



REPORT

NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON FARM INPUT SUBSIDY PROGRAMME (FISP)



VENUE: CSIR STEPRI CONFERENCE ROOM

DATE: 28TH FEBRUARY – 1ST MARCH 2018

INTRODUCTION

The Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development (CIKOD), Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana (PFAG) and the Groundswell International (GSI) organized a national workshop to promote Agroecology through the reforms of the Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP). The objective of the two-day workshop was to present the outcomes of a commissioned research undertaken to assess the status of the FISP and how it supports the needs of small holder farmers to stakeholders and solicit their inputs for presentation to policy makers. The workshop brought together stakeholders from the agricultural sector including the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Centre for Scientific knowledge and Industrial Research (CSIR), the General Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU), Ghana Muslim Mission, Ghana Permaculture Institute, Organic farmers, the media amongst others. In all, there were 60 participants comprising of 34 males and 26 females on the first day and 62 participants of 38 males and 24 females on the second day.

DAY 1

In her welcome address, the Executive Director of Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana (PFAG), Madam Victoria Adongo, stressed the importance of women in agriculture and the need to look at other alternatives to chemical fertilizers which is environmentally friendly, climate resilient, cost effective and beneficial to them. This, according to her will also contribute to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). She was hopeful that the presentation by the Research Scientist / Researcher will address the cost effectiveness of farm input subsidy by governments and support the call for public investment in organic and agroecological farming.

PRESENTATION BY DR. JOHN JATOE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

The main objective of the assignment was to

1. conduct an objective assessment of Ghana's investments in agriculture since 2008, in order to contribute to the debate on the extent to which the sustainability, resilience to climate change, income and food security of small scale farmers have been strengthened
2. assess the effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability and opportunity costs and economic rate of return of public resources invested in FISPs in the medium and long term, particularly for small scale farmers and for consumers.

The presentation began with a view of the continental agricultural policy framework which underscored the need for African governments to commit not less than 10% of their national budget to support agriculture. Known as the Maputo Declaration, the idea was to focus on fertilizer as the most effective means of increasing productivity thereby culminating in the introduction of the Fertilizer Subsidy Program (FSP) in 2008. The presentation focused on fertilizer usage; its profitability, yield impacts, the public expenditure on them, the impact of inorganic fertilizer on soils, objectives of the FISP, the framework for reforms and policy implications as well as recommendations.

Using maize as a case study, the presentation looked at the profitability of inorganic fertilizer using the Value Cost Ratio (VCR) approach. The VCR according to him, requires a figure of 2 or higher to indicate profitability, however, that has not been the case for maize which recorded a rate of 1.42 in 2015. The implication, according to him, was that yields were not actually responding to the fertilizer application.

In terms of expenditure, the commitment to spend on agriculture fluctuated between 2008 and 2013, thus 5.3% to 1.3%, as

against the required 10% allocation, reflecting in growth rates which were less than the anticipated 6%. He also looked at the share of donor support to the agricultural expenditure which was as high as 37% in 2011, indicating the reliance of the nation on donor funding to support agriculture. He also looked at public agriculture expenditure for 2016 of which 77.57% was dedicated to “Food security and emergency preparedness” while there was no allocation to “Management of land and environment”. The emerging issues from the presentation were

- Ghana's public expenditure on agriculture falls far short of the Maputo Declaration benchmark of 10% and is still declining
- Government expenditure mainly covers compensation to employees
- Increasing share of public expenditure on agriculture goes to FISP, yet no exit strategy for FISP
- Rising application rates of fertilizer versus stagnant yields
- Assumptions about impacts of inorganic fertilizers

The presentation, in making a case for organic fertilizers looked at the impact of inorganic fertilizers on soils which includes soil acidification, nitrate leaching and pollution of ground water, nitrogen (nutrient) loading as well as soil humus depletion amongst others. Recalling the objectives of the FISP, such as improving farmers' access to yield, increasing adoption and usage, increasing yields amongst others, he iterated the need to re-think Ghana's approach for “sustainable food security hinged on domestic production”. He relied on various studies which place organic fertilizers as the most important augmenting complement to inorganic fertilizer and suggested strongly the need for adopting sustainable agriculture intensification and productivity growth which require the joint use of organic and inorganic fertilizers.

