

PAA Africa targeting in Niger

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The PAA Africa programme is a multi-stakeholder initiative aimed at promoting smallholder farmers' food security and access to institutional markets, and enhancing the food security of school pupils through the provision of regular school meals.¹

In Niger, PAA Africa is providing inputs to a discussion on a national strategy for local procurement for food assistance. It targets smallholder farmers as the main participants on the supply side, which has highlighted the importance of the availability of key resources (human, institutional, factors of production etc.) to ensure the feasibility of the intervention.

Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranked 187th on the 2014 Human Development Index. Agriculture, mainly subsistence farming, employs over 80 per cent of the population. It is very susceptible to climatic variation, which over recent years has led to successive food deficits. Planning, decision-making and targeting methodologies for purchasing food locally from small-scale family farmers for food assistance are crucial for programme effectiveness and positive outcomes.

Targeting criteria and results - By combining a geographic targeting of the Maradi region with criteria relating to the productive potential of farmers' organisations (FOs), and individual targeting at the community level to reach the most vulnerable farmers, PAA Africa in Niger (PAA Niger) has engaged 611 smallholder farmers (54 per cent of whom are women). Three quarters (77.5 per cent) of beneficiary households can be considered very poor or poor in terms of their living conditions; they usually depend on agriculture over an average area of 1.5–2 hectares for their livelihood.² The incidence of food and nutrition insecurity is high, and, on average, households spend up to 70 per cent of their total income on food.

Support to vulnerable smallholders - Several tools were deployed by the WFP within PAA Niger to improve beneficiary farmers' capacities to respond to the needs of local food procurement. Productive support provided by FAO consisted of the distribution of inputs (seeds, fertilisers, agricultural defensives and storage bags) and training on alternate millet–cowpea crop systems. Contract arrangements included an extensive awareness-raising effort among FOs to support their marketing capacities, including negotiating advantageous prices.

With this support and favourable rainfall, farmers doubled their productivity of millet from 237kg/ha to 494 kg/ha and of green beans from 132 kg/ha to 265 kg/ha from 2012 to 2013.

The WFP purchased 137.2 tons of millet and 100.9 tons of beans from seven FO unions—nearly 5 per cent of all WFP procurement in Niger in 2013. Thanks to the contracts with farmers' unions, producers received an additional USD34,000 (21 per cent more) compared to market prices, which positively affected revenues at the individual level.

Findings and recommendations - The PAA Niger results demonstrate the potential of institutional procurement programmes (IPPs) to help poor, resource-constrained farmers, if proper support is available and adapted to

their needs. Establishing stable institutional demand could positively impact the inadequate access of Maradi farmers to markets, particularly regarding price fluctuations and the role of local traders. This is particularly true for women farmers, who in Niger's case face greater obstacles to market their produce, due to a lack of productive support and unequal access to market opportunities.

The limitations and constraints that were found need to be taken into consideration in any discussion on targeting resource-constrained, poor farmers in IPPs. These include the needs and capacities of farmers vis-à-vis the tools available for purchasing their production and maintaining a steady supply while investing in crop diversification.

Targeting criteria: In a context of high poverty levels, IPPs can benefit from the use of broader criteria, leading to a less costly targeting process without considerable inclusion errors, while still maintaining the programme's focus on vulnerable farmers.

Approach centred on FOs: Counting on FOs as the programme's entry point has the advantage of increasing ownership and facilitating the provision of services. Nonetheless, there are limits to whether these structures can reach the most vulnerable farmers. Therefore, there is a need for continuous support to associativism and collective action.

Inefficiencies of local food systems: It is imperative to discuss targeting in the context of excessively concentrated markets whose dynamics do not necessarily exclude smallholder farmers but nonetheless contribute to keep them trapped in a poverty cycle, subjected to price fluctuations and to the oligopsonistic actions of traders.

Building a gender-sensitive approach: In Niger, women's unions had the best results in terms of compliance with procurement contracts. This suggests that, when productive assets are available or provided, IPPs that target resource-constrained women can have a positive impact on gender inequalities for agricultural production and marketing.

References:

WFP. 2014. *Rapport de l'enquête de base sur les achats locaux auprès des petits producteurs*. Rome: World Food Programme.

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Notes:

1. The Purchase from Africans for Africa (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 purchasing food locally from small-scale family farmers to supply school feeding programmes. For more information, see <<http://paa-africa.org>>.

2. Poverty in terms of living conditions is measured according to three subdimensions: income, consumption and material conditions (deprivation and housing).