



Support to Farmers' Organisations in Africa Programme (SFOAP)

2009-2012

Final Evaluation of the pilot phase

Summary of the evaluation report

This note summarises the independent evaluation report. Its content is the sole responsibility of the independent evaluation team and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission and of any other stakeholder involved in the programme.



The SFOAP pilot phase and its final evaluation were financed by the European Union.



The SFOAP final evaluation was implemented by AETS/CARDNO.

SFOAPs objectives, activities and stakeholders

The Support to Farmers' Organisations in Africa Programme (SFOAP) is a pilot programme created in 2009 to strengthen the capacity of FOs in African countries and of their regional and Pan-African networks in order to influence policies and support programmes affecting agriculture, rural development and food security. This capacity-building programme was supported by the European Commission (EUR 5 Mio) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) of the United Nations (USD 1,5 Mio). It was launched in 2009 and ran until September 2012.

SFOAP combined support to both regional and national FOs in one single programme. The FOs which benefited directly from SFOAP were: (i) the four African regional networks of Farmers' Organisations (RFOs) – the Eastern African Farmers' Federation (EAFF), the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU), the Plateforme Sous-Régionale des Organisations Paysannes d'Afrique Centrale (PROPAC) and the Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs Agricoles de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (ROPPA); (ii) their member organisations (National Farmers Organisations - NFOs) in 31 countries of Sub-Saharan Africa; (iii) the Pan-African Farmers' Organisation (PAFO).

To achieve its purpose, the SFOAP had two specific objectives: (i) to empower FOs to serve their members' interests better by strengthening their institutional and organisational capacities; and (ii) to strengthen the role that FOs play in articulating and implementing agriculture development policies and programmes by institutionalising their participation in decision-making processes at different levels.

SFOAP final evaluation

An external independent evaluation, financed by the European Commission (EC), was carried out from March to September 2012 to assess the SFOAP pilot phase. It was implemented by AETS/CARDNO (Team Leader: Hubert Cathala).

The main conclusions of the evaluation were discussed with all stakeholders (RFOs, European Commission, IFAD and other partners) at a workshop in Nairobi in September 2012. These discussions led to a common agreement among all parties on how to take into account the conclusions and recommendations of the final evaluation in the next phase of the programme. This constitutes the "Agreement at completion point" document.

This present note summarises the external evaluation report. The evaluators have taken into account the final discussions in September 2012 and the comments received by the different stakeholders to finalise their report. Nevertheless, the content is the sole responsibility of the independent evaluation team and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission and of any other stakeholder involved in the programme.

To obtain the full SFOAP evaluation report, including the "Agreement at completion point" and all detailed comments, please contact:

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1. Relevance: Strengths, weaknesses and interest of SFOAP

A logical and relevant programme which works with the most representative FOs

It is generally agreed that, given the large numbers of people that depend directly on agriculture for their livelihood, agriculture is the sector with the greatest potential for enhancing economic growth on the African continent and for reducing poverty.

If they are to defend their interests and improve their livelihood, smallholders need to have a voice in national and regional policy dialogue and decision making. FOs are the main structures that can represent smallholders in policy dialogue. RFOs in particular can ensure coordination and coherence between policy engagement at regional and national levels. They are the best, and most legitimate, channel through which to deliver messages and represent farmers' interests in regional policy dialogue with Regional Economic Communities (RECs), regional and continental agricultural research bodies and other inter-governmental institutions. The organisation of farmers at regional and national levels can also support the delivery of economic services. It is therefore important for FOs, particularly those representing smallholders, to organise themselves at national and regional levels.

SFOAP is all the more relevant in that the four regional FOs it supports are the most representative organisations for FOs in their sub-region and are recognised as such by the RECs. In addition, while the percentage of African farmers who are actually members of an FO is low (never more than 20 % and generally closer to 10 %, if not lower), members of SFOAP-supported FOs are globally representative of a large part of the farming population. Nonetheless, some farmers' movements are not included in SFOAP, although they deserve to be represented at regional or continental level. Mechanisms for increasing inclusiveness should thus be sought in the future.

