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An International Center for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development

Empowering Farmers for Effective Participation in Decision-Making

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By

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Preface

Farmers are the primary users of the soil and as such are important stakeholders in the welfare of the soil and decisions that affect its use. Yet, policy decisions that directly or indirectly affect the functioning of the system (spanning input procurement or production, use, primary production, processing, marketing, and final consumption) are often taken without farmer participation. Effective consultation and exchange of ideas between farmers and the public-sector decision makers have been weak primarily because of the absence of strong national farmers' organizations that truly represent farmers from the grassroots. If the situation were reversed, farmers would be sufficiently empowered to fully participate as partners in decisions that affect agriculture as a whole.

The Policy and Market Program (PMP) is one of three interrelated programs in the Africa Division of IFDC—an International Center for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development. Through a number of related projects PMP seeks to improve the socioeconomic and political environment for soil fertility improvement in sub-Saharan Africa. One such project is the Favorable Socioeconomic and Policy Environments for Soil Fertility Improvement (FASEPE). Particular attention in the FASEPE is given to the facilitation of partnership among three important groups of stakeholders: public-sector decision makers, private-sector input dealers, and farmers' organizations to collectively invest in soil fertility improvement for agricultural intensification. The activities and functions of public-sector decision makers are relatively well known, but not much is known about the private-sector input dealers or farmer-based organizations (FBOs) that must now be in partnership to fill the void created in some West African countries by government's withdrawal from direct involvement in input supply. An exploratory study was therefore necessary to understand the structure and functioning of farmers' organizations with a view to empowering them to become effective partners in influencing decisions that relate to their welfare as the primary users of the soil resource base. In 1999 and 2000 the project conducted exploratory studies of farmers' organizations in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Mali to learn about how farmers are organized and function in the defense of their interests and how they participate in taking decisions that affect them as a group. In May 2001, the project co-hosted a regional workshop in Burkina Faso for farmers and their organizations from nine West African countries to share experiences and to develop a common plan for networking among them.

This report reviews the issue of farmer empowerment through FBOs and presents the findings of an exploratory study of farmers' organizations in three countries. This is an area in which IFDC is relatively new, but it is convinced that the issue of soil fertility and agricultural intensification must go beyond the public-sector decision makers and indeed include the participation of farmers and input dealers. The studies, which have revealed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of FBOs and their aspirations, have been useful in gaining a better insight into their activities. In particular, the analysis of the situation and issues arising from them form the basis for our intervention and collaborative activities that will empower farmers to effectively participate in decision making.

Although several individuals and organizations contributed to the completion of the study, the support and cooperation of farmers and their organizations are gratefully acknowledged. Netherlands Minister for Development Cooperation (DGIS) did not only fund the FASEPE project but was very instrumental in getting IFDC to consider farmers' organizations as important target groups that must not be marginalized in decisions concerning agricultural production and agribusiness. For this and their continued support, we are grateful.

Amit H. Roy
President and Chief Executive Officer

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Abbreviations

ACDEP	Association of Church Development Projects
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AFAMIN	African Agricultural Market Information Network
AFDI	Association FranVais et Développement Internationale
AgSSIP	Agricultural Services Sub-Sector Investment Program
AOPP	Association des Organisations Professionnelle Paysannes
APA	Appreciative Planning and Action
APCAM	Assemblée Permanent des Chambres d'Agriculture du Mali
CAs	Chambers of Agriculture
CARE	Cooperation for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CATHWELL	Catholic Relief Services (CRS)
CCD	Convention to Combat Desertification
CCOF	Cadre de Concertation entre Organisation Faîtières
CCSFA	Cocoa, Coffee and Sheanut Farmers' Association
CEDEAO	Communauté Economique des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest
CFDT	Compagnie Francaise du Développement des Textiles
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CILSS	Comité Permanent Inter-états de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel
CLUSA	Cooperative League of the United States of America
CMDT	Compagnie Malienne pour le Développement des Textiles
CNCR	Conseil National de Coopération et de Concertation des Ruraux
CNPA/B	Conseil National des Professionnels Agricoles du Burkina
COCOBOD	Cocoa Marketing Board
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DDCRES	Demand-Driven Cost-Recovery Extension Service
DGIS	Netherlands Minister for Development Cooperation
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FASEPE	Favorable Socioeconomic and Policy Environments for Soil Fertility Improvement
FBOs	Farmer-Based Organizations
FENOP	Fédération Nationale des Organisations Paysannes
FEPA-B	Fédération des Professionnels Agricoles du Burkina
FRON	Fédération des Riziculteurs de l'Office du Niger
GNAFF	Ghana National Association for Farmers and Fishermen
GPCs	Groupements de Producteurs de Cotton
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
IFAP	International Federation of Agricultural Producers
IFDC	International Center for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labor Organization
MEST	Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology
MOFA	Ministry of Food and Agriculture
MMDE	Ministry of Manpower Development and Employment
NGOs	non-governmental organizations
OHVN	Opération Haute Vallée du Niger

ONG	Organisation Non-Gouvernemental
PADLOS	Programme d'Appui au Développement Local au Sahel
PAOPA	Plan d'Action pour l'émergence des Organizations Professionnelles Agricoles
PAOSA	Plan d'Actions pour l'Organization du Secteur Agricole
PASA	Agricultural Sector Adjustment Program [French abbreviation]
PASAOP	Program d'Appui au Secteur Agricole et aux Organisations Professionnelles
PMP	Policy and Market Program
PSID	Private Sector Input Dealers
RCA	Regional Chambers of Agriculture
RECAO	Réseau des Chambres d'Agriculture de l'Afrique de l'Ouest
R&D	Research and Development
ROESAO	Réseau des Opérateurs Economiques du Secteur Agroalimentaire de l'Afrique de l'Ouest
ROPPA	Réseau des Organizations Paysannes et des Producteurs de l'Afrique de l'Ouest
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SG 2000	Sasakawa Global 2000
SGA	Seed Growers' Association
SOFITEX	Société Burkinabe de Fibres et Textiles
SOPROFA	Société de Promotion des Filières Agricoles
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
SYCOV	Syndicat des Producteurs du Coton et du Vivrier
SYVAC	Syndicat pour la Valorisation des Cultures Cottonière et Vivrière au Mali
UCOBAM	Union Natoinale des Coopératives Agricoles et Maraîchères du Burkina
UEMOA	Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest-Africaine
UNDP	United States Development Program
UNFA	Uganda National Farmers' Association
UNJPA/B	Union Nationale des Jeunes Producteurs Agricoles du Burkina
UNPC/B	Union Nationale des Producteurs du Coton du Burkina
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VEPEAG	Vegetable Producers and Exporters' Association

Empowering Farmers for Effective Participation in Decision-Making

Introduction

Farmers, businessmen, and politicians who make a living from the supply, distribution, and use of agricultural inputs have stakes in decisions that affect the welfare of the soil, hence, agricultural productivity. Farmers use the land primarily for production and are inextricably linked with food security. Businessmen supply the inputs, purchase raw products, add value, and market the final products. Politicians have a stake in the productivity of the land as it relates to food security and poverty reduction. Prior to the implementation of structural adjustment policies and agricultural sector reforms, the state was directly involved in several activities in the agricultural sub sector as a major player. Since the early- to mid-eighties, the political and socioeconomic environment in some African countries changed fundamentally. The state is no longer directly involved in the procurement of inputs, production, processing, and marketing of agricultural products and is now learning to communicate with the entities that are assuming the responsibility for these functions. On the other hand, farmers are beginning to realize that they can no longer count on the state's direct support and must learn to negotiate their interests with the government and the private sector in a free market setting. In this context, farmers have to be strong at all levels and vis-à-vis their partners as well (policy makers, private sector, etc.). The new attitude of stakeholders having to adjust to each other has not yet been assimilated, and the mechanisms by which dialogue and negotiation can take place effectively have not been established. Moreover, the stakeholders concerned have not yet acquired all the necessary capacities to deal with the new situation. This capacity must be built or strengthened if each is to play his/her rightful role.

The Policy and Market Program (PMP), one of IFDC-Africa Division's three interrelated programs, aims at improving the socioeconomic and political environment for soil fertility improvement. PMP has a component project that facilitates partnership between three groups of important stakeholders: public-sector decision-maker, private-sector input dealers, and farmers' organizations (Figure 1). In the FBOs' component of the partnership triangle, the project seeks to empower farmers' organizations for their effective participation in decision-making on a wide range of issues at the local, district, regional, and national levels. The issues to be addressed by the empowerment are those related to agricultural research, production, processing, marketing, and consumption with particular emphasis on natural resource management.

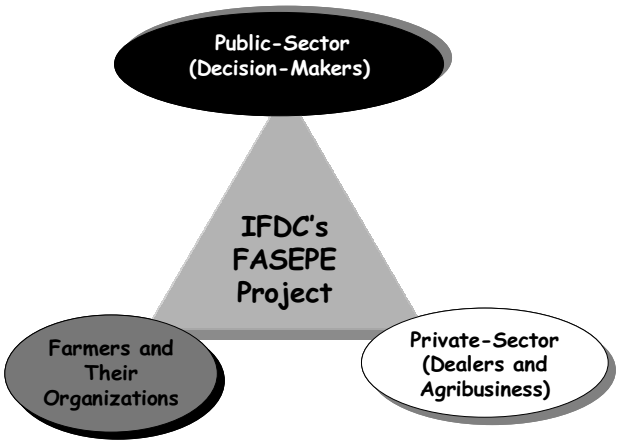

Figure 1. Facilitating Dialogue Among Decision-Makers, Farmers, and Their Organizations and Private-Sector Input Dealers and Agribusiness.

The What and How of Farmer Empowerment

Farmer Empowerment Defined

This study has adopted the definition and understanding of farmer empowerment from Beaudoux et al. (2001) and from Sharma (2001). Beaudoux et al. defined farmer empowerment in its minimalist sense

as the *"development of farmers' capacities to initiate actions on their own or to influence decisions that affect their economic and social activities."* Sharma on the other hand defines farmer empowerment as *"an activity that mobilizes and motivates people in the farming community to bring about positive changes within the organizations."*

The changing economic situation and the withdrawal of the state from the provision of agricultural services have combined to make the empowerment of farmers a priority for most governments and the donor community. Unfortunately, farmer empowerment has been looked upon unfavorably by some because of the potential conflicts it may create within the society.[1] Although the potential exists, especially in instances where empowerment of FBOs reduces the power of other institutions, it does not necessarily mean or lead to conflicts or confrontations. Where these organizations do not tend to replace or reduce the powers of these institutions, there are usually no conflicts. An example is the empowerment of farmers' organizations to create and operate savings and credit unions. This activity does not necessarily replace existing financial institutions, since there are few such institutions that cater specifically to smallholder farmers.

Farmer Empowerment Process

The process of farmer empowerment may take many forms. Sharma (2001) uses the *Appreciative Planning and Action (APA)* approach as part of the low-cost empowerment package for women farmers in Nepal. The APA approach is based on intervention at three levels: empowerment for literacy skills development; empowerment for economic participation; and empowerment for rights, responsibility, and advocacy.

In the view of International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) and according to Pertev and King (2000), farmer empowerment is all about helping farmers to get organized. Therefore, resource-poor farmers cannot be empowered if they do not have an organization that can represent them at local, district, national, regional, and global levels. Any farmer empowerment process must necessarily touch farmers at the grassroots level, because the grassroots farmer groups are the vital building blocks of the process. However, the grassroots groups are fragile and weak if they do not structure themselves at higher levels. Equally, any structure that does not have proactive and dynamic grassroots farmers' groups at its base is a nonviable and unrepresentative organization.

