



Developing local rice: Women rice processors in Karfiguela



Background

Rice is the fourth most widely grown cereal in Burkina Faso and demand for it is growing fast.

However, local rice faces competition from imported rice from Asia, like in all countries in the region, there is a deficit in local production. Between 2006 and 2013, the quantity of rice imports grew from 300,000 to almost 450,000 tons, while the cost of these imports rose from EUR 56 million to around EUR 93 million. In 2013, rice grown in Burkina Faso barely accounted for half of the rice consumed in the country.

SNV implemented a project titled "Local Rice Farmers Can Feed West Africa" from January 2014 to December 2015 to respond to the challenge of food security and the sub-regional deficit in rice production. The project covered five countries - Benin, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. In Burkina Faso, the intervention areas of the project were the South West and Cascades regions.

The Cascades region is situated in the extreme west of Burkina Faso with a Sudanese climate and annual rainfall that can exceed 1200 mm. It is the part of the country that receives the most rain, and therefore is the best suited for agriculture.

SNV's support in this region focused on rice producers and the women's Union of Parboilers of Karfiguela (*Union départementale des étuveuses de Karfiguela*).

Rice production is a family affair, while rice processing is an activity exclusively undertaken by women, who are generally organized in women's groups. The processing involves parboiling, a process of precooking rice before it is de-husked.

The challenge

Parboiling is an activity that women undertake in addition to actual rice production within their family unit.

Organisational challenges

While the parboilers, totalling 437, were organised in groups within the Union, there was a lack of cohesion and coordination between the different groups.

Limited technical capacities

The parboiling units had limited capacities for good hygienic practices, especially as the technical facilities were rather rudimentary (materials, equipment, procedures, time, lack of organization, losses).

The paddy rice that was delivered to the women was of poor quality and in insufficient quantity. The rice from the wetlands was beaten directly on the ground. It thus contained high levels of impurities, causing significant losses for the women processors. In addition, firewood was used to pre-cook the rice thus causing harmful effects to the environment.

Local rice is not very competitive

One of the consequences of all these constraints was that the parboiled rice was not very competitive on the local market. In terms of marketing opportunities, the women processors had difficulties satisfying their institutional clients given their limited production capacities.

Strategies implemented

The overall goal of SNV is to contribute to improved food security within households and at the national level by improving rice productivity and quality as well as access to markets. The idea was that the different parts of the value chain develop business strategies to ensure that locally produced rice is competitive.

The approach consisted of strengthening organisational and technical capacities, providing support with production materials, and promoting local rice.

Improving production conditions

Under the first component, training sessions on good hygiene practice, production organisation, and management of processing equipment were held. The training sessions also covered the topics of farm accounting, entrepreneurship and joint marketing. 182 women processors from Karfiguela received training. The strategy was to train 10 community trainers who then in turn trained other processors and monitored the processing and marketing of the parboiled rice.

Following training, parboiling equipment was supplied to the processing union.

Learning through study tours

The training sessions were accompanied with a study tour to a parboiling union in Bama. The exchanges helped the Karfiguela women processors understand the importance of having strong collaboration in place with producers to ensure the quality of paddy rice. They also gained greater awareness of the negative impact on the environment of using firewood.

Promoting local rice

In terms of marketing, a marketing campaign was implemented to increase the visibility of local rice in the Cascades region. The campaign involved mapping rice buyers in the Cascades region and setting up two sales points in Banfora and Sindou to ensure easier access to parboiled rice for local inhabitants.

In addition, the media and other channels of dissemination were used to design and transmit publicity messages. These messages included radio adverts and visual materials in local languages (500 posters displayed, 2000 flyers distributed). This campaign potentially reached 20,000 people. The women processors also participated in a fair organised in Ouagadougou.

Local rice was also promoted at the institutional level through the organization of a forum that brought together government and key players of the rice sector.

Results

Professional women processors

The capacity building of the women processors and the promotion of local rice has achieved significant results. The women have now developed techniques for checking the quality of the paddy rice they buy for processing (variety, respect of post-harvest procedures) before placing their orders. The women can now estimate the amount of wastage from the winnowing and washing steps, and therefore better forecast the return on their investments. This makes it easier to calculate their level of production and enables them to better negotiate the price at which they buy paddy rice.

An activity that respects the health of the women processors and the environment

The distribution of stoves that use rice husks as combustion fuel provided an alternative to the use of firewood for producing parboiled rice. This technology helps conserve the environment and fight against climate change.

Benefits of joint sales

The joint sales marketing strategy facilitated the collect, processing and delivery of 10 tons of rice with a value of EUR 5000 to the national food security stock agency, SONAGESS (*Société Nationale de Gestion du Stock de Sécurité Alimentaire*).



Lessons learned

The support to the Karfiguela women processors enabled a response to the key challenges of food security and improving local production. The project's success comes from the technical and organisational capacity building of the women processors. By contributing to increased professionalization of their activities, SNV in Burkina Faso helped empower the Karfiguela union.



Women's groups, an asset for the project

One of the key factors of success of the project was the pre-existence of rice processing umbrella organizations at both the regional and national levels. From 2010, that is four years before the project started, regional unions had gotten together to create a national union of parboiled rice processors, *the Union Nationale des Etuveuses de Riz du Burkina (UNERIZ-B)*. These existing organisations enabled the identification of local partners for the implementation of the project.

