

FROM KNOWING NEEDS TO SOWING SEEDS

Zeferino Konda National Innovation Facilitator for the seed cooperative partnership

Oliveira Paulo Lead National Innovation Facilitator for the seed cooperative partnership

March 2018





“CDAIS doesn’t give us money. But better than that, it teaches us ways to increase our production and profit so we can make more money ourselves.”

“CDAIS is interesting for us because it is improving how we operate,” explained Francisco Venda, President of the Sementes do Planalto seed cooperative based in Bailundo. “We work with many partners, and the new skills have proved invaluable.” Since 2016, CDAIS has been working with this group, helping them to identify and agree their priority needs, and take steps to overcoming them. Though much is yet to be done, the high levels of energy and enthusiasm will ensure that progress will continue long after the project has ended.



Cooperative members sharing experiences on growing maize for seed, and the pests and diseases that affect production and seed quality, during a visit to one of the farmer’s fields.

“CDAIS is like a blacksmith’s furnace. We put in a hard problem, like a metal bar, but afterwards we can work it into another shape, a tool that we need.”

Francisco Venda President of the Sementes do Planalto seed cooperative, Bailundo.

Sementes do Planalto – seeds of the uplands

A group of farmers began to work together to produce quality seed in 2012, starting slowly, with the original aim of building up a seed bank for their own use. Then in 2015 they established the Sementes do Planalto seed cooperative, with the support of the non-governmental organisation (NGO) CODESPA, in part to enable them to access credit. The lack of funds was a serious constraint to development. But then, with credit, they began to produce much more and started to seed, and grew... Based in Bailundo, there are now 200 active members spread across seven municipalities in the provinces of Huambo and Bie. All members demarcate a certain area that they dedicate to the production of selected varieties, mostly of maize and beans, with the benefit that the cooperative guarantees to buy all seed they produce at an agreed price.



The group multiply selected improved seed varieties on special plots

A key problem was that farmer-members lacked the technical agricultural skills to ensure that yields were adequate and, more importantly, that seed quality met the strict standards of the national seed service (Serviço Nacional de Sementes, SENSE). Yet Sementes do Planalto showed that they were able to produce certified seed in quantities that would earn all members

a good income, and increase the availability of quality seed on the local market. The cooperative now produces ample seed of improved varieties that were not available locally before, which are shared informally between members and to others through sales. But, as was highlighted by members, much more still needs to be done.

Strengthening the seed sector

A capacity needs assessment undertaken in November 2016 indicated the key needs of the seed cooperative. These revolved around the lack of technical assistance, unavailability of credit, and poor links between the farmers and agricultural research and extension organisations, input suppliers and potential markets. In 2017, CDAIS worked with the group to begin to address these issues, but was itself faced with problems as the project facilitators found other

employment. Nonetheless, by the start of 2018 the action plan was validated and a clear plan for implementation of activities was put in place. These include support so that the cooperative can find and hire an agronomist to provide appropriate technical assistance, to collate a list of all the potential input suppliers and purchasers of seed in the area, to train members in how to prepare business plans so they can access credit and better manage their affairs, and to assist in the provision of capacity building in internal management and organisation.



The innovation partnership has the full support of the municipal government, where the initial capacity needs assessment was held, and the seed cooperative meets regularly at their main office.

02 FROM KNOWING NEEDS TO SOWING SEEDS

Making steps in the right direction

The innovation partnership is forging ever-stronger links with many and varied partners: NGOs, service providers, other development projects and – importantly – with local government. Victorino de Alexandre Moma, Vice-Administrator, Municipality of Bailundo, has no doubt: “the state has provided tools, equipment and seeds to so many groups, but because of the lack of capacity, many of these resources remain unused or are wasted. CDAIS offers just the support we need, to help people make the most of the opportunities available, and in accompanying us all. And a few benefits can help to build many more.”

At a meeting in February 2018 that brought together more members who had not been part of the project until then, one of them, Jorge Mario, was quite vocal: “I don’t know what this C-D-A-I-S project is, but I do know what we want. We need to open doors, or we have to break them down. And we can only do that by improving our own capacity to do things.” The need and the mandate for CDAIS activities was made clear, if needed, yet again: “Agriculture is the basis of our rural economy,” Augusto Samati reminded everyone. “Since childhood I have loved farming, and have seen many changes since my parents’ days... But we can make many more improvements still, if we prepare better and dedicate ourselves.”



“The benefit is to learn how to select the best seeds and practices that will help us to increase our yields,” said cooperative members Paulo Cale (above) and Augusto Samati (next page).

