

BENIN COUNTRY WORKSHOP FOOD & BUSINESS APPLIED RESEARCH FUND

Novotel Orisha, Cotonou, BENIN

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1. WELCOME REMARKS..... 2
- 2. FROM CO-CREATION TO A BETTER FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL SECURITY 2
 - 2.1 Project results..... 2
 - 2.2 Two projects showed their approach to reach the target groups 1
 - 2.3 Two projects showed the approach from output to outcome. 1
 - 2.4 Relevance of ARF projects for national and Dutch policy makers..... 2
- 3. OPEN SPACE AND PANEL DISCUSSION ON CROSSCUTTING TOPICS 0
 - 3.1 Open-space discussion on challenges faced by Benin ARF consortia 0
 - 3.2 Panel Discussion around cross-cutting topics 0
- 4. WRAP UP AND CLOSING OF WORKSHOP 1

COUNTRY WORKSHOP

1. WELCOME REMARKS

The facilitator, dr. Dominique Hounkonnou, welcomes the participants and introduced the programme of the day (annex 1).

In his welcome words, Professor Hounhouigan from the University of d'Abomey-Calavi refocused the seminar on the fact that it gathers the Benin ARF projects together with the funding organisation to get to know each other and share their experiences. He wrapped up the international workshop of that week, with two major foci. The first one concerned the inner circle of the ARF consortia and the most immediate stakeholders, on their internal experience of co-creation and the impact of their research , and on research uptake and knowledge sharing for the outer circle, beyond these consortia. The second one tackled ways to take into consideration nutrition along the value chain of agricultural products for more impact, for lifting malnutrition in Benin. He congratulated Benin teams for their dynamism in applying to this funding scheme and thanked NWO-WOTRO and F&BKP (see annex 1) for organising this workshop..

The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, especially the WOTRO Science for Global Development department that focuses on global and local processes in Low and Middle Income Countries (LMICs), was represented at this workshop by Dr Cora Govers. She was delighted by the presence of the representatives of Benin ARF consortia at this seminar, not only the one implementing their project since 1 or 2 years but also the newly-appointed ones. This country workshop aimed at furthering collaboration between projects, enhancing research for impact (especially for better food and nutrition security) in the specific situation in Benin and finding approaches to link Benin projects to national policies. She presented the two NWO-WOTRO Food & Business funding tools for fundamental (Global Challenges Programmes) and applied research (Applied Research Fund) that are developed for knowledge co-creation through trans-disciplinary consortia based on a Theory of Change. Currently, 36 ARF projects have been funded in Africa and Asia, and coordinated by practitioners and a last batch of 9 projects are yet to be awarded for a total budget of 15 million euros plus at least 20% co-funding by private partners. Report on ongoing ARF project activities are very positive. as all consortia are built and work to ensure research uptake and impact. She also emphasised the strong collaboration between NWO-WOTRO and the Food & Business Knowledge Platform to support the funded projects. The F&BKP works to facilitate research uptake and scale up research outputs to larger audiences. From this respect, ARF projects are highly encouraged to interact with the platform. The Food & Business Research coordinator refreshed briefly the mind of participants on the Theory of Change and related Impact Pathway with a specific attention to the different spheres around the projects (of control, of influence, of interest, see annex 1 and 2).

2. FROM CO-CREATION TO A BETTER FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL SECURITY

Four batches of presentations were given to the workshop attendees for different purposes.

2.1 Project results

Polycarpe Kayodé presented the following INFLOR project results after two years of implementation:

- 138 promising local food ingredients identified, characterized and mapped by agro-ecological zones of Benin
- 12 nutritional Maps realized for the local food ingredients of Benin
- 03 novel food formulas developed: 1 for industrial exploitation and 2 generic formats for agro-ecological zones
- 01 launching workshop; 04 steering committee meetings and 03 follow up meetings organized

- 02 participatory sensorial evaluations of developed products realized
- 03 manuscripts prepared for publication in refereed scientific journals
- 03 posters prepared for presentation at international workshops.

