Entrepreneurship is key

While some argue that the value chain concept of agricultural development is just another fad, it promises to transform agriculture to modernization in ACP countries. The economic prospects of these countries will depend on their ability to modernize the agricultural sector as a key contributor to poverty reduction and growth. Agricultural transformation requires adapting to a new environment and facing evolving challenges. One of the key challenges is how to move away from subsistence agriculture to business-oriented models of farming and entrepreneurship. Many of the recent debates in ACP countries have focused on what kind of farming to promote, in particular between family farming and agro-business. While there might be good reasons for supporting one or the other, experience around the world clearly shows that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution. For instance, the EU experience shows that although the agri-food industry currently plays a predominant role, family farming is still very much alive and has an important role in ensuring food security and supporting regional development. What is important is to recognize the need to have all stakeholders – including governments and public institutions – to come together, develop a common vision, define targets and agree on the way forward. In all this, entrepreneurship is the key to success.

We hope that this special issue of Spore will inspire you and show you that agricultural transformation and modernization is already underway in many ACP countries. Important lessons can be shared across countries and regions.

Michael Hailu
Director – CTA
1 | CHALLENGES

The options

Modernising agriculture provides jobs and livelihoods for many people. It is the key challenge that will continue to face most ACP countries for the coming decades. With the vast majority of farms being small-scale, they will need additional help making the move to modernisation.
It may seem glaringly obvious to say that most ACP countries are dominated by agriculture. Yet until recently, the importance of agriculture in these countries’ economic and social lives was to some extent unapparent. Governments and donors paid little attention to this sector, preferring to let a liberalised global market take its course. Today, agriculture is returning to centre stage, and much is being asked of it: to ensure food sovereignty; provide jobs for a rapidly growing population, especially in Africa, and offer people a decent living; and to export so as to bring in foreign currency. In order to meet all these challenges, it is crucial to achieve a very significant increase in output, and hence productivity. The only way to achieve this is by ‘modernising’ agriculture. The changes may take many different forms, just as there is wide variation in the countries’ current situations, their geographical circumstances and the political systems that run them.

Striking figures, which highlight agriculture as a fulcrum for development in many countries, now and for the decades to come, will have an influence on any changes of direction. The agriculture sector still employs a large majority of the population: 63% in sub-Saharan Africa and as much as 83% in Ethiopia, 81% in Rwanda and 78% in Kenya, according to World Bank figures for 2009. In the Caribbean, the rate is 60% in Haiti and just 9.8% in Trinidad and Tobago, which is a far more industrialised country. The picture is similar in most of the Pacific Islands, such as Vanuatu, where agriculture employs 70% of the active population.

In spite of the massive rural exodus that has rapidly swelled African cities over the past 30 years, most people still live in rural areas and make a living from crops, livestock rearing or some activities other than farming. With Africa’s population set to double in the next 40 years, jobs will have to be found for the 10 million – soon to become 20 million – young people who enter the labour market each year. So long as it enables people to have a certain standard of living, and that this activity acquires a greater social standing and is better integrated into the country’s economy, agriculture will remain an important source of employment, whether it be working for the family farm or as a salaried employee.

**A key economic sector**

This sector also makes a significant contribution to gross national product (GNP), accounting for on average 30% of GNP in Africa: 44% in Mali, but only 7.8% in oil-rich Angola (see map). In Haiti, agriculture makes up 35% of GNP, but just 9.8% in Fiji. In many countries without mining resources, agricultural exports remain the principal source of foreign exchange – this is true of Benin (53%), Cameroon (70%) and Kenya (78%). It also plays an active role in the

### Glossary

**Commercial farming**
A type of agriculture that is closely linked with the economy, where output is mainly or exclusively produced to be sold. To be effective, it requires significant investment. It is the opposite of subsistence farming.

**Subsistence farming**
Agriculture that mainly revolves around household consumption and a subsistence economy. Output is aimed neither at agribusiness nor export markets. It is chiefly consumed by farmers themselves and the local community.

**Food security**
FAO defines this as access for all human beings, at all times, to food that enables them to live a healthy active life. Achieving food security involves ensuring that sufficient quantities of food are available, that supplies are relatively stable and that people needing food can have access to it.

**Food sovereignty**
An international right that allows populations, governments or groups of countries to implement agricultural policies that are best suited to their people, without having a negative impact on people from other countries.

**Agrifood system**
The way in which people group together and organise their space on varying scales to produce and consume food.

**Agricultural production system**
Combination of crops, livestock operations and production methods (land capital, labour) used at the family farm level.
creation of national wealth. In countries emerging from long years of conflict and neglect by government services, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, agricultural production is the first sector to be revived, pulling other activities in its wake such as processing and trade. A simple road that is made suitable for motor vehicles once again can double output in less than a year.

However, the primary focus of farmers is to feed themselves and ensure food security for the people of their country. For the past 30 years, producers have constantly increased their output of cereals, tubers and vegetables. But their efforts are not sufficient and can, in some cases, be hampered by competition from massive imports which have become *de facto* indispensable in most ACP countries, from the Pacific Islands to Africa and on to the Caribbean. Thus, Trinidad and Tobago exports 80% of its agricultural output and relies on imports to feed its population, while Haiti covers just 70% of its food requirements. Even some farmers consume imports when they do not have enough home-grown food to eat.

This is a worrying situation given that global agricultural prices are constantly fluctuating and these purchases weigh heavily on government trade balances. In 2010, food imports cost Africa US$33 billion (€23 billion) according to the UN Economic Commission for Africa. The African continent currently imports more than it exports. Since the 2008 crisis, it is more imperative than ever to end this dangerous dependency and ensure food sovereignty.

These figures offer ample confirmation that agriculture may be the key sector for economic and social development in most ACP regions, especially where there are no other raw materials, such as timber, oil and minerals. However, they also mask deep disparities and the inadequate output and productivity of most of these agricultural systems, which need to undergo rapid development. Differences between countries in the agriculture value added per...
Worker – an indicator that measures agricultural productivity – show this clearly. The World Bank gives the figure of $225 (€158) in Guinea, 16 times lower than that of South Africa ($3,641 [€2,560]), while in the USA it is $77,901 (€54,700). Yields are two times lower than the global average. So there is still a very long way to go.

Small family-run farms predominate

In all regions, family-run small-scale farms predominate, accounting for an average 90% of output. These farms range from very small subsistence holdings that only feed and provide basic requirements for the family to small-scale agri-entreprises that are linked to commercial value chains and sometimes call on outside labour. A common feature is that economic activities and the family-run structure are closely linked – the fields are tended by the family, especially women who often also handle sales at markets. Land is frequently passed down through inheritance and decisions are taken by the head of household. According to the Network of Farmers’ and Agricultural Producers’ Organisations of West Africa (ROPPA), these family-run African farms, also called family production units, mainly produce in order to ‘live’ rather than to ‘sell’, so increasing revenue is not the priority. It is also important to ensure food security while reducing risks, maintaining good social relations and conserving land.

Such objectives go hand-in-hand with lifestyles, but they also carry constraints. Farms are mostly small, often less than 2 ha, a size that can only generate a small income, making it dangerous to focus on a single crop. Producers only have a few simple tools to work their land. Very rarely do they have tractors or rotovators, though they sometimes have water pumps if they are near a water point. Buying improved seed, fertilisers and phytosanitary products is difficult or even impossible for some of them, either because they are too expensive or because they are not available. Achieving a significant increase in yields is a challenge.

Agricultural growth in Africa has risen by 50% since 1980

Urban markets, drivers of agriculture

Towns represent farmers’ prime outlets for selling produce. These markets drive producers to increase output of fresh products and modernise their farms in order to meet the exacting demands of agrifood enterprises and distributors.

How important are urban markets for agricultural output?

Urban markets are the prime drivers of agriculture in Africa. In recent decades, farmers have adapted to meet the needs of the growing populations in towns. They have innovated to satisfy consumer demand, for example by selecting varieties of yam or fonio. Their innovations are not always the result of research. Intensification and the use of inputs or materials have led to major changes in many farms – this marks the start of modernisation, enabling farmers to increase the quantities they produce. Sales to urban consumers constitute the main outlet for farmers. In terms of market value, they represent more than export markets. Food crops can also be more profitable than cash crops. Producers in northern Cameroon have replaced cotton with yam, which has a very buoyant market. Farmers earn the majority of their income by selling their surplus crop or producing specifically for these markets. Information is, however, badly lacking on these sectors and the jobs they create. For a long time, it was thought that agricultural development was linked to that of external markets. Contrary to what is widely thought, the crisis of 2008 has refocused attention on the importance of urban markets based on local products.

INTERVIEW

NICOLAS BRICAS

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challenge that is too difficult for poor farmers relying on food crops to manage on their own. They consume almost all that they produce, selling a very small part, often with great difficulty and for low prices, to buy essentials or send their children to school. There is nothing left to invest.

Obstacles to modernisation
Markets are often limited, except when producers live close to towns. The problem is especially acute in isolated areas where transport costs are twice as high as elsewhere. Regional markets and well structured value chains only work for certain products such as the often cited examples of Galmi onions in Niger and potatoes from Fouta Djalon in Guinea, or for export products. Otherwise, only the biggest producers manage to penetrate value chains. The smaller ones can only manage it if they receive help. A study by the RuralStruc programme shows that farmers in the Senegal River region – which has received considerable investments, is close to coastal markets and has an industrial tomato processing factory – have far higher revenues than those in Casamance, an isolated area with little organisation.

