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Smallholder Safety Net
Upscaling Programme

project results

DEMONSTRATION FIELDS FOR RICE PRODUCERS IN SENEGAL



Partner organisation (investee)

La Sénégalaise des Filières Alimentaires (SFA) is a rice processing company whose mission is to develop an inclusive value chain for the production, processing and marketing of rice in the north of Senegal. **At the end of 2020, SFA collected rice from 3,125 smallholder farmers.** The Grameen Crédit Agricole Foundation has been a shareholder in SFA since 2013.

The problem

Rice is the staple food for families in Senegal. However, the country relies upon imports **to satisfy 60% of its rice consumption¹.** Although the government has introduced several measures to support national production, there is a long way to go before self-sufficiency is fully achieved. Both the yield and the quality of the rice produced are low due to a poor application of good farming practices. The project addresses this problem.

Historically, **the company has provided technical support to rice farmers,** notably through the creation of a network of lead farmers entrusted with passing on information from SFA to the members of their group. However, despite the support provided to the producers, the yield has continued to be low compared to the crop growth potential. **Very few farmers implement the good growing practices** they have been trained in because they remain sceptical about the new techniques, especially if they do not see concrete results or the advantages.

The proposed solution

The project aimed to set up **20 demonstration fields** where the best practices would be put in place with the help of an agronomist. The idea was for the fields to enable **60 local lead farmers to be trained and for those lead farmers to then train 2,000 small rice producers** during guided tours of the fields and exchange sessions on the good practices.

The expected outcomes of the project were:

- 1 to strengthen the knowledge and skills of the rice producers
- 2 to increase the volume and quality of rice production
- 3 to increase the revenue of these producers and their households
- 4 to contribute to improving food security in Senegal by increasing both the production and the quality of rice to meet local demand



Non-financial services



IMPACT INVESTOR



**FONDATION GRAMEEN
CRÉDIT AGRICOLE**

Microfinance & Social Business



PARTNER ORGANISATION

**Sénégalaise des Filières
Alimentaires (SFA)**
Senegal

NUMBER OF FARMERS REACHED

1,501

AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAIN

Rice

START DATE

March 2021

DURATION

6 months

TOTAL EXPENDITURE

€ 11,190

Including € 8,537 (76%)
financed by SSNUP

¹ International Food Policy Research Institute - IFPRI (2018). "The rice value chain in Senegal: significant progress made, but challenges remain."



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key results



18

demonstration fields
set up

Several production protocols were respected by the producers which were in line with the demonstrated techniques:

- ✓ use of Sahel 108 rice variety
- ✓ use of certified seed to ensure a high and homogenous yield
- ✓ introduction and application of the cropping calendar
- ✓ application of pre-germination techniques and techniques to scare birds away



1,501

small producers trained
in good practices,
including
324 women



5 %

increase in the quantity of
(unhusked) paddy rice
collected by SFA (15,500 to
16,300 tonnes)



16 %

increase in yield
for SFA producers
(from 4.7 to 5.4 tonnes
per hectare)

Project's contribution to the SDGs



2. Zero hunger

2.3 Adoption of productive and sustainable agricultural practices

2.4 Improvement of productivity

2.1 Reduction of food insecurity

5. Gender equality

5.5 Participation of women in economic life

→ **Improved quality of rice produced on the demonstration fields:**
the paddy rice collected by SFA contains fewer impurities.

While these positive results cannot be entirely attributed to the project, the application of good practices by producers has most likely contributed to them.



lessons learned

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✓ Recruit agronomists to give the training instead of solely relying on the lead farmers

Communication between the demonstration field producers, the lead farmer and the other producers was not always effective. During the visits, the lead farmers who were not paid professional trainers displayed a lack of motivation and interest in the demonstrations.

✓ Ensure a technical follow-up and continuous updating of the producers at key stages of the production process

The key stages are: before the launch of the season, mid-season and during the ripening stage. The necessary checks include testing the quality of the seeds as well as ensuring the correct use of herbicides, fertilisers and water in accordance with the different phases of plant growth.

✓ Organise more meetings between the expert and the farmers

The total number of farmers trained is lower than the initial objective (1,501 farmers trained compared to the target number of 2,000). This was mainly due to the travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the insufficient number of meetings and training sessions.

✓ Ensure access to farming inputs to enable the producers to correctly apply the practices they have been taught

Although the quality and quantity of the rice produced have improved as a result of the project, the improvements could have been more significant. Indeed, several producers from the demonstration fields failed to respect the quantities and the application schedule for the seeds, fertilisers, urea and herbicides. These difficulties were mainly due to the challenge of acquiring the appropriate and recommended inputs at the right time. There is a lack of suppliers of inputs in the region. Certain producers await the provision of subsidised fertilisers. However, there are never enough and they arrive too late. Others found it difficult to access credit and experienced lengthy disbursement delays, which in turn delayed the purchase and application of inputs. It is therefore necessary to ensure that the demonstration field producers have access to a complete set of inputs before the beginning of the season.

Outlook

The lead farmers and demonstration fields system enables SFA to **disseminate good production practices**. It also provides a **channel of communication to share information** about crop growth in the various areas. SFA will continue to develop and improve the system with more training, interventions and close monitoring by agronomists.