In concluding, the following recommendations were proposed

- Usage of subsidized mineral fertilizer only as part of a wider integrated soil fertility management approach
- Promotion of the joint use of both organic and inorganic fertilizers, including subsidized organic fertilizer.
- Reduction on reliance on mineral nitrogen, particularly urea and sulphate of ammonia, by various agronomic methods to increase organic sources of nitrogen (agroforestry, manure, crop rotation with legumes)
- Promotion and encouragement of farmer managed natural regeneration (FMNR) of trees, agroforestry, composting and management of farm yard manure to produce organic sources of nitrogen
- Promotion and encouragement of various approaches to sustainable land management, including agroforestry, inter-cropping and crop rotation with legumes, and soil and water conservation technologies
- Need for shifting of the burden of critical public expenditure from donors to Government of Ghana and the
- Need to significantly raise the levels of capital expenditures in agriculture

DISCUSSION ON RESEARCH FINDINGS

There was a discussion by representatives of the GAWU, CSIR and MOFA on their impressions and candid views on the outcomes of the research as a contribution to the validation of the findings.

Dr Adams Abdullai of STEPRI of CSIR expressed satisfaction with the findings of the survey and stated the need to focus on specific areas that need to be operationalized. He was of the view that a wider stakeholder consultation should have been pursued in order to accommodate more views in the survey. He supported the notion that the FISP was an afterthought and not sustainable and beneficial to the agricultural landscape. He also lamented on the information gap and lack of clarity in terms of data for computing the allocation to the agricultural sector. He also spoke about the weak research extension linkages and the lack of commercialization of best practices over the period. He concluded that government needed to rethink, reprioritize and venture into sustainable intensification as that has been proven to be the best way of approach to agricultural productivity. He raised issues with the capacity of seed growers in the country to provide inputs for the various subsidy programs.

Madam Emelia Ghansah of GAWU, also expressed disappointment on the reliance of heavy donor support and its implication on decision making. She called for a refocus on the FISP and the need to blend organic and inorganic fertilizers

and train farmers on better usage of the fertilizers. She also pointed out that the recommendations should be forwarded to the respective government agencies for actions to be taken.

The representative from the Policy, Planning and Budgetary Division of MOFA, Mr. Shaibu Mustapha raised some concerns about aspects of the research. He expressed the lack of clarity on the focus of the study; that is, whether it was aimed at the Agricultural sector or the sector ministry, MOFA. He cited the problems with extension delivery, wholesale fertilizer programs and blanket applications by farmers. He also hinted that the ministry was currently planning to develop a soil map to identify soil specific needs for the right mix of fertilizer application. He also provided a justification for the expenditure that goes into land and environment in that there is just one programme under the directorate hence less staff and less resources needed in that regard. According to him, the **FISP** was not funded by donor support but by Government through the Annual Budget Funding Amount (ABFA). He indicated that there has been a decline in terms of reliance on donor support to fund agriculture as 22% of the agricultural budget was donor funded as against 41% the previous year. He however, called on CSOs to influence MOFA in pushing for increase expenditure for capital expenditure.

He also called for the consideration of premium prices for farmers who go into organic farming as an incentive for more patronage. In conclusion, he reiterated the need to look at all the dimensions of food security which encompasses the availability, reliability, food sovereignty and also stressed on the importance of food storage and marketing.

In response, the researcher acknowledged the need for inclusion of the soil and water management institutions, however the difficulty in reaching them accounted for their omission. He also indicated that he relied on data as provided through the Public expenditure review process and published by the World Bank. He added that the report was for agricultural expenditure, however due to the complex accounting mechanism, the standard report adopted by the World Bank was used.