What role does demand from urban consumers play in the marketing and processing of agricultural products?
The agrifood sector is the cog in the wheel that links agricultural production to consumption. It enables agricultural supply to adjust to demand and to extract higher profits. Women have invested in this sector to offer processed products such as oils, flour, dried and fermented products, etc. In West Africa, these are generally very small-scale enterprises. Some women are, for instance, making investments to offer packaged products. But the weak purchasing power of impoverished urban dwellers who have no jobs restricts outlets for agrifood industries. These people have trouble paying the added value of such products. It is therefore important to generate a virtuous circle of modernisation that includes agricultural producers and processors as well as buyers. Developing a middle class that wants and can afford good quality, easy-to-use products that are available all year round drives the development of more modern agrifood enterprises.

What are the impacts on agriculture of modernisation of the agrifood sector and marketing?
Small- and medium-scale agrifood enterprises are increasing in number – Senegal now has 50 small-scale millet milling units, compared with just five in 1990 – and they want to meet consumer demand, taking the place of market vendors whose products and origins were well known. These enterprises are becoming very demanding in order to ensure consistency and quality for their products. Farmers keep precise records of product specifications or sign a purchase contract with the big companies. These are impossible constraints for smallholder farmers, accelerating the concentration of the sector in the hands of larger farms. Producers need to modernise to respond to the situation. Producers’ organisations can sometimes do this, but often there are difficulties. The development of supermarkets risks exacerbating this concentration still further and sidelining small-scale farmers, who cannot make the investment to respect the standards required by distributors. The trend of rationalising markets puts many jobs at risk in the sales and agricultural output sectors. By developing too quickly it risks causing serious damage. In Europe, this process took decades to achieve.

Are Africa’s internal markets attracting investors like the agricultural land?
Yes, increased value and distribution of local products aimed at local markets appear to be a profitable sector for both local and foreign investors. But it is not clear whether these industries generate more jobs than they cut. It is not just a case of producing more in a better fashion. It is also important to manage the pace of industrialisation, which is dictated by the need for jobs.
The distribution of work between the sexes also hampers investment. Men are more inclined to be involved in cash crops, which bring them some money, while in many countries women tend the food crops that produce no income. Farmers with an entrepreneurial spirit who seek to innovate to increase their revenues are not always well regarded by their relatives or the community, especially if they are women.

Most of these farms are fragile and are at the mercy of changes in climate or market conditions. Prolonged drought or torrential rains which sweep away crops – increasingly common in some countries, especially in East Africa – can ruin these farmers, who have no insurance to protect them from disasters.

**Innovations to encourage**

For a long time, these family production units were thought to be archaic and incapable of making any progress. However, in the past 30 years they have adapted to requirements. Agricultural growth in sub-Saharan Africa rose from an annual rate of 2.3% in the 1980s to 3.8% between 2000 and 2005, often overtaking the growth rates of other sectors. In the same region and over the same period, agricultural productivity rose by 50%.

There is good scope for innovation on these farms and they can be swift to adapt to local opportunities. In recent decades, horticulture has experienced an unprecedented boom around towns and as a crop for the hungry season in parts of the Sahel. Maize cultivation has expanded considerably in many countries due to the introduction of varieties adapted to different regions or to drought in southern Africa. The same is true of cassava, with new varieties developed by research. Small-scale irrigation has made progress, as has animal traction in countries of the Sahel. Producers’ organisations have mushroomed in most African countries, especially in the West. In Burkina Faso, almost every village has at least one.

The many market information systems, the development of rural microfinance and management advice were developed by projects and now benefit a limited sector of small-scale farmers. However, they are not enough to unleash real agricultural modernisation, the kind that would enable rural communities to live decently and countries to produce enough to feed themselves and sell for export.

**Coherent, structured agricultural policies are crucial for modernisation**

Coherent, structured agricultural policies which address all problems are needed if small-scale producers are to overcome these hurdles. Professional training for future farmers, building or maintaining rural roads and tracks, bringing electricity to rural areas, land planning, better availability of inputs at affordable prices, access to credit, safer land tenure – the list of areas needing attention is very long indeed for most ACP countries if they want agriculture to continue to be the spearhead for their economies and the main source of jobs for their people.
Small farmer thinks big

The agricultural landscape of ACP countries is made up of large numbers of small-scale farms, some agricultural enterprises and several powerful foreign companies. Not all these components are developing at the same pace.
Clever, inventive, brave, hard-working – ACP farmers, especially women, are certainly not lacking in qualities or skills. They have proved as much during the past few decades. However, in spite of their efforts, these several million small-scale producers are still poor, or even very poor. According to the RuralStruc study, 75% of households surveyed in Africa earn an average of less than US$2/person/day. In Mali, the figure is close to 90%. That is just enough to meet their basic needs, and sometimes barely enough to feed them. Notwithstanding the number of people they keep in work, these family farms cannot provide food security for their countries – neither in Africa, the Caribbean or in the Pacific Islands. Nor can they create sufficient wealth to develop.

There is wide agreement that ‘modernising’ these farms is both urgent and crucial. Some say it is inevitable. But there is less consensus about how this should be achieved. Some want to see a move from subsistence agriculture to commercial farming, while others long to see large highly mechanised agricultural enterprises employing a large labour force. These two visions meet and sometimes overlap within the same country, giving rise to discordant development. There is a yawning gap between the small-scale family farm which struggles to survive and huge commercial farms with several thousand hectares, and there are many different formulas for modernising.

The example of foreign investors?

Some countries believe that the massive influx of foreign investors attracted by reserves of land, especially in Africa, opens up interesting opportunities for rapid modernisation of their agriculture, holding out prospects for greater food security for their people.

Ethiopia has already leased more than 600,000 ha of land to foreign investors who are funding some 800 agricultural projects. The government hopes this move will help it feed its people and instill more modern approaches into local farmers.

Recently, several Caribbean countries highly dependent on food imports opted to open their land up to investors keen to set up large-scale agricultural enterprises.

Given the ample resources available for investment, the productivity of land managed by these enterprises is high, often far outstripping that achieved by

A farmer on his tractor in the village of Vohitranivona (Madagascar)

**Mali**

**Leasing to develop land**

The Office du Niger – a vast irrigable plain of 960,000 ha in the centre of the country – is Mali’s rice bowl. However, to date only 85,000 ha of this space have been developed. With inadequate resources to extend irrigation infrastructures, the Malian government has opted to turn over 100,000 ha to Libya. The Libyan authorities have signed a 50-year lease which does not involve them paying any rent but commits them to carrying out the work needed to increase the value of this land and enable 100,000 ha of extra land to be cultivated by Malian farmers.

High-yielding rice varieties (8 t/ha) will be grown here, in collaboration with the China National Hybrid Rice Research and Development Centre. The produced rice will be used for local consumption and to feed Libyans. Malibya Agriculture, the company created by Libya to carry out the project, has entrusted the development works (begun in 2008) to a Chinese company. Malibya has already widened the canal that supplies water and has tarmacked a 40 km road in Bougouwéré, in the Macina area. This first phase should result in the development of a 25,000 ha area. Another high volume canal will be built by the Libyans and offered to Mali to improve new rice paddies. For the upcoming agricultural season, only 6,000 ha will be developed. Work stopped in April due to the civil war in Libya.

This project has been harshly criticised in Mali, as many farmers had to move and lost their land. However, the Malian farmers’ association AOPP has obtained compensation for these farmers who have now returned to their land.

Soumaïla Diarra
local farmers. It is a beguiling prospect for officials in the investing countries. The Chinese are predicting rice yields of 60 to 75 quintals per hectare, twice or three times that of producers in Tanzania, where the Chongqing Seed Corp has been installed.

Sometimes, local private enterprises develop on the back of these massive land transfers. In Kenya, the country’s biggest sugar company, Mumias Sugar Company Ltd, and the Tana and Athi Rivers Development Authority (TARDA) want to create a 16,000 ha sugarcane plantation to produce biofuels. However, the River Tana delta is currently cultivated by thousands of farmers, and herders bring their flocks to graze there.

These modern enterprises, set up by big private or public companies, are violently contested. They do not guarantee food security -- far from it. Much of the output of this leased land will go to feeding countries such as China, Libya and Saudia Arabia, or will be exported on world markets in the form of flowers and vegetables. Often, what little remains for local markets may end up destabilising them at the expense of small-scale producers.

Most worrying to producers’ organisations is the fact that the sale or lease of land often involves fertile areas cultivated by local farmers, who find themselves being dispossessed. These producers then become paid farmworkers who barely earn a dollar a day. Improving the life of local farmers and providing

Access to credit is a first prerequisite for modernisation

a decent living for young people in rural areas are considerations that rarely feature on the agenda.

“No one recommends big plantations and a capitalist model for agriculture in Africa. It is clear that such a model would not solve problems of jobs and poverty for hundreds of millions of families. The question is how to help hundreds of millions of stakeholders to engage in the market?”, said Michel Petit, former World Bank Head of Department for Agriculture and Rural Development.

Local entrepreneurs

What is needed is a transition from subsistence agriculture to commercial or business farming. Farming is often commercial on a very small scale, for there are few household farms that sell nothing at all. What distinguishes a so-called ‘modern’ business farm is that it uses various production factors such as capital, paid labour and land. Farms are managed like businesses, with costs, revenues and profits all carefully calculated. In this respect it is entirely possible that a household farm can become an agribusiness.

For this change to happen, small-scale farmers need to improve both output – increasing productivity and quantities produced – and marketing, identifying markets, prices and profitable sectors. They also need to engage in processing products to obtain added value.

Agribusinesses can also be created by entrepreneurs, who set up farms and manage them, using hired labour to work them, or by distant owners who only want the revenue.

In Africa, many medium-scale farms measuring several dozen hectares have been established in recent decades. They are often owned by political figures, government officials and traders who have bought well-placed plots of land and invested in them to meet market demands, either locally or further afield. Often, they are located on the outskirts of towns, supplying urban consumers with fruit, vegetables and even poultry. In Benin, administrative officials and businessmen frequently buy up land to produce teak wood or fruit and have recently expanded into export products such as pineapple.
However, some small-scale family farms also manage to grow and modernise. Even if there are still relatively few of them, they serve as an example to others. A case in point is Korka Diaw, a small-scale rice farmer in Senegal’s river valley, who put all her efforts into expanding her farm by acquiring more land. With help from the Ministry for Women and Women’s Enterprise, she initially set up two rice mills and then opened a third one to hull her paddy. She now employs twenty workers, including eight women, and takes part in the country’s major agricultural fairs.

