus relates to the governance and management of groupings, to economic management of farms or to production techniques. At ICAT, there is also individual advice and advice to POs. These advisory mechanisms taken in their entirety can be placed between traditional outreach programmes with the use of State agents and an accompanying approach, with planning of activities for beneficiaries (PO or FF), over several years.

These mechanisms are still in their infancy and are seeking a balance. The large number of advisers, with different specializations, leads to a wide variety of advisory methods which are difficult to coordinate. The usual problems of relationship between the administration and farmers find mention. An advisory system with a mass approach cannot delve deeply into specific problems of farmers. Mismatches are observed between technical advice provided and the farmers' actual needs. Behaviour that is too prescriptive on the part of advisers can cause problems to arise with technical suggestions being perceived as 'injunctions' rather than advice. A lack of monitoring and evaluation does not allow impacts of these mechanisms to be assessed.

Empowerment and self-sufficiency of the service seems preferable to the ACEFA programme coordinators (organization, its own budget, staff recruitment and selection, widespread computerization). Similarly, ICAT wants to increase the role of POs in controlling the mechanism, and to make it financially self-sufficient by increasing the services on offer.

### **3. Principal strategies for making MAFF sustainable and scalable**

In this section, we summarize the strategies that have been proposed – or even already implemented in some cases – to meet the challenges of MAFF sustainability and scalability.

#### **3.1. Financial sustainability**

Financial sustainability was addressed in four ways:

- Cost reduction of advisory services: for example, by increasing the effectiveness of advisers by reaching a wider audience, or by reducing training costs by organizing on-site sessions to avoid travel by advisers or by making MAFF training of advisers part of diploma courses.
- The diversification of funding sources: for example, with cost-sharing between the State, the producers who benefit from the advice, traditional funding entities and the education system.
- Pooling of funding destined for general advisory services to allow for more consistency and therefore effectiveness in the service provided. It is a matter, for example, of creating a national or regional fund which will consolidate all sources of funding and of establishing an organization to interface between requests arising from the field and the donors.
- Relying on institutional anchoring and promoting a form of governance of the cheapest advisory service. A form of privatization of the advisory service may be a possible solution. It forces self-financing through payments by clients for services or through withholdings in a sector.

#### **3.2. Strengthening skills of advisory actors**

Proposals for strengthening skills of advisory actors are focused on three types of actors (Table 10). These are:

- Advisers: in addition to traditional training provided by projects, possibilities of training by seniors were discussed, as were the mobilization of locally available skills (where advisory structures already exist) to provide complementary training and the sharing of experiences between advisers.
- Farmer extension workers (or contact farmers): recognition of their function by according them a status and/or giving them an allowance appears to be an indispensable prerequisite. Continuing training for them should also be considered. The challenge will be to make a more effective use of them and limit their role according to their capabilities by focusing their activities on, for example, data acquisition and entry, the conveying of member demands or reporting of problems encountered.
- Managers of the mechanism (who could be elected PO members, members of the steering committee or agents of project coordination cells): It was mentioned that sometimes a mismatch exists between ground realities and decisions taken to orient the advice provided.

**Table 10: Summary of strategies to strengthen skills of advisory actors**

<b>Actors</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
<b>Advisers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• training by old timers</li> <li>• networking of agricultural advisers around existing services (information, exchanges, training, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Farmer extension workers (or contact farmers)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognizing their function by according them a status and/or giving them an allowance, continuing training</li> <li>• using them more effectively and limiting of their role according to their capacities: data acquisition and entry, conveying of field information</li> <li>• using end-of-campaign assessment meetings to help analyze data and formulate advice</li> <li>• using the cascade method of training with farmer extension workers or providing them adapted training</li> </ul>
<b>Managers, steering committee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sensitization to local realities and to problems of family farms</li> <li>• sharing and exchange platforms for bringing together all the actors of the mechanism (advisers, contact farmers, farmer representatives, MAFF members)</li> </ul>

The problems addressed by the various mechanisms and concerning strengthening of skills are:

- The difficulty in pinning down the ideal adviser profile: generalists or specialists? From what origin: rural areas or trained in the city? Provide advice in which language?
- Problems of managing skills: rarely does a mechanism include a career path for advisers within its structure. Thus, many advisers leave after 2 or 3 years to find jobs elsewhere with better pay and with enhanced responsibilities.
- Problems of updating knowledge of advisers, of building capacities to innovate in communication methods or for providing advice in an accompanying role, of developing training tools adapted to different audiences.

In such a context, four types of learning mechanisms for advisers have been proposed:

- Networks: for example, a network of agricultural advisers around existing services (information, exchanges, training, etc.).
- Meetings during end-of-campaign assessments, during the data-analysis phase, with 'experienced advisers' who will help advisers take part in these assessments and formulate advice.
- Exchange and sharing platforms bringing together all the actors of the mechanism (advisers, contact farmers, farmer representatives, MAFF members).
- Cascaded training: this is the model chosen by SNV to set up an advisory service in the POs, by using a series of training to turn supervisors into farmer extension workers.

