SYNTHESIS REPORT ON THE POST HARVEST MANAGEMENT E-DISCUSSION

The programme on postharvest in Sub-Saharan Africa is coordinated by HSI\textsuperscript{1} and implemented in a consortium with FANRPAN\textsuperscript{2}, AFAAS\textsuperscript{3} and Agridea as partners. The second outcome of this project is for good practice options for reducing postharvest losses are compiled, disseminated and scaled up. Among other ways to achieve this, AFAAS is moderating e-discussions on post-harvest management (PHM) among extension practitioners. The e-discussion platform was launched on 25 April 2015. The launching questions were “What do the farmers you work with do with their harvest to avoid loss? And what do you intend to do about it? Experts have contributed to the discussion and this report gives highlights of traditional PHM practices among farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa:

i. Sun drying cereals usually on open ground on soils or tarpaulins. Large scale or peasant farmers harvest and leave maize out in the field for few weeks to get rid of the pests and then remove the covers before shelling. The shelling is done either manually or by shelling mills.

ii. Storage: After shelling, cereals are taken home for a more elaborated storage. In the storage facilities, maize can be kept for months before getting sold.

iii. Preservation: Ash and Neem tree leaves are used for protection of cereals against weevils. Some farmers use chemical pesticides against post-harvest pests. For cassava and sweet potatoes, once harvested it can be buried in soil and remain fresh for over two weeks. But most times cassava is dried and processed into flour (the case of garri and fufu in Nigeria).

The experts expressed a number of concerns:

i. Ashes and Neem leaves only have a limited effect to avoiding post-harvest losses.

ii. Many commodity markets in Africa have failed; there is so much uncertainty especially due to un-predictable government policy that has consistently distorted markets. As a result, there is limited interest by investors to develop and market simple technologies that fit in the farmers’ environment in terms of costs, access and use. Therefore many

\textsuperscript{1}HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation

\textsuperscript{2}Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network

\textsuperscript{3}African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services
farmers are unable to apply post-harvest interventions except for the traditional methods leading to huge post-harvest losses.

iii. Both local and international market opportunities are a big precursor for most farmers to ensure quality and quantity of production.

Some recommendations were as well highlighted:

i. Traditional practices should be first choice if they work, as they are often well adapted to local resources and knowledge.

ii. Awareness creation on the effects of poor PHM will increase the demand for post-harvest research products.

iii. There is need to mobilize farmers into co-operatives for collective marketing, which will ensure that they deliver sizeable quantities of products to the market, but also provide an opportunity to collectively manage post-harvest challenges.