In summary, the process of farmer empowerment basically consists of:

- Strengthening farmers' skills (e.g., literacy, technical, business, and other skills).
  - To increase their economic participation and their well being.
  - To sharpen their negotiating and advocacy power in all relevant fora.
  - To be aware of their rights and responsibilities and to be able to participate in and influence policies that affect them and their business.
- Strengthening farmers' organization structures at the grassroots, national, and global levels to be a strong entity to achieve all of the above.

Essential Roles of Farmer-Based Organizations

Once individual farmers are inducted into organizations and are sufficiently empowered, they have essential roles to play in the present situation where the government is no longer directly involved in the procurement of inputs, production, processing, and marketing of agricultural products. Farmers' organizations can play three essential roles: (1) the role of a forum, (2) the role of representation and liaison, and (3) the role of undertaking group activities and providing services to the members.

The Role of a Forum

Farmers' organizations often serve as a forum where members assemble to discuss what they have in common. Some forums are formal and are scheduled at pre-determined intervals (e.g., annual general meetings) while others may be convened as emergency meetings to discuss a subject of particular importance. Whether formal or informal, these meetings present the opportunity for farmers to discuss membership-related issues or things of general or of peripheral interest to the organizations. The forum is often convened at different levels of the or-

1. Because there are potential winners and losers associated with any change, process conflicts and confrontations are inevitable.

ganization (local, district, regional, national, or even international) and may also represent an ideal opportunity for developing technical and managerial skills of members.

The Role of Representation and Liaison

In this role, the organization often represents the group and functions as its voice. It articulates the views formulated by the group to those outside the organization and vice versa. Often, the organizations are key sources of information from the farmers to the government, to research and development, and financial institutions, and the other way around to the farmers. The role of representation and liaison is an ideal channel for advocacy, lobbying, and negotiations between farmers and other stakeholder parties. Several examples exist. In Zimbabwe, a memorandum of understanding has been signed between the Zimbabwe National Farmers' Union and the National Agricultural Research System, whereby farmers through their union discuss and finalize their research needs and negotiate with the research system to obtain the services they need. In Mali, farmers have formed "research products user committees" from the grassroots to the national level to serve as advocacy groups for research products or technologies coming out from the national agricultural research system. During the annual research planning meetings of the research institute, the user committees are invited to participate in the discussions and, thus, influence the direction of future agricultural research. In Burkina Faso and Mali, the cotton producers' unions represent the voice of the cotton farmers at the management level and have been able to participate in price fixing for inputs and the product and other issues concerning the industry.

The Conseil National de Coopération et de Concertation des Ruraux (CNCR), a national platform that represents farmers and the rural population in Senegal, is a well-known example of what a strong national farmers' organization can do to influence political decisions. In 1966 it threatened to withdraw from all national negotiations fora organized by the Government of Senegal because the Government was stalling on implementing agreed measures of importance to smallholder agriculture, including a reduction in the interest rate on agricultural credit. In 1997, in the face of CNCR's continued intransigence, the President of the Republic agreed to receive the CNCR delegation and subsequently ensured that the agreed measures became effective.

Group Activities and Service Provision Role

In this role, farmers' organizations mobilize their own physical, intellectual, and financial resources to improve their situations. One common group activity is the formation of farmer groups within the organization to work together on members' fields during periods of peak labor. In addition to working jointly in the fields, the establishment of savings and credit schemes to cater to the financial needs of its members is of vital importance. In northwest Cameroon, some women's organizations have created savings associations in the form of "tontines," where women pay a fixed amount weekly or monthly, and the total amount is then paid out to one group member at a time (Hartwig, 2000). The women's organizations have also instituted insurance schemes in the form of "trouble funds" to provide funds for members in difficult situations such as sickness or death in the family.

In Guinea, the potatoes, onion, and tomato producers union of the Fouta Djallon provide input supply, credit services, and market outlets to their members. Farmers' organizations are also providing extension services and advice to their members in concert with the traditional system. In Uganda, the Uganda National Farmers' Association (UNFA) has been expanding its Demand-Driven Cost-Recovery Extension Service (DDCRES) into several districts. The system is unique in that farmer members have to pay for the services they require so that the system would both be demand-driven and financially sustainable. At present it is operating on a cost-sharing basis, which would move to full cost recovery in the future.

Farmer Organization Types

Under the prevailing conditions in sub-Saharan Africa, genuine and effective FBOs have important roles to play in providing services to their members and influencing policies on behalf of their members. Depending on the purpose, local preferences, and legislative frameworks of a country, FBOs may take the form of groups, associations, pre-cooperatives, unions, cooperatives, federations, syndicates, cooperative partnerships, or farmer-controlled companies. In general, two or more groups with the same mis-

sion can together constitute a union, and at least two unions can join in a federation with at least two federations constituting a confederation at the national level.

Although FBOs mean different things to different people, they can be classified according to their activity type or by their origin.

FBOs by Type of Activity

Two main types are common: farmer business organizations and farmer representative organizations. Farmer business organizations are enterprises that focus mainly on economic services, and farmer representative organizations focus primarily on representation of interest, communication, and consultation. Many farmer business organizations also have a representational function; likewise, farmer representative organizations usually also incorporate economic activities.

FBOs by Origin

Using the origin or initiator of FBOs, one can distinguish between FBOs:

- Based on social traditions.
- Created by the state.
- Created by non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Groups based on social traditions at the local levels exist for as long as one remembers and come in different forms (e.g., groups, associations, etc.). However, the organization of farmers in a modern form, with legal constructs such as cooperatives, was introduced during colonial times usually to provide the members with production and marketing services (Diagne and Pesche, 1995). Just after independence, the emerging African states institutionalized cooperatives to implement state policies. The states used these organizations as instruments to direct and to control the rural population. Today, the lack of spontaneity, independence, and responsibility of FBOs is often attributed to this history because farmers ultimately viewed these organizations as state institutions instead of their own cooperatives. In the seventies private agencies and the NGOs focused on the rural population that had been neglected by the state and created FBOs to cater to farmers in part and for their project needs. Since the adjustment policies of the mid-eighties an objective became to transfer power to local populations, and for this reason also FBOs were created by some NGOs. It should be noted that these organizations were often initiated without the real participation of farmers (Diagne and Pesche, 1995).

Characteristics of Effective FBOs

Irrespective of the type or origin of farmers' organizations, the main characteristics of effective farmers' organizations are those that are freely established (based on a common vision), have voluntary membership, are legally owned and controlled by persons who benefit from the services provided, and are based on the concept that benefits accrue to members in accordance with their participation in the organization. To be viable, farmers' organizations need to have clearly defined common goals that all members actively endeavor to meet. Viable farmers' organizations are those guided by democratic principles. They need a maturation period to function optimally, and those initiated from the bottom seem more likely to be viable than organizations initiated from the top. Organizations have to be strengthened by training and collective action to establish a power base through which to influence rural policy making and implementation, and specifying the place of farmers in emerging societies (North, 1990).

Situation of FBOs in Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Mali

The Africa Division of IFDC's Policy and Market Program (PMP) seeks to improve the socioeconomic and political environment for soil fertility improvement in sub-Saharan Africa. This is done through a number of related projects of which the FASEPE project facilitates partnership among three important groups of stakeholders: public-sector decision-maker, private-sector input dealers, and farmers' organizations to collectively invest in soil fertility improvement for agricultural intensification. While the public-sector decision-makers are relatively known, not much is known about the private-sector input dealers or FBOs that must now be in partnership to fill the void created by government's withdrawal from direct involvement in input supply. An exploratory study was therefore necessary to understand the structure and functioning of farmers' organizations with a view to empowering them to become effective partners in influencing decisions that relate to their welfare as the primary users of the soil resource base. The ex-

ploratory study was conducted in Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Mali since these were the countries in which the project focused its attention. However, an additional study was conducted in the Republic of Benin to gain further insights into how farmers are organized and influence decisions so as to provide lessons for the focus countries.

Methodology

The study was undertaken in Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Mali during the period—1999 and 2000. Given the diversity in origin, objectives, leadership, etc. and the different needs of the numerous farmers' organizations, the study was conducted in three interrelated phases: exploratory phase, learning phase, and a development and implementation phase.

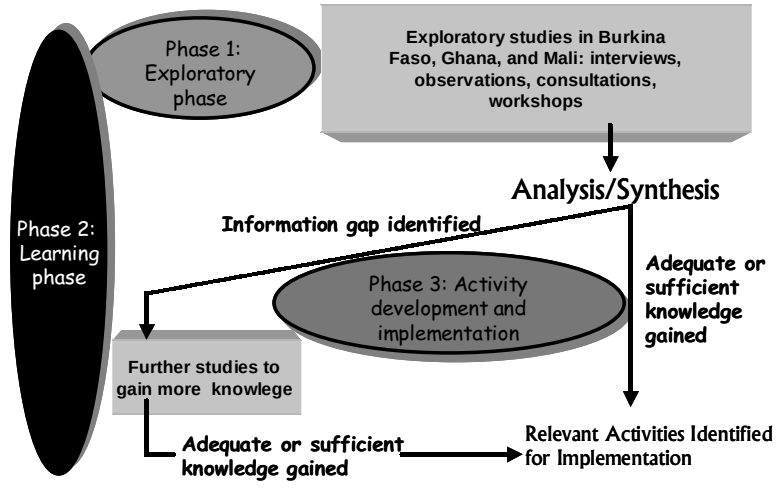

Figure 2. Essential Phases in the Identification of Relevant Activities With Farmer Organizations.

Exploratory and Learning Phases

The exploratory and learning phases overlap and their objectives were to help gain a deeper insight and knowledge of the farmers' organizations with regard to their structure, objectives, membership, and other activities to guide the development of relevant activities for their empowerment. Key activities in these two phases consisted of reviews of farmers organizations' literature, consultations and interviews with different categories of individual members, and holding of mini-workshops to obtain group positions on certain issues as necessary. The exploratory and learning phases were followed by analysis and synthesis of the situation which led to two situations: either adequate and sufficient knowledge was gained or an information gap exists (Figure 2). If adequate and/or sufficient information were obtained about the FBOs under study and direct specific activities were identified with the farmers, they would be developed and implemented jointly (phase 3). On the other hand, if an information gap remained, a further investigation was necessary to fill the gap. It is useful to note that the learning phase is a permanent feature of the process in the sense that new issues might appear or new information gaps might be revealed during the phases including the implementation phase. The additional case of how farmers are organized and how they influence decision making in the Republic of Benin was a result of insufficient knowledge that required further investigations of some successful cases in the West African region.

Development and Implementation Phase

The objective of the development or implementation phase is to assist the FBOs to meet their specific needs through a joint elaboration and implementation of the activities identified in the earlier phases.

The direct and specific activities that were identified through the case study for implementation in phase 3 included a study of cotton producers' associations on a regional basis, a regional workshop to be conducted jointly with the Comité Permanent Inter-états de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel (CILSS), and specific training activities to be conducted for the benefit of leaders of FBOs starting with the Assemblée Permanent des Chambres d'Agriculture du Mali (APCAM) in Mali. In Ghana, the identified activity was either to restructure the Ghana National Association for Farmers and Fishermen (GNAFF) to play a representational role for all farmers and fishermen in Ghana or to organize a consultative meeting with the leaders of all farmers' organizations to brainstorm and arrive at a consensus of the type of an "umbrella" or "apex" body that could represent the interest of all farmers and fishermen in Ghana.

Situation of FBOs in the Study Countries

This section gives a brief overview of the situation of the farmers' organizations as obtained through the exploratory study conducted with the primary farmers' organizations in Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Mali. More details of the origins, status, type, structure, and functioning of the farmers' organizations in these countries and that of Benin are described in Nederlof (1999), Nederlof (2000a), Nederlof (2000b), and Nederlof (2001) for Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, and Benin, respectively.

