DRAFT SYNTHESIS OF THE SECOND ROUND OF PHM E-DISCUSSIONS

E-discussions on the topic “Post-Harvest Loss Management improves after access to markets improves” have been running. The discussion question was “Is there any sense for smallholder farmers to invest time and money in Post-Harvest Management (PHM) unless they have access to markets? There are divergent opinions about the relationship between PHM and market access. Yes farmers practice post-harvest management in many ways in order to access already existing grain markets. However on the other hand it is also argued that many African farmers still produce for many other reasons other than for sale e.g food security and thus PHM even without targeting markets is necessary. More discussions on the above questions are ongoing at:

http://afaas.linkinglearners.net/afaas/lll.nsf/topic.xsp?id=bc7ede63-d63b-4fc5-81f1-721002f3ac04#2fdb0ee0-55e1-40f7-a821-a8f2271c4b48

Therefore, it is important that extension workers first understand the reason why farmers produce food before knowing which PHM interventions to introduce to them. Extension workers can establish farmers’ innovation platform.

1. Use of pesticides to preserve grain

1 An Innovation Platform is a physical or virtual forum established to facilitate interactions, and learning among stakeholders selected from a commodity chain analysis. Their interaction leads to participatory diagnosis of problems; joint exploration of opportunities and investigation of solutions leading to the generation of agricultural innovation along the targeted commodity chain.
Farmers use pesticides to preserve the quality of their grain. In Benin for example, communities that are more frequented by grain traders tend to use more pesticides than those less frequented by traders. But pesticides are perceived to cause residual toxicity problems to food consumers. Seemingly, African consumers also do not care about the presence of pesticides in grain for food, but they lack information on pesticides in food. However with most African countries having consumer protection laws, implemented by governments, consumers can be made aware of the dangers of these pesticides through consumer protection associations.

Also unknown by consumers are the dangers of Aflatoxins in grains. Extension workers should present information on this to consumers to make them appreciate PHM and this may influence all the other players along the food value chain. **Therefore extension workers can work with consumer associations to sensitize consumers about the effects of pesticides in food.** Discussions on this topic are still ongoing at:

http://afaas.linkinglearners.net/afaas/lll.nsf/topic.xsp?id=95478e46-28b9-469b-8476-21d3db954115#34be91d6-5e60-46f8-bc32-960d15117ec1

Traders and consumers do not differentiate grains by how they are stored; either with or without pesticides. To them, there is no difference between the organically preserved and pesticide preserved grain, and thus no premium price is paid for organically stored grain and this leaves PHM as no-value effort. **What is it that can be done by extension workers to remove this non price differentiation? How can the farmer-consumer interaction on the pesticide issue possibly solve this?**

Farmers also use pesticides due to limited access and knowledge on safe alternatives. They also try other few means of preservation but they fail because of little knowledge and information about them. This is worsened by lack of known tests for the presence or absence of pesticide residues in the grain at farm level. **What is it that extension workers need to do to solve this problem?**

In Benin, some farmers especially in cotton growing areas use obsolete and hazardous pesticides on the market for grain conservation, increasing chances
poisoning of consumers. We must look into what extension workers can do to ensure safe pesticides are used by farmers. Discussions on this are ongoing at:

http://afaas.linkinglearners.net/afaas/lll.nsf/topic.xsp?id=95478e46-28b9-469b-8476-
21d3db954115#61145c7a-5c68-482f-8c37-9fdc5f7475ed

2. PHM in the warehouse receipt system

During times of surplus, farmers are encouraged to deposit their grain in warehouse receipt system to wait for favorable grain prices that usually follow seasonal patterns.

The Communal Union of Producers (UCP) in Zogbodomey Benin, constructed a warehouse to manage production surpluses. In this warehouse running contracts for treatment and disinfection of the stock and the store were issued. The store is disinfected at the start at stocking and once a month every month. The stock is fumigated with phosphide. The bulked grain losses 11% weight while in the warehouse. We must look more into how the warehouse managers compensate for this loss. Who bears the loss?

The warehouse receipt system here works best because of the market information systems (MIS) that is in place. Market price control is one of the important factors for the success of a warehouse receipt system. Extension workers contribute to this by studying the market prices of grain and passing on this information to the farmers and farmer organizations in the warehouse. Also, extension workers accompany the farmers that are part of the warehouse receipt system to negotiate for credit from Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs). Please feel free to contribute to on-going discussions about this at;

http://afaas.linkinglearners.net/afaas/lll.nsf/topic.xsp?id=bc7ede63-d63b-4fc5-81f1-
721002f3ac04#170ca166-af97-4ff9-88c5-57e9b30ebd0c
3. PHM in a multipurpose cooperative store

A good example is the Busia Multipurpose Cooperative Stores. Here, farmers and traders interface as members to the cooperative. Extension workers give technical support to the membership of these cooperative stores. With demand for good quality grain, the cooperative gives farmers tarpaulins for drying, good grain store, and threshing machines. Continue discussions with Steven Wandera at: http://afaas.linkinglearners.net/afaas/lll.nsf/topic.xsp?id=bc7ede63-d63b-4fc5-81f1-721002f3ac04#4b6be13e-272d-4f27-9ce1-ff47c611cef8

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7. Mr. Degelo Simon
8. Mr. ASSOGBA Romuald

Suggested topics for the next round of PHM e-discussions

1. Extensionists must develop effective methods and tools for disseminating Post Harvest Management technologies in order for farmers to pick them up. So; i) what technologies do you want to disseminate but you are looking for an effective method for dissemination? ii) Do you have experience with an
effective method of dissemination of a particular Post Harvest Management technology, and how do you know it was effective?

2. We must work with people who have a commercial interest in reducing post harvest losses in cereals and pulses. If we don’t involve them then farmers and stakeholders have no reason to apply PHM well.

- Have you worked in a government program that managed to improve PHM? Is PHM still working well after the government or donor support finished, or is it in trouble? Please explain it to us?

- Have you worked in a commercial effort where smallholder farmers improved their PHM? Is it still working? Is it still profitable or not? Please explain to us how it works.