

ANGOLA

FROM FARM TO AGRI-BUSINESS

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“Of course we have problems, but we have learnt to see them as *positive* problems.”

“When I first heard about the CDAIS project two years ago, I knew immediately that it was just what our group of farmers was looking for,” explained Edgar Somacumbi. “We have land, seeds, tractors and all the equipment we want, and a processing plant. But moving from being farmers to agro-entrepreneurs is a complex process and requires new skills. And this is where we needed help.” CDAIS is now supporting a group of farmers to improve how they organise themselves and to help them find solutions to their problems.

It is 5:30 as the sun rises through the mists in the uplands of Kwanza Sul. The leader farmer of the Terra do Futuro project Edgar Somacumbi takes his usual walk, today with fellow farmer Jorge Chicale, and they discuss the day’s activities and share their hopes for the future. “But to go forward, we need to change our behaviour, change the way we see and do things,” they agreed.



One of the new young farmers shows the results of his labours. “We are farmers now, yes, but we are aiming to become agri-businesses in our own right.”

“The old ways just don’t work anymore, the whole system needs changing. Only we can do it, though we must first change within ourselves.”

Edgar Somacumbi leader farmer
in the Terra do Futuro project, Kwanza Sul

Terra do Futuro – land of the future

This pilot project was established in 2009 with US\$1.4 million of financing from the Angolan Development Bank (Banco de Desenvolvimento Angolano, BDA), to scale up ideas to bring new land into cultivation and attract young farmers. The area chosen was far from other villages to avoid land conflicts, and each of the 60 farmers was allotted a 250-hectare plot (their *fazenda*), in which they chose where to build a house, and are supported in obtaining a tractor and pick-up truck. All other agricultural equipment is communal, held in central store yards, and they must discuss and agree who will use what, and when. Not all farmers are fully committed, however, and some have yet to get their ‘entitlements’. Others, though, are proud to show their successes.

Employment is a big benefit. But environmental concerns are also at the heart of the project. Ilidio Pinto explained, “Each of us has 250 hectares, but we are obliged to retain at least 50 hectares of natural forest, though most of us have much more forest than that. I started with 50 hectares of farmland, and am growing my area step by step as my resources allow.” And he explained that what would help him the most is to have the skills to become a ‘real farmer-businessman’. “Of course we have problems,” said Somacumbi, “but we have learnt to see them as *positive* problems, as we work together to find appropriate solutions.



And CDAIS is helping us in this process, building our skills in this way.” And Jorge Chicale chimed in: “we can see a change in some of us already, in how we see things, and how we work with each other.”

“I have seen change in myself,” said farmer Flavio Gomes. “Before I used to buy things without much care, but now I keep all my receipts and calculate my costs. I pay more attention, I talk more with others, share experiences. Through CDAIS I have also had opportunities to share with the other innovation partnerships – and I learnt a lot especially from the seed cooperative, for example.”

A question of scale

This Terra do Futuro project had an aim of mass production, with a target of 97,000 tonnes of cereals and beans per year, so it also installed a central industrial area to dry and store the harvest, mill flour, and prepare different types of value-added animal feeds. They have also invested in advanced production lines, such as one that produces extruded breakfast-cereal-like ‘corn pops’ as fish food for aquaculture.

< From small seeds... Flavio Gomes shows what can be achieved with a little support – and a lot of energy...

Spreading the word

But at the other end of the scale are smallholder farmers, a few of who have been involved with the CDAIS project since the very beginning, participating in the capacity needs assessment and all other workshops. João Feliciano told his story: “Thanks to the Terra do Futuro project, I learnt how to better sow and grow maize from other farmers, and get much better results now. And I pass on this new knowledge to my neighbours, family and friends so they too can benefit.” But this is not enough, he observes. The next stage that CDAIS will implement is to support Feliciano and others like him to form an association so they can negotiate the buying of inputs more cheaply, get better prices for their crops, and learn more from each other’s experiences.

Advancing on the road to progress

Angola has so much potential as an agricultural country, with up to 50 million hectares that could be cultivated. But why is it not being cultivated now? “It is simply a case of lack of will – political will in strengthening sectorial strategies and providing resources for those who live from this activity,” said Somacumbi. “Government policy is to help farmers, but little is actually done.” He hopes that through the policy dialogue that CDAIS is facilitating in 2018, the views of farmers like himself and his fellow fazendeiros will be heard loud and clear at a higher political level.

At the farmer level, access to finance and markets are recurrent problems. So CDAIS is supporting farmers to identify and hire trainers who can teach them agri-business skills, how to prepare individual farm business plans, and how to establish and manage associations such as a maize producers group, as well as advanced farming techniques.

At the end of a long walk around the main compound, Somacumbi explained with pride that the Terra do Futuro project has seen 9000 hectares of land brought into cultivation over a five-year period, creating hundreds of jobs and supporting the local and national economy with increased agricultural output. “And with new skills, we can only grow.”

From assessments to action

A capacity needs assessment workshop was held at the site of the Terra do Futuro project at the end of 2016. Edgar Somacumbi explained: “This was a very interactive event, with breakout groups and lots of discussions over the three days, between farmers, smallholders, traders and traditional leaders. The tools used helped them to articulate their needs, and this provided a strong basis for what is now following. It was really excellent.”

This led to the development of actions plans in 2017 that were continually adapted as activities started. And though implementation was hampered by the loss of key CDAIS staff, “some results can be seen already, and they are spreading,” added Somacumbi. Other farmers shared these views in the most recent meeting. Mario Ferreira said, “I am looking forward to the new opportunities that CDAIS will bring this year.” And Cudienga Matucumona added, “Before, we were lost in all our problems, but now we see a way forward and we are ready to learn!”



