

**ROPPA-CPF-NI consultation report in Burkina Faso
September 1 – 6, 2008**

**What are the opportunities for collaboration in view of
strengthening agricultural advisory services ?**

First draft

**ROPPA
CPF
NI**

Summary of chapter 1

Presentation of the objectives of the consultation

Summary of chapter 2

For carrying out the consultation process in Burkina Faso, ROPPA has asked CPF (Confédération Paysanne du Faso), as a member of ROPPA (and FIPA), to act as focal point and to organize the consultation with assistance of two NI consultants. The consultation has been headed by Mr. Moumini Ouédraogo, permanent secretary, CPF. The first meeting with ROPPA, CPF and the consultants, at the beginning of the consultation process, allowed to share information and present in detail the objectives of the consultation. At the end of the consultation, a meeting was organized for elaborating and discussing the conclusions.

During the consultation various meetings took place with producer organizations (UNPCB, FEPA-B), private firms (SOFITEX), a research institution (INERA), the Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulics and Fishery, and a NGO (AFDI).

Summary of chapter 3

Agriculture contributes more than one third of the national GDP and employs more than 80% of the active population. There are about 1.200.000 (family) farms. The area under cultivation per farm ranks from less than 1 ha to far more than 10 ha. But most of the farmers cultivate between 2 and 5 ha. Development of some agribusiness farms can be observed during the last 10 years.

Extensive cattle breeding and cultivation of cereals (sorghum, millet) are the main production activities in dry areas without irrigation. In savannah area, cotton, maize and sorghum are the main components of the farming systems; but farmers also grow other crops when their prices are attractive. Farmers use animal traction and fertilizers; livestock has expanded in the area. Irrigation schemes are without importance, but some farmers use irrigation techniques for growing rice or vegetables (mainly onion and tomato).

Farmers still ask for technical advice to grow crops or raise cattle, but increasingly they demand for assistance in other fields (advice on farm management, improvement of soil fertility, especially when chemical fertilizers get more expensive, marketing of products, etc.). They also look for advice and assistance to strengthen their organizations. In terms of efficiency of advice, the advisory model which concentrates on technology transfer is no longer valid. There is an urgent need to strengthen capacities of farmers and their leaders to improve management of their farms and organizations.

Summary of chapter 4

Many experiences show clearly the evolution of agricultural advisory services in Burkina Faso. Some FOs have hired advisors for providing advisory services to their members. Some private firms, as the cotton companies, employ field staff having the required capacities for advising farmers. Some of the NGOs which work in the northern part of the country are financially assisted by international cooperation. The public extension services of the Ministry of Agriculture (MAHRH), however, face severe difficulties. There is no clear strategy at the national level for developing an agricultural advisory system in line with the new institutional context and able to address new economic, social and environmental challenges.

Different initiatives aim at improving the coordination between different actors of AAS (agricultural advisory services). It is worth to mention the “Participatory Farm Management Network; its FO members are dedicated to share experiences and to improve the provision of agricultural advisory services. CPF has planned to launch a technical commission specialized on agricultural advisory services for facilitating the participation of FOs in the debate on that topic and to put them in the position of real partners able to negotiate with the government.

Other coordination mechanisms exist at the local level. UNPCB, the national cotton farmers’ organization, for example, negotiates with cotton processing companies within the framework of an inter-professional body. Agricultural advisory services are important topics for these stakeholders in view of strengthening the production of cotton and the overall activities of farmers. Some FOs play an important role in coordinating at the local level the services which are provided by the different AAS stakeholders. Other coordination mechanisms could be more important in future by taking into account the recent setting up of Regional Agricultural Chambers or of the administrative rural communities.

Summary of chapter 5

National agricultural extension system

In the 90s a national agricultural extension system has been set up with financial assistance of the World Bank. This system was based on the “Training and Visit” approach; its implementation declined more and more at the end of the 90s and was finally stopped in 2001 with the end of external support. Currently, with assistance of FAO, the Ministry of Agriculture undertakes an internal evaluation for revitalization of this extension system despite considerable reservations of various FOs and institutions regarding that approach.

Cotton companies

For facilitating production and marketing processes the cotton company (SOFITX) has hired field staff with the task to support interaction between the company and the cotton producers from the early 90s onwards. The liberalization of the cotton sector in 2002 and the setting up of new private cotton companies led to the decision to maintain that field staff. Sometimes input traders provide additionally technical assistance to farmers.

