## Funding Agricultural Research to Connect Local Communities to Global Markets: Experiences from Benin (West Africa)

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### Introduction

Open access of developing countries to global markets needs to be addressed by policy-makers. However, low cost and high quality production and processing remain prerequisites for competitiveness on national markets and international markets. Connecting local communities to global markets requires the improving of innovations to support the commodity network development. For that purpose, Benin's agricultural research has developed an innovative funding and management strategy. To investigate its present contribution to enhance the access of local communities to global markets, semi-structured interviews were carried out with leaders of the public research organization (INRAB), development projects, farmer organizations and NGOs. Successes and remaining challenges are presented below.

## Funding and management approach

Opening agricultural research to other stakeholders and partnerships Operational and institutionalized NARS New partnerships between NARS, professional organizations and private sector Partnerships with international organizations Provide farmers with diversified services and products

Priorities - quality control funding - new constraints planning implementation M&E - capitalization Gateway to extension

#### Research to enhance of local communities' access to global markets

grants for improving focus, quality and efficiency of research

Competitive

Annual cycle of agricultural research management Competitive grants, peer review & scientific workshops Relevant for financing farmer needs-oriented research Relevant for managing scientific quality of research Involving local communities in setting priorities

Cyclic research management involves users Systematic diagnostics with farmers in various regions to identify urgent needs Call for research proposals takes outcomes of diagnostics into consideration Optimized decentralization of research for continuous and effective communication with clionte

## Successes + success factors

#### Research progressively organized by regions and main value chains

- Political ranking of value chains
- Value chains and related constraints identified with farmers in each region on the basis of market & local potentials
- Research results on markets, marketing and performing technologies organized by value chains
- Intensification and improved research on key issues for each value chain

### **Bankable technologies**

- Quality and continuity of research results improved
- Increased supply of research results resolving constraints identified by farmers and their organizations
  - Bankable technological packages transformed in commercial extension material

### **Effective dissemination**

- Pluralistic and performing extension system
- Operational linkages between NARS and extension
- Input provision for non-cotton value chains

# Sustainable funding for efficiency of adaptive research

- Financial contributions of National and District Government, donors and farmer organizations to operating budgets to use human resources efficiently
- Creation of a National Fund for agricultural research

# Challenges

# Quality management at NARS level

- Relevant criteria, procedures for assessment
- Incitation mechanisms

#### Use of international knowledge

- Access to international inform. & knowledge systems on markets and science
- Systematic use of relevant innovative possibilities for production & processing
- Partnerships between NARS and regional & international research organizations

#### Investment in strategic research

- Program-based funding of strategic and prospective research for sustainability and future competitiveness within National Fund for agricultural research
- Research on institutional arrangements for technology development and dissemination, service arrangements, marketing