

# FARMING-SYSTEM SPECIFIC EXTENSION CONTENT FOR ENHANCING CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS IN SORGHUM-BASED DRYLAND FARMING SYSTEMS OF TANZANIA AND BURKINA FASO

## LINKING FARMERS TO MARKETS

### CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND AGRIFOOD SYSTEM RESILIENT ISSUES

As climate change negative impacts continue to rage, crops adapted to hostile environments such as sorghum and millets continue to gain importance because they naturally outcompete those that need more moisture and more fertile soils. To get full advantage out of this competitiveness firm linkages to markets of the surplus produce is essential. This is together with identifying and linking farmers to new markets such as the brewing industry, food processing industry, etc.

### ESSENTIAL TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Linking farmers to markets is key to improving the lives of smallholder farmers. Ensuring availability, access and use of production technologies alone will not be enough to lift farmers out of poverty and improve their livelihoods. Facilitating their link to markets is essential so that the surplus that they manage to produce by applying the production technologies finds a vent to markets and in so doing increase their incomes and livelihoods.

Linking farmers to markets is key to agricultural transformation. Often, we have noted piles and piles of onions, citrus fruits, pineapples, tomatoes by the roadside waiting to be eaten by cattle and goats or as they wait to rot. Even on the side of livestock, it is not surprising to come across poultry farmers stuck with eggs from their layers without an easy market to dispose them.

Extension agents must as part of their role facilitate linking small-scale farmers to markets so that they benefit from available lucrative opportunities. This linkage is important because small farmers are limited in knowledge about the market given their socio-economic backgrounds. This limitation reduces their ability to participate in high value market chains.

### HOW TO FACILITATE LINKING FARMERS TO MARKETS

The following steps are recommended for extension agents

**Step 1:** Not all farmers are interested in growing the same crops because their objective functions are different and indeed quite diverse. Thus, the first step is to categorize farmers in production domains such as tomatoes, pigeonpeas, sorghum, pearl millet, etc. A further sub-category can be based on small and medium farmers.

**Step 2.** Make a list of potential market opportunities by reviewing secondary sources, including reports on consumer trends and opportunities for import substitution, as well as talking to industry experts and NGOs. Create a list of potential opportunities by speaking to supermarkets, hotel operators, schools, local traders and wholesalers, and other key commercial informants. Check secondary sources as well.

**Step 3.** Carefully, analyze and estimate the quantities that are required by the various sources (potential demand) per season per product

**Step 4.** Carefully analyze and estimate the strength and capacity of farmers to produce and deliver to meet the various requirements.

**Step 5.** Do a rough matching linking specific crop farmers to respective market outlets

**Step 6.** Keep watching the market trends and advise farmers accordingly understanding that markets are dynamic entities and never static.

The above can be done by i) the extension agent organizing value chain meetings, e.g. sorghum, millet, pigeonpeas, pearl millet, tomatoes, etc. ii) Requesting to be slated in Village Assembly Meetings to discuss some of these issues iii) working with some farmer groups who may or may not be crop specific and sometimes with individual farmers. When the latter become successful, they will spread the message to other farmers as well.