The programme is consistent with country needs, global priorities and partners' and EC policies. The fact that it is based on FOs' strategic plans ensures that its assistance is relevant to the needs and expectations of the beneficiary FOs, regardless of their state of development or socio-political context. In addition, SFOAP can be considered to bring added value to the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) process by supporting FO's involvement in this process.

A flexible and unique programme which adapts to varying needs, contexts and stages of FO development and goes where others don't

SFOAP has a number of unique features which accentuate its added value

▶▶ It is unique in focusing support on the cross-cutting, institutional strengthening of both the network and its members. Although other programmes may be financially more significant, they tend to focus on specific sectors.

▶▶ SFOAP is the only project which has involved all RFO members and contributed to building cohesion and a sense of belonging.

▶▶ Hardly any RFOs have previously managed such a complex programme. Thus, SFOAP has provided them with a unique experience in programme management (planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, administrative and financial management, and reporting).

▶▶ By being so flexible, SFOAP supports FOs in moving towards institutional budget support, based on their strategic plan rather than on a project approach. This is conducive to coherence, efficiency and FO sustainability and should be further consolidated.

▶▶ SFOAP can help the weaker members of RFO networks to catch up with the other members.

Another interesting aspect of SFOAP is that it is flexible enough to adapt to the needs of different types of institutions at varying stages of development and within a range of contexts. This flexibility means that the programme can respond to needs that are not addressed by other partners.

It is one of its main comparative advantages.



A questionable allocation of resources among FO

FOs tend to distribute funds equally among themselves. This is not desirable. Allocations should be



based on a common assessment and prioritisation of differentiated needs. It is healthy for a network to be composed of equal partners and efforts should be made to reduce capacity variations among FOs. However, all members should remain in SFOAP as this strengthens the feeling of belonging to a network. If an FO is a member of a network, it should automatically be invited to take part in SFOAP. The nature of its participation should be the only point of discussion.

While resources are reasonable, expectations are unrealistic for such a short timeframe: institutional strengthening needs time

An obvious flaw in the programme's design is its overambitious objectives. Institutional strengthening takes time. Financial resources are not considered to have been a limiting factor. While the amounts received by National Farming Organisations (NFOs) seem limited (around 50 000 EUR over 3 years) they are not negligible for any FO. Adaptation to endogenous FO processes is crucial and the allocation of abundant resources would risk reducing sustainability. When institutions are being built time is of the essence. Continuity rather than quantity should be the guiding principle behind support. A continuation phase should therefore be considered.

2. Effectivity: Major outcomes but...

The main results achieved by SFOAP, or to which it has significantly contributed¹ with respect to institutional strengthening are the following:

- ▶▶ improved coherence, governance, internal democracy, communication, representativeness and legitimacy of FOs;
- ▶▶ improved FO financial capacity, accountability, credibility of secretariats, ability to mobilise external support (including project design and management) and capacity to diversify funding sources;
- ▶▶ improved leadership (entrepreneurial and coordination capacities, negotiating skills, and communication) of board members, staff and FO leaders, empowerment of FOs with respect to their members and ability to service and advise their members (organisational, financial and technical training and support, knowledge management);
- ▶▶ emergence of women's wings and youth wings structured at regional, national and sub-national level with statutory and strategic documents and regular meetings;
- ▶▶ increased visibility, recognition, reputation and credibility of FOs with respect to public authorities, private organisations and development partners, and increased involvement in rural development instances and projects;
- ▶▶ increase in the number, quality and influence of the messages delivered by farmers to governments

and development of mechanisms for monitoring and analysing policy implementation and effects. In most countries, FOs have significantly increased their access to government authorities and have become active participants in CAADP processes, thus helping to determine and validate regional and national policies as well as the orientation of regional and continental research institutions.

For the first time RFOs (and NFOs) are engaged not only in advocacy and representation at the regional level, but also in a process of supporting the institutional development of their members (peer-to-peer support, training, sharing of knowledge and experience from country-level activities and promotion of policy dialogue). This is a big step forward in terms of the institutional strengthening of FOs. It has led to increased membership of FOs and a stronger sense of belonging. More generally, SFOAP has contributed to building cohesion across the farmer movement.