Often, such developments are the result of a nudge in the right direction from a project or by banding together in producers’ groups. Since the initial outlay is the first hurdle facing farmers, access to credit is often a key prerequisite for modernisation, so that farmers can buy land, material, inputs and improved seed (see part 3).

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, small-scale market gardeners in five major towns lacked affordable credit, water and good quality seed. A few years after receiving support from an FAO programme, their revenues quadrupled. They now produce more than 500,000 t of legumes and vegetables, contributing to a significant improvement of supplies to these towns and to the diets of their people.

In north-west Cameroon, NOWEFOR, a federation of unions of Common Initiative Groups (CIGs), with more than 1500 farmers grouped into sectors, has introduced major improvements in growing techniques, leading to a fivefold increase in tomato yields. To avoid flooding local markets, production is staggered and contracts have been signed with buyers from Douala, who export to Congo and Gabon.

Output and marketing go hand in hand

This latter example clearly shows that managing support is as important as technical developments in production methods. Local, national, regional and even international markets offer opportunities. It is important to know how to explore and get the maximum output and marketing.

UGANDA

Reaping big returns

Less than 5 years ago, 45 year-old Allen Kitooke ventured into farming with just 10 chickens. Today, she is a household name in Busukuma sub-county, Wakiso district, Uganda, and has diversified way beyond poultry. As a single woman, her hard work has paid off. She now has 500 layers, a model banana plantation and a mango field. In all, Kitooke cultivates a total area of 22 ha. Her path to success started when Uganda National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) staff visited her gardens of sweet potatoes and cassava. “They saw potential in me and took me for training at the sub-county headquarters to learn how to rear chickens and grow crops on a commercial basis,” explained Kitooke. NAADS asked Kitooke to build a shelter for her poultry in exchange for credit in the form of 200 broilers and feed to help her start commercial farming. The start-up package was worth UGX1 million (€294) with Kitooke due to pay back UGX700,000 (€206) in 12 months. “I was able to get back the money in 1 year, but NAADS was so happy with my progress that they asked me to continue using the capital,” she said. Kitooke sold the original 200 broilers and bought another 300 to bring on. She bought a further 350 layers using proceeds from bananas and coffee. Kitooke had extended her product range from an early stage to intercrop bananas, coffee and paw paws. In February 2009, Kitooke used profits from bananas, coffee and cash from the sale of some land to invest in mangoes – the next stage in her diversification strategy. She has so far invested UGX30 million (€8,811) in these fruits, planting nearly 14 ha. “I can see a future in mangoes,” she says confidently.

As an individual, Kitooke is now the area’s biggest supplier of eggs and the main supplier of banana suckers to other farmers. She has also invested in cattle on a small scale. Her current
spread of crops and livestock earns her a monthly net income of UGX1.6 million (€470) and she is careful to put UGX400,000 (€117.5) in her savings bank account every month. She has a comfortable house and runs a commercial vehicle. Her smallholding’s steady growth has enabled her to take on 15 workers and she is planning to employ another five to help with the increasing workload.

Kitooke’s model farm is sometimes used as a training facility to teach other farmers how to scale up operations on a sustainable basis. Nothing goes to waste on Kitooke’s farm. Chicken droppings and cow dung are used as manure for her banana plantation and she makes home-made pesticides, mixing tobacco leaves, chillies, soot, garlic and cow urine to spray on crops. “This is cost-effective because I grow the tobacco and the urine is from my cows. It kills pests and improves harvests,” said Kitooke.

Angella Nabwowe

profit from them, individually or in groups, depending on the product, transport conditions and the norms required. Regional integration, which seeks to remove customs barriers, can also prove a powerful factor in promoting agricultural modernisation, helping to ensure that countries liaise over respective outputs. Between 2006 and 2008, predominantly agricultural trade between the three leading countries of the East African Community – Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda – grew by nearly 40%, according to this organisation. So political decisions play a pivotal role in increasing regional trade (see part 4).

Development of the agri-food sector that links producers to consumers is also an important factor in driving modernisation of farms in order to increase productivity and product quality.

The need to respect norms required for export – such as phytosanitary standards and traceability – stimulates producers to modernise their technical systems. These changes also benefit local output, as noted by COLEACP/PIP, which has trained a number of trainers in this area.

To make investments viable, it is important to ensure economic and financial planning for farms. It is no longer simply a question of managing food risks for the family. A farmer also needs to know how to carry out techno-economic diagnosis, evaluate profitability, plan financing requirements and organise work (labour requirements, costs etc.). Training is needed for all these skills, but often it is only available through projects or producers’ organisations.

A number of programmes are currently working to encourage the development of agricultural enterprise. One such initiative is UniBRAIN (University, Business and Research in Agricultural Innovation), launched recently with the aim of linking university teaching, research and private sector, bringing together institutions such as the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), the African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education (ANAFE) and the Pan Africa Agribusiness and Agri Industry Consortium (PanAAC). The idea is to create consortia of agricultural business incubators to promote the development of small- or medium-scale competitive agribusinesses – they will offer expertise from graduates specialised in agribusiness, start-up services and market tracking. The first countries involved are Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

Business incubators

For some years now, the International Fertilizer Development Centre (IFDC) has been developing Competitive Agricultural Systems and Enterprises (CASE) programmes in an effort to promote closer integration between farmers and local entrepreneurs and technical, financial and marketing development services involved in a specific sector. This approach has already benefited some 60,000 West African farmers, many of them women, and is being extended to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
In Ghana, the pepper sector in Tamale, Northern region, and maize grown in Wenchi, in the Brong Ahafo region, are being targeted for dialogue between all stakeholders with the aim of developing local agribusiness clusters for these two products.

Initiatives like this are increasing, even though for the time being they only involve a small minority of farmers. The aim is also to create a knock-on effect for other producers in the area. It is clear that farming and the agrifood sector have become attractive investment propositions for business figures. But the gap between these agribusinesses and small-scale family farms remains very wide. Much care will be needed to ensure that the big ventures do not eat up the small ones, for these play a crucial role in supplying countries and providing jobs. If ACP countries are to progress from isolated individual initiatives to making collective changes, governments will have to make strenuous efforts to provide more fertile terrain.

Recycling space and water

Flora Mwase has diversified into fish farming on her small plot of land in Malawi’s Dowa district. She received help in building ponds and training as part of the national farm fish programme, though aquaculture is not an easy option. Challenges include access to start-up capital, supplies of feed and fingerlings, inadequate marketing channels and lack of technical know-how.

Mwase has learned how to use water from her ponds to irrigate new crops she is growing, including maize, bananas, tomatoes and cabbages. The results are far better than any she achieved with rainfed agriculture, and she is selling both fish and crops at local markets. “I have managed to build a corrugated iron roof house and I send my children to better secondary schools”, said Mwase.

In other countries too, aquaculture is proving an effective way of earning extra revenue for small-scale farmers who have limited space. In Nigeria, peri-urban fish ponds and tanks have become popular, with 3,000 fish farms established over the past 10 years. In Cameroon, a number of small operations have increased to commercial scale, each with an average 11,500 m² of fish ponds. In Papua New Guinea, aquaculture is gaining ground as a way of earning incomes and tackling unemployment, especially for women and young people. New trends generate other jobs and business activities. In Nigeria, aquaculture entrepreneurs have emerged to sell fish, while others focus on producing and selling feed.
CHRISTIAN ROKO

From journalism to farming

Determination, training and much thought – these have proved the keys to success for a journalist from Benin, who has turned to farming and is passionate about his work. Encouraged by promising results, he now has long-term plans to modernise his farm and process his produce.

Two years ago, you left your job as a journalist to become a full-time farmer. An unusual career choice. Had you been planning this for some time?

It wasn’t a sudden impulse. I had been mulling over this career change since 2003, when I bought my first 4 ha of land in Ita-Djèbou in the Plateau department, 65 km east of Cotonou. Farming has always been a passion of mine, ever since my schooldays. Although neither my parents nor my grandparents are farmers, they have always cultivated small plots of land.

For me, it is important to have two strings to my bow. So at the same time I studied private law at university and underwent agricultural training at the Songhai Centre, which I followed up with courses on farms in Benin and abroad.

In 2004, I began to plant selected oil palms and fruit trees – citrus, mango, avocado – intercropping them with maize, cassava, beans and sesame. Since I was busy working as a journalist during the week, for 6 years I would go and work in my fields two Sundays a month. Gradually, using my savings and with the support of my family, I expanded my farm. I now farm 9.5 ha.

Where do you sell your output? And what plans do you have for the future?

For the moment, only 3 of my 8 ha of oil palms are in production; the trees are starting to bear their first fruits. Local markets can easily absorb these small quantities, which I sell to women. But I’m not going to stop there. I have a plan to start processing my products – making palm oil, fruit juice and biscuits, which I will sell to shops in Cotonou or for export. I have already been contacted by a big Nigerian dealer who wants to buy my palm oil.

I am also testing products not generally known to people in Benin. A restaurant has agreed to offer its customers grenade and passion fruit juice made from my trees.

Has your training encouraged you to use new growing techniques?

Based on what I learned at the Songhai Centre, I try to use mainly low-cost natural inputs which respect the environment. I use compost to fertilise the citrus trees; on the oil palms, I use ‘vegetable fertiliser’, made of dried leaves which enrich the soil as they decompose. Instead of pesticides I use neem powder against insects. To increase the resistance to drought of my plants I capture run-off water by making holes around the base.