Burkina Faso

As in many African countries, most of Burkina Faso's population depends on agriculture for their livelihood. Agriculture in Burkina Faso is characterized by an extensive production system, a low level of mechanization, and low level of mineral fertilizer use. Although subsistence crops occupy 88% of all cultivated area, fertilizers are mostly used for cotton production and hardly for the production of other crops. The justification in the use of fertilizers on cotton lies in its contribution to export earnings.

Burkina Faso is characterized by a large diversity of different types of farmers' organizations at the local, federal, national platforms and, more recently, at the chamber of agriculture (CA) levels. The country thus has approximately 15,000 village organizations of which only about one-third is legally recognized and many exist only formally. Some of the local- and regional-level farmers' organizations encountered during the study are described in Nederlof (1999), and only the national-level ones are presented here.

There are at least four identifiable national FBOs in Burkina Faso, each with its own mission, objectives, and history. They include the Fédération Nationale des Organisations Paysannes (FENOP), the Conseil National des Professionnels Agricoles du Burkina (CNPA/B), Union Nationale des Jeunes Producteurs Agricoles du Burkina (UNJPA/B), and Union Nationale des Producteurs du Coton du Burkina (UNPC/B). FENOP and CNPA/B are parallel initiatives, although FENOP was formalized earlier. One of the most important members of CNPA/B is Union Nationale des Coopération Agricoles et Maraîchères du Burkina (UCOBAM) through which Burkina Faso is represented as a member of IFAP. Founded in 1946, IFAP is the only worldwide body bringing together nationally representative FBOs.

Fédération Nationale des Organisations Paysannes (FENOP)

FENOP was created in1994 when the Swiss International Association of Six "S"[2] organized a national meeting for FBOs at Dedougou to discuss the results of a study it financed about farmers' organizations in Burkina Faso (ARC, 1994). The Dedougou initiative, as it was later called, was attended by about 101 FBOs who expressed their wish to create a national farmers' organization with the view to sharing knowledge and defending their collective interest at the national level. A monitoring committee was formed to follow up the ideas of the Dedougou initiative. Two years later, in 1996, a second meeting resulted in the creation of FENOP. FENOP is currently being financed mainly by the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) but also receives some Dutch cooperation aid. By 1999 about 120 member organizations making up FENOP paid their annual membership dues.

FENOP's objectives are:

1. To develop activities intended to empower FBOs to become better producers and to improve their economic and social well-being.
2. To contribute to the establishment of an institutional framework for FBOs.
3. To facilitate the exchange between the different stakeholders.

Activities undertaken by FENOP to achieve these objectives include:

1. Communication of information to the relevant stakeholders.
2. General and specific training of members aimed at empowering them.
3. Exchange between farmers to diffuse local knowledge.
4. Support to farmers to enforce their negotiation capacities with their commercial partners and to be aware of issues of input quality, legal assistance for contract management, and information about quality norms on the market.

2. Se Server de la Saison Sèche en Savane et au Sahel.

5. Diffusion of results from farmers' experiments.

6. Technical and financial negotiations.

FENOP has an executive board of directors and a secretary general at the national level. It is represented at the regional, union, or provincial levels (Figure 3). FENOP has grown very quickly and is now organized along commodity lines (cowpeas, potatoes, cereals, cotton, etc.).

Conseil National des Professionnels Agricoles du Burkina (CNPA/B)

The idea creating CNPA/B was mooted in 1995 when IFAP initiated a project for the empowerment of farmers' organizations. The project's objective was to facilitate the creation of a national structure for farmers' organizations, able to defend farmers' interests on the national level. CNPA/B was hence created in 1997 with the initiative and financial support coming from the Dutch cooperation. The World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) recognize the CNPA/B as a national farmers' organization and consult them regularly on farmer issues. An extensive membership list of CNPA/B is not available, however, UCOBAM and the federation of "groupements" NAAM are key members.

Activities of CNPA/B include:

1. Institutional aid to formalize and legalize member organizations.

2. Participation in the elaboration and orientation of agricultural policies.

3. Organization of producers according to production or commercial activities.

4. Technical, business, and language training for members.

5. Assistance in the establishment of the CA.

CNPA/B trains several of its leaders who represent the farmers' organizations in their specific provinces of Burkina Faso. These leaders who are chosen among the representatives of the local organizations are not paid in cash but only receive training as remuneration. At the departmental level farmers create their 'think tanks,' where they express their specific training needs that are then transmitted to the higher provincial level for consideration. Training is usually provided in the areas of bookkeeping, business viability, soil conservation measures, literacy, etc., but the areas of training are prioritized at the provincial level. CNPA/B not only seeks finance for their member organizations, but they equally transfer their knowledge about policies to the provincial and departmental level. Unlike FENOP and other FBOs, members of CNPA/B are organized over the whole agricultural sector and not subdivided along commodity lines. CNPA/B is governed by orientation advisory and executive boards and are represented at the regional, provincial, and departmental levels (Figure 4).

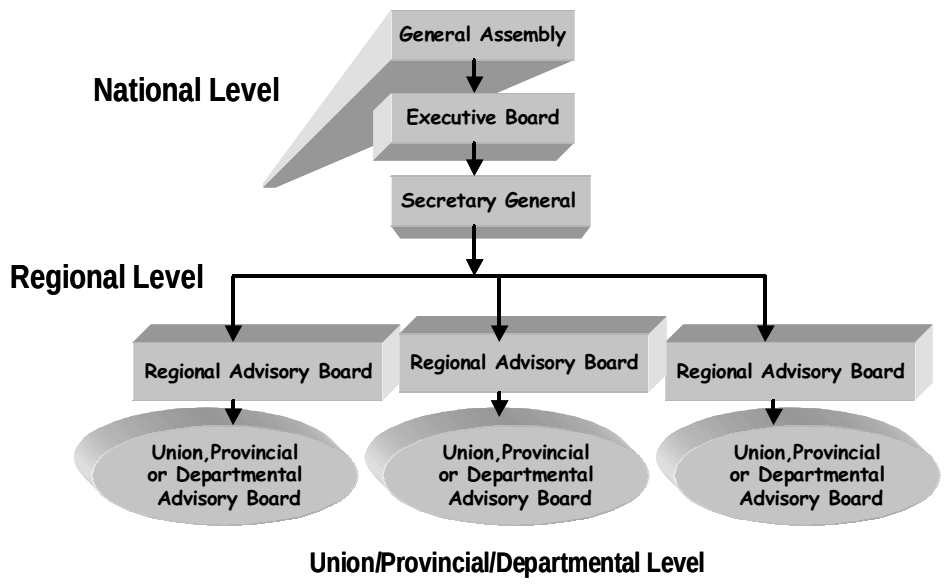

Figure 3. Organizational Structure of FENOP.

Union Nationale des Jeunes Producteurs Agricoles du Burkina (UNJPA/B)

Soon after independence in the sixties the government established the Cen-

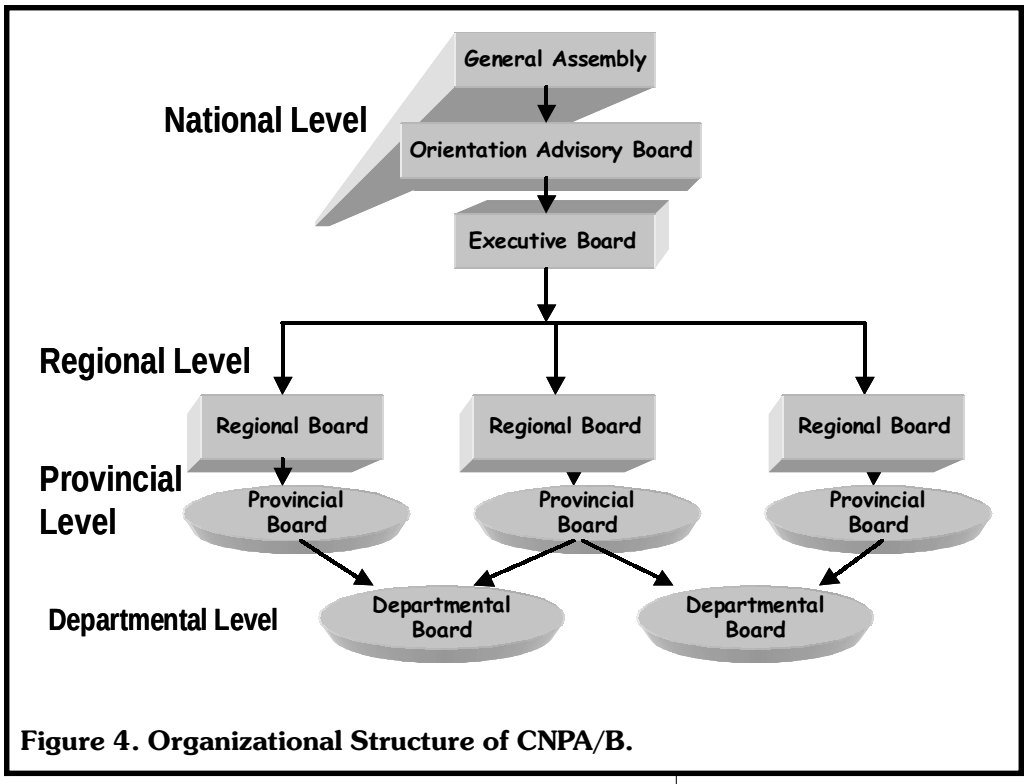

Figure 4. Organizational Structure of CNPA/B.

tre d'Education Rurale to train young men and women. Training was done using the French language as the medium of instruction. With the benefit of this new knowledge, most of the trained young cadre left the country to apply their trade elsewhere. In 1972 the training orientation was changed to more context-specific training using the local language and emphasizing agriculture. Consequently the name of the center was changed to "Centre de Formation des Jeunes Agriculteurs" to reflect the new orientation. The trainees were then organized into village farmer groups, "Groupement des Jeunes Agriculteurs" to facilitate production and commercialization. These groups unionized in 1990 on the departmental level and 2 years later on the provincial level. In 1997 the national organization of young agricultural producers was formed into UNJPA/B. The objectives of UNJPA/B are to:

1 Represent young agricultural producers at national and international levels and to defend the interests of the organizations of young farmers.

2. Facilitate contacts between donors and different partners.

3. Provide training and management to members.

4. Manage an information database for the young farmers.

Even though the training centers no longer exist, young farmers between the age of 13 and 45 continue to join the UNJPA/B since they claim they do not feel comfortable expressing their points of view before their elders in the traditional farmer organizations. The main problems faced by members include the lack of initial capital to start their business, problems associated with land acquisition, and access to materials. As an organization, the UNJPA/B lacks funds, but it has advantages over some other farmers' organizations in the sense that the UNJPA/B includes young farmers who are more likely to be innovative because of their training and more open to changing traditional agricultural practices.

Union Nationale des Producteurs du Coton (UNPC/B)

Until recently, the cotton production chain was managed by Société Burkinabe de Fibres et Textiles (SOFITEX), the parastatal cotton company in Burkina Faso. Under the arrangement, farmers organized into "Groupements des producteurs du coton" (GPCs) produce cotton for the company, which provides improved seeds, fertilizer, and pesticides on credit and technical assistance during the production process. The cotton is sold to SOFITEX at harvest and the costs of inputs subtracted at the source. When Burkina Faso undertook the agricultural reform process, SOFITEX was dissolved as a parastatal with the state, the cotton producers' union, and the French textile factory each owning 30% of the shares, and 10% sold to private investors (Jeune Afrique, 1997).

After the 1994 devaluation of the FCFA, farmers partly abandoned cotton production due to a significant misunderstanding between producers and SOFITEX dating back to 1990. This situation made both SOFITEX and the producers realize how much each needs the other, and hence, in 1995 SOFITEX and the state proposed an action plan to give a new impetus to cotton producers. The cause of the misunderstanding was the misappropriation of credits provided for cotton production. Credits for inputs were delivered by the agricultural bank to each village organization through a solidarity guarantee scheme and each village organization was responsible for the repayment. Since the credit was provided to the village as a whole, all farmers including non-cotton farmers benefited; however, it was the cotton producers who supported the village credit indirectly. The scheme was abused (mostly used for the production of crops other than cotton) and as a result, most village organizations were unable to pay off the credit, leaving a total debt of 2.4 billion CFA by 1995.

