


**Effective Aid for Small Farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa:
Southern Civil Society Perspectives**

Case Studies in Ethiopia, Ghana and Mozambique



Coordinated and Prepared for the
Canadian Food Security Policy Group
January 2007

SUMMARY

Foreword

This document is a summary of country studies on agricultural development carried out in Ethiopia, Ghana and Mozambique in the second half of 2006. These studies were commissioned by the Canadian Food Security Policy Group as a way of giving voice to civil society organizations concerned with agricultural development in these CIDA-priority countries. The civil society organizations consulted were intended to be representational but, obviously, not comprehensive.

The views expressed in this report come directly from these studies and may or may not reflect the specific views of all of the members of the Canadian Food Security Policy Group.

The Canadian Food Security Policy Group brings together Canadian international development agencies, emergency relief providers, farmers/producers' organizations and human rights groups who have worked for decades in sectors related to enhancing food security in developing countries and in Canada.

Members include Canadian Council for International Co-operation, Canadian Foodgrains Bank, CARE Canada, Christian Reformed Church, Developing Countries Farm Radio Network, ETC Group, Inter Pares, Mennonite Central Committee Canada, National Farmers Union (Canada), Oxfam Canada, Oxfam Québec, CHF - Partners in Rural Development, Rights & Democracy, UPA développement international, USC Canada, United Church of Canada and World Vision Canada.

Effective Aid for Small Farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa: Southern Civil Society Perspectives Case Studies in Ethiopia, Ghana and Mozambique¹

Introduction

In mid-2006 the Canadian Food Security Policy Group sponsored a series of independent research studies of priorities for aid to agriculture and CIDA's bilateral supported initiatives in agriculture and rural development in three sub-Saharan African countries – Ethiopia, Ghana and Mozambique. The purpose of this research was to inform a dialogue in Canada on increasing the amount and effectiveness of CIDA's aid for agriculture in reducing poverty. Local researchers drew upon the knowledge of local civil society organizations, local government, and donor officials, in order to better understand the relevance of CIDA-supported programs for agricultural development in the context of small-scale farmer livelihoods.

Key Findings

Based on the case study research for Ghana, Ethiopia and Mozambique, the following common agricultural development priorities were expressed by civil society organizations (CSOs) in these countries:

1. Strengthening farmer-based organizations and related domestic CSOs.
2. Improving access to rural credit for small-scale farmers and particularly for women farmers.
3. Expanding and better utilizing small-scale irrigation and/or other means for water management appropriate for small farmers.

¹ Members of the Canadian Food Security Policy Group commissioned research in Ghana (Professor Saa Dittoh), Ethiopia (Dr. Berhanu) and Mozambique (Mr. Jaqueline Massingue). Brian Tomlinson, Policy Analyst with CCIC, summarized this research in this paper, taking account of advice and input of a small reference group composed of Faith Mansfield (CHF), Kioko Munyao (World Vision Canada), Stuart Clark (Canadian Foodgrains Bank) and Jean Christie (Consultant).

A Canadian consultant interviewed CIDA officials in Ottawa and assembled an overview of CIDA programming in agriculture, rural development and food security for each country. The focus of this research is on bilateral programming initiatives, in part because of insufficient data on programming supported through Canadian Partnership Branch. Bilateral programming is non-responsive and therefore should closely reflect the priorities of the CIDA's 2003 agriculture and rural development policy. The intention of the FSPG is to share the lessons and recommendation of this research with CIDA officials following the finalization of this report.

4. Researching and promoting technologies relevant to the conditions facing small-scale farmers in order to improve their livelihoods (much current research is disconnected from the needs and priorities of small farmers).
5. Increasing extension services geared particularly to support women farmers.
6. Providing fair and transparent legal access to productive resources for small scale farmers (and pastoralists in Ethiopia).
7. Improving rural infrastructure for local markets, storage facilities, market information and marketing structures that direct an increased proportion of the market price to local farmers.
8. Improving access to commercial markets, with a strong emphasis on developing local and regional markets, while not ignoring export opportunities where these do not undermine domestic food security.
9. Supporting the role of small farmers in conserving and promoting agro-ecological diversity, and ensuring farmers' stewardship of their seed supply systems.

In addition to identifying agricultural development priorities, the local CSOs recommended that Northern CSOs, including those from Canada, should:

1. Strengthen the capacities of their local partners to influence donor and government policies for food security and agriculture.
2. Support the mutual exchange of experience and knowledge among all CSOs.
3. Commit to relationships with local partners that extend beyond the normal 2-3 year project cycle.
4. Show greater inter-agency coordination in their work.

Background

Achieving food security through improved support for small-scale agriculturalists, pastoralists and rural households is widely recognized as an essential base for poverty reduction in sub-Saharan Africa. The rural sector still accounts for 70% of sub-Saharan Africa's population and two-thirds of all livelihoods. Women remain responsible for up to 70% of food production in Africa. Despite growing food insecurity in urban areas, most of Africa's poor and under-nourished groups still live in rural areas.