Martin Agboton indicated that PROSESS was implemented in Benin since one year and achieved the following results:

- 05 key group of actors of the soy seed supply system and their roles identified;
- 01 informal soya seed supply system trusted by farmers versus no formal functioning soya seed system in Benin;
- lack of quality seed as desired by farmers;
- quality attributes researched by the soya marketing system actors are clearly identified;
- 10 soya bean varieties have been collected from IITA Nigeria, 7 from research institutions and NGO and numerous accessions;
- 8 well performing varieties identified based on agronomic characterisation;
- 01 launching workshop with 51 participants;
- 01 advocacy made to the ministry in charge of agriculture for the development of a strategic plan for the soya seed system in Benin;
- 01 project description poster presented at three conferences;
- 01 project leaflet developed.

2.2 Two projects showed their approach to reach the target groups

Enoch Achigan-Dako showed that the Cleonomics consortium attempted to reach the target groups through the involvement of farmers at different steps of the project: in during proposal development, in the launching workshop, at in-station demonstration, farmer field schools (for better production practices) and fairs (knowledge dissemination), via advertisement and fact sheets, and by testing nutrient rich high yielding lines with farmers. Beyond this,

ideas/inquiries/statements of farmers are integrated in project approaches such as the shift from genomic to additional transcriptomics and metabolomics study, as farmers mentioned accession variability in terms of bitterness and smell.

The approaches developed along the rice food chain developed by the PARCR project to reach the final beneficiaries were presented by Raoul Balogoun:

- including Farmer Field Schools, allowing researchers to work closely with rice producers and processors
- Pilot Parboiling Women Groups, to ensure capacity building within actor of parboiling share of the rice chain) and
- Innovation platforms, for experience sharing, credit access, access to equipment, market, technical innovation and lobbying.

2.3 Two projects showed the approach from output to outcome.

The project on improving overfishing resilience presented by Donald Houessou planned to achieve outcomes from their output through a diversity of tools such as technical reports, maps, training workshops, website communication, reports, impact evaluation, etc.

Dapis project was presented by Nicodeme Fassinou. He argued that stakeholders outside consortium Ananas Mitongnon could be reached by their outputs through workshops with all the actors of the pineapple value chain, visits of experimental sites by stakeholders of the outer circle, publications, technical manuals etc.

The question – answer session that followed these six presentations yielded questions meant to improve attendees’ understanding of the projects. However, one related to the influence of ARF projects results by the Dutch embassy and Benin agricultural policy the second to the dissemination of the outputs of the current seminar. The Benin ARF projects are in line with the priority areas of the Dutch embassy (water, women empowerment, food security). The Dutch embassy in Benin indicated that

project outputs help lobbying during monthly meetings organized by the Benin Ministry in charge of Agriculture, setting up intervention priorities in Benin and are used as inputs for policy development by Dutch ministries. ARF and Agripofocus platforms are adequate opportunities available to spread outputs of ARF projects and seminars. Moreover, the Regional of Sectorial Comities for Research and Development (CRRD and CSRD) of the National Scientific Agricultural Research System in Benin is also fully available to receive presentations of the ARF project results.

2.4 Relevance of ARF projects for national and Dutch policy makers

Two short presentations were delivered, one by **Annelies van der Berg**, 1st secretary at the Dutch Embassy in Benin on **relevant initiatives and priorities in the country**, and one by **Guy Apollinaire Mensah**, Director of the Research Promotion Centre at the University of Abomey-Calavi, on **the potential for policy relevance of the projects presented in the morning**.

Annelies van der Berg underscored the new priorities of the cooperation which include getting to zero malnutrition and hunger, sustainable economic growth and successful Dutch businesses. A particular emphasis was put on issues such as gender, climate change, youth, and good governance for better livelihood. These priorities are tackled using the Dutch Diamond approach and the leave nobody behind policy of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to achieve the best outcomes. Participants commended the Dutch Embassy for their support and transparency in the management of the cooperation on the projects.

Guy Apollinaire Mensah established a link between all the projects presented and the New Government Action Program. He further indicated that development will only be possible through education and research. For him, the Spider plant project is a fundamental research project as well as it is an applied research project. This is all the more true since

it will enable to select the best cultivars that will in turn help to address the issue of malnutrition. Apart from all that, he pointed out some gaps in the presentations. For instance, presenters did not show how they are going to add value to the outcomes of the research projects and he suggested the use of policy briefs to address that issue. In addition, those working in the processing area failed to show how byproducts will be valued. He suggested to bridge processing with animal feeding or soil fertilization through the use of processing byproducts.