In 1996 an action plan was developed in which cotton producer organizations (GPCs) with only cotton producers as members were eligible for the solidarity credit. These GPCs have since been organized on departmental, provincial, and national levels, and in 1998 the GPCs came together to form the new UNPC/B. In late February 1999, the union signed a protocol of understanding with SOFITEX whereby the government would hold 65% of SOFITEX's shares and the Compagnie Francaise du Développement des Textiles (CFDT) would own the remainder (EIU, 1999). The protocol provides for the establishment of a joint management committee responsible for setting producer and input prices, overseeing SOFITEX's annual research budget, and ensuring the maintenance of rural roads. SOFITEX now negotiates and communicates with UNPC/B and no longer with FENOP, which first represented the interests of cotton producers in Burkina Faso.

Cadre de Concertation entre Organisation Faîtières (CCOF)

The idea of forming a platform for cooperation among different national FBOs was launched at a workshop organized in 1996 at Koudougou, Burkina Faso, by the Programme d'Appui au Développement local au Sahel (PADLOS) of CILSS. The workshop's aim was to facilitate the development of a regional platform for the nine Sahelian countries.[3] In each of these countries, a national platform for cooperation among national FBOs was established, but in Burkina Faso it was not until 1998 that the national FBOs agreed to form the platform, which they named as "Cadre de Concertation entre Organisation Faîtières" (CCOF). Each national organization has two representatives in CCOF, and leadership rotates among the national organizations. FENOP, CNPA/B, and UNJAB were the initial members of CCOF, but UNPC/B did not agree to participate and others speculate that UNPC/B does not want to share its resources with the other members. UNPC/B clearly is the richest of the national organizations because much money is circulating in the cotton sector. UNPC/B, however, considers that attention should be paid to the basics first before concentrating on higher levels of aggregation. UNPC/B decided to join CCOF in 2001, but FENOP has withdrawn apparently because of a conflict between CCOF's and FENOP's objectives.

Chamber of Agriculture

The idea of forming a CA in Burkina Faso was conceived in 1993. In 1998 the state, convinced that the existing farmer organizations catered only for about 10% of the farming population, asked FAO to assist in setting up a CA to represent all farmers. On the basis of several consultancies, studies, workshops, and meetings, a plan for establishing the CA was elaborated. Some critics of the plan thought that the consultants were attached to government (politicized), hence, not sufficiently objective. This plan for setting up the chamber which was to be presented to the government at the end of 1999, proposed the emergence of 12 regional chambers and 1 national CA.

Some of the existing national FBOs are against the creation of a CA for fear that the CA would be used as a new political instrument for imposing government policies on the local population. It is even suggested that the government influenced which farmers should be chosen as representative farmers. However, initial ideas concerning the implementation of a CA have changed considerably after regional workshops where farmers had their input.

3. Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Gambia, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Chad.

Ghana

Small-scale farmers make up an estimated 60% of the Ghanaian farming population (CEPA, 1999). However, they remain unorganized and are generally isolated from market information and profitable market opportunities. In general, the practice of grouping farmers into farmers' organizations in Ghana seems much less developed than in the French-speaking countries where many FBOs exist. However, several farmers' organizations: traditional, NGO, or state-created FBOs are found in Ghana today. GNAFF, considered to be "created" by the government in 1992, is at present the only legally recognized national farmers' and fishermens' organization in Ghana. GNAFF's objective is to help farmers and fishermen adapt to a changing economic situation and to represent farmers' and fishermens' interests to the government and vice versa. However, the organization does not seem to adequately represent those they claim to represent because links with the grassroots have not yet been established. Independently from GNAFF, some religious organizations have created a network, Association of Church Development Projects (ACDEP) in the northern, upper west, and upper east regions to cater to the needs of farmers. Other organizations created to cater to special interests of the farmers are those formed along the commodity lines—coffee, cocoa, cotton, rubber, tobacco, and rice. Recently, the national chief farmers formed an association to preserve their status and to serve as a source of counsel, inspiration, and a 'think-tank' for farmers and other stakeholders in Ghana.[4]

Commodity-Based FBOs

Many diverse producer associations are organized around specific commodities or activities of which the best-known ones are the coffee, cocoa, sheanut, cotton, and rice producer associations. These producer associations are found at the various levels (community, district, regional, and national), but their capacities vary. Each of the commodity-specific FBOs has a common interest in defending the interest of the farmers in the production and marketing chain of the products they represent. Examples are:

Cocoa, Coffee and Sheanut Farmers' Association (CCSFA)—CCSFA is a non-profit farmer organization that has been in existence since 1979. It started as an association of cocoa farmers organized at the grassroots, community, district, region, and national levels. Cocoa farmers at the grassroots organize themselves into community-level associations and elect the community chief farmer to represent the association. The elected chief community farmers assemble at the district level to form the District Executive Committee from which a representative is elected to represent them at the regional level. The elected chief district farmers and their deputies from all the districts in the region form the Regional Executive Committee. The chief regional farmers from all the 10 regions in the country constitute the National Executive Committee. Officers of the District, Regional, and the National Executive Committees hold office for 5 years and are eligible for re-election for another term. A chief national farmer (President of the Association) is elected from the National Executive Committee (Figure 5).

Recently coffee and sheanut farmers joined the cocoa farmers' association and changed its name to the Ghana CCSFA. The same election process is followed ensuring that the national chief farmer represents all cocoa, coffee, and sheanut farmers in Ghana.

The objectives of the CCSFA are:

1. To organize cocoa, coffee, and sheanut farmers throughout the country into one body.
2. To seek general interest of cocoa, coffee, and sheanut farmers in the acquisition of farm inputs.
3. To promote and maintain the common well-being of members through the exchange of ideas and information technology.
4. To seek ways to prevent smuggling of cocoa, coffee, and sheanut out of Ghana.
5. To educate members on ways to improve the quality of their produce.
6. To serve as a channel of communication between the Government and members on matters affecting the cocoa, coffee, and sheanut industry.

4. For the past 10 years, the nation has honored its best farmers selected on completive basis from all the 10 regions of Ghana. The farmers are given material and monetary prizes for their contribution to agriculture in Ghana during the high profile National Farmers' Day celebrations on the first Friday in December each year.

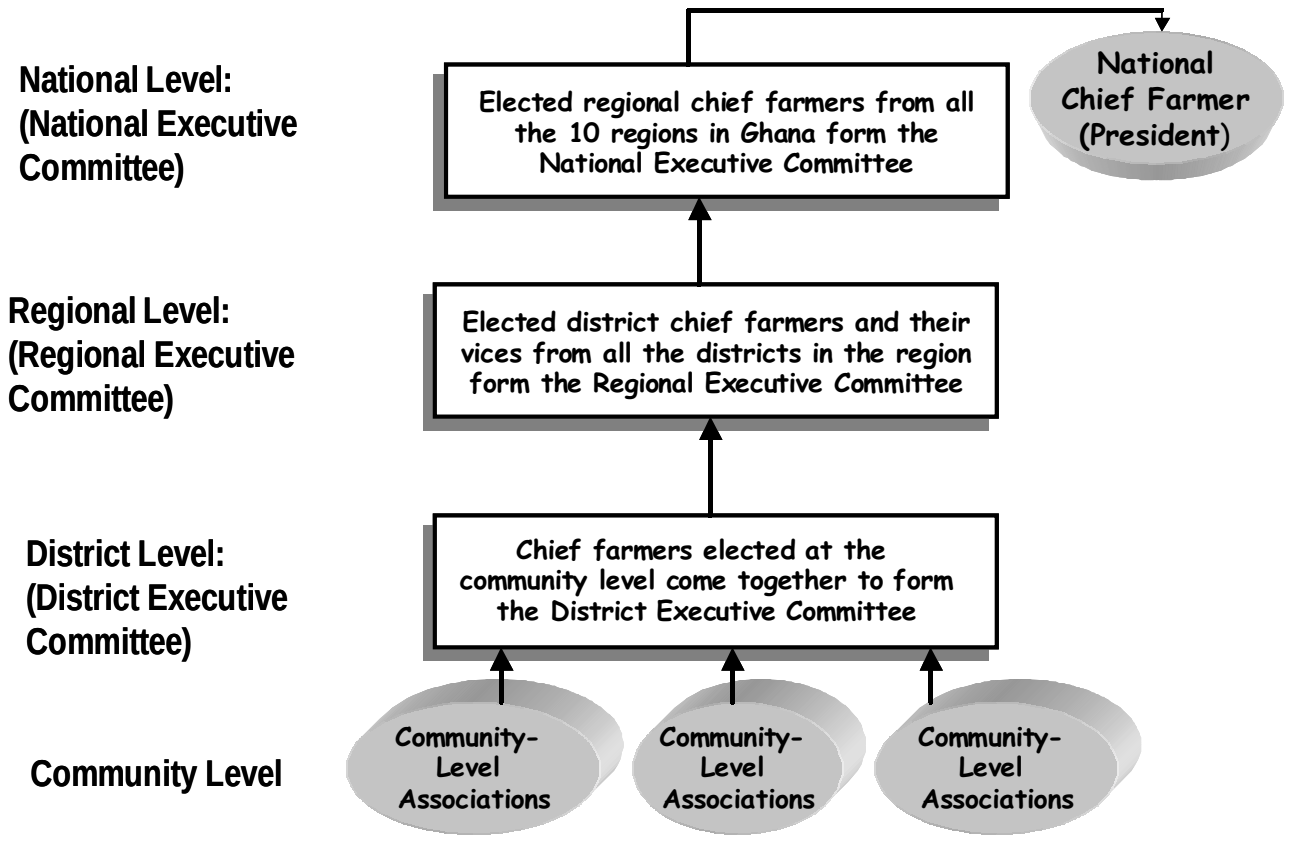

Figure 5. Organizational Structure of CCSFA: A Bottom-Up Approach.

The CCSFA plays both a representation role and a service provision role on behalf of its members. In its service provision role, for example, the CCSFA supplies inputs to its members at subsidized cost through the network of over 70 shops of the Cocoa Inputs Company that the association had acquired. Funds generated by the Cocoa Marketing Board (COCOBOD) is used for funding the subsidy and is paid for by members of CCSFA deducting a percentage on each kilogram of cocoa sold on behalf of the association members. Each year a special committee, comprised of the National Chief Farmer, the Minister of Finance, a representative of COCOBOD, a representative of the cocoa extension service, and the policy and research member of COCOBOD, determines the price of cocoa. In this way, the cocoa farmers' organization, represented by their chief farmer, influences decisions on cocoa price.

Seed Growers' Association (SGA)—To develop a viable, vibrant, and sustainable private sector, seed growers and dealers have formed seed associations organized into three broad sectors of the country: northern, middle, and southern sectors. The northern sector comprised of about 37 registered seed growers from the northern, upper east, and upper west regions. The middle sector is made up of some 36 registered producers from the Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions while the southern sector is made up of about 31 registered growers in the Greater Accra, eastern, central, and Volta western regions. Each association has its membership requirements, which are part of the group's constitution. The objectives of SGA are to offer members an opportunity to share ideas and in some cases resources and to serve as a lobby group to protect their interests. It is also easier to provide other assistance such as training for members of the association more effectively than if they remained individual growers.

The Ghana SGA has received some support from NGOs such as Sasakawa Global 2000 (SG 2000),

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), Techno Serve, and Cooperation for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) International in terms of organizing regular meetings and training in business management. Although membership is voluntary and open to all seed growers, the majority of the members are maize, cowpea, groundnut, and soybean growers. Vegetable growers belong to the Vegetable Producers and Exporters' Association (VEPEAG).