...a need for consolidation

Despite major achievements, results vary between regions and within networks. In most cases they need to be consolidated.

Not all FOs are in a position to conduct effective lobbying and advocacy

While the stronger NFOs in East, Southern and West Africa carry weight with their respective governments

¹ Obviously, FOs receive support from a wide range of sources and carry their own endogenous development dynamics meaning SFOAP can only be considered to have contributed to FO institutional strengthening. As a transversal institutional strengthening programme, it can be said that SFOAP contributes to the development of almost all of the various networks, though results can only rarely be exclusively attributed to SFOAP.

(in various cases more than the RFOs do at regional level), consideration of their proposals is still far from systematic. For organisations less accustomed to advocacy work, the level of capacity to network, to analyse policies and agricultural development measures, to evaluate the effect of these on their members, and to formulate complementary proposals remains weak. These FOs are not in a position to conduct meaningful dialogue with their respective governments. Some are invited to policy-dialogue events merely to comply with donors' wishes regarding civil society involvement and may only serve to 'rubber-stamp' government decisions.

Knowledge management (KM) and communication: two crucial issues requiring further development

The bases of farmer organisations are the producers. It is the capacity of FOs to respond to grassroots concerns that determines their strength. While work at a regional level is important, it is essential for it to be complemented by support to FOs at a sub-national level.

FOs still need to develop communication between the various levels of farmers' organisations (local, national, regional and continental). It is essential for SFOAP to support the increased participation of local FOs (RFO visits to NFOs rather than the contrary, rotating meetings between countries...) and develop knowledge management (KM), including Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems, equipped with mechanisms that can synthesise and make the best use of experiences gained. KM (information, capacity building, technical backstopping, agricultural issues and policy analysis) is one of the areas where RFOs (and NFOs) have the highest added value. EAFF's KM system and ROPPA's "Observatoire des Exploitations Familiales" are promising developments.

In general, more work should be invested in the characterisation of different farming systems (including pastoralism and fisheries) and in the collection and analysis of data on good agricultural development practices, so as to nurture agricultural policy and development proposals adapted to different farmers. Moreover, most RFOs and NFOs recognise the development of market information services to be crucial.

A need to consolidate and diversify the offer of services

Responding to local concerns means FOs must, Responding to local concerns means FOs must, in addition to advocacy, develop their offer of services (capacity building, technical support, input provision, marketing,

credit) and strengthen their network of partners, including within the private sector. SFOAP should play a bigger role in such developments. However, FOs should be wary of assuming responsibilities historically held by government organisations without some form of recognition of the service they are providing and a clearer commitment on the part of the authorities to provide the required framework for them to conduct such services efficiently.

A challenge for RFOs is how to manage the complexity and differences that exist among FOs: determining the cross-cutting, common issues but also the specific needs of each member organisation.

Economic services are generally better provided at a sub-national level. The subsidiarity principle – a crucial guiding principle for SFOAP – would limit the involvement of NFOs and RFOs in economic service provision to a supporting role (market information). However, less well established NFOs can boost their recognition by supporting such services more closely. Ideally, advocacy-orientated issues – of less immediate benefit to farmers although no less important – will then emerge from the constraints met when implementing economic services.

A new economic service component should therefore be included in the next phase of SFOAP. Its exact content will be adapted to the context of each FO, but it should not provide direct support to producers (SFOAP must remain focused on network strengthening and capacity building at national and regional levels).

Wide-ranging situations with respect to governance

Organisational capacities are still limited for a significant proportion of NFOs. Planning and budgeting capacities vary widely. Many NFOs need to develop their membership base, consolidate their representativeness and institutionalise mechanisms of coordination and exchange with grassroots.

SFOAP should go further than its work with secretariat staff and FO leaders (board members and others) and involve a larger number of members, thereby ensuring stronger internal democracy, leader renewal and improved communication with grassroots organisations.

In rare cases, NFOs fail to fulfil a number of minimum criteria related to representativeness, independence from government and good governance. The farmer movement has a vested interest in promoting best governance practice. Weak, underperforming NFOs damage its reputation. SFOAP should therefore promote peer review and exchange in order to encourage performance and guarantee FO standards.



