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Emprasefor: A Case of Resilient Farmer-led Forage Seed Entrepreneurship in Central-America

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Abstract

Adoption of novel forage technologies depends often on the availability of seed. In Central America for instance, the demand for seed of drought-adapted grasses of good quality (e.g., *Brachiaria brizantha* CIAT 26110 “Toledo”) is not met and imported seed is expensive and often not accessible. Hence, based on their experiences with CIAT-led participatory research on forages, a group of around 10 small crop-livestock farmers in the region of Victoria, Yoro, Honduras, founded the seed enterprise “Emprasefor”. CIAT and local partners provided initial support through advice and an initial investment of USD 2000. Four years of increasing area and seed production (up to 2000 kg from 20 ha), reaching a yearly turnover of approx. USD 12,000, resulted into an agreement with a private seed company guaranteeing seed purchase at a fixed price and supply of inputs. However, adverse climatic occurrences during 2005 caused a major drop in production, putting the farmers into debts that were partly covered by selling seed at the local market for a better price. In the following years the area for seed production decreased and the remaining area was used for improved fodder for own livestock. While seed production continued, an additional initiative was developed to diversify into producing hay and concentrates for the local market. Mixing equipment was acquired and initial production during 2008 amounted to 5 tonnes of concentrate consisting of mainly locally produced ingredients. This case shows the vitality and resilience of a farmer-led forage seed production enterprise, as well as its possible role for diversification into related activities. The modest, strategic support from third parties makes the concept replicable. Farmers value highly the opportunity to be an entrepreneur and increase their income. Other perceived benefits include increased knowledge on forage seed production, as well as higher animal production from own improved plots.

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