

profile

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Roots and Tubers Development Programme

Increased productivity of roots and tubers in Benin

The overall goal of the Roots and Tubers Development Programme (RTDP) in Benin was to help reduce poverty by improving the income and living standards of rural households. To that end, the programme sought to enhance the production, processing and marketing of roots and tuber (R&T) crops in areas affected by poverty. Total programme costs at appraisal were estimated at US\$19.3 million, and IFAD provided a loan of US\$13.1 million.

RTDP focused on four areas of support: cultivation of roots and tubers (22 per cent of project base costs); processing and marketing (7 per cent); grass-roots organizations (52 per cent); and programme coordination (19 per cent). The programme was implemented in four agroecological areas that were both suitable for R&T production and affected by high levels of poverty. The target group comprised 330,000 rural households, most of which had little land or farms that were too small to provide an acceptable standard of living. The programme also targeted poor women and young school drop-outs.

Main evaluation findings

The programme's objectives and the proposed target group were deemed relevant to the country context and in line with the strategies and policies of both the Government and IFAD at the time. The focus on cassava as a cash crop was particularly relevant in view of Benin's long tradition of cultivating the crop and because of opportunities for developing small-scale processing as an income-generating activity. However, programme design was flawed inasmuch as it lacked a sound analysis of the links between the proposed intervention strategy and ways of reaching the identified target group. As its name implies, RTDP focused primarily on increasing R&T productivity, and therefore interventions were oriented more towards producers and processors that were more capable than the most vulnerable groups of capturing potential programme benefits.

For the above reasons, RTDP's impact in terms of enhancing household assets and income, agricultural productivity and food security were moderately unsatisfactory when measured against the expected impact on the target group. However, to some extent, the project contributed to developing technical innovations, in partnership with research institutions, and promoted the dissemination of several innovations at the village level (e.g. introduction of cassava varieties and cassava flour). It also supported the adoption of more intensive farming techniques, mainly for business-oriented producers with sufficient access to land, inputs, services and markets. Members of production/processing groups were motivated to maintain or even expand their R&T-related business concerns whilst cassava production was declining and demand for its derivatives increasing across the country. Programme support to institutions and policies contributed to ensuring the sustainability of its achievements.



PROJECT DATA

Programme costs:

Total: US\$19.29 million

- IFAD loan: US\$13.11 million
- West African Development Bank loan: US\$3.9 million
- Government of Benin: US\$2.2 million
- Beneficiaries: 330,000 households
- Project area: national

Cooperating institution:

West African Development Bank

Key dates:

Executive Board approval: May 2000

Loan effectiveness: June 2001

Project completion: September 2008

Private and public service providers contracted by RTDP were able to strengthen their leadership skills and improve services to rural communities. Moreover, RTDP contributed significantly to the national policy for the promotion of roots and tubers, formally adopted by the Government. However, the poorest producers, IFAD's target group, were underrepresented in the associations supported

by RTDP and were therefore unable either to benefit directly from these activities or to find solutions to their constraints. Commercial infrastructure, such as roads and warehouses built or rehabilitated by RTDP, led to better access to rural products. The impact on natural resources was limited to raising the awareness of farmers to the need for better soil management.

Key recommendations

The completion evaluation made three main recommendations related to targeting, innovation and sustainability of programme achievements:

- **Greater attention should be paid to ensuring effective targeting of the poorest producers and processors through R&T development interventions.** In collaboration with partner governments, IFAD should conduct two thematic studies based on its experience in different countries. These should involve: (i) an analysis of the expected impact of R&T development programmes (with particular reference to recent technical, socio-economic and institutional developments) on the living standards of the poorest active rural population and the environment; and (ii) a review of the performance of different targeting strategies used in R&T development programmes to ensure that the poor can benefit from the proposed interventions.
- **IFAD and the Government should support the innovative development of approaches and technologies in favour of the poorest R&T producers and processors, emphasizing their potential to contribute to agricultural and rural development.** These approaches should be part of Benin's strategy for implementing its policy for R&T promotion, which includes, among other things: (i) an effective targeting approach for the poorest R&T producers and processors; (ii) practical modalities to ensure secure access to land by the producers targeted; (iii) provision of affordable private services to the poorest producers and processors, such as agricultural inputs and access to credit services; (iv) facilitating access by the poor to markets; and (v) support to rural employees in the subsector to organize themselves to defend their interests and obtain better working conditions.
- **Through ongoing IFAD-funded projects, the Government should ensure the sustainability of results obtained and the scaling up of innovations promoted by the programme.** This includes: (i) strengthening and streamlining the production chain for plant material of improved varieties and expanding it to other roots and tubers; (ii) pursuing the dissemination of new and improved technologies for sustainable production of roots and tubers; (iii) improving quality control and the marketing of flour (for bread); (iv) developing standards for R&T quality, and establishing a system of quality control, traceability and certification of products; (v) supporting the transformation of producers and processors groups into cooperatives, and, ultimately, into federations; and (vi) reproducing the model of paying public and private service providers based on performance in other projects financed by IFAD.



One of the specific objectives of the Roots and Tubers Development Programme was to create favourable marketing conditions, thus benefiting the target group. *Source: Annabelle Lhommeau (IFAD)*

Further information:

Republic of Benin, Roots and Tubers Development Programme, Completion Evaluation, Report No. 2275-BJ, December 2010, ISBN 978-92-9072-196-3, IFAD Office of Evaluation, Via Paolo di Dono 44, 00142 Rome, Italy. The full report and Profile are available online at www.ifad.org/evaluation; email: evaluation@ifad.org.

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