The debate induced by these presentations released the following messages:

- the newly appointed government of Benin budgeted 10 billion FCFA per year to support research and development of agriculture, and facilitate spreading of outputs;
- the Dutch embassy operating guidelines is the MASP which is constantly reviewed. The ongoing one is the MASP 2014 – 2017. Moreover, it works for a win-win partnership for a better representation of Dutch companies in Benin but also good interaction with Benin companies. This strategy is currently supported by the Dutch Good Growth Fund: Business for Development. More advertisement will be made around this funding scheme allocated to companies. The Dutch embassy in Benin doesn't work directly with the Ministry of Agriculture as most of its agriculture related programmes focus on post-harvest technologies. However, it supported research at university through NICHE and NFP fellowships.

3. OPEN SPACE AND PANEL DISCUSSION ON CROSSCUTTING TOPICS

3.1 Open-space discussion on challenges faced by Benin ARF consortia

A speed-dating session was organized around a representative of each of the consortia presenting their ARF project during the last session. As an outcome, three challenges faced by consortia in Benin and suggested solutions were identified, each defended by an ambassador.

Challenge 1. Quality and health-sensitive packaging: Products not well positioned; some indications do not appear on the packaging. What can be done to comply with food safety standards? Packaging demand should be assessed to justify the future establishment of a bottle manufacturing factory (for juice). Stakeholders should equally be sensitized through intense communication on the need for certification. Products identified for their lack of compliance to food safety standards should be effectively censured.

Challenge 2. Integration of issues addressed by ARF projects in the Benin Strategic Plan for the Development of the Agricultural Sector (PSDSA). ARF consortium members should not wait for WOTRO to organize seminars before they meet and share ideas. These consortia should take ownership of the National Agriculture Investment Plan (PNIA 2017) and develop policy briefs to inform policymakers about their project outcomes.

Challenge 3. Competitiveness of the packaging sector in Benin. To ensure the competitiveness of the packaging sector in Benin, efforts should be made to facilitate the import of biodegradable packages. It is also important to map packaging stakeholders in the country and sensitize potential investors.

3.2 Panel Discussion around cross-cutting topics

The floor was first given to the two presenters to give their opinions about the aforementioned

issues. For the representative of the Embassy, countries should create economic unions to be stronger. She also expressed her agreement with the idea of certification to comply with quality standards bearing in mind market needs; all open-space ambassadors insisted on the need for an enabling business environment.

As for the Director of Research Promotion, he pointed that ARF consortia would gain a lot using a value chain approach that enables them to root into the country agricultural policy.

The three open-space ambassadors pinpointed the need for solidarity among Beninese companies. Those who have succeeded should mentor the younger ones to enable the availability of quality foods that all Beninese citizens deserve. They also insisted on the need for integration in order to foster development. The issue of packaging was also flagged and it was recommended to continue thinking about how to produce the packaging materials in Benin instead of relying on imports.

Furthermore, a particular emphasis was put on networking between companies and researchers for better dissemination of research output. AgriProFocus is already working in that arena and is ready for supporting network activities. Given that in Benin, non-state actors are allowed to contribute to government policy, the consortia were encouraged to develop policy briefs in order to impact policymakers and scale up the outcomes.

On top of all that, participants agreed that development funding should no longer be considered in terms of philanthropy. The private sector should be involved and entrepreneurship encouraged. Université d'Abomey-Calavi already showed the way by creating incubators (Start-Up Valley) where students look for research results that can be translated into business ideas. Such initiatives should be encouraged.

4. WRAP UP AND CLOSING OF WORKSHOP

The Dean of FSA wrapped up the deliberations. He thanked all the consortia members and emphasized the need to implement the outcomes of the projects through policy briefs and publicity. He further indicated that ARF is an innovative approach for using research as various stakeholders work together from the design of the project to the marketing of products. Serious work should be done for better impact. Co/Mutual evaluation of ARF consortia should be promoted for better criticism about our individual works. If ARF project outcomes are implemented, the government and other donors will come in to finance more research activities. Therefore, good visibility tools ought to be developed to show what is done. Finally, he thanked the ARF partners for their honesty and transparency in projects' managing.

