

Sustainable Tree Crops Program - Nigeria



Project Dates: Pilot Phase: 2003-2006, Phase II: 2007-2011

Country: Nigeria

Funders: US Agency for International Development (USAID), World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) and global industry, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development/National Cocoa Development Committee, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)

Implementers: International Institute for Tropical Agriculture and national partners

Overview

Decades of underinvestment in the tree crop sector affected the rural economy of the tree crops belt of Nigeria. Cocoa, a major export-oriented cash crop, suffered a serious setback. From 2003-2006, STCP-Nigeria worked with national partners to demonstrate innovative approaches to improving the productivity of cocoa farms in an environmentally friendly and socially responsible manner. This was accomplished through farmer training using the Farmer Field School approach, and strengthening of farmer organizations for effective member services and profitable trade engagements. STCP-Nigeria Phase II seeks to improve economic and social well-being of smallholder tree crop farmers by building on its prior successes and promoting a resilient and supportive policy environment.

Program Objectives:

- To enhance productivity of cocoa farms in an environmentally and socially responsible manner
- To improve marketing efficiency in the cocoa sector
- To promote income alternatives in cocoa farming communities
- To promote improvement in policy environment for effective transformation of the rural economy

Progress to Date:

- **10 States have the capacity to implement Farmer Field Schools.** As a result of the successful Farmer Field School approach in the Pilot Phase, the commissioned STCP-Nigeria to develop the capacity of cocoa producing states to implement and manage Farmer Field Schools through their extension services. Participating states include: Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo, Abia, Kwara, Kogi and Osun. As of December 2008, eighth out of the ten states have implemented farm field schools with technical support from STCP-Nigeria.
- **6,181 farmers trained through Farmer Field Schools.** Graduates include: 2,204 farmers trained under the STCP-Nigeria core program; 300 farmers trained with funding from the Sustainable Practices in Agriculture for Critical Environments (SPACE) Project; additional 569 farmers trained with funding from SPACE, Cross River State and farming communities jointly. Also in Cross River State, 1,231 farmers were trained by communities; while 1,877 farmers trained by the four states implementing Farmer Field Schools. A total of 12,362 farmers were trained by the graduates through guided farmer-to-farmer diffusion. In all Farmer Field Schools, farmers received training on topics related to integrated crop and pest management, quality improvement, and farm safety (including safety of children).
- **8 nursery sites established.**
- **4 nursery sites established.** STCP-Nigeria began a project with the state governments, the Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria, the National Cocoa Development Committee and the Federal University of Technology Akure, to develop a farmer organization/community-led seedling production and distribution system. To-date 8 nursery sites have been established in the participating states (Abia, Edo, Osun, and Cross River), and have distributed over 141,760 seedlings not only to their members but also to other farmers.
- **4 Cooperative Unions adopt collective marketing arrangements.** The Tonikoko Farmers Cooperative Multipurpose Union (TFCMU), Cross River Advanced Cocoa Multipurpose Union (CRACMU), Ife Cooperative Produce Marketing Union (IFCPMU) and the Itunta High Quality Cocoa Farmers Multipurpose Society Limited adopted collective marketing

arrangements. Three quality control laboratories were established for the 3 cooperatives to enhance their collective trading activities. Two cooperatives have established a long-term distributorship arrangement with an agro-chemical company and a micro-finance institution. In addition, STCP in collaboration with SOCODEVI has trained 12 local service providers that are now providing technical services to 7 farmer organizations.

STCP-Nigeria: Nursery Business Improves Livelihoods for Community

Mr. Buhari Safiu is a farmer trained as a Farmer Field School (FFS) facilitator and a member of the Ekperi Community Nursery Group of Edo State, Nigeria. This is his story in his own words:

I come from Ilorin in Kwara State but grow cocoa in Ekperi in Edo State, a leading cocoa-producing state in Nigeria. I started farming some four years ago in 2004 with the first set of cocoa seedlings I planted coming from Isoko Centre Local Government in Fuga, about 7 km away.

The local government introduced a cocoa nursery to the informal group of farmers I belonged to at the time. Initially we faced many challenges due to our inexperience in nursery management. For instance, non-germination or late sprouting of the cocoa seeds and the problem of insect pests were prominent.

With pods from the Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria [CRIN], STCP-Nigeria in 2006, introduced the Community Based Nursery Scheme [CBNS] to us to help us establish and manage the cocoa nursery on our own. They also provided us with some materials like wheelbarrows and shovels to support our efforts. We also levied ourselves to build a well for water. **The training helped us to learn many new things including planting and watering timing, correct planting positioning (cotyledon not to face downward), knowing the depth of planting, insect pest control management, and how to manage chemicals to avoid sickness.**



There are positive results. In 2006, when we established our first nursery under the CBNS we achieved up to 70% germination rate. The following season, we achieved 98% germinate rate. **Besides, we have noticed good growth rate/uniformity and absence of insect pest infestation and members are no longer complaining about skin irritation due to agrochemicals.**

We are now in a position to establish and manage cocoa nurseries on our own and run it on a commercial basis to make money. We now offer technical advice on how to establish and maintain cocoa nurseries to other farmers for a small fee.

We also sell our seedlings and use the money to send our children to school. One of our members, Madam Patricia, who was not a cocoa farmer, sold her own share of the seedlings last year. Because of the gain she made, she has started planting cocoa. **In all, we are now self sufficient in seedlings production and do not rely on external public services. Our current nursery is the only cocoa nursery in the whole of Edo State.**

At home, I apply my knowledge and management skills acquired during the FFS to organize my family well. I now appreciate what my wife and children say. I listen to them more than before, and I facilitate family discussions instead of instruct. **To sum up in Yoruba “Koda, eto yi ti mu ilosiwaju ba emi ati awon awon ara aba mi gidigidi” meaning “this program has brought a lot of development to me and the members of my community”.**

For more information on the Sustainable Tree Crops Program, contact:

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