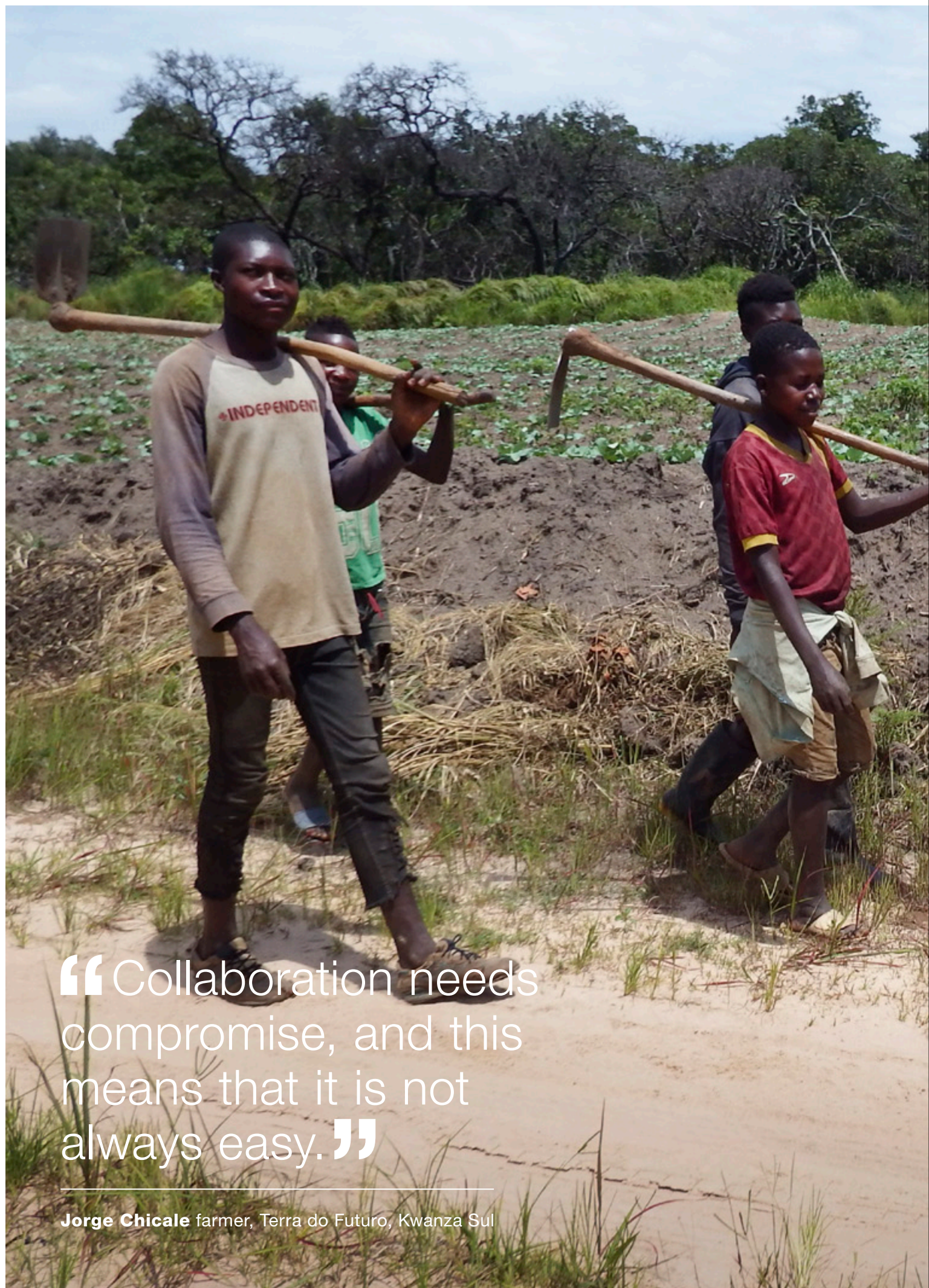
A meeting in February 2018 where farmers discussed the timetable for implementing the CDAIS action plan with Facilitator Juliana Sacamia and CDAIS Country Programme Manager Maria Fátima do Nascimento.



Jorge Chicale leads initiatives to experiment on a small scale to diversify production, such as on his own farm with aubergines, onions and pineapples.

“Learning is not a sprint, it is a marathon. It needs stamina, concentration, and patience!”

Edgar Somacumbi leader farmer in the Terra do Futuro project, Kwanza Sul



“Collaboration needs compromise, and this means that it is not always easy.”

Jorge Chicale farmer, Terra do Futuro, Kwanza Sul



Some of Ilidio Pinto's nine full-time workers, who receive housing, food, cooking oil and all they need to live, and a regular monthly salary that they are very happy with.



Ilidio Pinto in one of his cabbage fields: "Later this year I will invest some of my profits to clear more land over there."

“Each of us has 250 hectares but we are obliged to retain at least 50 hectares of natural forest. Though most of us have much more forest than that.”

Ilidio Pinto farmer in the Terra do Futuro project, Kwanza Sul

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Rural enterprise is one of three innovation partnerships in Angola being developed as part of the CDAIS project. For more information, visit www.cdais.net/home/pilots-countries/angola. CDAIS is implemented in Angola by Agrinatura (represented by the Instituto Superior de Agronomia, ISA, Portugal), FAO Angola and the national Instituto de Investigação Agronómica, IIA.

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