

BURKINA FASO

A MARKETPLACE OF INNOVATIVE IDEAS

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“Participation in this ‘marketplace’ made me realise how so many people involved in agricultural value chains are becoming more and more innovative.”

The CDAIS ‘marketplace’ to promote agricultural innovations in Burkina Faso took place on 6 July 2017 in Ouagadougou. It was a rich event involving more than 80 people who are working directly with, or interested in working with, different partnerships. The marketplace allowed stakeholders in the six selected partnerships to get to know and develop relationships with suppliers of agricultural support services. It also provided an opportunity for service suppliers and other participants to show their interest in accompanying the partnerships on their respective journeys.

“Before, I had a ‘traditional’ view of agriculture, as subsistence farming,” said Kaboré François, Agency Network Manager of Orobank. “But participation in this ‘marketplace’ made me realise how so many people involved in agricultural value chains are becoming more and more innovative, using new processing techniques to increase their incomes. And this attracts the interest of bankers.” He added that Orobank did not hesitate to accept the invitation to take part.



The marketplace was recognised by all participants as an effective and valuable means of starting to work together.

“Our company strategy places the agricultural sector in prime position regarding investment. As such, it was very useful to learn about existing agricultural innovations, increase our visibility, and to better position ourselves for the future.”

“My motivation for participating in the marketplace was to look for partners and attract donors,” said another participant, René Emmenegger of CNABio, the national council for organic agriculture in Burkina Faso. “I wanted to find innovative and appropriate approaches to promote our GSP organic agriculture label – and the marketplace allowed us to increase our visibility, make many new contacts, and gather a range of possible support.”

The marketplace

This idea, developed and implemented by CDAIS, brought together 80 stakeholders, in addition to all those mobilised for the organisation of the day’s activities. They included representatives of civil society and non-governmental organisations, government services, education and research organisations, financial and micro-insurance institutions, support services, producer and processor organisations, bilateral organisations, international development agencies, and national projects, programmes and funding bodies. The media also covered the event.

“The marketplace helped to convince me that agriculture in Burkina Faso is undergoing a fundamental change.”

François Kaboré Agency Network Manager, Orobank

Opening

The opening ceremony started after beneficial rain fell in Ouagadougou on the morning of 6 July 2017 – seen as symbolic for ‘watering’ the ideas that would grow throughout the day. Representatives from government ministries and international organisations heard speeches from the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation (MESRSI) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which recognised the significant experiences already gathered by the CDAIS project in Burkina Faso. These were followed by presentations on CDAIS’s aims, activities, approaches and expected results. Then, the micro-enterprise innovation partnership was presented as an example of one of the six national partnerships, including an explanation of the need for strengthening capacities at this level. Then, everyone visited the stands of the various support services, which each had to make the most of a two-minute opportunity to present their ‘offer’.

“Agricultural production is clearly becoming more and more commercial, and of interest to the financial sector.”

François Kaboré Agency Network Manager, Orobank

Innovation partnership world café

The innovation partnership world café comprised six ‘innovation partnership’ groups of about ten people, each associated with one of the innovation partnerships: micro-irrigation, organic labelling, producer-organisation services, sunflower production, micro-enterprise development, and land-tenure reform. Participants were invited to join those stands corresponding to an allotted group number, and an ‘expression of interest’ sheet was given to every participant, to collect the interests of partners to assist the different partnerships with what type of support they could supply. This took place in six rounds of about 20 minutes each. During each round, partnership leaders and facilitators had 15 minutes to present their needs for building functional capacities, followed by five minutes of exchanges.



Some of the discussions in the partnership world café.



Part of the support services world café.



Finally the sheets were analysed by a specialised team.



Support services world café

In parallel with the partnership world café and organised in the same way, a dozen invited support services presented what they had to offer at the marketplace, during the 'support services world café'. Turns were taken, with five minutes to present and five minutes to answer questions. All participants were also asked to complete 'expression of interest' sheets, with different ones being used depending on participants' actual and potential roles.

Marketplace feedback

Towards the end of the day, those responsible for monitoring, evaluating and capitalisation of the CDAIS project presented findings from 256 registered expression of interest sheets. Of these, 79% showed an interest in accompanying at least one of the partnerships.

Partners stated that they could offer support in the following areas: access to financial and micro-insurance services, diffusion of large-scale innovation, on-farm innovation, experimental design, incubation of innovative projects, and the market launching of innovative products, among others. They also noted coherence between the needs of the partnerships and the offers made. And of these, 86% expressed a desire to use such support services as offered.

Closing remarks

The closing ceremony was marked by statements from the Burkina Faso CDAIS project coordinator and the FAO representative from Rome. They thanked all the participants for their full participation and interest shown in the marketplace, and invited everyone to remain available and become more involved in the implementation of CDAIS. Kaboré concluded by saying, "The marketplace allowed us to realise that efforts



are being made to innovate in the agricultural sector in Burkina Faso. We also realised that these innovations focus on family-oriented, market-oriented agriculture, and new processed products we saw, such as new micro-irrigation systems and techniques for producing high-quality, high-market-value sunflower oil. These made me realise that the agricultural sector is no longer isolated, but is increasingly opening up through the development of collaborative capacities.”

In conclusion

This ‘marketplace of agricultural innovations’ was seen by all as a great success. It clearly achieved its objectives, as was seen by the input of all participants, the number of expressions of interest to collaborate, new contacts made, and the responses of so many of those invited. In all, 97% said that it was an effective means for building partnerships with other actors. But participants noted that more time would have been better. Activities were intense and they would have preferred more time to listen and to talk at each stand. The words of one participant were representative of most: “Next time, we would like two days, and not just one, to make the most of such an event.”

Emmenegger of CNABio added what he gained from the day: “We learnt a lot about existing support services and benefited greatly from sharing experiences with them. We will make firm appointments with donors who indicated their interest in accompanying us, plan to use Agridata to share price information and the availability of certified products, and will solicit the services of TallMedia Group to help us increase our label’s visibility. This has created confidence amongst those involved in the CNABio partnership, building on the collaborative approach and joint reflection inspired by CDAIS. And implementation of the accompanying plan will be a masterpiece of this dynamic.”

Prepared by

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CDAIS is implemented in Burkina Faso by Agrinatura (represented by CIRAD), FAO Burkina Faso, and the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation (MESRSI), along with other partners for other niches. For more information, visit www.cdais.net/home/pilots-countries/burkina-faso.

07 A MARKETPLACE OF INNOVATIVE IDEAS

