

Learning Programme for Technical Support to MACs (Deliverable No. 5 of First Mile Phase 2, IFAD-Agridea)

Introduction

What kind of technical support do local Market Access Companies (MACs) need from the national level through a Private National Company (PNC)? AMSDP core groups in Hai, Babati, Muheza, Mufindi, Songea and Same provided their responses to this question during visits by Ueli Scheuermeier and Clive Lightfoot (to Same only) in August 2007. Their responses were discussed with AMSDP national coordination office. It quickly became apparent that AMSDP could not address all the support needs identified by the MACs. A division of responsibility for technical back up at the national level was determined as follows:

- AMSDP zonal staff to focus on back up support to MAC's for business registration and using the LLL online learning platform for cross district learning on setting up MACs.
- IFAD knowledge management officer to focus on back up support to MACs for using LLL platform and ICT connectivity as well as documenting deal making and impact stories for LLL/Radio/News.
- FAO RKN coordinator and mentors to focus on back up support to MACs for deal making, market intelligence, and identifying income streams.

With support from IFAD knowledge management officer and RKN coordinators acting like a PNC the following technical back up needs of MACs can be supported:

Support to ensure appropriate ICT connectivity

MAC's require technical back up from a PNC to ensure effective and efficient ICT connectivity. PNCs must help MACs with regard to getting hold of required equipment and for ensuring reliable equipment maintenance and servicing. If possible PNCs should arrange for rental packages of ICT equipment to MACs that include maintenance and servicing, either directly or through a third party. The results of the ICT survey conducted by Galin Kora and Amour Usi provide an array of ICT connectivity options for MAC's to choose from. The report also includes a checklist of questions each MAC needs to answer in order to identify an effective ICT connectivity solution. MAC's will be supported by the PNC to use this checklist and decide on an appropriate ICT connectivity option. MACs may also find useful partnerships with local ICT 'technicians' working in their district, who can then be the technical contact person for the rental service.

Support to deal making at national level

MAC's require back up from a PNC for making deals with large traders who operate at the national level. PNC would approach big traders (eg. Dodoma Transport or Mohammed Enterprises) to negotiate large volume orders on behalf of MACs. PNC would then organize the MACs to handle the bulking and transport of produce as well as payments to farmers. This relieves the big trader of the headache of working with many MAC's and the MAC's of the headache of negotiating with big traders. MAC's could certify small traders/transporters to bring produce from the farm to pick-up points, check quality and make payments to farmers. Sharing the costs of negotiating and organizing across MAC's will improve the efficiency of marketing as well as make the MAC's better known to large clients.

Support to market intelligence

MAC's require daily information from a PNC on commodity prices at the main national markets in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. MAC's will update their billboards with this information every day. Rather than the current sms price information which is one week old they will have same day prices. Cost to the PNC for supplying this service could be offset by selling the information via Celtel who

currently use the free (but out of date) public data for their sms service. Another alternative would be for the PNC to operate this system for Celtel.

Support to setting up a commercial enterprise

MAC's require back up from a PNC to help them register their company with the Ministry of Industry Trade and Marketing. MAC's also need guidance in the difficult task of determining the ownership of their company. PNC could also arrange for MACs to register as members of TCCIA.

Support for identifying and developing income streams

MAC's require back up from a PNC to help them identify first income streams to get their businesses going. MACs need help for learning to identify the 'headaches' of their clients, ie. the stakeholders all along a marketing chain, and develop appropriate services or 'asprins' to cure them. Saving money for their clients is one quick way to first income streams, and clients will gladly pay a commission for being relieved of their headaches. This will later likely include getting a commission for ensuring quality of produce as well as certification of produce for their clients. The PNC could stimulate the thinking among the emerging MAC's in the various districts, through sharing specific examples in pilot districts for others to learn from.

Support to using the LLL online learning platform

MAC's require back up from a PNC to get full value from using the LLL platform learning teams on 'Demand Driven Services' and 'Firstmile'. These teams are the platforms on which MAC's share their experiences and ideas and thereby spread costs for identifying innovations across MAC's. This is particularly true for retrieving information from the rapidly expanding knowledge pool and engaging in online discussions. The PNC would also assist the MAC's to maintain and update their contact details of mobile phone numbers and email addresses.

Support to new ventures

MAC's require support from a PNC on new crops which farmers could be growing or new ways for their clients to add value to their products. New venture ideas go beyond new crops to new quality standards, new flows of produce, new flows of information, new channels of financing for market chain development. The PNC would conduct R&D on such new ventures for the MACs. R&D could go beyond identifying new income opportunities to cover new operational procedures for MAC's to operate more efficiently or new ways to handle cash flows and finances.

Procedure

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mentoring via Informing Commercial Enterprises (ICE) InstantTeam.• Preliminary assessment by end of 2007 and reorient or change priorities.• Assessment workshop in April 2008. |
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