Improving consumption of local rice by households

While SNV did adopt an integrated approach that linked national organisations with parboiled rice producers, the strategy did not sufficiently consider the role of imported rice in the crisis affecting local production. In effect, the easy availability and financial accessibility of imported rice considerably influences Burkinabe consumption habits. And yet, local consumption by households presents more sustainable opportunities than institutional orders which tend to be made occasionally and without great regularity. A market study helped provide insight on the needs of male and female consumers in order to adapt the strategy.

The study enabled better monitoring of local demand in order to adapt the marketing strategy. While it is justifiable to have focused local rice promotion activities in the production zones, the project could also take into account urban areas, for which rice is the most consumed cereal. It is also in urban areas where Burkina Faso-produced rice has the lowest visibility.

Low access to loans limits the productivity of the women processors

While institutional orders represent a key market for local rice, delivering on these orders raises significant challenges for the women processors. Payment delays by the public sector buyers limit the capacities of the women processors and lead to tensions with paddy rice producers. These problems could be relieved with improved access to loans for the processors (in particular for working capital, or guarantee funds, etc)

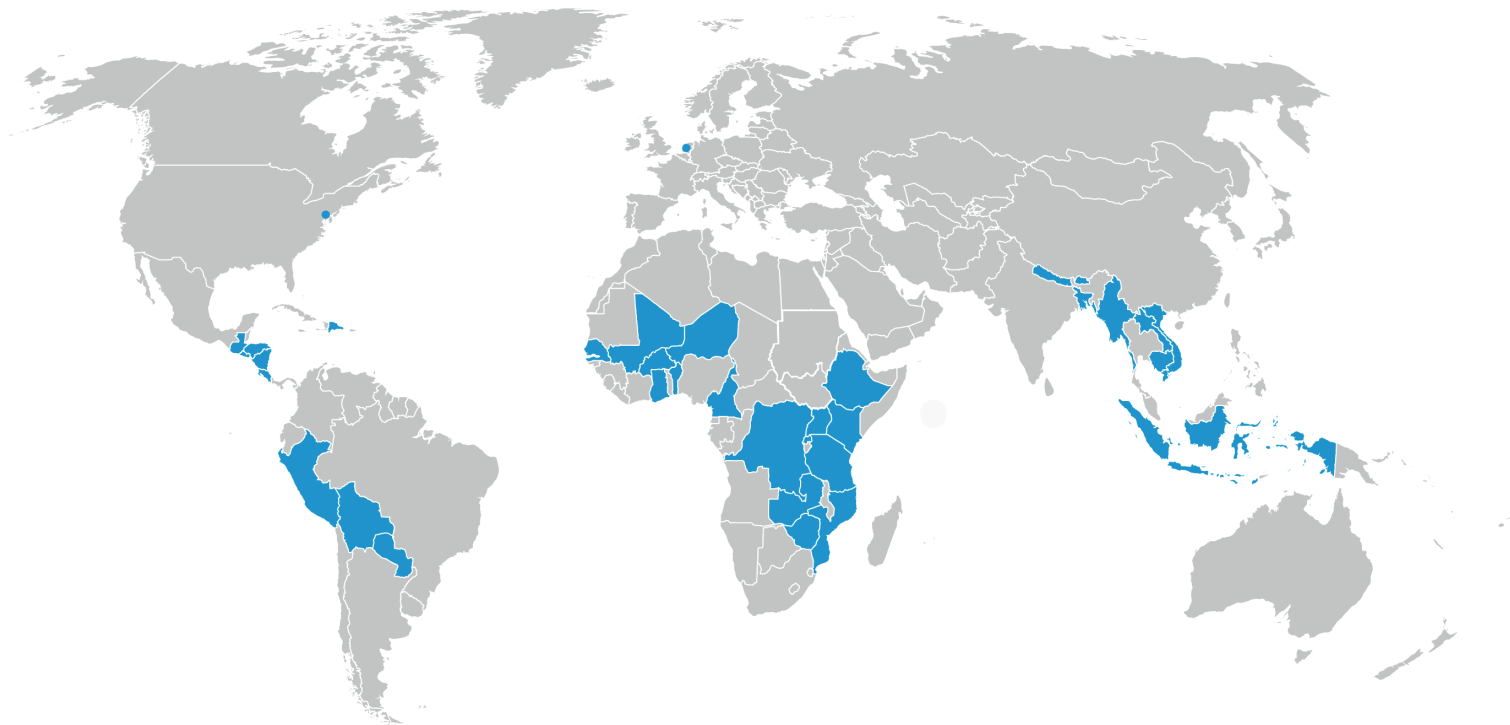
Scaling up the integrated approach

The existence of a national union of parboiled rice processors is an asset for the scaling up of the experience with the women processors of Karfiguela. The project could encourage the formalization of contracts between processors and paddy rice producers. This would have the benefit of using an inclusive approach while also reducing problems linked to the quality of raw material, tensions caused by late payments and thus facilitate collaboration between the women processors and the men producers.

Benefits of green technologies

The project could also replicate the experience of stoves using rice husks as a combustion fuel to ensure greater protection of the environment, while reducing the work load and costs related to the use of firewood, as well as protecting the health of the processors.





SNV is a not-for-profit international development organisation that makes a lasting difference in the lives of people living in poverty by helping them raise incomes and access basic services. We aim for premium quality and focus on only three sectors: agriculture, energy and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). With a long-term, local presence in over 25 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, we know how governments work and how relationships are built. Implementing our mission exclusively through project financing requires us to work efficiently and invest in operational excellence every day. Our team of more than 1,300 staff is the backbone of SNV.

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