### **3.3. Principal strategies for scaling up**

Three different ways are proposed to scale up MAFF mechanisms with the goal of reaching more people:

- Convincing more farmers to become MAFF members (sensitizing, lowering selection criteria, promoting participant turnover).
- Financing the scaling-up of the mechanism (more human resources, more travel, and more coordination).

- Adapting the methods i) to reach more people (working with illiterates, covering a bigger geographical area, meeting diverse expectations), ii) to train more people using fewer resources (group advisory methods, model farms, farmer field schools, more effective learning methods, ICTs).

These strategies re-examine the mechanisms' governance modalities, training and availability of human resources, and the methods used.

As far as governance is concerned, scaling-up of the mechanism raises problems of coordination. How does one retain flexibility in a much bigger mechanism? Decentralization of the steering cell is one option. Creating PO platforms has also been proposed to promote coordination between actors.

To expand the mechanism, additional competent people need to be mobilized. Inclusion of adviser training in university curricula should be considered as well as 'mass' training for farmers (literacy, extension, etc.).

Changing methods to reach more people is a laborious undertaking and ICTs have to play a central role in the future in this regard. But it is the lack of opportunities for experimentation that hinders the development of new methods, for example, methods more suitable for illiterates. In the case of Procoton, literacy sessions applied to MAFF were developed by the PO to reach a larger number of members.

## **Conclusion**

From the self-analysis documents we identify three key issues that shaped our thinking on questions of governance, funding, methods and skills. Firstly, the diversity of mechanisms for providing management advice to family farms illustrates the ongoing reorganization of advisory actors, after decades of lack of support and funding in this domain. The POs are the new emerging actors, occupying an increasingly important role in rural development. They are present in the near majority of advisory mechanisms. Their role remains still marginal in some cases but they appear as key actors to better define advisory requirements, to design approaches tailored to the characteristics of family farms, at a minimum cost, and to reach a maximum number of producers. For the Bohicon II workshop, a major challenge thus lies in determining abilities of POs to provide MAFF and the outlook for their role in a sustainable advisory system. The second issue concerns the role to assign to the new entrant to the world of advisory systems: the farmer extension worker. He is being increasingly called upon and used even though his actual role is still not clearly defined. The third issue is the evidence of the impact of MAFF. In the absence of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and impact assessments, it is difficult for these mechanisms to draw lessons from their experiences and evolve accordingly.

In conclusion, these self-analysis documents show that MAFF principles have been appropriated by many actors and adapted to various mechanisms and contexts. Even though advisory methods have come a long way, organizations involved in providing advice recognize that the MAFF approach has specific characteristics that are consistent with farmers' needs and expectations when compared to other existing approaches (FFS, FBS).

## Terms of reference for self-analysis of MAFF mechanisms, Bohicon II Workshop

### Objectives:

Self-analysis should allow the participants of the Bohicon II workshop to:

- Present their field experiences at the workshop (in the form of a **poster**)
- Present a few elements that are particularly illustrative of one of the workshop's priority themes (in the form of an **oral presentation**)
- Conduct an analysis of MAFF mechanisms on issues of sustainability and scalability and identify scope for improvement on these issues (drafting a **summary document**)

Self-analysis will be carried out collectively by all actors involved in the implementation of a MAFF mechanism. A MAFF mechanism consists of all actors involved in implementing MAFF on the ground, its rules of operation and activities. This mechanism may consist of a PO implementing MAFF or beneficiary of MAFF support, NGOs or private/public companies implementing MAFF, cells to support MAFF within development projects, organizations supporting MAFF remotely, etc. In a country, there may be several types of MAFF mechanisms.

Each mechanism must plan its self-analysis by identifying a small group of people who are most suited to participate in this activity. This self-analysis can be conducted through a small number of meetings (a one-day workshop if preparatory work has been carried out to gather the basic information required, a few meetings if participants wish to have in-depth discussions to strengthen their own analysis and therefore the relevance of their future actions).

### 1. Presentation of the existing advisory mechanism

#### Implementation of the MAFF mechanism

- Objectives of MAFF
- History of the establishment of MAFF with the major development phases: key dates and figures

#### Existing advisory mechanism

- Which are the structures/organizations involved in MAFF (POs, NGOs, private companies, State services, international partners, etc.)? What are their functions (MAFF delivery, methodological support, participation in MAFF planning and evaluation, financing MAFF, etc.)?
- What are MAFF's areas of intervention?
- Number of advisers (broken down by type of advice and by function)
- Number of farmer extension workers
- Number of farmer members
- What are the major characteristics of the farmers participating in MAFF (farm size, agricultural production, literacy level, etc.) and what are the requirements to participate in MAFF?
- What is your intervention methodology for MAFF (in groups and/or individually, technical and/or economic advice, importance of training on concepts and tools, importance of advice adapted to each farmer, etc.)?
- What MAFF tools are you using (different notebooks and records, farm visits and exchanges between farmers, etc.)?