My various training sessions have also helped me to introduce good management practices: space planning, work planning, monitoring activities and costs.

I also speak regularly to my neighbours – all traditional farmers who came to start working plots when they saw that even a town dweller like me had set up here! We exchange advice. I do the same with my farmworkers – old friends who could not make a living on their small farms. Here they earn money and work small plots. I encourage them to plan further ahead.

You don’t appear to have any intention of stopping there. What are your plans for the future?

For the time being my turnover is small, and I reinvest everything in the farm, especially to pay my seven workers. But things are changing quickly. I am planning to buy equipment, including a rotary cultivator and a harvester so that I can expand my farm. But I am reluctant to take out a loan because it is a risk and with interest rates at more than 10% it seems very expensive. In any case, I’ve never taken out a loan before.

In 2 or 3 years time, when my current fields are in full production, I hope to have a large mechanised plantation. Present crops aside, I am going to plant cashew and trees for timber. I also have a plan to develop some marshland for aquaculture. I am very optimistic. I am 43 year-old and it is time I thought about marriage.

Have other town dwellers tried the same path that you have? With what results?

Young people have tried to set up, but many of them have failed to stay the course and have given up. They find the work too hard and find it particularly difficult to find labour, which is a serious problem. The young people from the villages do not want to work the land. They prefer to traffic in oil from Nigeria or be motorcycle taxi drivers in Cotonou. I am lucky enough to have my friends.
Respect small-scale producers

Stephen Muchiri is Executive Director of the Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF), launched in 2001. In October 2010, EAFF was given the task of organising the general assembly of the Pan African Farmers Forum (PAFFO).

What is ‘modern farming’ from your point of view?
In my view, modern farming encompasses eco-friendly production, whereby we prevent pollution of natural resources from the source. Modern farming will entail advocating proper policies that favour the small-scale farmer to help him increase his productivity and production using available technologies that are demand driven and dependent on their climatic zones. This involves tilling of land, with the backdrop of preserving it for the future generation, including the use of safe pesticides, safe fertilizers, manure and green energy for production.

What are the relations between commercial and small-scale farming in Kenya?
Since most farmers in Kenya are small-scale, large-scale farmers tend to enter into contractual agreements with smallholders so as to increase their volume of production for the export market. In most instances, large-scale farmers usually provide inputs (fertilizers and pesticides), capacity building on production, and also sometimes seed. Small-scale farmers try their best to produce quality produce and sell it to the big farmers for export.

What should they be in a ‘perfect world’?
Being ‘feeders’ of the nation, small-scale farmers should be regarded highly with the integrity and respect they deserve. Policies should favour the production, processing and marketing of their produce. Farmers should have a stake in research that is being implemented so as to avoid only producing research results that are published to boost the scientist’s reputation. Government should avoid the importation of commodities that are already being produced in the country because this would affect the local production market and further deter farmers from producing. This is a recipe for disaster as food insecurity levels escalate.

What is at stake in the transition from small-scale to commercial farming?
If small-scale farmers switched to commercial farming, the impact would be both positive and negative. The positive impact is that they would be able to gain higher returns from farming. The downside is that most commercial farmers practice monocropping. This would eradicate biodiversity and most produce would only be for the European market. The East African consumer would suffer significantly due to high prices since all produce would have to be imported back to the country after value addition.

To find out more

FAO
www.fao.org
• Regional Training Course in Agribusiness Management for Farmers’ Organizations
http://tinyurl.com/5t1z29j

IFAD
New directions for smallholder agriculture
http://tinyurl.com/6yaldg9
• Rural Poverty Report 2011
http://tinyurl.com/4x3xw4k

NEPAD–OECD Africa Investment Initiative
http://tinyurl.com/3n97rk8

International Centre for development oriented Research in Agriculture
http://tinyurl.com/3txgqym

UniBRAIN
www.panaac.org

Food security is the priority

Conclusions from studies carried out by the RuralStruc programme offer approaches for promoting the transition to modern agriculture as an engine for growth. The research conducted between 2006 and 2010 in seven countries, including three in sub-Saharan Africa and Madagascar, indicates that the strategy should focus on small-scale farms, a source of employment for the rapidly increasing younger generation.

However, the ‘structural’ poverty of African farmers means that they do not have the capacity to invest in farm improvements. Food security, therefore, must be the priority for politicians who need to help farmers to increase their output and access markets. These are essential prerequisites if producers are to diversify their activities and find resources to invest in more profitable commercial farming.

To encourage this shift, RuralStruc stresses the importance of developing strong links between small towns and outlying rural areas. This would make it possible to forge closer ties between producers and consumers, lower transport costs and limit often adverse competition with producers in capital cities. The close proximity between small towns and rural areas also provides farmers with the opportunity to work both in the fields and in town, thereby strengthening the non-farm economic sector and paving the way for sustainable urban development.
3 | STEPS TOWARDS MODERNISATION

Taking off

There is no magic bullet for making the leap from a subsistence existence to one which holds promise for profit and expansion. But experience shows that ACP smallholders who have made the grade have all had to overcome key challenges.
smallholders make up over half the population in most developing countries and figures show that their farms enjoy significant scope for growth. The International Fund for Agriculture’s (IFAD) Rural Poverty Report 2011 revealed that there is ‘massive potential’ for harnessing the contribution of small-scale farmers to improve rural incomes. So what does a small-scale producer need to make the transition from subsistence to commercial farming?

Finding the cash to buy inputs such as fertiliser or farm machinery can be the first hurdle for a farmer wanting to scale up production. The single most commonly reported obstacle to entrepreneurship is inadequate access to capital, says the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Formal banking systems are often loathe to invest in small rural entrepreneurs because of perceived business risks and absence of collateral – a particularly acute problem for youth and women. Finance available to smallholder farmers is often too expensive for anything other than short-term needs. Innovative solutions include supply chain financing, microfinance, credit cooperatives and warehouse receipts (see p. 26).

Farmers will need to find novel ways to boost crop and livestock production if their farms are to be

With support from FARM–Africa, smallholder farmers in East Africa have been equipped with business skills and linked to profitable markets for traditional African Indigenous Vegetables (AIV). Farmers were formed into Business Support Units (BSUs) and offered training in leadership, finance management and record keeping before progressing to marketing indigenous vegetables.

Demand in Kenya rose by 135% over a 2-year period. The volume sold was 9,000 t, with cash income earnings of Ksh80 million (€660,000) in informal markets and Ksh150 million (€1.2 million) in formal markets. The introduction of AIVs provided the average farmer with a net gain of €1,120/ha.
Extension and advisory services have a key role to play

food from the same land. But if agriculture is to be intensified, it is crucial that it is done in a sustainable manner. A UN study on agroecology, released in March 2011, claims that small-scale farmers can double food production in a decade by adopting simple ecological methods such as nutrient cycling or biological nitrogen fixation. The report documents agroecological projects that have shown an average crop yield increase of 80% in 57 developing countries. The Foresight Report on Food and Farming Futures, published in January 2011, details 40 case studies involving sustainable intensification from 20 African countries. Yields on average slightly more than doubled over a period of between 3 and 10 years. Sustainable production can produce other spin-offs. In Burkina Faso, a move towards soil conservation has spawned a network of young day-labourers who go from village to village to dig zai pits and build walls and half-moon structures.

Land management and tenure security

Some say there can be no real increase in production without genetically modified (GM) crops, though the issue continues to spark fierce debate. In May, Kenya became the third country in sub-Saharan Africa – after South Africa and Burkina Faso – to approve the commercial planting of GMOs.

Land access and tenure security influence the extent to which farmers are prepared to invest in improved land management and adopt new technologies and innovations. Acquiring more land, by renting, is often part of the process of scaling up from subsistence to commercial farming, so it is important that tenure systems have provision for this kind of arrangement. Tenure and access to credit go hand-in-hand since loans are often only extended to farmers with documented rights. More than 80% of land in the South is not legally registered. Some ACP countries such as Burundi and Mali are attempting to provide greater land security through local land commissions and land register kiosks. The Network of Rural Women Producers (NRWP) of Trinidad and Tobago is in the forefront of campaigns to ensure that women have equal access to land ownership, helping members to know their rights. Even small plots can be productive. In the Caribbean, cultivation of herbs and spices is proving a profitable sector for growing numbers of producers.

Simple technology and innovation solutions that can have a sizeable impact include agro-well construction, water harvesting, drip irrigation, intelligent planting schemes and strategies for reducing post-harvest losses. The use of greenhouses and hydroponics have brought good profits to some ACP farmers, especially in the Caribbean. Hydroponic tomato production is taking off in Côte d’Ivoire, where returns are such that farmers are paying back investment in just 3 months. At present, less than 1% of Africa’s farmland is worked by tractors and only 10% is worked by draft animals. Just 7% of African arable land is irrigated compared to 41% in South Asia. The key, experts agree, lies in choosing technologies that are suited to local conditions. Irrigation systems need to match smallholders’ unique characteristics, including plot size, low ▶
capital availability and low risk tolerance. The introduction of treadle pumps in Uganda’s semi-arid Karamoja region is helping herders diversify into crop production. In Tanzania’s Kilimanjaro region, farmers who once struggled to feed their families are now selling their produce at local markets, with crops irrigated by micro-dams that collect water streaming down the hills.

ICTs can provide major benefits in training and education, improved distribution, accelerated market development and business networking. Growing numbers of services offer real-time market information so that farmers receive crop prices and demands directly on their mobile phones. A scheme in the village of Macha, Zambia, is helping to connect rural dwellers to the Internet. When local farmer Fred Mweetwa’s cattle fell sick, knowing that the vet was hundreds of kilometres away, he used Skype to make contact and save the animal.