PLENARY SESSION

Key questions included;

- Why local seed producers were not included for the supply of seeds being provided for the Planting for Food and Jobs program
- Why MOFA was now developing soil map after subsidy programs had already began.

Some key suggestions proffered included:

- Need to relook at Post-harvest management and adopting a value chain approach to solving agricultural challenges
- Enhancing the value of the FISP through improvement of extension service delivery and dedicated fund for agricultural development
- Provision of opportunities to learn from farmers as they know the solutions to some of the challenges identified.
- Need for disaggregated data to track usage of the FISP

It was noted that the impact of the FISP was questionable, as potential yields did not commensurate with the subsidy being provided. There was also the need for the lift of ban on recruitment to make way for intake of more extension officers. There was the need for scientific support to farmers on the effects of climate change and also build their resilience. In terms of availability of soil map before application of fertilizer, the MOFA representative explained that the subsidy program was introduced as an emergency initiative and the soil map will now complement its efficiency. There was also the need to learn from some African countries on how they allocate resources to organic farming and have a worldwide appreciation of policies around privatization of seeds which are more profit oriented as against the needs of small holder farmers. Moreover, the need to support and build capacity of local seed growers was crucial as they are left reeling in debt by the government after they supplied some portion of seeds for the Planting for Food and Jobs programme. There was the call for training of farmers to promote and grow indigenous seeds and reduce the importation of seeds.

EXPERIENCES ON AGROECOLOGICAL FARM SYSTEMS IN GHANA

Mr. Dan Banuoku, Programmes Director of CIKOD made the first presentation on Agroecological farming practices by their farmers in the Northern Region. He highlighted the technologies being employed by women farmers and school children in running an eco-agriculture system contributing to increasing soil fertility. In promoting agroecology, he highlighted the Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) of trees techniques and the application of compost, promotion of farmer to farmer extension and intercropping with trees as a means to prevent soil erosion as well as maintain soil fertility. In addition, farmers were assisted to collect, save and share seeds through seed festivals. He indicated that farmers were indigenous scientists and a lot could be learnt from them. He concluded that the practice of agroecology can improve the incomes of farmers and called for support to scale up their practices through the provision of simple tools and technologies.

Mr. Charles Nyaaba, Programmes Officer of PFAG, also spoke about PFAG's agroecological farm in Techiman in the Brong Ahafo Region which is to serve as the alternative blueprint to mono culture and industrial agriculture. He indicated that over 400 farmers have been trained in apiculture, mushroom farming, heliculture, and livestock rearing amongst others. He cited farming practices such as composting, pruning and also the saving of seeds as some of the sustainable farming practices being pursued. He indicated its profitability and the need for support to scale up the practice for wider number of farmers.

Madam Grace Kala of the Ghana Permaculture Institute spoke about the practice of permaculture by her organization which is a design system that aims to create stable, productive systems that provide human needs, and are sustainable. The aims include the production of effective and low maintenance system of farming, integration of plants, animal, structures and people together, reduction of waste and ensuring self-food sufficiency. The practices include improving soil with compost, using "cake" to improve the soil, recycling of plastic materials for use, entomology, moringa production amongst others. At the end of the first day of deliberations four key recommendations were proffered for presentation to the sector minister in anticipation of his participation for the second day of the program.