#### Governance and coordination of the MAFF mechanism

- Who are the actors who will take decisions or have the greatest say at the technical level (to select the MAFF methods and tools, to plan and evaluate the adviser's activities, etc.)?
- Who are the actors who take decisions or have the greatest say at the strategic level (to select the areas of intervention, to define the number of advisers to recruit, to define the criteria MAFF membership for farmers, etc.)?

- What is the role of POs in MAFF (to define MAFF objectives and evaluate results, to directly implement MAFF themselves, to finance MAFF)?
- What are the mechanisms for coordinating with these partners (steering committees, signing of contracts, etc.)?

### **Financing the advisory mechanism**

- What is the MAFF cost?
  - Cost of the adviser and his activities (by adviser type)
  - Adviser support (training, methodological support)
- What is the source of funding and conditions to access funding?
  - Funding agency, PO, sector, participant

### **The poster**

The poster will present the main elements of MAFF analyzed on a single sheet. We can have:

- 1) A block diagram describing the MAFF mechanism; arrows could be used to explain the governance and coordination linkages between the various actors involved (who is controlling it, who is funding it, who takes decisions, etc.).
- 2) A location map.
- 3) A box to describe the entities mobilized (POs, partners, funding agencies, etc.).
- 4) A box presenting the MAFF method and tools.

## **2**

### **2. Prospective thoughts on MAFF sustainability and scalability (summary document: The summary should not exceed 10 pages in length)**

#### **2.1 Questions on governance and coordination**

- What are the other support/advice mechanisms available in your area/country and how many producers do they reach?
- Are there mechanisms at the national or local levels for coordinating advisory activities developed by different actors/providers of advisory services?
- What strategy and what actions have you developed – or could develop – within your organization or within the framework of the MAFF mechanism to insert pilot advisory experiments into national training and advisory mechanisms for the purposes of scaling up (reaching a greater number of producers, institutionalizing the pilot experiment)?
- What relationships have you established between the various services provided to producers (credit, supply of inputs, training, etc.)? How and under what conditions can the MAFF help the development of these other services?
- What are the limitations of existing mechanisms to support producers (including MAFF) and what needs to be done so that there is greater efficiency of and better coordination between all these activities undertaken by private actors, POs and the State?
- What is the outlook for improving modes of coordination between partners?

#### **2.2 Questions on financing the advisory service**

- How do you finance your advisory activities (advisers, participation of members, methodological support, training, etc.)? Who pays what?
- How do funding sources and mechanisms influence the orientation and the quality of advice that you provide?
- In your experience and in your situation, what are the real opportunities for funding advisory services by participants, POs, sectors, the State, funding entities? What complementarities?

- What mechanisms to favour for the mobilization and use of funds from each actor category? Who can/should pay and who can implement the advisory service?
- How are other support-advice mechanisms in your area financed? Can you draw any lessons from them for your own MAFF mechanism?

### **2.3 Questions on mobilization of skills and training**

- What are the profiles of advisers that you are currently using? Their strengths and weaknesses? What are the criteria for selecting farmer extension workers?
- What would be the ideal adviser profile (possibly depending on the type of functions they will have to fulfil) in terms of: initial training curricula, experience and continuing training?
- What are their training needs?
- How to train a sufficient number of advisers in the country (beyond just the requirements of projects)? Which courses for the initial training of new entrants to the profession and for the continuing professional training of those already in it?
- From your assessment, what place/responsibility, what support/training and what financial support for farmers extension workers who are willing to assist more experienced advisers or capable of fulfilling specific functions?
- What experience do you have in creating and/or supporting knowledge- and information-sharing networks of advisers or farmer extension workers as a means of updating adviser skills?

### **2.4 Questions on the evolution of advisory methods**

- What are the tools currently most used by farmers/offered by the facilitators?
- Are the methods used suitable for the producers' needs and limitations?
- What are the challenges faced by advisers in their role of providing support and advice to producers?
- How did you change the methods you started out with? What problems did you encounter while improving them?
- What do you think is the role of new information technologies in improving the effectiveness of advisory services?
- Would you like to change MAFF methods to better meet farmer needs, to seize opportunities or to face challenges you encounter?

## **3. Questions on scalability and sustainability of MAFF mechanisms**

- In order to change the scale of intervention (to reach more farmers) of advisory services in general and MAFF in particular, what would be your suggestions and proposals in the context of your organization, your MAFF mechanism and at the country level?
- In order to ensure the sustainability of the activities of advisory services (funding but also post-project implementation of the advisory service), what would be your suggestions and proposals in the context of your project/team and at the country level?

### **Summary document**

The summary document will include:

- Descriptive elements from section 1 (history and presentation of the existing mechanism)
- Prospective thoughts on scalability and sustainability from section 2, following the structure proposed (2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4)
- Your suggestions and proposals as requested in section 3