Despite progress, women's involvement should still be improved

While women are involved to a certain extent in all organisations, they rarely occupy positions of leadership. Thus efforts to integrate women better into the decision-making processes are required. Most FOs appear to have developed – or are in the process of developing – a “women’s wing” and at the very least their strategic documents contain declarations pertaining to the promotion of gender equity. “Women’s wings” however, should take steps to avoid becoming just another member of the network and an alibi for taking gender considerations into account. The actual role they are given within an FO’s decision-making processes should be better analysed.

Organising at a continental level: PAFO development limited by a lack of consensus as to its future role and responsibilities

The Pan-African Farmers’ Organisation (PAFO) has been set up, legalised and recognised by continental and international partners. This in itself is a significant result. Nevertheless, little more can be said to have been achieved. No executive secretariat has been set up yet, PAFO meetings are irregular, and ownership by RFOs is weak. PAFO yet did not produce any information or clear policy proposals and it still needs to

finalise its strategic plan. RFOs do not even appear to agree with PAFO’s mission statement.

PAFO’s current status quo reveals differences between its five constituent RFOs² with respect to their vision of PAFO and the place it assigns to agriculture in development processes.

When FOs represent a wider diversity of farmers (large and small), they tend to be more market orientated and it becomes less obvious to what extent their action represents the best way of helping to reduce poverty and food insecurity, despite their obvious contribution to modernising agriculture, increasing agricultural production and creating wealth within the sector. Hence, it is necessary to have an open exchange on the vision each RFO has of PAFO, its prerogatives and responsibilities. Such an exchange should touch upon the extent to which farming is concerned exclusively with agricultural production, or whether it also has a social and wider economic function, and how far agricultural production alone can solve food security issues. In all cases, common interests on which FOs can coalesce should be identified, as should the thresholds beyond which an FO believes its views and interests are no longer represented.

According to the evaluation team, in order to support such discussions PAFO should help develop deeper mutual knowledge and understanding by encouraging farmers from different geographical areas to get to know each other better as well as their respective farming systems.



3. Efficiency: Administrative procedures cause delays and synergies are lacking, but significant achievements have been made

SFOAP has suffered from the FOs inability to manage the EC’s complex administrative procedures, as well as from a lack of coordination with other programmes and between regions. Nevertheless, considering its continental scope and achievements, and the limited funds involved, SFOAP’s level of efficiency is generally satisfactory. In addition, the experience gained in grappling with EC procedures contributes to institutional strengthening.

However, working at the national and regional level, SFOAP cannot stand alone. It is essential for it to develop more synergies with regional and national investment programmes. It should also promote exchange and better coordination among FOs (within a network and within a country), among the various levels of FO

organisation and across geographical areas. This has great potential in relation to institutional strengthening as well as advocacy. There is no doubt that it is better if a message can be delivered at various levels through a multipronged approach.

In addition, SFOAP should develop monitoring, evaluation and reporting procedures as a tool for FOs, embedded within their own M&E systems based on their strategic plans. FOs in turn should increase the level of analysis and detail in their reports. Ideally, project funding should be based on a system of joint planning and evaluation, linked to performance indicators jointly devised by FOs and enabling peer support. RFOs could coordinate such a system.

² UMAGRI (Union Maghrébine des Agriculteurs) though it has not taken part in SFOAP to this date, is nonetheless a member of PAFO.

4. Sustainability: two major challenges: financial stability and capacity renewal

Donor support is prominent in the budgets of all NFOs and RFOs, regardless of whether they are supported by SFOAP. Financial sustainability is still a long way off. For better established NFOs or RFOs, donor funding seems to be forthcoming and immediate sustainability is less of an issue. However, for all FOs, the balance between sources of funding is inadequate in the long run and a higher level of self-financing should therefore be sought. A number of FOs, particularly those most recently established, also need to diversify their sources of funding.

While the development of economic services could partially address this problem, donor funding will continue to be essential³ and FOs must develop their capacity to tap into it (project cycle management, response to call for proposals, etc.), whilst recognising that it can distract them from their core missions and nurture project opportunism or even subservience, which risks stripping the farmer movement of its identity.