Vegetable Producers and Exporters' Association (VEPEAG)—VEPEAG was formed in 1997 by a group of vegetable producers and exporters and is now registered as a national organization with current membership standing at about 200. The association is managed by an Executive Council that is responsible for policy and general direction of the association. The council consists of an elected association president and an executive secretary and co-opted members from relevant linkage organizations like the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA), the Ghana Export Promotion Council, and the Ghana Investment Promotion Center. VEPEAG's objectives are:

- To promote vegetable production for the local and international markets.
- To mobilize resources for production and export of vegetables.
- To increase the volume of exportable vegetables and broaden the production base.
- To ensure product quality to meet international standards.
- To identify markets for members and provide them with up-to-date market information.
- To serve as a medium for negotiating competitive and uniform pricing.
- To serve as linkage between policy makers and the vegetable industry.

VEPEAG plays both representational and service roles for its members. Among the services provided are input supply, training, marketing, and sourcing of credit. VEPEAG negotiates and coordinates the supply of seeds, fertilizers, crop protection products, tools, and equipment between the dealers and their members to ensure quality and timeliness of supply. VEPEAG has also organized training courses for its members in agronomic practices, pesticide use, post harvest handling, and bookkeeping. In the area of marketing, the association has created a marketing company, the Ghana Vegetable Marketing Company, which buys produce from both members and non-members for export. Through this intervention, members benefit from the external market, which would not have been the case if they acted individually. The marketing company has also guaranteed loan applications on behalf of the members.

From its inception, VEPEAG has been nurtured by MOFA through institutional support of the association's secretariat, through training, and the provision of a central grading and packing facility near the export terminal at the airport. VEPEAG has also developed close ties with local and international agencies such as the Ghana Export Promotion Council, CARE International, Techno Serve, and Amex International, which provide a range of assistance from institutional support, training, agribusiness, and sponsorship at fairs and conferences locally and internationally.

Noncommodity-Based FBOs

There are several noncommodity-based farmers' organizations from the village through to the national level. They are organized for a wide range of social and development purposes with their major activities biased towards a concern for advocacy and implementation of development activities. Some examples are:

Church-Supported FBOs—Several legally recognized FBOs have been created by NGOs and religious organizations. These are often district- or region-specific and are hardly represented at the national level. Examples are Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and ACDEP. ADRA's approach is based on the farm household and works in collaboration with the extension service and through NGOs such as the Peace Corps. The CRS, also known as CATHWELL, works with FBOs to improve the well being of farmers through agriculture. The focus is on the use of organic manure and the provision of loans for bullock plows, training, post-harvest technology, beekeeping, and plant and fruit trees' cultivation. One of the main achievements of CRS is its role in the promotion of soybeans as a high source of protein in the northern regions.

Apart from the CATHWELL activities, church groups in the northern, upper west, and upper east regions of Ghana have also created a network of church development agricultural projects. The network, ACDEP, meets three times a year for members to exchange experiences, ideas, and views. Depending on the needs expressed by the members, workshops or training sessions are organized. Themes treated during earlier workshops are, for example, group dynamics, women circumcision, gender, etc. ACDEP member projects are also very much involved in participatory technology development activities and interact widely with institutions with similar interests.

Ghana National Association for Farmers and Fishermen (GNAFF)—Noncommodity-based farmers' organizations do exist at the national level; however, their capacities are varied. The Ghana Cooperative Council exists as an "apex" organization but is having financial difficulties as it is almost entirely dependent on financial contributions of the government to function.

Another key "apex" organization is GNAFF, the only legally recognized national farmer organization created in 1992 when the government agreed to help organize farmers into an umbrella organization to represent smallholder farmers as well as fishermen. This culminated in the creation of GNAFF to help farmers adapt to the changing agricultural and socioeconomic conditions and to represent farmers' interests at the national level in negotiations with the government and vice versa. The situation that Ghanaian farmers must adapt to is the vacuum left by government in input subsidy, supply, and guaranteed prices prior to the structural adjustment era. GNAFF is organized at the community, district, regional, and national levels and is represented in all the 110 districts and 10 regions. Unlike some other farmers' organizations, GNAFF members do not pay membership fees but depend on the purchase and resale of cutlasses, levies, guesthouse rental, and registration fees. Since this source of income is irregular, funding has become one of the primary bottlenecks for the functioning of the association.

GNAFF attempts to assist the government in formulating policies on the basis of the local existing situation of farmers and through them farmers become involved in political decision making. It has, however, often been criticized as being unrepresentative of the farmers and that they have been used as a political tool. With the change in government in 2001, GNAFF leadership and its functioning have been thrown into disarray. However, efforts are being made from within GNAFF and elsewhere to reexamine the status, structure, and functioning of GNAFF and possibly involve other farmers' organizations in a consultative meeting to map out a strategy and a consensus for a representative apex body of all Ghanaian farmers.

Mali

According to Sall (2000), different kinds of FBOs, estimated at approximately 3,656 different organizations, have sprung up since 1987, in addition to the CA in Mali. The farmers' organizations include village associations, traditional 'tons,' and economic interest groups. Since the decentralization and privatization policies in 1991, several large FBOs have been created, including the Syndicat des Producteurs de Coton et du Vivrier (SYCOV), Fédération des Riziculteurs de l'Office du Niger (FRON), Association des Organisations Professionnelle Paysannes (AOPP), and later, the Plate-Forme Sahélienne des Organisations des Producteurs Ruraux supported by CILSS.

Several donors and projects support the different FBOs in Mali. Examples are SDC, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the International Labor Organization (ILO), and the Government of Norway. USAID funds the Cooperative League of the United States of America (CLUSA) for the empowerment of FBOs in the non-Compagnie Malienne pour le Developpement des Textiles (CMDT) zones where their intervention is demand driven. UNDP funds an NGO collective action project whose activities are centered on the empowerment of FBOs and helps villages understand the consequences and benefits of decentralization. They also support local collectives in the field of human capital development, socioeconomical structures and infrastructures through training, micro-realizations, and structuring. The project has a special focus on women because they often have been forgotten and currently covers 345 villages in 3 different regions. As in the case of CLUSA, the NGO collective action project also concentrates on underprivileged zones outside the CMDT intervention zone. The French, through the Asso-

ciation FranVais et Développement Internationale (AFDI), provides financial support directly to the farmer organization, AOPP. The Regional Chambers of Agriculture and APCAM are financially supported by the FAO and more recently by the World Bank.

The Cotton Syndicate Group, SYCOV/SYVAC

SYCOV was formed and legally recognized in 1990. It was formed out of crisis when in 1989 different regional associations of cotton producers united and rejected an unfavorable policy adopted by CMDT regarding the financial responsibility of cotton farmers' associations. In 1990 a rumor circulated that CMDT wanted to raise its staff salaries without raising prices paid to cotton producers. Members of SYCOV united efforts again and created the Coordination Committee for the Village Associations and Tons of Koutiala. CMDT was worried and refused to negotiate with the committee. As a reaction the committee called for a strike and for 2 months the associations refused to deliver their cotton to CMDT until the Minister of Rural Development himself mediated the conflict. CMDT accepted bargaining with the committee and agreed on SYCOV's participation on the National Agricultural Pricing Board for cotton. The Koutiala branch of SYCOV is very active and is an important example of a syndicate defending the rights of its members vis-à-vis the CMDT and government policies.

In September 2001, the newly elected officers of SYCOV undertook a working visit to the cotton-producing zones in the CMDT and Opération Haute Vallée du Niger (OHVN) regions to access the activities of the season. One recommendation from the mission was the change of name of SYCOV to the Syndicat pour la Valorisation des Cultures Cotonière et Vivrière au Mali (SYVAC) to reflect the new direction of the cotton producers association. A congress was held in October of that year to adopt the new constitution. SYVAC, which is apolitical, will be a member of APCAM. The organizational structure spans all levels, from village, through the districts (ZER-ZAER-SDI) to zone, to region (CMDT and OHVN), and to the national. SYVAC is open to any Malian farmer provided his or her activities are directly or indirectly linked with the cotton production system. Its primary mission is to defend the interest of its members locally, nationally, and internationally. It will also provide training and general information to its members. Its primary source of revenue is the institution of a membership levy of CFA 250 per ton of cotton per annum.

Association des Organisations Professionnelle Paysannes (AOPP)

The concern for lack of trust and of the divergent views among the various FBOs in the Koror, Tominian, Koutiala, Fana, Segou, Gao, and Kayes regions inspired opinion leaders and representatives of the FBOs to meet in 1993 to create a 'commission paysanne' as a forum of exchange between FBOs. In 1994 the 'commission paysanne' organized several regional seminars that led to the creation of AOPP at the national level in 1995.

AOPP's objectives are to:

- Build a trust between FBOs.
- Identify common interests between different FBOs.
- Favor contacts between farmers for commercial relations and syndicate activities.
- Change relations between farmers and support systems (technical, administrative, and political assistance).
- Defend farmers' interests in the implementation of agricultural, economic, and social policies.
- Be engaged in all farmer-relevant issues.

Membership of AOPP is open to recognized FBOs and is subject to a subscription fee. Even though solid and credible as a farmer organization, they do not cover the entire country. However, through their membership in APCAM they try to influence policies at the national level. AFDI[5] financially supports AOPP.

Chamber of Agriculture (APCAM)

Prior to 1987 when Malian farmers were not organized into associations, farmers were absent at a state function where the head of the state called a meeting of the different social layers of the society. He met the different social layers except for farmers because they did not have a well-structured organization that could represent them. This lack of farmer representation led to the creation of a national chamber of agriculture in Bamako with delegates repre-

5. AFDI is known for their exchanges between French farmers and farmers in developing countries in order to share experiences.

sented at the regional level only. During the 1991 'popular movement,' farmers recommended a more decentralized structure of CA, and CA was extended to local levels. FAO technically supported the restructuring of this more representative chamber. At the circle, regional, and national levels, elections for office holders are held using secret ballots. Each region creates its own autonomous CA. The election follows a democratic process where each village delegates four representatives each representing farmers, herders, fishermen, and foresters. At the commune level, three representatives from the villages making up the commune are elected to represent them at the circle level. The three elected representatives from each level form a consular assembly at the regional level. The consular assembly also includes 5 representatives from other professional agricultural associations for a total of 12 to 29 members of the assembly.

The decentralized network of the national chamber of agriculture in Mali is shown in Figure 6. It is composed of a consular assembly of about 12 to 29 elected members and is made up of:

1. The National Chamber of Agriculture consisting of all the nine Regional Chambers of Agriculture (RCAs) and elected delegates from the different circles plus five representatives of other professional bodies.
2. The Permanent Assembly of the Chambers of Agriculture (APCAM) consisting of the nine presidents of the CA, two elected members of each CA, and five members of professional agricultural organizations.