**Markets and value chains**

Engagement with the private sector can be a powerful driver for growth, especially in the absence of support from the public sector. Contract farming is just one of a number of business models that allow farmers to benefit from help with production, inputs and market access. Local, regional and global value chains can offer important opportunities for smallholder suppliers, linking ACP producers who normally operate in relative isolation to a range of services such as advice, credit, processing and marketing. The past decade has seen a steady integration of more agricultural products from African countries into established global value chains, including Ethiopian and Mozambican coffee and flowers from Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania.

Selling products is often the catch for small-scale farmers, and while modern markets offer a new trading environment for smallholders, with potentially profitable opportunities, they also have higher entry costs. National and regional markets can offer a valuable alternative, so it is important not to neglect them – small-scale producers need help in identifying which market is most suitable for their products.

**ICTs accelerate the development of markets and commercial networks**

Marion Hart has made a lifetime’s work out of processing food and helping other women farmers to earn more from what they grow. Well known across a wide swathe of the Caribbean as the owner of a thriving food company, she also works with the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (BADMC), developing by-products from cassava. Hart started by selling streetfood in Trinidad, before moving back to her native Barbados with seven small children to raise on her own. Desperate to earn an income, she began helping a man selling juices and sandwiches from a van. She asked if she could sell some of her own products. “He agreed if I would give a 5% commission on anything I sold. So I started bringing along coconut punch, sweet bread and pone,” she recalls.

Marion soon got a job with the Barbados Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) as a technical aide, her task being to come up with ideas that food technologists could develop, mainly from sweet potatoes, tomatoes and green bananas. She moved to BADC’s Agro-Processing Unit, developing ketchups, jams, jellies, sauces, potato chips and patties. She travelled in the region. At the Caribbean Industrial Research Institute in Trinidad, she learned to perfect sweet potato flour. At a workshop in Grenada, she gained insight into grinding cassava into a finer grade of flour. In 2002, Hart decided to set up on her own and launched 7 Hart’s – named after her seven children. She started by selling a batch of sugar cakes to two small outlets. Less than a month later, she had five more customers and was earning good profits. She made labels on her home computer. By the end of the first year, 2003, she had 25 regular customers, supplying tamarind balls, sugar cakes, Christmas cakes, guava cheese, juices and jams from golden...
particular product and circumstance, and how best to access it. Infrastructure is also important – particularly through improved roads and transport. Just one-fifth of the rural population in sub-Saharan Africa has easy physical access to markets, compared with 60% of Asian rural dwellers.

Business skills are among the most neglected areas of rural development interventions by national governments and donors, yet they are crucial if producers are going to make the transition to becoming entrepreneurs. The World Bank’s infoDev has a global business incubator network in more than 80 developing countries. In Burkina Faso, the Rural Microenterprise Support Project targets rural women, youth, microentrepreneurs and poor farmers with business development services. Increasingly, bankrolling entrepreneurship schemes are producing packages that also offer technical and business know-how. The Agricultural Development Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, whose focus is helping small-scale farmers shift from subsistence to business, offers a range of technical support systems, such as training in Good Agricultural Practices and quality assurance systems.

Processing products and presenting them in an attractive manner are important ways of generating income, but at present, less than 20% of agricultural output in developing countries undergoes processing, compared with 80% in developed countries. Some ACP staple crops, such as cassava, are bulky, perishable and cannot be traded without significant processing or value-added treatment. This results in some striking disparities. Nigeria is the world’s largest cassava producer but accounts for 0% of global exports of processed cassava while Thailand, which accounts for only 10% of cassava output, commands 80% of global trade because it processes its product.

The added touch

Adding value has a knock-on effect, creating new outlets and openings. According to UNCTAD, each US dollar (€0.70) of additional value added in agriculture generates another 30 to 80 cents (€0.20 to €0.55) in income gains elsewhere in the economy.

apple, cherry, carambola and tamarind. She also supplied crushed peppers in bulk for pepper sauce makers.
The proceeds of Hart’s company have helped her put five children through university, including one, a chemical engineer, who now helps with research. She believes strongly in supporting women farmers. Seeing the need to reduce the high wastage of agricultural produce, she teaches others how to develop products and how to exploit them to earn higher incomes. She has trained women in several countries to use the foods they grow. Her work involves promoting local cuisine by developing products and recipes and training farmers how to market the foods they produce.

She sees her life as about helping women empower themselves. In her simple and direct way, she sums up, “I am happy when people like what I do.” And she concludes, “I have done a lot.”

Andy Taitt
A growing number of small-scale producers in the Caribbean are tapping the tourist and export markets for chutneys, spicy sauces and condiments. Nelva Magloire launched a small business making plantain chips from her mother’s kitchen in Dominica. She now runs a full-scale processing unit. The NRWP of Trinidad and Tobago stages an annual festival to focus on adding value. Last year’s event showcased man-{

}goes, with demonstrations of processing and marketing techniques for the fruit and mango soaps, paper, beverages and even jewellery.

Many ACP farmers have improved outputs and incomes by diversifying into different crops, livestock or fish sectors (see Box below). Identifying and accessing a niche market can make all the difference between making a meagre living and standing out from the crowd, generating the kind of profit that allows a farmer to plan ahead and expand. Tomorrow’s farms do not have to be based on straightforward agriculture. The rural non-farm economy is an important path out of poverty, especially for women, with opportunities in trading.

Continued on page 24

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Links in the chain

Coffee farmers on Papua New Guinea’s remote Managalas Plateau have tapped into lucrative organic export markets. Spurred by their success, they have branched out into growing chillies too.

The rough terrain of the volcanic plateau in Papua New Guinea’s (PNG) Oro Province makes crop cultivation an uphill task, and marketing produce an even tougher challenge. But a network of small-scale highland coffee farmers have beaten the odds and teamed up with a local private enterprise. As part of an efficient value chain they receive essential support with inputs, crop management and perhaps most important of all, marketing. They now produce certified organic coffee bound for Australian and US markets, earning far higher incomes than they ever have. This important step has enabled the farmers to branch out into a new crop, generating extra revenue through chilli production. That means a reliable year-round income — something these farmers have never had before. Most of them run farms of 1 to 10 ha, and have no other means of earning a living.

Support for farmers

The informal network of 2,345 coffee farmers receive support from PNG company Earth and Spirit Products (ESP) in producing coffee to high quality organic standards. “This coffee is then processed and exported to organically certified markets in Australia and the US”, said company founder and chief executive Fiona Tanner. For the year ending 2010, ESP exported a total of 3,000 bags of coffee, with a net increase in revenue to farmers of 40% on the previous year.

Time to diversify

To take up the slack between coffee harvesting seasons and help its network of remote, rural producers, ESP expanded into producing bird’s eye organic chillies (Capsicum frutescens) in 2010. The company converted existing warehouse space to host a solar dryer, enabling it to meet the standard moisture content required for storage and sale of chillies.

“We are getting a regular income from our chillies”, said Tom Mesa, a farmer from Tabuane village who is in charge of monitoring quality control, as well as producing chillies. By the end of last year, the company had exported its first container of chillies to Australia, and it plans to export more than 10 containers during the course of this year.

Vinesh Prasad
Agriculture and the economy go hand in hand

Modernisation of the agriculture sector is not just a question of finances. To be really effective, the process needs to involve small-scale producers, who must have access to technologies and markets. Success stories in Mozambique have been piloted by investment company Gapi-SI.

What is Gapi-SI?
Gapi-SI is an institute of development finance (IDF), registered with the Mozambican banking system as an investment company. It is a mixed public-private company for business development. Our shareholders are investors with a long-term vision who have invested in a modern concept of banking for socio-economic development. Taking its shareholders into account, Gapi-SI offers, aside from its financial operations, services to support business development. We believe that the holistic system that we use is the most effective way of encouraging a new generation of businesses to prosper. We support start-up projects, as well as business incubators made up of young people, aimed at creating business and job opportunities for young people.

What kind of ‘modernisation’ is there for agriculture in Mozambique?
Modernisation integrates the various segments and operators of agricultural sectors. This integration only brings modernity if synergies and value are created by those involved. Modernisation cannot be seen solely from a financial viewpoint. It must involve small-scale farmers and their access to improved technologies and markets.
Our vision aims to break with strategies and concepts based on a dualistic economy. Agriculture and the economy have to be seen in a global manner. You can only talk about modernity when the capacities of the commercial sector match those of household farming, within well organised value chains. For that to happen, access to a commercial banking network is crucial, but insufficient. It targets the main stakeholders in the value chain. A network of credible and sustainable microfinance institutions, close to markets for small and micro rural enterprises, is also essential. That is why we are involved in creating a network of savings and community credit associations, as well as rural banks, to supply the needs of small-scale producers.

What are the results of your efforts to help small-scale producers?
The results can be seen on a national scale. The poultry sector is now managed by national businesses. Ten years ago, these businesses were fragile and only involved small poultry farms. In return for financing from us, we have demanded that owners get supplies of raw materials for poultry feed from local producers. In exchange, they provide suppliers with day-old chicks and feed, so as to promote the emergence of a network of small-scale household poultry keepers. The country now relies less on imports of frozen chicken, and thousands of families are involved in this sector, thereby ensuring their survival and making an effective contribution to the country’s food security. This business sector has made it possible to replace imports and draw profits from local resources, while at the same time creating micro enterprises and jobs.

Another success story involves Ikuru, one of the cooperative associations that we have helped to launch in order to market farmers’ products. Ikuru, which practices fair and organic trade, ensures additional profits for producers. In London, you can now find cashew nuts, peanuts and sesame, all exported by cooperatives representing about 10,000 families belonging to Ikuru.

What are the main hurdles you have encountered?
In recent years, Gapi-SI has diversified its activities and consolidated its economic and financial results. However, there is still limited understanding about what an IDF is. We need to overcome this hurdle through better communication. Some sectors of the national political class, as well as some technicians and officials, still think that IDFs are state banks, there to hand out money (providing loans for political reasons, with no sense of responsibility for the borrowers). Some people believe that you just need more banks to make the financial system more effective. They do not understand that the first step is to promote solvency for potential borrowers. The lack of human resources is also an obstacle. Our schools still do not offer all the skills needed for socio-economic development.