These are:

1. There is ample evidence that the right conditions exist for local production of seeds across the country by our seed producers, growers and farmers for supply for the Planting for food and Jobs program. However capacity and logistical constraints account for their inability to meet demands as encountered in the first phase of the PFJ programme. In that regard, we recommend that adequate resources should be channelled to building and improving the capacity of seed producers such as the National Seed Traders Association of Ghana (NASTAG) as part of the components of the PFJ programme. This will boost their operations to meet the local demands of farmers and also create jobs for the teeming youth thereby improving incomes and livelihoods.
2. The blanket application of fertilizer by farmers has not had the desired effects on yield and productivity. In that regard, we recommend that the right mix of organic and inorganic fertilizer should constitute the package to farmers needed for maximum yield. This will ensure value for money from the Input Subsidy Programmes since that will lead to increased yield and productivity which is the main objective of the Input Subsidy Programmes.
3. We acknowledge the effort of Government to build a Ghana beyond aid. In this regard we call on government to immediately reconsider shifting the burden of critical public expenditure from donors to Government of Ghana. We demand that Government significantly raise the levels of capital expenditures in agriculture- investment into simple peasant friendly agriculture technology to support conservation agriculture.

4. Lastly, we recommend that there should be a major shift in the use of public funds especially for agricultural purposes. Specifically, we want government to allocate funds to prioritize and promote conservation agriculture. This should be accomplished by recruiting more extension officers who should be focussed on skills development and training of farmers on Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration techniques, Sustainable land management including agroforestry, inter-cropping and crop rotation, soil and water conservation technologies and agroecology. These systems have been proven not only to be cost-effective but also beneficial to the environment and leading to increased productivity, yield and incomes of small holder farmers.

DAY TWO

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Executive Director of CIKOD, Mr. Bern Guri presented an overview of the Reform of the Farm Input Subsidy Program. The goal according to him was to engage in evidence-based advocacy for a shift in resources in existing public investments for agriculture towards increased support for small-scale family farmers (including women farmers) in making a transition to a more productive, climate resilient, sustainable, nutrition and gender sensitive farming system, based on agroecological principles and suggesting reform of the Farm Input Subsidy Program. According to him, the strategy for advocacy was to

- raise the awareness and political consciousness of farmer organizations and rural women associations in Ghana about:
 - the composition of the FISP and overall resource use of public investment in agriculture
 - its relevance for the mass of small scale family farmers in ecologically fragile, risk prone farming areas
- To facilitate a process for leaders and members of smallholder farmer organizations to
 - propose alternative patterns of public investment that is more closely aligned with their priority needs and livelihoods in the medium and longer term

He walked participants through the activities lined up to achieve these objectives which included undertaking of mapping of small scale farmers and rural women associations promoting sustainable agriculture as well as conducting literature review and assessment of public resources for agriculture with specific focus on FISP and support going to agroecological farming. Key issues that came up among others were, emphasis of FISP on fertilizer subsidy, lack of specific evidence on the profitability of the different soil-crop fertilizer combinations and the requirements of knowledge of soil characteristics and processes regulating nutrient availability and supply to crops.

In that regard, the Executive Director of Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana, read out the recommendations as agreed by participants to be considered by the sector ministry.

The chairman for the day was Dr Karbo of CSIR and the National Learning Alliance on the Sustainable Agricultural Intensification Research and Learning in Africa (SAIRLA). He expressed optimism on the adoption of the recommendations by government and indicated the need to set up strategies for setting up a movement to push for prioritizing organic farming. Mr. Bern Guri, Executive Director of CIKOD stressed the need for having a unified front by farmers and CSOs for sustainable farming and promotion of the concept of ecological farming. He provided opportunity for knowledge sharing by organizations and coalitions on their agroecological practices.

EXPERIENCE SHARING FROM NETWORKS/PLATFORMS

The Coalition for the Advancement of Organic Farming shared a brief overview of their works in the country. Their aim is to push for the certification of organic products in the country and they are currently part of a national platform made up of over 17 members including NGOs and individual members that seeks to ensure that they attain that recognition and promote market for organic produce.

A farmer from the Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana, also spoke about the PFAG's agroecological farm in Techiman in the Brong Ahafo region and reiterated the benefits of the farm practices and its profitability as he adopted the practices in his farm.