The missions of the decentralized network of the national chamber of agriculture are:

- Professional representation of the interests of farmers, herders, fishermen, and foresters at the local, national, and international levels.
- Stimulation of the restructuring of the rural people to face the realities of the day.
- Contribution to the capacity building of the members.
- Channel of communication and information to members.
- Support for individual and collective initiatives of the rural people.
- Participation in policy decision making with the government on behalf of the rural people.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis: Country-Level FBOs

Several FBOs are set up under different circumstances and with different objectives in each of the three countries studied. It would therefore not be appropriate to lump together the strengths, weak-

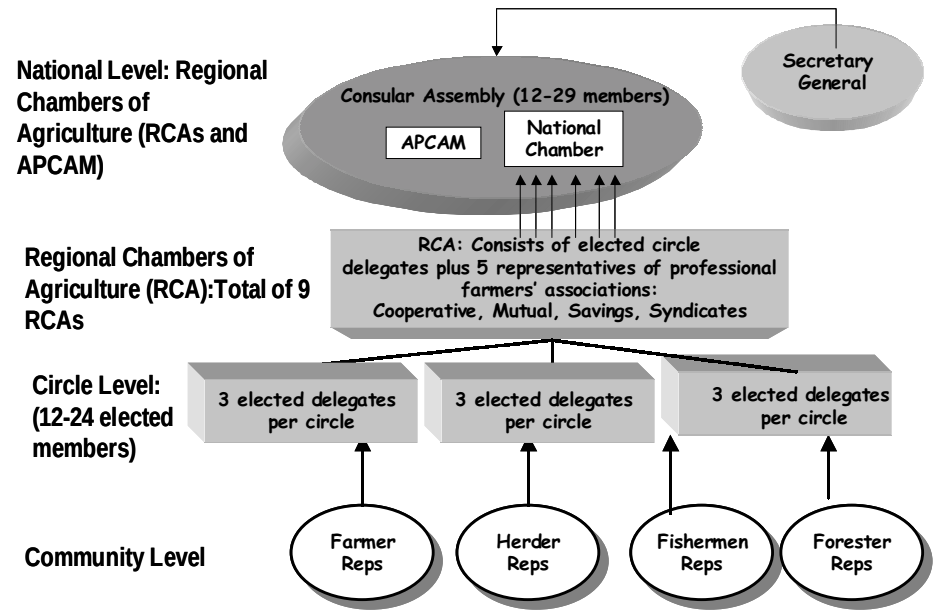

Figure 6. Decentralized System of Regional Chambers of Agriculture of Mali.

nesses, opportunities, and threats of all the FBOs studied. An attempt is thus made to identify the SWOTs for each of the FBOs in each of the three countries (Tables 1, 2, and 3). The trends in common strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the FBOs are summarized.

Common Strengths

The farmers of the subregion have become conscientious of the fact that as individual farmers, they are handicapped to fight for their rights and responsibilities and to effectively articulate their viewpoints in the policy arena. As a result, they are forming larger entities in the form of groups, associations, pre-cooperatives, unions, cooperatives, federations, syndicates, and cooperative partnerships or farmer-controlled companies. Some of the main benefits that farmers are gaining from being organized include:

- Acting as larger entities at the national level articulating common interests, especially in negotiations e.g., the associations of cotton producers in Burkina Faso and Mali or the association of coffee, cocoa, and sheanut farmers in Ghana have been able to negotiate prices for their products on behalf of their members.
- Pooling of resources of members through membership dues, levies on products sold by members e.g., a partial levy on a ton of cotton sold or a percent levy on a kilogram of cocoa sold.
- Pooling of resources increases the financial base of the members, helps reduce risks, and may serve as guarantees for loans.
- Collaboration in sourcing and provision of services, thereby benefiting from economies of scale.
- Collaboration in sharing information and agricultural technologies.

Common Weaknesses

The main weakness common to the farmers' organizations is the lack of proper consultation at the grassroots by the leaders before significant decisions are taken at the national level. The root of the problem lies in the fact that farmers are not properly represented in the organizational structure and only few individuals at the top speak on behalf of farmers. As a result, farmers and their organizations generally lack the influence that they should normally have on agricultural policies. Another weakness of the FBOs is the tendency to depend on donor agencies for financial and technical support. This dependency is in itself not a bad idea to the extent that the financial and technical situations of the emerging organizations are weak. However, questions of sustainability arise to the extent that farmers' organizations themselves are not making strong enough efforts to build their financial, technical, and organizational capacities to take over when the donor support diminishes. On the basis of the different country studies one may conclude that there is a general disagreement among the different farmers' organizations which all claim to represent farmers interests vis-à-vis the public-sector policies.

Common Opportunities

New opportunities have opened up for farmers since the early- to mid-eighties when the political and socioeconomic environment in most of Africa changed fundamentally. The state is no longer directly involved in the procurement of inputs, production, processing, and marketing of agricultural products and will have to communicate with the entities that are assuming the responsibility for these functions. In a similar vein, farmers can no longer count on the state's direct support and must learn to negotiate their interests with the government and the private sector in a free market setting. Therefore, farmers have to be strong at all levels, and as well vis-à-vis their partners (policy makers, private sector, etc.), and their capacities must be built or strengthened to participate in decision making as partners.

The changing economic situation and globalization also demands that farmers explore the attention being given them in international forums and diversify their activities from mere production to value-added and processing activities. There are opportunities opening up for joining forces in regional FBOs to benefit from stronger regional entities (e.g., Réseau des Chambres d'Agriculture de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (RECAO), Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (ROPPA), and Réseau des Opérateurs Economiques du Secteur Agroalimentaire de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (ROESAO) to influence sub-regional agricultural policies.

Table 1. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of Selected Farmers' Organizations in Burkina Faso

Farmers' Organization	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
FENOP	Represented at the grassroots through to the national level. Potential financial sustainability through membership dues.	Tendency to act at the national level without proper consultation at the grassroots level. Tendency to depend too much on donor support.	Opportunity to provide quality support to members as they are organized along commodity lines.	Ability to function effectively without high level of donor support.
CNPA/B	Represented at the grassroots (province, departmental, and national levels).	Tendency to depend too much on donor support. Not clear if members pay membership dues to generate funds within group.	May explore their international visibility (recognized by the international community: World Bank, FAO) to their advantage.	Dependency on donor support may redirect the organization to other objectives and activities.
UNJPA/B	Membership open to young farmers (13-45 years old). More educated and more dynamic members.	Access to finance significant problem (young people hardly have any collaterals to guarantee loans).	Vigor and initiative of the youth and their potential to adopt new technologies.	Reticence of other organizations with older members.
UNPC	Specialization in a single commodity (cotton) hence quality support. Relatively ensured input supply and outlet for produce.	Tendency to depend too much on technical and financial support of SOFITEX.	May use its long experience and those of their neighbors to exert influence on management.	May be exploited by SOFITEX. May be used as a political tool.
CCOF	Democratic elections of officers.	Does not represent all the FBOs.	Opportunity to serve as a platform representing	Competition from emerging CA.

Table 2. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of Selected Farmers' Organizations in Ghana

Farmers' Organization	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
CCSFA	Well represented at the grassroots; strong voice at the national level; democratic principles; financial sustainability through levy on products sold; own and manage input supply company.	Tendency to be pre-occupied with the production aspects of cocoa, coffee, and sheanuts. No attempts to diversity and add value to the raw materials.	Opportunity to venture into value-added and processing activities and to attract the youth.	Falling world prices of raw materials; Tendency for the youth to shy away from perennial crops. Aging population of cocoa farmers.
SGA	Represented at the grassroots.	Tendency to depend on donor support. Internal fund mobalization weak.	Members may be trained to provide technical assistance in seed production. Opportunity to create linkages with the seed dealers for ensured outlets for their seeds.	Low demand for seeds. Inadequacy of public-sector funding.
VEPEAG	Executive Council made up of experts from different sectors on which VEPEAG depends (Export Promotion, Investment Promotion Council, MOFA) Own and Manage Vegetable Marketing Company on behalf of members.	Dependency on government (MOFA) and donor support. Not well known in many vegetable-producing areas.	May take advantage of the emerging vegetable and horticultural markets in Europe and America. Renovation of freight facilities at the Kotoka International Airport, Accra.	The pace of development of haulage and storage infrastructure low. The pace of improving research capabilities low.
GNAFF	Representation for smallholder farmers and fishermen who are not members of commodity-based farmers' organizations.	Tendency to depend too much on government, hence, lose independence. Membership dues not usually paid. Perceived to be a political tool for government.	Review of status and reorganize GNAFF to attract members.	Members showing growing disaffection.

Table 3. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of Selected Farmers' Organizations in Mali

Farmers' Organization	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
SYCOV/ SYVAC	Represented at the grass-roots through to the national level. Financial sustainability through levy on cotton sales by members. International recognition.	Pre-occupation with cotton with little attention to other crops.	Larger roles foreseen by Malian government in view of disengagement of the cotton parastatal. Development of the private-sector input dealers and opportunities for linkages.	Inexperience of the farmers' organizations in handling input procurement, distribution and management
AOPP	Financial stability based on member contributions and support from French Association of Farmers.	Lack of representation in certain parts of the country.	Linkages with farmers' associations in France.	Potential dependency on the French Association of Farmers
Chambre d'Agriculture (APCAM)	Decentralized system of regional chambers and a permanent and consular assembly at the national level. Consular assembly includes representation from other professional agricultural associations. National budget allocated to APCAM. Linkage with the International Associations (IFAP).	Appear to have ambitions that may go beyond the interests of the ordinary farmers belonging to the chamber (e.g., headquarters of the regional chambers of agriculture). Appear to have strong political clout.	Emerging political environment permitting consultation with farmers at national and international levels.	Inexperience of the farmers' organizations in handling input procurement, distribution, and management. Will APCAM become a political tool? Emergence of the regional network of farmers organizations (ROPPA) as threat or competition to the network of CAs.

Common Threats

It has become clear from the case studies that a kind of rivalry exists between the different farmers' organizations, thereby undermining their capacity to speak with a common voice and defend the interests of farmers. It is not clear what roles the different organizations have to play and how they can complement each other. More precisely the functions, activities, and roles of the different FBOs intervening for the same global objective are not properly defined. This situation leads to confusion and the impression that they are competitive instead of complementary.

There is a threat of sustainability of the farmers' organizations because most of them depend to a large extent on donor financial and technical support. If capacities are not built within the organizations and donor support is reduced, some of the organizations may be forced to disintegrate. The tendency for some farmers' organizations to be used as political tools for the advancement of the political agenda of the ruling party or the opposition is real and continues to pose a threat to the proper functioning of farmers' organizations.

Situation of FBOs at the Sub-Regional Level

The need to group national-level farmers' organizations into larger entities at the sub-regional level to influence sub-regional policies is becoming increasingly important. Fortunately, there is an emerging trend in this direction with four interrelated initiatives being created: RECAO, ROPPA, ROESAO, and the CILSS platform for farmers' organizations.[6]

Réseau des Chambres d'Agriculture de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (RECAO)

The success of the decentralized system networks of CAs in Mali (with FAO's support) has triggered the idea of developing a sub-regional network of CAs with headquarters in Mali. CAs are currently present only in a few countries but plans are underway to extend them to others. The idea of the network at the sub-regional level is to represent and defend the interests of all farmers, whether organized into farmers' organizations or individual farmers not belonging to any organization or professional farmers' organizations. At a recent workshop for CAs held in Bamako in November 2001 and attended by participants from Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and Togo, recommendations were made toward the reinforcement of efforts to regionalize the networks. Other key activities identified for the regional network of CAs include:

- Development of professional organizations along commodity lines (e.g., regional association of cotton producers, etc.).
- Reinforcement or creation of a consultative forum for producers in the sub region.
- Regular exchanges of experience among member countries.
- Organization of regional agricultural fairs and other catalytic events to promote agriculture and to strengthen linkages.
- Diffusion of market information and other relevant information of common interest among members.
- Assurance of representativity at discussions of sub-regional institutions such as the Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest-Africaine (UEMOA) or the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The President of the Malian Chamber of Agriculture represents the network of CAs at IFAP in the capacity of President for Africa. The network of CAs also recently represented the chambers in the reflections of UEMOA on the development of a common agricultural policy for the UEMOA states.

Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (ROPPA)

ROPPA is another initiative that seeks to bring together farmers' organizations in the West African sub region. ROPPA, which focuses mostly on smallholder farmers or farm families, was created at a farmers' organization workshop organized in Cotonou, Benin, in July 2000. The proposed headquarters of ROPPA is Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, and member countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo. The statutory documents creating the net-

6. The CILSS platform is an initiative by CILSS to provide a forum for farmers' organizations in the Sahelian countries. With the new developments on the regional farmer organizations' front, the CILSS platform is becoming less and less visible.

work and the bylaws of the network were approved and signed by the members during another convention held in Mali in November 2000. ROPPA's objectives are to:

- Promote and defend peasant agriculture for the benefit of smallholder producers.
- Inform and train members of the network from experiences from within ROPPA and elsewhere.
- Encourage consultations among members and promote the structuring of farmers' organizations in member countries to be able to participate in making decisions that affect the rural and agricultural sector.
- Promote the solidarity between ROPPA members.
- Ensure representation of farmers at the sub-regional and international levels.
- Encourage linkages and consultations between ROPPA and similar structures worldwide.

ROPPA is governed by a body called the "Convention," composed of seven elected delegates, and is the legislative arm responsible for developing the strategy and orientations of ROPPA. It also has an Executive Committee composed of a president and two vice presidents and is the executive and supervisory arm and a technical unit charged with the execution of the activities of the Executive Committee. ROPPA's resources come from membership fees of CFA 1,000,000 per member country, contributions, grants from partners, and donors. A Capacity Building Fund has been created[7] to support the activities of the network. As of July 2001, the financial situation of ROPPA stands at CFA 183,535,711 out of a total pledge of CFA 245,349,273 (ROPPA report, 2001). Apart from membership fees representing 4% of total contribution, some important donor agencies and NGOs that contribute to ROPPA are Coopération Francaise (7%), Agriterra (5%), Coopération Belge (10%), CSA (1%), SOS Faim (29%), and Coopération Suisse (44%) (Figure 7).

Although ROPPA has been in existence for only 2 years, it has carried out several missions to member countries to create awareness and has contributed largely to the reflections of UEMOA on the development of a common agricultural policy for UEMOA states. ROPPA is recognized in the sub region by UEMOA with whom it has a Memorandum of Understanding, and internationally by the European Union, FAO, and other bodies with interest in farmers' organizations.

Réseau des Opérateurs Economiques du Secteur Agroalimentaire de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (ROESAO)

ROESAO is a regional network that brings together stakeholders and agribusinessmen of the agricultural production chain (input suppliers, producers, processors, and commodity traders). It was created in March 2001 in Bamako during a regional conference reviewing the perspectives of agriculture in Africa. The objectives of ROESAO are:

- Reinforcement of the capacities of its members to be able to participate in the elaboration and implementation of regional policies that affect their activities.

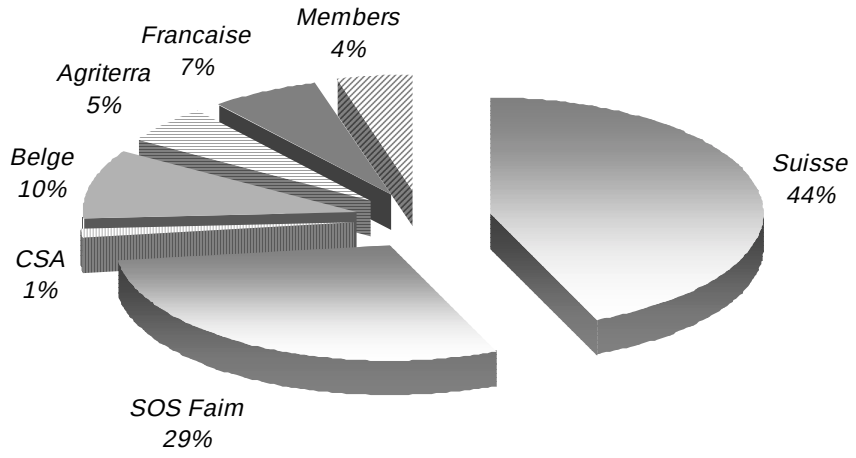

Figure 7. Sources and Levels of Funding of ROPPA as of July 2001.

7. Fonds de Régional de Renforcement des Capacités des Organisations Paysannes et Producteurs Agricoles, Rapport ROPPA, Septembre 2001.

- The development and diffusion of market information through a regional market information system.
- Training of members in various aspects of their activities.
- Facilitation of access to different support from the public and from the private sectors for its members.

SWOT Analysis: Regional-Level FBOs

As in the case of national farmers' organizations, the emerging regional-level farmers' organizations are also created under different circumstances and with different but interrelated objectives. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the regional-level FBOs are:

Strengths

It is now widely recognized that even if individual farmers are organized into national-level associations and are already participating in national-level decisions, they may not be able to influence regional policies as effectively as they would if they were grouped into larger regional entities. The primary benefits that could accrue to farmers' organizations at the regional level include:

- Acting as larger entities at the regional level, articulating common interests, especially in negotiations related to common regional or international agricultural policies.
- Pooling of resources to increase the financial base of the member countries helps reduce risks and may serve as guarantees for loans at the regional level.
- Collaboration in sourcing and provision of services, thereby benefiting from economies of scale.
- Collaboration in sharing information and agricultural technologies.

Weaknesses

The main weakness of the regional initiatives is the apparent lack of coordination among the networks. In particular, there appears to be a duplication of efforts between RECAO and ROPPA and tension between the leaderships of the two organizations to the extent that if this were not rectified they would not be able to achieve the benefits of collaborating at the regional level.

Opportunities

The changing political and socioeconomic environment in many countries in West Africa is providing opportunities for agricultural and trade policies to be reviewed. Farmers, as important stakeholders, need to be consulted at a broader regional level and hence the need for them to be strong and united at the regional level. It is encouraging that one of the regional networks (ROESAO) focuses attention on agribusiness and the food chain and involves input and commodity dealers, processors, and the farmers themselves. There is the opportunity to join forces with ROPPA and RECAO and provide the necessary market and trade information for farmers and businessmen to influence all aspects of sub regional agricultural policies.

Threats

The most important threat of the emerging regional organizations is the apparent rivalry existing between the two main networks of farmers' organizations. This has the potential of splitting their ranks and undermining their capacity to speak with a common voice and defend the interests of farmers. It is not clear what roles the different networks have to play and how they can complement each other. There is also a threat of sustainability of the regional farmers' organizations as they now depend on donor support without adequate provisions for self-financing mechanisms.

Farmer Empowerment Intervention Strategies

Experience from elsewhere (e.g., from Albania and described by Cotera, 2000) shows that farmers and their organizations are best empowered by an autonomous organization with no direct links to the government and which will operate independently from any government institution. Although IFDC has access to the government and facilitates dialogue among farmers, agribusinesses, and policy makers, it operates independently of any government institution. Its intervention strategy to empower farmers' organizations in the sub region is situated at two lev-

els, both of which occur simultaneously. The two levels are in-country empowerment and sub-regional level empowerment.[8] The key empowerment activities broadly include:

- Strengthening farmer organizations' structures (at the grassroots, district, regional, and national levels in-country as well as at the sub-regional and international levels).
- Developing or strengthening farmers' skills (e.g., technical, business, and other skills) at the various levels:
  - To increase farmers' economic participation and their well being.
  - To sharpen their negotiating and advocacy power in all relevant fora.
  - To be aware of their rights and responsibilities and to be able to participate in and influence policies that affect them and their business.

The definition of these broad activities resulted from a thorough understanding of the situation of FBOs prevailing in the sub region (Figure 8). It consists of individual farmers at the grassroots community level grouped into larger entities (e.g., unions, associations, or other groupings) at the district level. They may be commodity-based or otherwise. The district-level groupings become larger entities of similar groupings at the regional administrative level. At the national level, national associations or federations exist and several of these federations may come together to form a confederation, considered as umbrella or apex bodies. In some cases, the RCAs come together to constitute the national chamber of agriculture. Some of the national associations are registered with or are members of any of the sub-regional farmers' organizations (ROPPA, RECAO, or ROESAO). In some cases, the same national farmers' organization may belong to the three sub-regional networks. Whereas certain national farmers' organizations belong to the global farmers' organization (IFAP) directly, others do so through the sub-regional farmers' organizations.

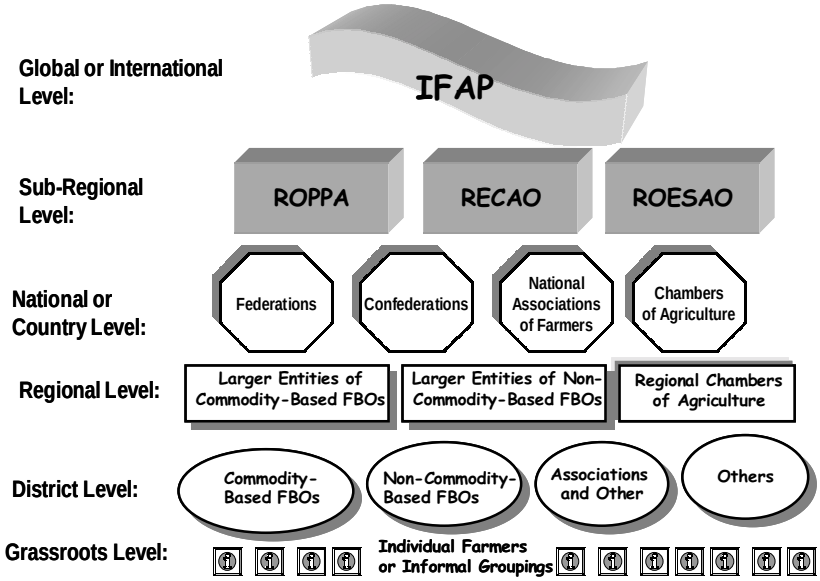

Figure 8. A Generalized Structure of Farmers' Organizations in West Africa.

Levels of Intervention

Clearly there is the need to intervene at all FBO levels because the weakest link determines the strength of the chain. Different interventions are required for each unique situation. However, given that most farmers in the sub region are illiterate, the empowerment intervention should also include literacy empowerment, particularly at the grassroots level. Some NGOs, by virtue of their closeness to the grassroots organizations, have a comparative advantage over IFDC in this aspect and could be best placed to provide the empowerment.

Empowerment for economic participation and for rights and responsibilities, and advocacy and participation in decision making could best be handled at the district and regional levels. At the national level, the focus should be on coordinating the different federations or national associations into an umbrella or apex body (confederation, CA, or another entity) capable of advocacy, lobbying, and negotiation on behalf of farmers. At the sub-regional level, where

8. Recall the definition of farmer empowerment and its process from the earlier sections.

there are currently four competing initiatives (ROPPA, RECAO, ROESAO, CILSS Platform), effort should be concentrated on ensuring their complementarities and avoiding duplication so as to adequately represent the farmers' organizations in the individual countries at the sub-regional and international levels.

Ongoing Empowerment Activities

The specific empowerment activities that are on going were distilled from the thorough assessment of the needs of the farmers' organizations during the case studies and through the SWOT analysis. These activities are therefore demand-driven. In the next section the farmer empowerment activities currently being undertaken by IFDC are described followed by future planned activities.

Country Level

Burkina Faso (UNPC/B study)—The national association of cotton producers in Burkina Faso, UNPC/B, presently faces problems of input supply and the marketing of produce because the Government of Burkina Faso is phasing out its support for the parastatal cotton agency, SOFITEX, which is the main supplier of cotton inputs and the purchaser of the product. UNPC/B has recognized the need to have its structure strengthened and the capacities of its members reinforced in order to play the multiple roles of representation and advocacy on behalf of its members and a service provision role. The association is therefore collaborating with the PMP program of IFDC to conduct an in-depth study of the association with the view of empowering them. The study, which started in November 2001, will obtain information on the following:

- UNPC/B membership, structure, and organization from grassroots through to the national level.
- The decision-making mechanisms within and outside the association.
- Modalities of access to and exchange of information among members.
- How the association relates to or influences decisions of SOFITEX vis-à-vis input procurement, credit, technical support, and sale of produce.
- How they relate to other FBOs locally and in the sub region.
- How they relate to research, extension, and technology-generating institutes, particularly how they articulate their technology needs to the research institutes.
- How the different government policies have affected the productivity and profitability of cotton over time.
- What mechanisms they use for dialogue and negotiations, etc.