Francisco António Souto
is an economist. He was formerly a financial journalist and worked as a consultant for the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. Since 1990, he has headed Gapi-SI, a development finance corporation in Mozambique.
Diversifying and processing for development

communities, while Africa's rich heritage of natural landscapes, wildlife and indigenous crafts lends itself to the agrotourism sector. A Ugandan business making stationery from agricultural waste was among the winners of last year's Supporting Entrepreneurs for Environment and Development (SEED) award. In Guyana, North-West Organics combines conservation of turtles with sales of organic massage oils, soaps and cocoa. The entire product range of this flourishing community-based enterprise is made by indigenous women.

ALLISTER GLEAN

Quality and markets

TTABA is a growing force in Trinidad and Tobago's agribusiness sector, offering advice and coordination so that producers can increase profit margins. It helps at every stage of production, including postharvest, packaging and marketing, and makes sure products are up to scratch.

What does your work involve?
At TTABA, we see our role as leading the development and expansion of the agribusiness sector in Trinidad and Tobago, spearheading a project to revise and drive agribusiness. We provide farmers with guaranteed contracts and we demand that they produce professionally.
We focus strongly on agro-processing and on adding value. We recognise that consumers want convenience and that adding value can help to increase consumption of local foods. This is true for both individuals and businesses, so we also semi-process for other processors.
My role is to work with farmers, commodity groups, all sorts of people in the food industry towards developing industrial and commercial policies, and as a coordinating body.

How do you help farmers raise the quality of produce?
We reach out to farmers through extension officers. We try to ensure that they meet processing quality standards by following proper procedures. It is hard to compete with international farmers who are subsidised by their governments, so we have to emphasise quality and we have to go after what the consumer wants. We put a lot of emphasis on the value chain and demand that farmers follow quality production methods.

How important is training?
We train farmers in better ways of production, in better methods of post-harvest handling – simple things like farmers putting sweet potatoes on the market.
milk from every cow at every milking, and test for instant detection of mastitis," he says.

Sekhoto bought his farm in 2009 with a government grant as part of South Africa's land reform programme and used some of the money to buy cattle, sheep, horses and a tractor. Hard work and perseverance have helped him convert his land into a highly profitable property.

Sekhoto's farm is equipped with some of the latest technological systems that measure milk yields and automatically monitor how equipment in the dairy shed is operating. Each cow in his herd is fitted with a motion sensor and an electronic identification tag. The sensor relays information back to Sekhoto's computer, which alerts him when an animal displays signs of heat and identifies cows due for mating.

Sekhoto supplies his milk to Inkunzi Milkway in Pretoria and Woolworths, the country's sole organic retail chain store. He also produces apples, which are supplied to markets in Pretoria and Johannesburg. The apples are organically produced using drip irrigation.

Fidelis Zvomuya

still covered with mud from the field in the mistaken belief that this protects the crop. We have been encouraging them to wash away the mud to make their harvest more attractive.

We train them in using new technology. TTABA has acquired a new cassava planter and a harvester which we rent to farmers for use on their plots. Now some farmers are thinking of getting their own machines.

Do you help with finding markets?
Yes, we try to help farmers find the markets that are so essential. They can produce all they like, but without markets they are still nowhere. So we work closely with the National Agricultural Marketing Corporation. The Ministry of Food Production has been very pro-active in finding markets abroad and we are working with them on a deal to domestically supply a major international fast food chain with cassava and sweet potato products. We are very proud of this, for we have constantly been pushing public/private sector cooperation.

How easy is access to credit?
Access to credit remains a challenge, but we continue to explore new sources. Government is working to assist farmers and quite a lot is already allocated through the Agricultural Development Bank of Trinidad & Tobago. But much more funding is needed and farmers themselves need to work on accessing sources from outside the region.

What about land access?
Access to land is a problem. Some of the farmers are only renting the land they plant on. Since the change of government, however, the Ministry of Food Production has been aggressively looking at the matter of providing land for farmers. But the application process can be complicated and sometimes farmers don't have all the information they need or can't manage the process. TTABA will help in cases like this, and we encourage farmers to apply for large plots of land to be farmed cooperatively. Three farmers' groups are already doing this.

There is talk of clusters. How do these work?
Clusters means bringing farmers together in groups that best suit their needs. It could be as simple as sharing techniques, sharing resources, including labour, in a single area where farmers work in similar conditions and face similar problems. One group, the Rio Claro Farmers Association, has been very successfully producing cassava, cutting costs through sharing finance, equipment and labour. They are now one of the most reliable of the groups with whom we have contracts.

What are the major hindrances that farmers face?
Finding quality labour is a major hold-up. Some farmers are currently sourcing labour from a programme that was designed to provide workers for maintaining roads and drains. TTABA is working to introduce an agricultural component to the programme, preparing workers to meet the standards farmers will demand. The training that has taken place so far has produced commendable results. The Tableland Pineapple Growers Association is soon going to be hiring some 300 labourers. In the long run, though, farmers may have to turn to importing labour.
State-supported investment

Between 2005 and 2007, the government of Madagascar tested agricultural credit subsidies, in partnership with a microfinance institution. It marked a new strategy for state intervention in agricultural investment.

What is subsidised credit in Madagascar?
Subsidising interest rates is a tool for agricultural policy that is being used in the North to support investment and agricultural modernisation. With backing from the EU and later Japan, Madagascar has tested this instrument through a pilot project. Implemented between 2005 and 2007 in several regions of Madagascar, this project sought to support the purchase of inputs and agricultural equipment.

The government intervenes by providing subsidies for credit rates. The subsidy benefits borrowers in the form of a premium, which is offered by the partner microfinance institute (MFI) once the loan has been repaid. In Madagascar, Agricultural Savings and Credit Unions (CECAM), a mutual fund network launched in 1994, has been in the forefront of distributing subsidised credit. Credit support has to be backed up with technical advice.

What have been the results of this pilot programme?
The experiment launched in 2005 lasted until 2007, for as long as there was funding for the project. Positive results were observed – demand for credit to buy inputs and equipment increased, subsidised loans were repaid, MFIs gained new clients and agricultural equipment was purchased through this channel.

Challenges remain. Technical support was not provided and there does not seem to have been any long-term change in farmer practices. Implementing the project has not always been easy for CECAMs since it is difficult to work subsidies into the operations of an MFI.

In what way have these trials been innovative and why are they still of interest?
Governments are becoming involved in funding for agriculture in different ways, for example by intervening in market regulation or supplying market information. With trials for credit subsidies, the government of Madagascar has gone further, going back to more 'interventionist' tools that were abandoned at the time of the structural adjustment plans.

Another contribution from this experience has been the public–private partnership launched between MFIs and the government to support agriculture. The project results give reason to believe that extending the initiative could provide real support for agricultural modernisation. This experience throws new light on the legitimacy of state intervention through support for agricultural investment, a key element of agricultural modernisation.

Farmers bide their time

Warrantage, or warehouse receipt systems, is designed to help farmers avoid having to sell their harvests at the lowest price, when supply is at a peak. The system involves farmers offering part of their harvest as collateral, in exchange for credit to finance the next production cycle or invest in other businesses. The harvest is generally stored in communal custody. Warrantage generally lasts for between 3 and 6 months, typically between two seasonal cycles. It mainly deals with cereals, although some cash crops such as groundnuts and certain vegetables are also stored.

In Niger, where the system has been rolled out extensively, the impact on farmers’ incomes has proved significant. Aside from improved cash flow, advantages include lower-priced inputs due to bulk purchasing and more opportunities for added value through better storage. But warrantage can only work for products that can be stored without damage and is sustainable only if price differences between those at harvest and during the hungry season cover warehousing and other costs.

Management of stocks must be rigorous.
Agricultural policies are the lynchpin of a coherent and sustainable rural modernisation process that benefits producers. ACP countries are coming together in regional organisations to begin the slow task of shaping these policies. It is an immense task.
Political will and the availability of sufficient resources are imperative if ACP agriculture is to modernize. This mantra, which is constantly repeated by regional and international bodies, is now beginning to produce initial results. Countries are gradually drawing up agricultural policies that reflect renewed interest in a sector long neglected by government, and herald significant ambitions for its future.

Peter Hazell, Director of the Environment and Production Technology Division at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), compares the present situation in Africa with that of Asia in the 1960s. In 25 years, the Indian continent has pulled itself out of famine and has even succeeded in generating surplus output. Small-scale farmers have benefited from various measures during this green revolution – suitable technologies, distribution of land and greater land tenure security, modern affordable inputs, credit for small farms and policies guaranteeing stable and fair prices. These are all areas where ACP governments need to take action, as part of an overall plan for their countries’ agricultural development. They will have to make critical choices between a variety of more or less liberal options taking into account the interests of farmers, the needs of urban dwellers, respect for the environment and constraints posed by globalisation.

Pro-active agricultural policies are essential, but should be developed together with those most closely affected by them – the farmers. They should also be accompanied by appropriate financing and coordinated with other sectorial policies. However, it is not straightforward. These policies must also align with increasingly complex regional policies in an international environment that does little to take account of the difficulties that countries face.

Through the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), East African Community (EAC), the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) each region has defined its policy for agricultural development.

The launch of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) developed by the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) has brought a new sense of coherence to the various initiatives pursued by the countries (see Spore 153). The CAADP has inspired the regional African policies, helping to establish rules and recognised principles. To benefit from donor funding, each country is required to develop its own project, ensuring that it aligns with the CAADP programme. The goal is for countries to achieve an annual agricultural growth of 6%. Nine have already exceeded this figure (Angola, Burkina Faso, Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria, Senegal and Tanzania). However, only Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Rwanda and Senegal devote 10% of their budget to agriculture, as they pledged to do in Maputo in 2008.