National Union of Cotton Producers of Burkina

UNPCB has set up an advisory service at the time of its establishment and has hired advisers for assisting cotton producers groups. Its advisers are financed through taxes on the sold cotton. This advisory service has as objective to improve the performances of the cotton producers groups and to empower the farmers’ representatives at the group level. The results and impacts of that advisory system are appreciated by the members and the UNPCB representatives. New challenges concern the financial support of the advisory system and the evolution of the advisers’ tasks for meeting newly expressed demands of the producers and UNPCB. UNPCB wish to promote a new advisory method which take into account all the farm activities. Within the present context the application of these methods is now challenged.

FOs assisted by NGOs

After the withdrawal of the state FOs take now initiatives in various other areas. For example FNGN employs technicians and coordinators since many years for assisting farmers groups in implementing and managing projects. As an answer to the FOs’ representatives demand for having access to need-oriented advice, some new participatory approaches are recently

implemented in providing advice at the farm level. Since 2006 FEPA-B tests an approach for improving the management of family warehouses for cereals by the producers. FEBA-B organizes training for farmers' representatives on this topic with the purpose to disseminate knowledge and skills through them (farmer-to-farmer). Despite the implementation of all these valuable initiatives by FO, some of the FOs face difficulties which seriously limit their development.

Summary of chapter 6:

During the consultations several needs have been highlighted which partly can become opportunities for collaboration within the framework of the program FARA-AFAAS-NI-RFO.

Strengthening of the capacities of the organizations

At national level, priority is given to strengthening of institutional, organizational and operational capacities of the organizations for becoming actors in rural advisory services. This means:

- Defining better the content of advisory services for adapting them to the needs of the producers and FOs.
- Improving processes and methods of advisory services: It is necessary to give priority to thinking about methods and instruments of advisory services, but not for proposing a standard method, but for evaluating and analyzing the appropriateness of different methods in a specific situation.
- Assuring financing of advisory services: Financing of advisory services is certainly the topic which has the most importance for the actors involved in the advisory services as that question is difficult to resolve at the level of a single organization. Reflection processes have to be carried out at the level of each advisory service organization and at the level of the whole country.
- Managing the competencies of the advisors in the short and long term: the question of managing the competencies of the advisors is of high importance (refresher training, basic formation). But it is also required to consider training of service providers and basic formation of producers (alphabetization, youngsters in rural areas etc.).
- Improving monitoring and evaluation of advisory services: It is important to be able to evaluate the results and impacts of advisory services. However, such an evaluation leads to a great number of methodological problems which are not solved up to now. It seems to be useful to invest in that field.

Favoring exchanges for strengthening competencies and constructing a common vision of advisory services

Exchanges between the different actors involving advisory service provision (see the "Réseau Gestion" which has a large number of FO as members) do already exist. CPF establishes a "technical commission on advisory services" with interested FOs and advisory service organizations as members. CPF wants to give value to experiences related to advisory services which take presently place at the level of FOs. It has expressed its interest for

collaboration on that topic within the framework of the future program of AFAAS/FARA/OPR/NI. CPF and ROPPA have also expressed their interest for giving priority to exchanges between countries, and mainly between FO, on the topic of advisory services.

Elaboration of lobbying activities for improving the system of agricultural advisory services

Taking into consideration the assessment of advisory services which CPF plans to initiate, it seems that the FO wish the implementation of lobbying activities for expressing their point of view in the field of AAS. MAHRH also announces the possible establishment of a national commission which will deal with agricultural advisory services and will associate all the related actors. ROPPA participates already in negotiations with UEMOA and CEDEAO on agricultural policies at the regional level. Within that framework CPF and ROPPA consider that NI can provide an important support to agricultural advisory services, under the condition that the members of ROPPA present officially such a demand.

Understanding the evolution of the environment for adapting agricultural advisory services

It is considered as important that FO can develop prospective capacities for being able to capture opportunities and anticipate related difficulties. The institutional structures of agricultural advisory services should integrate such a prospective function.

Chapter 7: Options for implementing a joint program

The various meetings with the stakeholders involved in advisory services in Burkina, and the discussions with ROPPA and CPF gave valuable elements to design a proposal for a joint program on agricultural advisory services.

The potential contributions of NI

Some stakeholders mentioned how NI can contribute by a joint program together with AFAAS, FARA and the RPOs (including ROPPA):

- Methodological contributions in order to strengthen dialogs between stakeholders at national level
- Strengthening of FOs operational capacities for improving advisory services. FOs and other stakeholders lack resources for implementing their own programs or to extend their activities. A AFAAS/FAR/RFO/NI program could on one hand provide additional resources to national FOs' platforms, and on other hand, it could provide in due time an expertise to increase the FOs' political legitimacy
- Organizing exchanges of experiences at regional or continental level between FOs' platforms about AAS for contributing to elaboration of regional policies and influencing national policies.
- Designing and disseminating of valuables supports for advisory providers (methodological guidelines, synthesis, etc.)

