

Factsheet final findings Applied Research Fund Call 2



Strengthening agribusiness Ethics, Quality Standards & ICT usage in Uganda's value chains (AGRI-QUEST)

Summary

The AGRI-QUEST project was premised on the fact that despite the benefits enshrined in embracing (i) ethical behavior and (ii) quality issues with respect to accelerating transformation, competitiveness and sustainability of a vibrant food security program, there is a considerable lack of attention to these two issues in agribusiness value chains in Uganda. The value chains included in the project are rice, potato, dairy, oil seed, and cassava. Henceforth, the project was set out to answer the central Research Question (RQn): How can we have a better business climate that fosters a permanent and positive gradual change in practice & attitude towards agribusiness ethical behavior and quality standards in food security initiatives? To answer this complex RQn, a participatory action qualitative methodological approach centered around co-creation with multi-stakeholder engagement of various agri-business players was applied. These included: local produce traders, farmers, agro-input dealers, agro-processors, local government leaders, district agricultural officers and extension workers, plus agriculture sector donors. To realize impact and uptake of findings, the AGRI-QUEST project beneficiary and stakeholder engagement processes included capacity building of farmers/value chain players, wide consultations as well as variously disseminating findings through YouTube, Facebook, blogs, academic/scientific publications, policy briefs, conference presentations, etc.

Research findings

- Good practices and bad practices were being shared amongst value chain players. For example, in North-Western Uganda, farmers educated buyers of cassava stems on the varieties they offer for sale. This allowed the farmers to replace stems that appear unhealthy or unwanted by the buyers before concluding the purchase transaction
- Over 60% of farmers and agro-dealers were ready to observe in-house quality control standards. However, the general unethical agribusiness climate in Uganda (in the market) could not favour or reward them hence no value for upholding such efforts was seen.
- External factors (factors beyond the control of value chain players) were significant compared to internal factors (factors that can be controlled by value chain players) in frustrating efforts to observe quality standards and ethical behaviour. Key internal factors included; i) insufficient investment capital to pay for (expensive) infrastructure, like solar drying equipment, to replace worn out tarpaulins, or to pave /cement the floors of drying houses and yards; ii) key external factors included limited access to free extension services that are offered by 'Extension Workers', recruited by the district local governments yet to pay for services cannot be afforded in most cases by the bottom of the pyramid.

Outcomes achieved

AGRI-QUEST has engaged and gathered the locally applicable ethical and quality standards practices. Other stakeholders will be proud to uptake the knowledge the project has generated. A seed seller said: "I now must cross check myself using the AGRI-QUEST Ethical Code of Conduct. AGRI-QUEST project taught me how to use it. In fact, I am a widow, but I have improved my relationship and trust with potato seed buyers in Kisoro district because I also engage them to score me using the code of conduct booklet. It's in simple local language that

even those who never went to school can use, as long as they can read their local language.” A District Veterinary Officer for Mbarara District commented “(Un)ethical and quality standard issues in the dairy value chain can grossly damage the sector when they are not being dealt with. Issues of poor treatment of milk-able cows, wrong mixtures and fake antibiotics as well as poor hygiene have become almost business as usual. I am happy that AGRI-QUEST has done well to re-emphasise and demonstrate how ethical and quality standards must be dealt with through their summarised information in ‘Quality Standard issues in Dairy’, which has been simplified in the Runyankole (the local) language.”

Project messages to

A) Actors from private sector:

- Farmers learn more from each other and from traders than they learn from extensionists. Hence, it is recommended that: (i) Support to farmers should directly be intensified, for example support to build low cost produce (cassava and rice) drying facilities, (ii) Good agronomic practices and skills that preserve quality should be extended to value chain players.

B) Civil society and practitioners’ organizations:

- Uptalking of knowledge on quality improvement & ethical practices infrastructure should be priority on the agenda of agribusiness promotion in the respective value chains as well as increased support to the activities of extension workers.

C) Policy makers:

- Local governments (through the offices of District Agricultural Officers – DAOs, and District Production Officers - DPOs) should intensify the drive to include small value chain actors in to the formal business sector.

Knowledge products

- [Numerous flyers, policy briefs, research papers.](#)
- [AGRI-QUEST website](#)
- [AGRI-QUEST Facebook](#), for short messaging and narrations
- [YouTube channel](#) with short documentaries/clips

Knowledge networks

AGRI-QUEST is a recognised member & participant in AgriProFocus Uganda network activities.

Knowledge co-creation

- Internally, each consortium members played specific roles, but in a complimentary way. For example, The Ssemwanga Centre for Food and Agriculture Ltd, provided pure scientific knowledge on different aspects, e.g. the scientific approach to quality standards, botanical and agronomic interpretation and attached meaning to the ethical and quality approaches. Kibeedi and Co. Advocates reinforced voluntary the legal interpretation of the outputs, like the voluntary code of conduct that was developed. MUBS and VU Amsterdam combined the academic rigor to project outputs and activities to produce a business aspect and rigorous scientific outputs that can be consumed by the wider audience. In all this consortium arrangement and co-creation, the main challenge was for some key individuals wanting to feel superior or could under deliver on their allocated tasks.
- By working with other ARF/WOTRO funded organisations like Africa 2000 Network (A2N), the project was able to demonstrate the benefits of taking up ethical behaviour and in-house quality control practices to bottom of the pyramid players. The project also managed to reach very many project beneficiaries deep in the remote areas.
- Value chain apex bodies, associations and cooperatives (e.g. USPPA for Potato, UCCCU for Dairy, and BAIDA for Rice) helped to promote agribusiness dialogue between micro-players in the value chains. They also eased the up-taking of AGRI-QUEST research output dissemination, knowledge exchange and change processes through a variety of options like cluster meetings.

Consortium Partners

- [Makerere University Business School \(MUBS\)](#)
- [The Ssemwanga Centre for Agriculture and Food Ltd.](#)
- [University Amsterdam \(VU\), Faculty of Economics and Business Administration](#)
- [Kibeedi & Co. Advocates](#)

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Project website

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