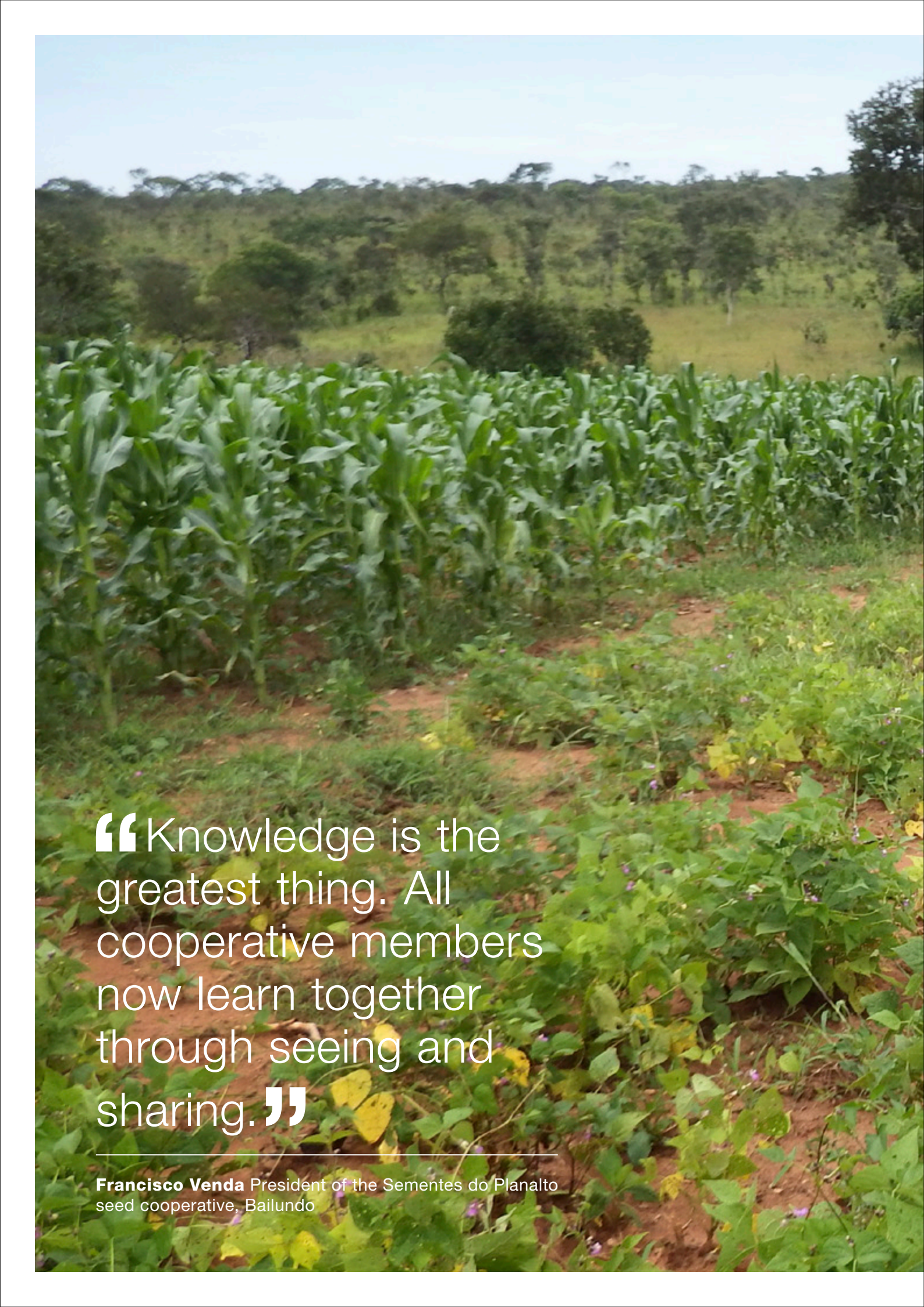
After this meeting that reconfirmed the outstanding needs, the president of the cooperative finalised a timetable of activities with the CDAIS team, the country programme manager, national innovation facilitators, and the Agrinatura focal person. The revised action plan was validated, and implementation would continue in earnest.



Francisco Venda, President of the Sementes do Planalto seed cooperative, Bailundo

And one good thing leads to another...

Julia Nangueve spoke highly about the changes she has seen, “CDAIS brings us a lot. It has helped to bring us new ideas and knowledge on how to work. For example, we now separate our parcels of land better and have applied improved practices.” Natalia Jambe, Secretary of the seed cooperative, said how they have learnt to work in a group, and all see how this is better than working as individuals. Together they said “what we learn from our involvement in the seed cooperative we pass on to our women friends. They are all farmers like us, so we now learn together how to produce and select quality seed for our own use, and – for those of us who are cooperative members – we earn extra income.”



“Knowledge is the greatest thing. All cooperative members now learn together through seeing and sharing.”

Francisco Venda President of the Sementes do Planalto seed cooperative, Bailundo



CULTURA - feijão
ÁREA TOTAL - 160 M.²
VARIEDADE - PRETO
COMPASSO - 25x40
Q. DE SEMENTE - 340g
Q. DE ADUBO - 4kg
DATA DA SEMEIA - 15-12-012

Cooperative member
Augusto Samati



^ Natalia Jambe (right) and Julia Nangueve (left), two of six members of the seed cooperative who are also members of the Bailundo women's organisation, in front of one of Julia's excellent maize crops.

Growing hope

"In the future we want to link in better ways with our input suppliers and our clients and markets, and CDAIS is helping us in this process," noted Francisco Venda. "We must also help our youth, and encourage them to invest their time and energy as the future is theirs alone."

And he concluded with the cooperative's vision, "to expand until we have 1000 hectares from which we produce the highest quality seed for the benefit of our members and all the farmers who will sow them." And CDAIS is accompanying them in 2018 to help them realise this dream.

“CDAIS helps us to think differently, helps us to analyse our problems, and better organise ourselves so we can find solutions.”

Francisco Venda President of the Sementes do Planalto seed cooperative, Bailundo

Prepared by

Zeferino Konda, National Innovation Facilitator for the seed cooperative partnership (zeferinovida@gmail.com, +244 923138034), and Oliveira Paulo, Lead National Innovation Facilitator (olivito7angola@yahoo.com.br, +244 925856832)

The seed cooperative is one of three innovation partnerships in Angola being developed as part of the CDAIS project. For more information, visit <https://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.

02 FROM KNOWING NEEDS TO SOWING SEEDS