Guiding principles for intervention

During the consultation some guiding principles emerged regarding the design of the proposal:

- Answering demands of FOs' national platforms, members of ROPPA. In some countries more inclusive platforms exist (cf the "national commission on advisory services" in Burkina Faso). Before any intervention it is required that these platforms submit a demand for collaboration which specifies the topics of the demand.
- Adapting objectives and activities for each country. In every country, every platform has a different level of development and in relation to AAS different objectives shall be achieved. This diversity should be taken into consideration.
- Not replacing the current initiatives in each country. The joint program should not create new dialog structures or platforms but should make use of existing structures and provide them assistance.
- Designing specific and different planning and monitoring mechanisms at national level and at regional level

Proposals at national level

During the consultation the stakeholders presented designing of proposals at the country level as a top priority. These proposals were discussed in order to design a joint program.

- Facilitating exchanges of experiences on innovative mechanisms to provide advice, between FOs but including other stakeholders (State, NGOs etc.) in order to draw lessons. The starting point is an analysis by the FOs on innovative experiences with advisory services. The framework of analysis which is presented in chapter 6 could be used. This chapter provides details about the method the FOs want to use. CPF could be in charge of the organization activities.
- Elaborating together with FOs and CPF an assessment of agricultural advisory services in the country for drawing lessons and generating advocacy processes aiming at renewing agricultural advisory services. There is a need to address the demand of farmers, the methods for providing advice, basic formation and refresher training for advisers (employees or volunteer farmer), the institutional arrangements (role of FOs, role of the State, role of the private sector etc.), and the financing of advisory services. The chapters 6.2 and 6.3 give details on the methodology which stakeholders can use for carrying out these assessments and advocacy process.
- Strengthening operational capacities of some national FOs in the field of advisory services. It requires to assist designing, implementation and evaluation of programs aiming at strengthening national FOs for allowing them to provide high quality services to their members¹. If that proposal is well received there is a need to put more thinking to asses the feasibility of such activities.

Various platforms which are members of ROPPA, could be interested in similar activities or could have more specific demands. We discussed the mechanisms for selecting and implementing activities at the country level.

- ROPPA disseminates information about the joint program to its members: objectives, areas of action, supported activities, financial mechanisms, etc.
- Each country elaborates a proposal which fits in the joint program framework and the specific situation of the country. It means the elaboration of a proposal presenting the objectives, the planned activities, the expected products, the calendar and the budget.

¹ Some discussions took place during the consultation process aiming at analyzing this question : Is a AFASS/FARA/OPR/NI program best well suited to implement such activities ?

ROPPA can assist the platforms to elaborate these micro-projects. The proposal can include a demand for expertise from NI which will be helpful at a given moment for the implementation of the proposal.

- A framework for analysis of the proposal has to be designed by the joint program in order to assess and select the proposals by taking into account at least the available financial resources. The used criteria could be linked to the relevance of the proposal for the national dialog on agricultural advisory services, the capacity of the platform to manage the proposal, etc. At this point ROPPA expressed the wish to be not involved in the selection process because its mandate is to assist all the member platforms.

Proposals at regional level

During the consultation process the stakeholders did not fully address their needs regarding activities at the regional level. Nevertheless some ideas have been raised:

- Facilitating exchanges of experiences on innovative mechanisms to provide advice, between FOs but including other stakeholders (State, NGO, etc.) in order to draw lessons learnt.
- Participating in advocacy activities on behalf of ROPPA on the renewing of agricultural advisory services. ROPPA could use the results within the framework of current policy dialog processes in order to defend the interests of FOs and to include priorities of FO in regional agricultural policies (ECOWAS, UEMOA)

It is worth to mention that such activities must be organized by ROPPA which is in charge of the promotion of exchanges between its members and the representation of its members at the regional level. Nevertheless ROPPA has to address many challenges regarding its FOs members. It has to manage many activities (dialogs between FOs platforms, synthesis of different working groups, elaboration of strategic documents presenting the position of FOs, representation of FOs in different forums etc.). On the other hand ROPPA can delegate the responsibility to coordinate the regional dialog to one of its members. Thus ROPPA and CPF discussed the possibility to mandate CPF with the coordination of the regional dialog on agricultural advisory services. CPF, however, needs to look for additional resources (human and financial resources) in view of achieving this goal.