Support to Farmers’ Organizations in Africa Programme (SFOAP)

Main Phase (2013-2017)

A partnership to strengthen the capacity of African farmers’ organizations for the benefit of African producers
National FOs in black are directly benefiting from the Programme.
The past two decades have witnessed an unprecedented development of farmers’ and rural producers’ organizations (FOs) throughout Africa. FOs enjoy growing recognition as the representatives of the farming community at the national, regional and international levels. The United Nations declared 2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives and 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming. These events acknowledge the invaluable role that FOs play in shaping policies for agriculture and sustainable development, providing services to smallholders, generating employment and social integration, reducing poverty and enhancing food security.

Today, there are tens of thousands of grass-roots FOs across Africa. Most play a dual role: as producers’ groups or cooperatives they provide services to their members and they represent their members’ interests with other stakeholders, including agricultural policymakers, business partners and development projects. Many grass-roots FOs set up local unions and federations that are joined to national umbrella organizations. These organizations have established five regional networks in Africa: Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF); Plateforme Sous-Régionale des Organisations Paysannes d’Afrique Centrale (PROPAC); Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs de l’Afrique de l’Ouest (ROPPA); Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU); and Union Maghrébine des Agriculteurs (UMAGRI).

The Support to Farmers’ Organizations in Africa Programme (SFOAP) was a pilot programme launched in 2009 to strengthen the capacity of FOs in African countries and their regional and pan-African networks. It was the first continental programme in Africa to be initiated by the four regional networks of FOs in sub-Saharan Africa (EAFF, PROPAC, ROPPA and SACAU) to work together with a single programme in support of the institutional development of their organizations at all levels.

SFOAP implementers: The pilot phase supported 55 national organizations in 39 countries, their four regional networks in sub-Saharan Africa and the establishment of the Pan-African Farmers’ Organization (PAFO).

Donors: European Union (EUR 5 million) and IFAD (US$1.5 million)
Main results:
• Increased management capacity benefiting national farmers’ organizations. Staff secured for day-to-day management and financial accounting.
• Accountability of FOs to their membership base, internal democracy and governance. The development of more than 31 constitutional texts, manuals of procedure, strategic plans and institutional databases strengthened the corporate governance of FOs. Also, 43 governing body meetings and 106 consultations among FOs members were organized.
• Formulation of policy positions. Forty-two evidence-based studies were carried out and discussed among members and stakeholders.
• FOs as players in policy processes. FOs developed more than 44 policy positions and attended local, national and regional policy forums improving their recognition, reputation and credibility among governments, local authorities and partners.
• African FOs launched the Pan-African Farmers’ Organization, the first continental organization of African farmers.
Programme financing and partners

IFAD supervises and cofinances the SFOAP main phase. The European Union (EU), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Agence Française de Développement (AFD) provide funding through IFAD. The total cost of the programme is EUR 19.9 million, which includes a contribution from the EU of EUR 15 million.

The SFOAP is a major ‘component’ of the EU, IFAD, SDC and AFD partnership for strengthening FOs worldwide through direct support to capacity-building.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) provide additional technical support. AgriCord, a key programme partner, is implementing a highly complementary programme, Farmers Fighting Poverty/AFRICA partly funded by the EU through IFAD. FFP/AFRICA and SFOAP are the two components of Farmers’ Africa: a wider programme supporting African FOs. The total cost of the programme is EUR 40 million, which includes a contribution from the EU of EUR 26.9 million.

A toolbox for capacity-building

SFOAP activities are organized around institutional and organizational strengthening, involvement in policy processes and providing economic services (see Chart 2).

The institutional strengthening component provides FOs with:

- Strategic tools such as constitutional texts and membership databases
- Staff, equipment and resources
- Training and expertise
- Consultation with members and communication
- Knowledge generation and sharing.

The component on policy processes helps FOs to:

- Conduct policy studies and analyses
- Promote meetings to forge common policy positions
- Carry out advocacy and lobbying activities
- Support the monitoring of policy implementation.

The component on provision of economic services supports FOs to:

- Provide advisory services for integration into value chains
- Generate, share and capitalize on knowledge and experiences.

A fourth component supports the operationalization of PAFO to enable it to actively participate in political dialogue at pan-African and international levels.

Chart 1: Use of funds

Chart 2: SFOAP activities
**Unifying principles throughout the programme**

**Ownership:** Farmers organizations define objectives and activities based on their respective strategic plans.

**Flexibility:** The programme is adaptable to emerging opportunities, the evolution of smallholder priorities and to the international agenda for the agriculture sector.

**Subsidiarity:** The principle of subsidiarity guides programme implementation and determines the attribution of responsibilities in the implementation of activities in order to maximize synergies and complementarities between the different levels of intervention.

**Coordination with complementary projects:** Coordination is ensured to develop synergies between different projects and interventions at national and regional levels and to learn from their experiences.

**Peer learning and inclusiveness:** Peer-to-peer support and knowledge-sharing from country-level activities are promoted, and the regional and continental networks play a key role to develop linkages and facilitate networking and exchanges at all levels.

**Mainstream gender and youth:** Focus on women and young people is at the core of the programme and special interventions are developed to promote their participation.

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**Implementation responsibilities**

Funds go to regional networks, which then channel them to NFOs. The regional networks are responsible for the overall coordination and implementation of activities within their region. NFOs are the co-implementers of the programme and are responsible for the execution of national activities.

In North Africa, implementation arrangements follow a dual approach. Complementary to and in cooperation with the direct institutional support provided to UMAGRI, the *Formation pour l’Épanouissement et le Renouveau de la Terre* (Fert) – an agri-agency member of AgriCord – develops and pilots test tools for NFOs to provide tailored services to poorer members, principally geared towards inclusion in value chains.

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**Chart 3: Implementation responsibilities**

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