The F&BR Coordinator stated that she was impressed by the implementation of all the project. She commended the various partners for their determination and profoundly thanked Professor Hounhouigan and his team for an excellent organization of the day, before officially declaring the country workshop closed.

Annex 1. Food & Business Applied Research Fund

The Food & Business Applied Research Fund (ARF) is a subsidy scheme of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is created to underpin the Ministry's food security policy by making more effective use of knowledge and encouraging innovation for development impact in the partner countries of Dutch development cooperation. The ARF is implemented by The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), department WOTRO Science for Global Development. See also www.nwo.nl/foodandbusiness.

The Food & Business Knowledge Platform (F&BKP) is the gateway to knowledge for food and nutrition security, connecting business, science, civil society and policy. See also www.knowledge4food.net. F&BKP and NWO-WOTRO work together in increasing the impact of research for food security implemented under the Food & Business Research (F&BR) programme of both ARF and the Global Challenges Programme (GCP).

Annex 2. Theory of Change

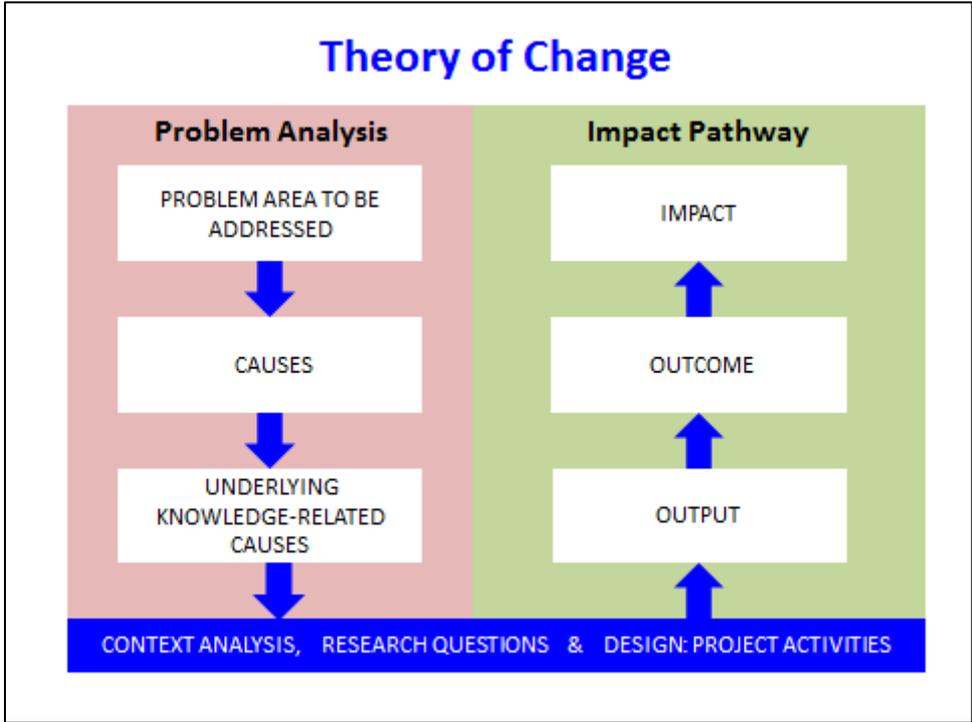


Figure 1. Theory of Change with Impact Pathway

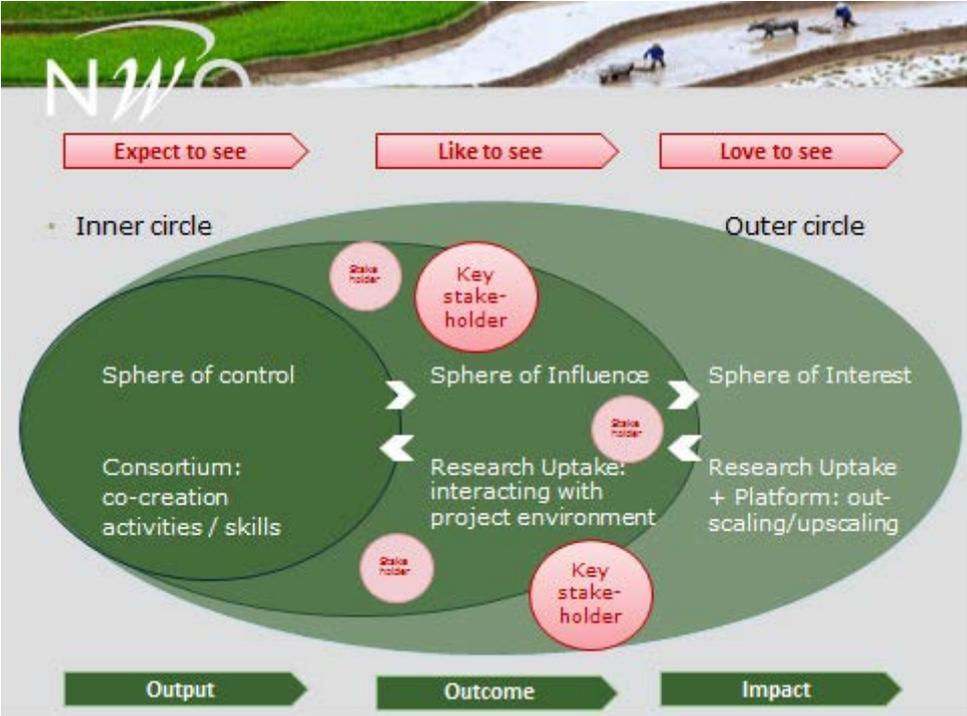


Figure 2. Impact Pathway with spheres of control, influence and interest

Annex 3. Benin ARF projects

ARF call no.	Project title	Consortium members	Contacts
2	Improving the resilience of the inland fisher communities and aquatic systems to overfishing and water resource degradation in Benin W 08.270.310	Dr. Wim Sonneveld (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam/Centre for World Food Studies)	b.g.j.s.sonneveld@sow.vu.nl
		Mr. Donald Houessou (ACED-Benin)	d.houessou@aced-benin.org