Another farmer representative from the Network of Rural Women Farmers Association of Ghana (RUWFAG), a coalition of group of rural women farmers from some countries in the West Africa sub region, shared the objectives of the association which focuses on strengthening the voice of women and sharing ideas and experiences in embracing and adopting agroecology as a farming method. In Ghana, the coalition began in 2007 and is currently operational in Lawra and Nandom in the Upper West Region, Techiman and Yeji in the Brong Ahafo region as well as Accra in the Greater Accra region. The representative from the Ghana Permaculture Institute also shared experiences on prolonging the shelf life of vegetables with the “charcoal fridge” initiative.

FORMATION OF A MOVEMENT

Prior to the workshop, the implementation team deemed it necessary to either form a movement or strengthen the already existing networks of Agroecology. This decision was to be made by the farmer groups and organisations at the workshop. However, the motive is to reach out to as well as record more organisations that support agroecology and would support an advocacy for the reform of FISP. This was because due to limited resources, the mapping out of these organisations could not identify more organisations as anticipated by the team.

STRATEGIES FOR FORMATION OF MOVEMENT

Opportunities were given to participants to discuss the need for the formation of a movement to promote agroecological farming.

Key deliberations included

- The need to build upon the recognition by the President of the Republic to meet with farmer groups every year to dialogue with them
- The need to complement the strength and weakness of each other through networks collaborations and information sharing
- A bottom-up approach should be adopted to collate views from grassroots to the top
- The need to strengthen various FBOs and consolidate efforts for a joint action and to do away with the fragmentation of CSOs and their parochial agenda
- The need for generation of evidence to be used as basis for advocacy and action
- The need to look at representation where all interests of members across different locations will be served (should be regionally based)

In general, it was agreed that a task force be formed to work towards the attainment of a movement for the promotion of agroecology. The following persons were elected as members of the task force to work towards the formation of the

Ecological Farmers Movement.

- Abdallah Tetteh; CAADP Non-State Actors Coalition (CNC) representing Greater Accra Region
- Sampson Appiah; PFAG, representing the Eastern Region
- Enjonamin Amoak; PFAG, representing the Central Region
- Anita Sutha, RUWFAG, representing the Upper West Region
- Abdul Rahman Mohammed, PFAG, representing Upper East Region
- Gerald Agana, Coalition for the Advancement of Organic Farming, representing the Northern Region
- Grace Kallah, Ghana Permaculture Initiative, representing the Brong Ahafo Region (subject to approval from Director of Organization)
- Samuel Oracca-Tetteh, PFAG representing Ashanti Region
- Eben Adu, representing Volta Region
- Mr. Awal, representing Central Region

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PEASANT FARMERS ASSOCIATION OF GHANA (PFAG)**

An action plan was drawn to guide the team in the execution of its duties. They include

1. Creation of a WHATASPP platform for communication, to be done by Mr. Rahman after close of meeting
2. Develop draft constitution and strategic plan to guide operations of the movement to be accomplished in three months' time.
3. Have a planning meeting in May to approve constitution, strategic plan and propose activities for execution for the year.

It was agreed that the locations for meeting will alternate between the premises of PFAG and CIKOD and hopefully Groundswell International will provide funding to support the operations of the movement.

NEXT STEPS

The objective of creating awareness for the FISP has been achieved with the organization of the national workshop and the extensive media coverage. The expectation was to get feedback from the ministry to inform the next course of action. Also, there was the need to put strategies in place by May to outline the operations of the movement.

The formation of the committee formed part of the next steps as their next actions will reflect what has been discussed and the need for a strong platform to push the advocacy for agroecological farming

CLOSING REMARKS

The chairman in his concluding remarks stressed the importance of research to the farmer in generating evidence to influence policy. He also called for monitoring tools to effectively measure policy changes and track progress of interventions. He also called for mapping of multi stakeholder groups to lead to the mobilization and launching of movement to push for reforms in the input programs.

He expressed gratitude to the researcher and admonished PFAG and CIKOD to continue to generate appropriate evidence for policy advocacy.

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