Triggering action

The global goals are ambitious, and countries are gradually developing agricultural development.

**BURKINA FASO**

Combining legality and legitimacy

In Burkina Faso, the land tenure reform act (RAF), introduced in 1984 and amended in 1991 and 1996, brought significant progress to towns, including the wide-scale issuing of residential permits. However, this law, which is based on the concept of land as state-owned property, has never been applied in rural areas due to a lack of general agreement. Rural land has generally continued to be managed according to customary law. But this system has proved increasingly inadequate as a means for juggling growing tension over land tenure.

A new policy and a specific law for rural land tenure were adopted in September 2007 and June 2009, respectively, following lengthy discussions. The reform gives control of rural land tenure to the government, but also to local authorities and private citizens. In addition, it recognises the efficiency of customary law. So communities in one or more villages can now draw on local custom to develop a land tenure charter that will regulate the use of common resources. The law also provides for special programmes to allocate developed land to young people, women and herders. The new law stresses the importance of conciliation in cases of conflict over land tenure, making it mandatory to attempt negotiation, before any dispute can undergo legal proceedings.

Inoussa Maïga
Agricultural policy for Central Africa (PAC-ECCAS)

A strategy to develop a regional agricultural policy for Central Africa was launched in 2008. Yet to be finalised, it involves the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) and the Community of Central African States (EEAC).

Agricultural policy for the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)

Agricultural research should endeavour to link universities, farmers’ organisations and the private sector, allowing each to become fully involved in international events such as the Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD).

Agricultural policy for SADC

Countries in the region undertook to draw up a regional agricultural policy in March 2008, but to date, no legally binding agreement has been set in place.

strengthen strategies that ensure cohesion among the various projects. Everything centres on the development of a more entrepreneurial style of agriculture sector – Uganda’s Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (2000), Kenya’s Agricultural Sector Development Strategy 2009-2020 (ASDS), Rwanda’s pro-active agricultural development policy launched in 2007 (see Field Report p. 31). In West Africa, Senegal introduced its Agro-Silvopastoral Law (LOASP) in 2004, a framework for development over the next 20 years and the result of extensive dialogue between the government and the farmers’ movement. The legislation has sparked similar initiatives in neighbouring countries, including the Agricultural Guidelines Law in Mali and an ongoing process in Burkina Faso to establish something similar. In the Caribbean, Haiti recently drew up an agricultural development plan for 2010-2015.

There is a wide range of options for government action. Better land tenure security is one of the main strategies for attracting investment. It requires transparent mechanisms to be set in place that are equitable and accessible to all. This is now more important than ever as pressure on land increases. In Mali, policies for land tenure are a priority, with just 15% of arable land cultivated.

In Burkina Faso, the government is attempting to reconcile different approaches to land tenure, giving priority to local customs (see Box). In the Caribbean, governments are assigning considerable quantities of uncultivated land to large commercial farms. Another urgent priority is a rapid rise in output. A number of governments, including Benin, Burundi and Malawi, have fully recognised the scale of the challenge at hand and introduced policies to subsidise fertiliser. These include Benin, Burundi and Malawi (see p.32). In Mali, fertiliser has helped boost rice yields from 1.4 to 2.4 t. In the Pacific, governments are promoting the use of charcoal combined with compost to improve the poor soils of its atolls and increase productivity.

A major challenge for the African continent is building infrastructure, especially roads, which are crucial if trade is to flourish. Most of the good roads serve the big towns while the dirt tracks that provide access to production areas in remote rural areas are poorly maintained. Huge trans-border projects, including motorway and rail corridors, are being considered as a means of improving trade. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, work is under way to renovate 10,000 km of road as part of five major infrastructure programmes launched by the government in 2006.

There is much still to be done to improve water management for agriculture, a declared goal for the ACP Parliamentary Assembly. In a recent study entitled What is the Irrigation Potential for Africa? A Combined Biophysical and Socio-economic Approach 2010, IFPRI claims that Africa’s irrigation problems are partly caused by lack of informed policies and targeted investment that is tailored to farmers and the local economy. The Regional Agricultural Policy for West Africa (ECOWAP) is promoting the development of small-scale irrigation, the restoration of large irrigated areas and integrated management of water resources. Guyana, which is highly vulnerable to climate change, must adapt its infrastructure to meet the challenge of low water quantities during periods of drought. Drip irrigation is one solution being encouraged by the government.

Training and research are two crucial elements if agricultural modernization is to succeed; however, both have been neglected for the past couple of decades. According to Jamaican Minister of Agriculture, Chris Tufton, agricultural institutions have been neglected in the Caribbean. The Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) has received nothing but operating funds from member states for at least the past 5 years.

Agricultural research should endeavour to link universities, farmers’ organisations and the private sector, allowing each to become fully involved in international events such as the Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD).
Some issues are especially delicate. A case in point is genetically modified organisms (GMOs), already adopted in three African countries. NEPAD has set up three research centres for biotechnology in Burkina Faso, Kenya and South Africa.

Getting extension services – public or private – back on track using ICTs, is also essential to promote rapid adoption of techniques. Another necessity is positive and effective agricultural teaching/training, which needs to be made available to large numbers of rural dwellers.

Financing agriculture and regulating markets

Money remains the core issue for farmers and governments alike. Small-scale farmers face difficulties getting credit as loans are often inaccessible or very costly. Government initiatives in this sector are rare. In February 2011, Niger opened an agricultural bank, BAGRI-Niger, which offers backing to producers’ groups, the agro-industry and agribusinesses and support structures for the rural sector. Elsewhere, this crucial service is mainly provided by public-private projects or partnerships.

‘Corridors of growth’ which concentrate a cluster of public-private investments in a selected area to attract viable agricultural enterprises are delivering conclusive results. The Mozambique Beira Agricultural Growth corridor (BAGC) has been developed in a public-private partnership backed by major firms, including Monsanto and Syngenta. Public investors finance roads, irrigation and provide electricity while private ones fund the activities carried out in these areas. In this corridor, 190,000 ha of commercial irrigated agriculture have created 350,000 jobs and generated an annual US$1 billion (€700 M) in agricultural revenues. It has brought water and electricity to 150 villages.

Governments also need money to fund agricultural policies. Generally, funding levels fail to keep pace with demand – US$5 billion (€3.45 billion) are invested annually in agriculture, but US$16 billion (€11 billion) is needed for Africa alone. Government resources and donor aid remain inadequate.

Regional integration offers some hope for ACP agriculture. Creating common markets such as the one launched in East Africa promotes greater trade flows and opens up new markets. Strong regional entities are gradually being developed, often with significant support from international bodies. Administrative red tape encountered at borders poses an obstacle to regional integration and increases costs. African governments and regional communities are slowly working to remove these hurdles.

ACP countries are also susceptible to imports from outside countries who gain entry with low customs tariffs. The advent of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) is giving considerable cause for concern and few African countries have so far signed or implemented them, fearing competition from European products. In an effort to protect markets for certain products, ECOWAS countries are thus seeking to add a fifth customs tariff band of 35%.

In Kenya, the dairy sector has received a boost from the launch of the Kenya Dairy Board, a regulatory body, to organise, regulate and develop the sector. This initiative, coupled with import control through the introduction of a 60% customs tariff, will allow the dairy industry to strengthen and grow. These measures have been complemented by aid and training policies for livestock keepers. Private manufacturers have invested in processing units such as...
mini-dairies set up to develop local sectors. The country is now self-sufficient in milk.

Producers’ organisations on the front line

Deciding on political strategies no longer falls solely within the scope of the governing authorities. In many countries, they must also take account of the views of producers’ organisations: cooperatives, cooperative unions, community organisations, umbrella organisations and regional organisations who offer services to their members and are anxious not to be ignored. Well organised, armed with ICTs and skilled in communication – EAFF Newsletter, Roppavelle, the Pacific Youth in Agriculture network on Facebook, etc. – regional organisations have become key negotiators for Ministries of Agriculture. In some regions, they have the capacity to debate and put forward their ideas, but they often lack sufficient resources to develop further. In October 2010 they launched the Panafri can Farmers Forum (PAFFO). Themed networks are also emerging, such as CRCOPR, the regional rice producers’ organisation launched in Mali in January 2011. In the Caribbean, the Windward Islands Farmers’ Association (WINFA) mobilised its members during negotiations on EPAs, so as to offer better information to civil society and producers. The Caribbean Farmers Network (CaFAN) makes strenuous efforts to provide more training for its member organisations.

At times, the increasing space taken by these organisations is seen as a threat to state authorities. In Senegal, the government has created a new farmers’ trade union, (SYNAEP-Japandoo), targeted as the central interlocutor for discussions, at the expense of existing organisations.

In order to strengthen these organisations and help them to become a source for proposals with the power to convince, the EU and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) have launched a project to support capacities and strengthen farmers organisations (PAOPA). It involves several networks

For the past 5 years, the Rwandan government has imposed, sometimes harshly, a green revolution on farmers in this small densely populated country. While it has led to a sharp increase in output it has also caused difficulties in selling produce.

Over the past 5 years, many Rwandan farmers have seen their maize output more than triple, from 1.5 t to 5 t for the ‘Tamira’ variety, for example. This is the result of a policy to regionalise crops and consolidate land use (pooling land to grow a single crop on extensive areas) launched in 2007 by the Rwandan government. It seeks to increase output and help farmers progress from subsistence to more commercial farming. The green revolution has proved crucial in this small hilly country where some 87% of people depend on agriculture and the population density now reaches 433 inhabitants/km², or even 1,000 in some places. In 20 years, the arable land available for each family has been halved, with some households having access to only 300 m² of land.

