

CASE STUDY 68

Technology For Improved Income of Smallholder Pineapple Producers, Ghana

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Country & Sector: Ghana, PIE Agriculture (Fruits and Vegetables)

Context

Pineapple is by far the most important crop within the horticultural sub-sector of the Ghanaian economy. The crop employs over 15,000 individuals out of which 40% are women and generates rural incomes of over 6 million USD. Large and medium commercial farms account for about 70% of production with the remaining produced by small holders. Pineapple production in Ghana covers over 8,000 acres of land and is predominant in the Greater Accra, Eastern, Central and Volta regions of the country. The varieties usually produced are sugarloaf, smooth cayenne and MD2.

Komenda Edna Eguafo Abrem Municipal (KEEA) is a pineapple-growing area in the Central Region of Ghana with over three hundred 300 smallholder farmers cultivating average acreages of between 2 to 3 on about 625 acres of land. The main variety of pineapple grown is the sugarloaf, which is a traditional crop known to the Central region of Ghana. However over the last five years, due to significant increase in Ghana's processing capacity (currently estimated over 35,000MT/year), market opportunities for sugarloaf pineapples have expanded. Furthermore, large processing companies as well as increasing number of small-scale processing enterprises provide new opportunities for smallholders to sell their produce through contract farming and inclusive business models.

Unfortunately, the industry is getting stagnated despite the huge potential. This has been attributed to the following: the continues use of traditional methods of cultivation, subsistence approach to pineapple cultivation and lack of market linkages between the producers in the municipality and market agents (commercial farms and processors).

Clients and partners

As a result, SNV worked with the Komenda-Edna-Eguafo-Abrem (KEEA) and the Municipal Directorate of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA), the statutory body in Ghana responsible for food production, strengthening of market linkages and creation of income-earning opportunities for poor producers.

Intervention logic and methods

SNV initiated an analysis of the pineapple chain which indicated constraints in marketing of pineapples at profitable prices for farmers. These constraints were due to inefficiencies emanating from traditional methods of production. Traditional pineapple production takes about twenty four (24) months for one fruiting cycle of the crop while at the same time maintenance cost remains high, about 50% of production cost.

Recognising these, SNV and other partners (including GTZ) supported MoFA to establish a demonstration field to introduce farmers to modern methods of pineapple production, using plastic mulch.

For a start, MoFA staff were trained on the cost-benefit of using the modern method of pineapple production and the need for technology adoption for farmers as a basis for facilitating market linkages between them and commercial market agents.

Thereafter, MoFA worked with a pineapple producer group Ataabadze Pineapple Growers Cooperative to develop a demonstration plot on a pilot basis. The demonstration plot served to train 57 selected farmers, on hands-on basis, in modern pineapple production technology and appropriate application of Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) in sugarloaf production.

Furthermore, MoFA extension agents were also trained and coached in pineapple GAPs and agribusiness development to enhance extension delivery.

The partnership also initiated a multi-stakeholder platform christened "Pineapple Value Chain Committee" with local actors and service providers to create opportunities for mutual learning and sharing. Additionally, a baseline study was commissioned and executed to generate baseline data to monitor progress in production and marketing.

Outcome

- The outcome of the intervention has resulted in the achievement of 70% maintenance cost (mainly labour) reduction for participating farmers as improved methodology significantly controls weeds on production fields.
- In addition, the use of the plastic mulch, which enhances soil moisture retention, has resulted in 50% increase in fruit sizes while fruiting cycle has also reduced from twenty-four (24) months to between thirteen and fourteen (13-14) months.
- The Municipal Value Chain Committee (VCC) that was established and which meets once a month has also enhanced trust among producers and other actors. One processor who participates in the VCC meetings has already initiated sales contracts with producers using the modern production method, giving indication that there is potential for further commercial relationship.

Impact

Due to these productivity enhancements, the average incomes of farmers who have adopted this technology have doubled. Farmers who were earning average income of GH¢ 1800 (US Dollar 1208) per acre in twenty-four months are now earning GH¢ 4000 (US Dollar 2,684) in fourteen months. Such farmers have also reported gaining more time to attend to other social and economic matters due to significantly reduced farm maintenance effort using the improved method.

Reduced labour input and improved incomes offered by new pineapple production method has also stimulated women, who hitherto were mainly involved in marketing and transportation of pineapples, to consider pineapple production as an alternative livelihood option within the KEEA municipality.

Lessons learnt

Working with small scale farmers no matter that their farming systems requires a deeper understanding of their economic and socio-cultural milieu and how such specific interventions relate to their immediate challenges of solving their "bread and butter" issues. As a result of this understanding, the technology transfer intervention was designed such that it sought to allow the producers to participate in the field learning while at the same time offering them the opportunity to undertake their normal daily activities. This approach elicited commitment and encouraged participation throughout the whole process.

Up scaling of interventions

Based on lessons learned and successes from this pilot intervention, SNV is working with MoFA on up-scaling this experience through:

- Creating awareness among local farmers in pineapple growing areas for wider adoption of the new approaches.
- Developing training manuals and other documentation to replicate this initiative in other locations with similar constraints.

- Facilitating contract farming arrangement with large-scale processing companies to create more market opportunities for small producers.

Photos and quotes

'This improved pineapple production method has really helped us in reducing our labour cost. Now we can even reduce our production acreages, which we find very difficult to maintain, and still make more money and have time for our other social responsibilities. We thank SNV and other partners for bringing us this light. We can now do business with processors' Kwamena Ampomah, Chairman, Ataabadzie Pineapple Growers Cooperative.



SNV Advisors interacting with pineapple farmers