		Prof. Philippe LALEYE (University of Abomey-Calavi)	laleyephilippe@gmail.com
2	Ensuring Sustainable and Sustained Food Security by Enhancing local parboiled rice value-Chain Competitiveness in Gogounou and Banikoara areas in Benin (PARCR). W 08.270.312	Raoul Balogoun (DEDRAS-ONG)	bk.raoul@gmail.com
		Dr Ismail Moumouni (University of Parakou)	ismailmm@gmail.com
		Mr. Wim Simonse (Woord en Daad/Red een Kind Allinace)	W.Simonse@woordendaad.nl
2	Designing appropriate agronomic and processing practices for pineapple supply chains in Benin W 08.270.313	Mme Félicité Djivoh (Group Magnificat)	allotcheoubenin@gmail.com
		Dr. Nicodème Fassinou Hotegni (University of Abomey Calavi (FSA/UAC))	nicodemef@gmail.com
		Dr. Willemien Lommen (Wageningen University)	willemien.lommen@wur.nl
2	Matching grain quality attributes to the requirements of soybean processors in Benin W 08.270.315	Dr. Paul Ingenbleek (Wageningen University)	Paul.ingenbleek@wur.nl
		Lagnon Patrice Sèwadé (SOJAGNON-NGO)	patsewade@yahoo.fr
		Dr. Elie Dannon (International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA))	e.dannon@cgiar.org
1	Utilizing the genome of the vegetable species Cleome gynandra for the development of improved cultivars for the West and East African markets W 08.270.305	Prof. dr. M.E. Schranz (Wageningen Universiteit & Researchcentrum/Biosystematiek; BIS)	eric.schranz@wur.nl
		Dr. Enoch G Achigan Dako (University of Abomey Calavi)	e.adako@gmail.com
		Edgard Deguenon (Hortitechs Developpement)	deguenonedgard@yahoo.fr
		P. Maundu (KENRIK Centre for Biodiversity, National Museums of Kenya)	patrickmaundu@gmail.com
1	Infant foods from local resources as a pathway to a better food and nutrition security in Benin W 08.270.307	S. Adjadogbedji-Avouzoukan (Groupe Pépité d'Or)	Consortium.infantfood@gmail.com
		Prof. Polycarpe Kayodé (University of Abomey Calavi)	polykap@yahoo.fr