The Ministry of Agriculture decides on the crops each province cultivates depending on soil and climate conditions: coffee, bananas, maize, pineapple or cassava. Provided they are members of a cooperative, farmers have the right to subsidised inputs and selected seeds. They must also follow new production techniques, especially planting in rows to increase the available space and respecting crop rotations. Building so-called ‘radical’ terraces groups together farmers’ plots and combats severe erosion on the hills.

Adhering to the rules is obligatory and local authorities have a duty to ensure everyone does so. The regulations have not been welcomed in several districts, especially time-consuming terrace construction, which makes farmers lose one or more growing seasons.

In areas where these measures have been put in place for several years, output of rice, maize, cassava and other crops has risen sharply. However, farmers are now finding themselves victims of their success. The organisation and development of value chains and marketing has not kept pace with them. In the north and east, markets are saturated with maize. As they can neither sell their crop nor buy food, farmers are going hungry. Pineapple producers watch their fruit rot in the fields due to oversupply. To tackle the problem, the government is giving support to the installation of small-scale processing units for pineapple and maracuja as well as drying sheds for maize.

Albert-Baudouin Twizeyimana
of African farmers’ organisations: the Network of Farmers’ and Agricultural Producers’ Organisations of West Africa (ROPPA), the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU), the Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF), the Sub-Regional Platform of Peasant Organizations of Central Africa (PROPAC) and the Pan African Farmers Forum (PAFFO) (see page 34).

Their presence in talks with governments and the professional advice they give is crucial to ensure that all farmers’ interests are protected, especially those of small-scale producers. It is only through a long-term strategic and political vision – one that takes account of the farmers of today and tomorrow, both men and women – that agriculture in ACP countries will gain a new momentum.

**[FIELD REPORT]**

**MALAWI**

**Smart subsidies**

While the pros and cons of input subsidies – and specifically Malawi’s use of them – continues to be hotly debated, their immediate impact has generated impressive results.

For most of his farming life, Malawian smallholder Willard Katosa had problems producing the kind of yields that would enable him to make a decent living. Like many farmers in Malawi, he was heavily dependent on low-input production of maize, though the soil was badly degraded. Soaring prices of imported fertiliser coupled with high maize price variation in this land-locked country made purchasing inorganic fertiliser almost unthinkable.

In a bid to improve crop yields, the Malawian government introduced a Starter Pack programme in 1998. Although the scheme targeted up to 96% of rural smallholder farmers, providing 10–15 kg of fertilisers, the amounts were too small to have significant effects. “As farmers, we received support in the form of free fertilisers, but imagine how little 10–15 kg can cover?” said the 35-year-old farmer.

Following a season of major food shortages in 2005/6, the government launched an Agricultural Input Subsidy Programme (AISP) for both food and cash crops. The scheme involved distributing coupons for fertiliser, which farmers could redeem at parastatal outlets. In exchange, they received inputs for about one-third of the normal cost.

“I bought a 50 kg bag of fertiliser at a subsidised price of MK500 (€2.7) using coupons that were distributed by agricultural officials in our area”, said Katosa. “AISP brought significant benefits to us as we were able to acquire inputs and apply fertiliser on a large scale.”

Farmers were also offered discounted prices on improved varieties of maize, rice, beans, groundnut and pigeon pea seed. Direct costs of AISP in the 2005/6 season were high – MK7.2 billion (€32.7 million) – and several private sector fertiliser chains reported heavy losses as a result of lower sales and exclusion from the scheme. But overall fertiliser use soared and, together with good rains, the results were bumper harvests. The programme was repeated the following year, with adjustments made to involve more private distributors. Maize yields and food security improved dramatically.

With fertiliser prices likely to remain high, such subsidies clearly come at a high cost to government budgets. The challenge is to design ‘smart’ input subsidy programmes that improve food availability and incomes in the short term, while stimulating growth and rural development in the long term.

*Charles Mkoka*
What is the link between the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the agriculture policy of ECOWAS (ECOWAP)?

ECOWAP is the body that implements CAADP in West Africa. ECOWAP translates the specific circumstances of the region and establishes the vision, goals and priorities. On a daily basis, we work closely with NEPAD’s Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA).

How do these policies promote modernisation for African agriculture?

Major changes are affecting regional agricultural development, both in the economic and commercial environment and the physical environment. Through structural reforms, ECOWAS is seeking to help build a commercial, physical, information and institutional environment that can promote a profound transformation of production systems and agriculture sectors in West Africa. This will be achieved through four different approaches: improving the commercial environment for agrifood sectors; adapting to climate change and integrated management of shared resources; putting an information system into operation and giving help with decision-making; and strengthening institutional and human capacities.

How should West African agricultural policies respond to recent financial and food crises?

The agriculture sector has considerable scope for contributing in a sustainable way to the food needs of the population, as well as economic and social development, reducing poverty in member states, and combating inequality between areas, regions and countries. The strong differences in ecosystems are a potential source of product diversification and will make it possible to exploit the region’s comparative advantages while also promoting the emergence of a diversified regional market. The region as a whole has 284 million ha of arable land available, of which only 60 million are currently in use. As well as this potential in terms of land that could be cultivated, there are also more than 215 million ha of pasture land. In addition, the region has more than 10 million ha of land that could be irrigated, but it barely uses 10% of this to its full value.

These possibilities are not sufficiently exploited and therefore West African agriculture does not perform as well as it could. Yields and productivity levels per active farmer are among the weakest in the world. As a result, about 19% of all imports are for food products, and access to regional and international markets for West African products remains low. Agricultural products are still not competitive and agricultural policies are often poorly designed. The first Regional Agriculture Investment Plan (2011-2012) will work to boost production and productivity, create favourable conditions for developing commerce and regional, inter-regional and international trade and offer support to vulnerable communities. In order to achieve regional food sovereignty, priority must be given to products which have potential for significant production levels and which align with the development of communities’ eating habits.

How can the transition be made for the agricultural and rural sector in West Africa from subsistence farming to commercial agriculture?

Since the 1990s, the West African agriculture sector has undergone major changes, with more output targeting local and regional markets. In addition, stakeholders are emerging who are increasingly organised at the regional level. They are carving out a space as important partners, who should be consulted when drawing up and implementing policies and strategies.

Several initiatives are under way, based on the implementation of the inter-community trade regime and adapting the external trade regime. In particular, these initiatives focus on introducing a fifth tariff band for the Common External Tariff. They also re-classify certain products, as well as negotiating market access as part of the EU-West Africa Economic Partnership Agreement and lowering hurdles to internal regional trade.

Public policy instruments address the fields of regulation and normalisation: incentives, taxation or regulation. These are the levers that enable ECOWAS to put into practice the options, guidelines and objectives that were adopted with the creation of ECOWAP. The fact that these variables are constantly developing means that they go hand-in-hand with – or where possible, precede – changes in the agriculture sector.
**INTERVIEW**

**Well managed productivity**

*What links are there between ‘modern’ agriculture, research and producers’ organisations (POs)?*  
Trained men, a suitable environment, productivity, competitiveness and access to markets – these are the keys to modern agriculture. By productivity, I mean controlled productivity, one which does not abuse the use of pesticides. Inputs must be properly managed. The question of research must also be taken into account. We know that it has greatly evolved and its results have improved significantly. However, there is insufficient collaboration between research and local communities. Often, results are available, they are not accessible to the public. It is, however, important to involve communities in research and to know how to link research and traditional knowledge. 

Producers’ organisations are the lynchpin in the chain between producers and research. They have good knowledge of their land and environment. They should be the focal point between research and grassroots communities. They know how to be persuasive and are trying to organise themselves better so as to offer community-based services and be better placed to spread the word about their goals and orientations.

*How do POs see training? Is there a special place for women?* 
Training is one of our main concerns. The development of human resources is fundamental. On this issue, we are planning a meeting with all regions (ed note: EAFF for East Africa, PROPAC for Central Africa, ROPPA for West Africa, UMAFRI for the Maghreb and SACAU for southern Africa) so as to discuss common objectives. We will then develop a strategy for the next 5 years and try to coordinate our activities. PAFO plays an important role in coordinating, harmonising and managing the knowledge of its members. 

Being a woman, my position is not easy. Everyone talks about gender and the need to support women. But the reality is more complex. We still have to fight and negotiate to convince people – far more than men do. We need to train women leaders, in each village, so that leading female officials gradually emerge at national level. I am launching an appeal to those who, like me, think that the time has now come.

**Reforms for farmer training**

Over the past few decades, training in agriculture and agronomic science has been neglected by governments and development policies. As a result, many agricultural professional, technical and higher teaching establishments in Africa have seen their budgets cut and their best teaching staff leave. Lacking adequate resources, they have become alienated from the needs of socio-economic stakeholders: farmers, the agribusiness sector, and research or extension services. 

NEPAD’S Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) is helping to improve the situation. In fixing the annual rate of growth for agriculture at 6%, it has highlighted significant needs in the field of training. 

While there is a revival of interest in higher agricultural teaching establishments, these need to introduce detailed reforms if they are to fulfil expectations. Aware of the challenge, African organisations have joined together to design a participatory mechanism to kickstart higher education for the agriculture sector. The system is managed by the African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education (ANAFE) – which groups together more than 134 African agricultural establishments – together with the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), a consortium of 25 universities in Central, East and Southern Africa. Objectives on the agenda include harmonising donor activities and funding, creating added value though better cooperation between African training institutions and adapting programmes to the needs of economic stakeholders.

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**To find out more**

**ANAFE**  
www.anafeafrica.org

**EAFF**  
www.eaffu.org

**NEPAD Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme**  
www.nepad-caadp.net/

**Pacific Agricultural and Forestry Policy Network (PAPFNet)**  
http://tinyurl.com/6fu83w3

**Regional Platform of Farmers Organisations in Central Africa (PROPAC)**  
www.propac.org

**ROPPA**  
www.roppa.info

**RUFORUM**  
www.ruforum.org

**Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU)**  
www.sacaun.org

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