Like other donor countries; prior to 1990, Canada recognized the importance of agriculture in developing countries by directing approximately 20% of its aid towards agricultural development. But, also like other donors, it cut its aid for agricultural development dramatically during the 1990s, falling by 34% between 1990 and 2000. The 57% drop in aid for agriculture to sub-Saharan Africa was particularly steep and difficult to understand.

Members of the Canadian Food Security Policy Group (FSPG) welcomed the renewal of CIDA's attention to agriculture and rural development in its 2003 policy statement, *Promoting Sustainable Rural Development through Agriculture* (CIDA, 2003a). The policy not only sets out important expenditure targets for agriculture, reaching Cdn\$500 million by 2007 (approximately

10% of Official Development Assistance), from a low of Cdn\$84 million in 2001. It also recognizes the central place of small-scale farmers, with a strong focus on women farmers, in an integrated approach to agricultural development that is based on an understanding of sustainable local livelihoods and ecosystem health. Its approach is largely consistent with strategies detailed in a recent OECD DAC “best practices” document, *Promoting Pro-Poor Growth – Agriculture* (DAC, 2006).

In its proposals for CIDA’s 2003 strategy, the FSPG focused on poverty reduction through improved rural livelihoods and the application of the principles of sustainable agriculture. The Policy Group stressed the importance of rural infrastructure and services with priority to household food security needs and sustainable local production for *domestic* markets. It called for coordinated donor interventions² that respond to the vulnerabilities of the poor and that strengthen their assets and capabilities. Since women play a predominant role in food production in Africa, building rural capacity must ensure that rural women are empowered to gain equal access to essential resources and inputs (land, credit, financing, technology, markets, business support, training etc.). By collaborating in diverse partnerships, including with civil society organizations, CIDA was encouraged to support the poor in organizing themselves (into cooperatives, self-help groups, farmer and peasant associations) to become significant actors in local and regional markets. Finally, the FSPG recommended that CIDA’s policy interventions with governments (and other donors), should promote appropriate agricultural trade, investment and support policies consistent with the principles of the human right to food, local food security and sustainable agriculture. [FSPG, 2002; FSPG, 2004]

CIDA met the 2003 policy’s spending targets for the first two years. However, according to recent CIDA figures, projected total expenditure on agriculture in 2005/06 will be between \$200 million and \$230 million, well short of the target of \$300 million for the year. Future projections point to a leveling off at current expenditure levels, far below the 2007 target of \$500 million. In light of this seemingly diminishing place for agriculture in CIDA’s current priorities, the FSPG is concerned that CIDA’s agriculture and rural development strategy is being abandoned, ignoring the essential contributions that Canada should be making to reducing rural poverty in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

² Since 2002, CIDA is improving its aid effectiveness by collaborating with like-minded donors in pooled funding for Sector Wide Approaches (SWAs) with Ministries of Government, including Ministries for Agriculture, and aligning Agency priorities with a country’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). While working with other donors and Ministry officials in a coordinated approach to sector development is positive, CIDA is also a modest donor in any given country, which in turn may limit the extent to which CIDA may influence the final outcomes for its program resources. On the other hand, Canadian CSOs have suggested that CIDA adopt a “niche approach” to maximize its influence on SWAs and General Budget Support programs. For a CSO critique of donor aid effectiveness strategies see Tomlinson, 2006.

The Importance of CIDA's Support for Agricultural Development

Canada's commitment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 requires increased CIDA focus on improved livelihoods for rural people, where the majority of people living in poverty continue to live. It is important that CIDA meet the five-year financial targets (reaching an investment of \$500 million in 2007) set out the 2003 strategy, *Promoting Sustainable Rural Development through Agriculture*.

CIDA's 2003 agriculture strategy is still highly relevant for improving the livelihoods of rural people. It provides a crucial focus on the relationship between agricultural development and food security, highlighting the critical importance of sustainable agriculture for small-scale farm families with particular attention to women farmers.

With particular reference to CIDA, the research noted that:

- CIDA's support to the agricultural sector in Ghana, Ethiopia and Mozambique is largely coherent with these governments' strategies for agriculture and food security. CSOs suggested several areas where these directions could be strengthened at the country and local levels.
- In Ethiopia and Ghana, there is a large disconnect between Southern (and Northern) CSOs involved in the agricultural sector and donor/government policy-setting.
- Many donor programs, including CIDA's, have had only modest impact at the local level. Regular dialogue with local CSOs (and their counterparts in Canada) will improve donor impact on the well-being of small-scale farmers and the position of women in the rural food economy.

With respect to the development of commercial agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa, CIDA is encouraged to evaluate these efforts explicitly in terms of the impact of these strategies on the livelihoods of the majority of poor and small-scale farmers as well as on achieving national food security goals.

--0--