This information will form the basis of empowerment activities such as helping them to get organized and be more representative, more democratic, and financially viable. It will also form the basis for strengthening the members' capacities for advocacy and economic welfare and be well equipped to provide services to its members. The lessons drawn from the UNPC/B study will be useful in guiding the empowerment of other FBOs in Burkina Faso.

Ghana (GNAFF Consultative Meeting)—GNAFF, which is an "apex" body representing the interests of farmers and fishermen, is no longer a credible organization because of its past links to politicians. In recognition of this deficiency, GNAFF recently held two consultative meetings in August and September 2001 to discuss how it could restructure itself to play the role of representation at the national level. A key conclusion of the consultative meetings was for IFDC to take the lead to plan a training workshop for leaders of the various FBOs in Ghana and to use the workshop as a rallying point or forum to discuss and agree on how a representative apex body of all farmers' organizations could be organized at the national level. IFDC is leading a planning committee including key stakeholders to plan the event in collaboration with the relevant sector ministries: the Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology (MEST), MOFA, and the Ministry for Manpower Development and Employment (MMDE) and other development partners. Activities being undertaken include:

1. The listing and contact information on the main farmers' organizations in Ghana, including their objectives, activities, and organizational structure.
2. Contacting the main farmers' organizations, discussing and obtaining their views on the initiative of creating an apex and representative body of existing farmers' organizations to defend the interest of Ghanaian farmers.
3. Identifying dates and location suitable for holding a 3-day training and consultative workshop.

4. Seeking the views of a representative, each from the extension service of MOFA and of the office of the Deputy Minister for Food and Agriculture in the accomplishment of the task.

The request to IFDC from GNAFF for assistance coincides with the government's determination to reinforce and empower FBOs in Ghana. The Agricultural Services Sub-Sector Investment Program (AgSSIP) program, recently launched in Accra (November 27, 2001), specifically targets the development of FBOs and will provide support for the development of FBOs in collaboration with MMDE, the Ghana Cooperative Council, and selected NGOs. The creation of an apex organization for the FBO movement in Ghana is envisaged, and an FBO Development Fund of US $5 million is to be established from the AgSSIP program that will be managed by the organization itself.

Sub-Regional Level

Awareness Creation and Activity Identification Workshop—During the exploratory studies in the three countries and in discussions with CILSS, the need for farmer empowerment awareness creation at the sub-regional level was identified. Therefore, a sub-regional workshop of farmers' organizations was planned with the objective of bringing together farmers' organizations to identify common activities that would enhance their capacities to participate in decisions affecting them at the sub-regional level.

IFDC and CILSS jointly organized the workshop in Koudougou, Burkina Faso, in May 2001 for 57 participants, representing farmers' organizations from nine countries.[9] The workshop's primary objectives were: (1) to create awareness of the need for farmer empowerment at the sub-regional level, (2) to have farmers exchange views on the extent to which they participate in decision making (in particular soil fertility management decisions), and (3) to identify areas in which farmers and their organizations require support from NGOs and other development partners. Although farmers do not usually express the issue of soil fertility as the most important preoccupation, the workshop used soil fertility management as the rallying point for the exchange of views on how farmers participate in decisions that affect their activities as primary users of the land. During the course of the workshop, a catalogue of activities and areas of collaboration were identified by the participants, and these form the basis of IFDC's efforts to empower farmers' organizations in the sub region.

The general consensus that emerged from the discussions in plenary and working groups is that farmers' influence on policies and decision making in the sub region is generally weak, and in most cases nonexistent. The areas in which the farmers' organizations require intervention from IFDC and its partners include assistance in:

- Organizing farmers at all levels, and particularly at the national and sub-regional levels into cohesive and well-coordinated entities.
- Strengthening farmers' capacities in technical, business, organizational, negotiating/lobbying, and communication skills.
- Having access to local, regional, and international market and policy information.
- Overcoming local land insecurity constraints.
- Having access to financing.

Consultative and Training Workshop for FBO Leaders—In response to the request made at the sub-regional meeting of farmers' organizations at the Koudougou workshop in May for specific training for leaders of farmers' organizations, IFDC organized a consultative and training workshop in Lomé, Togo, in October 2001. It brought together more than 40 representatives of FBOs and CAs from 4 West African countries.[10] The theme for the consultative and training workshop was **"strengthening the capacities of leaders of FBOs in the area of input supply and distribution systems and marketing of agricultural produce."** The consultative aspect was designed for the leaders of FBOs and CAs to identify problems, needs, and expectations in terms of support and training to plan future actions.

The program included field visits to observe input supply and distribution systems and sites where inte-

9. Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, Guinea Bissau, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal.

10. *See* news release entitled, "Africa Division of IFDC Strengthens Peasant and Farmers' Organizations" found on www.ifdc.org/ and go to the 'what's new' page.

grated soil fertility management was being implemented, particularly in the vegetable-growing sector. An important aspect was a visit to the fertilizer-blending plant at the port of Lomé. This afforded the participants the opportunity to make business contacts for direct purchases of the inputs. The themes developed and issues discussed led to the identification of some topics to consider, which should orient future training programs towards the:

- Clarification of the functions of the different types of FBOs.
- Definition of roles and responsibilities of FBOs in supplying inputs.
- Mechanisms to facilitate access to agricultural inputs.
- Measures to reduce middlemen's margins and ways of redistributing returns from economies of scale to farmers' organizations.
- Ways in which FBOs can cooperate on a regional basis to lower input supply cost.

Emphasis was placed on the importance of information and communication to target markets and the urgent need for FBOs and CAs to receive training and have access to new information tools and technologies. "Training, information, and communication are key elements for efficiency of peasant organizations: training to succeed in conducting activities; information to position oneself; and communication to keep in touch with other partners," explains Bassiaka Dao, a participant from the Fédération des Professionnels Agricoles of Burkina Faso.

The participants formulated recommendations including the:

- Institutionalization of an annual or biannual forum for the private sector and farmers' organizations to assess new developments.
- Collaboration between the Africa Division of IFDC and farmers' organizations to obtain necessary financing for future training programs.
- IFDC-Africa Division's support in developing mechanisms to transfer knowledge acquired by leaders of FBOs and CAs to members at the grassroots level.

Future Empowerment Activities

Guiding Principles

In developing future empowerment activities, lessons learned from the on-going activities would serve as a guide. Some useful lessons include:

- The need for IFDC to focus on its niche while collaborating with NGOs and other organizations with competence in the other areas related to farmer empowerment.
- The need to collaborate and pool resources with donors and other agencies taking into account their particular area of interest vis-à-vis FBO empowerment.
- Providing FBOs access to market and price information related to inputs and output.

Focusing on IFDC's Niche—One of the objectives of IFDC's FASEPE project, financed by the Ministry for Development Cooperation of the Netherlands, is to empower and assist farmers to participate in the creation of an enabling environment that provides incentives for investments in soil fertility improvement. The empowerment process requires that individual farmers be organized into recognized farmer associations. Indeed the priority action that emerged from the case studies and the SWOT analysis is for development partners to help farmers better organize themselves from the grassroots through to the national level. This is essential because farmers cannot be empowered if they do not have an organization that can represent them at local, district, national, regional, and global levels. Although FBO strengthening is an indispensable aspect of the farmer empowerment process, IFDC does not have the comparative advantage in this area and needs to collaborate with the appropriate agencies, particularly the NGOs who work at the grassroots.

As an International Center for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development, IFDC's niche is in the area of facilitating the creation of incentives for investments in soil fertility improvement. Farmers, whether large or small, have an important stake in soil fertility improvement because it is the indispensable natural resource from which they produce food and fiber. In today's context, rapid population growth and the associated decline in per capita arable land has made agricultural intensification a better option for increas-

ing agricultural production than extensive agriculture. Agricultural intensification itself requires constant efforts to improve the fertility of the soil, implement appropriate government policies, and develop sustainable input supply and product marketing systems. Any policy decision that adversely affects any of these factors also affects the welfare of the farmer adversely. IFDC is well placed to empower farmers to participate in making or influencing decisions that affect these factors.

Collaboration With Donor and Other Agencies—A primary weakness of the FBOs in the sub region is their tendency to depend so much on donor financial and technical support to the extent that donor philosophies and interests sometimes influence the direction of dependent FBOs. It is unlikely that any single institution or donor agency would be well equipped enough to empower farmers in all the areas mentioned above. Some donors are clearly interested in FBO strengthening and group action; some in research-extension linkages; others are interested in literacy empowerment, economic participation and yet others are interested in advocacy. Therefore the key is a rapid inventory of donors and their specific interests so that those institutions and donors interested in supporting similar aspects of farmer empowerment would pool their resources and capabilities together in a well-coordinated manner to empower farmers' organizations.

Access to Market and Price Information—Farmers and their organizations would be better equipped to participate effectively in decision making if they have access to information relevant to their activities. These include information on availability and access to agricultural technology, government policies and their effects on their business, input and product market trends (local, national, and international), rights and responsibilities of farmers, etc. The regional-level training workshop organized by IFDC under the theme "strengthening the capacities of leaders of FBOs in the area of input supply and distribution systems and marketing of agricultural produce" was so successful that participants have requested that a similar activity be undertaken at the in-country level for the different FBOs.

Specific Activities

As has been the project's strategy, activities will continue to be jointly identified and planned by farmers' organizations and the FASEPE project in the specific countries. However some key activities have already been identified for execution in the immediate future.

The perennial problem of input supply and marketing of produce usually faced by farmers (especially cereal farmers) could potentially be solved in Burkina Faso with the creation of the Société de Promotion des Filières Agricoles (SOPROFA). Launched in January 2002, SOPROFA is an integrated agro-industry that will supply key inputs to farmers and buy their cereals and legumes for processing and commercialization. Hence, the farmers' produce would be used as collateral to benefit from input credit from SOPROFA. The project could serve as interface between SOPROFA and the farmers' organizations. In particular, it will empower SOPROFA-contracted farmers to be aware of their rights and responsibilities, to increase their advocacy, and to effectively dialogue and negotiate with the company.

In Ghana, the project will collaborate with MOFA and the Ghana Cooperative Council of MMDE and some donors (e.g, DFID, GTZ, CARE, Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), etc.) to organize a training and consultative workshop for leaders of the major farmers' organizations in Ghana. The objective would be to discuss and reach a consensus on forming an "apex" farmers' organization body that will represent farmers and fishermen of Ghana. The secretariat of the apex body will be strengthened to coordinate the empowerment activities in the area of advocacy, defense of the interest of members, and other activities.

Because market and trade information is essential to the empowerment of farmers' organizations, the project will make available and train FBOs in the individual countries and at the sub-regional level to use the African Agricultural Market Information Network (AFAMIN's) website.

Conclusion

A new dawn has arrived and farmers and their organizations will have to play an important role in the development of agriculture and the rural sector in the sub region. This situation has come about because the state is no longer directly involved in the

procurement of inputs, production, processing, and marketing of agricultural products and is now learning to communicate with the entities that are assuming the responsibility for these functions. On the other hand, farmers are realizing that they can no longer depend on the state's direct support and must learn to negotiate their interests with government and the private sector in a free market setting. In this context, farmers have to be strong at all levels, and as well vis-à-vis their partners (policy makers, private sector, etc.). Farmers will have to work more and more with governments, private-sector enterprises and institutions, research and extension, and financial institutions. Farmers' organizations can no longer be concerned with local and national issues but have to be interested in sub-regional and global issues that affect them in general. The process of farmer empowerment can be long and complicated. No one institution has the capacity to deal with all aspects of farmer empowerment; hence, there is a need to join forces to provide technical and financial support from the grassroots to the global level.

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