

Institutional food procurement programmes: the case of PAA Africa in Senegal

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Senegal has experienced a series of food crises. In 2012, around 739,000 people (6.2 per cent of the population) were affected by severe food insecurity. Most poor people live in rural areas: 57 per cent of the rural population are poor, and of those, 44 per cent are food insecure. Most are engaged in agriculture, raising livestock and fishing; however, the limited size of land plots does not cover their food needs, and producers struggle with access to markets.

Millions of farmers in sub-Saharan Africa face the same constraints. Thus, implementing local food procurement programmes for food assistance in such contexts raises questions about targeting small-scale and resource-constrained farmers. Strengthening this debate is crucial when designing policies that aim to improve the livelihoods of poor farmers and maximise food assistance benefits for school children, especially in a context of scarce public resources.

The PAA Africa¹ programme in Senegal is providing inputs for a national debate on the inclusion of institutional local food procurement in Senegal's multiannual government plan. The intervention targeted 1,000 resource-constrained, food- and nutrition-insecure small-scale farmers, by supporting their production capacities for rice and guaranteeing demand to provide the staple to schools in the region of Kédougou during the 2012-2013 campaign.

The targeting methodology involved three steps and associated criteria:

- 1. Geographical targeting:** a) areas affected by the successive food crises; b) edaphic-climatic suitability for rice cultivation; and c) presence of implementing agencies (FAO and the World Food Programme—WFP);
- 2. Categorical and community-based targeting of farmers' organisations (FOs):** a) villages affected by the 2010-2011 drought; b) membership of one of Kédougou farmers' unions; c) ownership of rice lowlands (bas-fonds); and d) not being engaged in other programmes promoting rice production; and
- 3. Selection of beneficiary farmers:** parity criteria among members, with all farmers within a selected first-level farmers' association being engaged.

The targeting process has met the programme's objectives by engaging small-scale family farmers acutely affected by food crises. According to data collected, 55 per cent of these households do not produce enough cereals for even half of their annual needs. Moreover, farmers face severe constraints related to their access to productive assets. Illiteracy is high among household heads, and yearly incomes are around USD400.

PAA Africa-programmed activities and results in Senegal

To improve farmers' capacities to comply with contracts, productive support activities were carried out, such as: input subsidies (free distribution of seeds and fertilisers); peer-to-peer farming technical assistance; processing rice facilities and packing; and transportation services.

The PAA Africa results demonstrate the potential of the approach, while also revealing some challenges. The targeted farmers were able to provide 100 tons of unpeeled rice to 168 schools in the Kédougou region that offered daily meals to 23,000 children in 2012-2013. Other outcomes include: a) an increase in productivity from 800 kg/ha to 2.5t/ha in the 2012-2013 campaign,

and to 3t/ha in the 2013-2014 campaign; b) increasing levels of compliance with procurement contracts, starting at 25 per cent of what was agreed in the 2012 campaign and improving in following campaigns; c) an average increase of USD27 in each farmers' income per campaign—around 7 per cent of their declared income.

Limitations mainly related to farmers' productive and social resource constraints: **Access to inputs and improved farming techniques:** The distribution of inputs extenuated access issues; nonetheless, concerns regarding the sustainability of such an approach need to be further explored. Even the community-based approach of capacity-building faced obstacles vis-à-vis farmers' high levels of illiteracy and uneven capacities.

FO organisational weaknesses: Organisations' limited capacities to provide services, to process rice and to organise commercialisation generated distrust among members, which had an impact on the level of compliance with procurement contracts.

Farmers' low income and liquidity: Guaranteed demand should include tailor-made tools to ensure diligent payment and/or access to financial services; otherwise, farmers will sell their production on the side as a coping strategy to manage liquidity constraints.

Low surplus production and potential for diversification: Small-scale and financially constrained rain-fed farming faces high opportunity costs to diversify or increase productivity based on available technologies.

Opportunities to be emphasised include the following:

Revitalising an area with productive potential and easing market distortions:

Stable institutional demand could respond to Kédougou farmers' overall inadequate access to markets caused by the region's remoteness, and even have positive impacts on the rice value chain.

Developing a cost-effective approach: The effects of procurement revenues on farmers' incomes will likely be more helpful to those who are more vulnerable.

Sustainable ways out of the poverty cycle: In a context of successive food crises and fragile social protection programmes, food-insecure and resource-constrained households could benefit from the complementarities and synergies between institutional food procurement, social protection and agricultural investment. This may prove to be a sustainable way to promote economic and productive inclusion, complementing social safety nets.

References:

- WFP. 2014. *Rapport Conjoint FAO-PAM de la Phase Pilote du PAA Sénégal*. Rome: World Food Programme.
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Note:

1. The PAA Africa programme is a joint initiative between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the governments of Brazil, the United Kingdom, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger and Senegal to support pilot initiatives of local food purchase from small-scale family farmers to supply school feeding programmes. For more information, see <<http://paa-africa.org>>.