FOs can be considered to offer services of public interest. It would thus be legitimate for them to receive public subsidies. However, many are wary of government support and would prefer to remain entirely independent of public authorities. It therefore seems that such support would be more realistic at a regional level than at a national level, where relations with governments tend to be more tense, government intervention more frequent and FO freedom of expression more of an issue. Current efforts by ROPPA to negotiate a systematic budgetary allocation from the Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine (UEMOA), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Comité Interministérielle de Lutte contre la Sécheresse au Sahel (CILSS) should be supported.

Moreover, FOs need to better master some of their costs and define a realistic volume of activity in the long term. Rather than planning to expand current staff and secretariat activities with SFOAP funding, they should better assess what their priorities are, determine what they can expect to do well (given available resources) and focus on the capacity building of present teams (particularly farmer leaders). Their volume of activity and staff should be increased only when sources of funding have been diversified and offer good prospects for stability.

Furthermore, in some cases, clarification of a universal conception of what a FO stands for could be useful. The farmers' movement must agree on the attitude it should adopt with respect to the conditions offered to its members and staff at the various levels of its organisation. To what extent does working for an FO imply a degree of commitment and compromise from its staff? To what extent do levels of compensation for board members' participation in NFO-related activities represent a source of revenue with the risk of taking board members away from their agricultural activities?

Apart from the financial aspects, many FOs still revolve around too small a group of leaders. As a matter of priority, therefore, future work must include the dissemination and multiplication of newly acquired capacities. The development of "youth wings" is a step in this direction, but mechanisms for promoting young leaders need to be better developed.

³ The most optimistic FOs estimate that for an organisation to generate up to 30% of its own resources would already be an impressive result.



5. Impact: FO emergence, consolidation, assertion and cohesion enabling advocacy campaigns with real but unquantified impact



The SFOAP programme is based on the observation that FO funding was available at a local level but much less so at national and regional levels. While the final beneficiaries of SFOAP should be farmers, the programme's effect on them should remain indirect. Funding for sub-national activities must be sought from country programmes. As a result, the direct beneficiaries of SFOAP are RFO and NFO leaders and secretariats. Nonetheless, although SFOAP's impact on farming communities is still limited and difficult to measure due to the continental scope of the programme, its impact is real where advocacy campaigns have been successful.

Furthermore, while the most visible outcome of SFOAP is the emergence or stabilisation of FO secretariats and the consolidation of FO core functions, the capacity of FOs to deliver, defend, impose and follow up on agricultural development proposals and policies has significantly and irrevocably improved, with the corresponding potential to defend farmers' livelihoods. In addition, there is significant potential for increasing the impact on farming communities through the development of economic services.

Finally, although it is still in its infancy, the birth of PAFO promises to have a great impact as regards conveying the voice of African farmers to continental and international forums concerned with agricultural policy and development.

6. Coherence and EC/EU added value

SFOAP support to FOs is largely coherent with EC/EU country and regional strategies as well as major country, regional and continental strategic papers.

The need to develop greater synergies should be underlined. The lack of collaboration between projects funded by the European Development Fund and SFOAP is clearly a missed opportunity. The almost total lack of knowledge about SFOAP's activities observed among European Union Delegations (as well as EU-Member States cooperation agencies, with the exception of AFD (Agence française de dé-

veloppement)), as well as the absence of cooperation between EU Delegations and SFOAP-supported FOs, demonstrate the limited EC/EU added value in the programme. More intense dialogue and greater coordination with EU Delegations should therefore be sought in the future.

Nonetheless, there is no evidence of duplication between SFOAP and other interventions. For example, SFOAP is complementary to the AFD-financed PAAR and to AgriCord efforts (which are supported by several EU Member States).

7. Visibility

According to the evaluation team, the programme's visibility is very poor. This is reflected in the absence of knowledge about the programme among people met who were not directly involved in its implementation (and among EU Delegations). The project's strategy and activities in terms of visibility, information and communication have been inefficient and should be improved.

The SFOAP independent evaluation was carried out from March to October 2012.