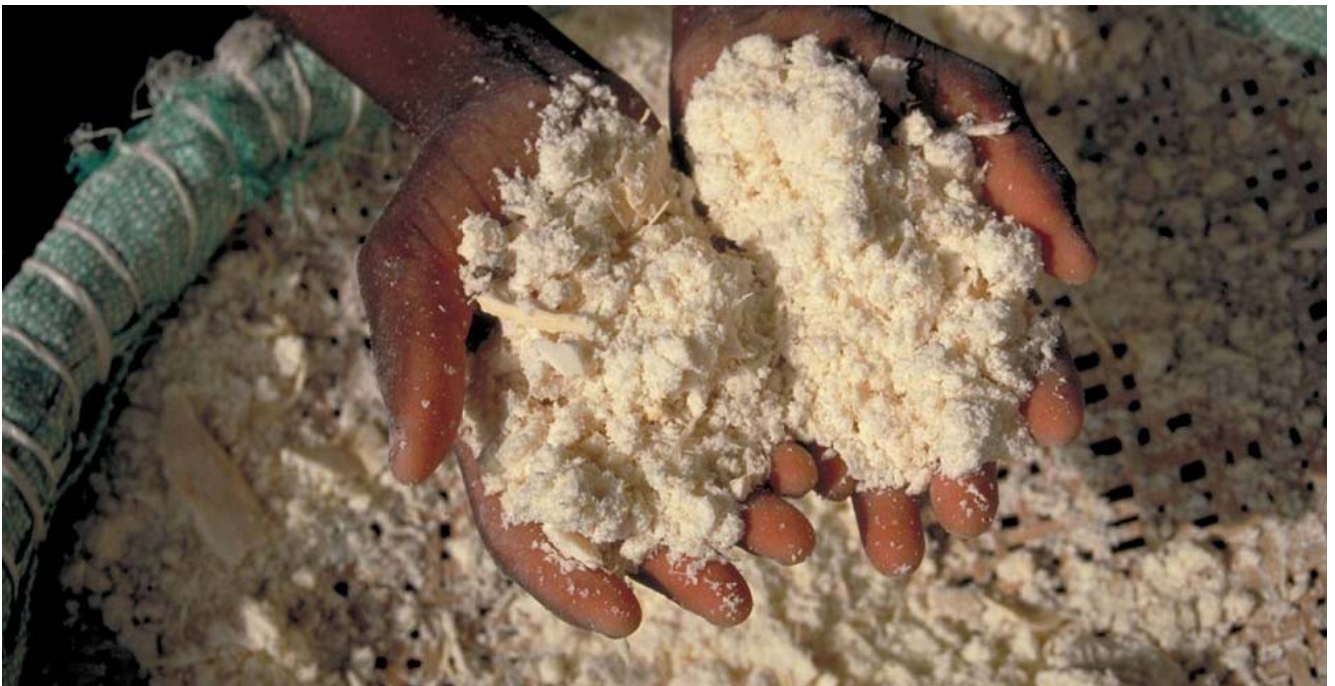


The Regional Cassava Processing & Marketing Initiative (RCPMI)



INTRODUCTORY SECTION

Abstract:

The development of the cassava industry is a key component of the IFAD's regional strategy for Western and Central Africa (WCA). In view of the above, and as a response to a call from African leaders through the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD), IFAD launched the Regional Cassava Processing and Marketing Initiative (RCPMI). This three-year initiative, entirely financed by the Italian and the Swiss Government for a total value of approximately US\$ 1.5 million, was kicked-off through a regional workshop held in Accra (Ghana) in March 2006. Operations started only at the end of March 2007, with the appointment of a coordinator.

The main RCPMI objective is to support the four IFAD-supported Roots and Tubers (R&T) projects in Benin, Cameroon, Ghana and Nigeria in:

- Pursuing selected market opportunities for cassava and its derivatives (mainly in the food and animal feed domains);
- Contributing to increase the integration of the various operators active within the different cassava derivatives' chains;
- Maximizing cross-fertilization among IFAD and other non-IFAD cassava related initiatives;
- Supporting, at a national and regional level, policy dialogue to enhance overall organization and performance of the cassava industry in WCA.



In terms of strategic guidelines, RCPMI's role has been to:

- Work as a catalyst in relation to the cassava processing and marketing activities planned by the four R&T projects ongoing in the WCA region;
- Focus primarily on products with a higher added value (therefore, on cassava derivatives rather than on the fresh roots);
- Maximize the involvement of the private sector into RCPMI's activities;
- Operate mainly through pilots, which are to be sustainable and easy to replicate;
- Implement, to the possible extent, activities having a regional perspective; and
- Collaborate with other ongoing initiatives targeting the cassava industry in the WCA region.

Conditions for uptake:

Agro ecological context: tropical zones in South America, Asia and Africa.

Existing linkages with other initiative in the region:

- Roots and Tubers Improvement Programme (RTIP) Ghana;
- Roots and Tubers Expansion Programme (RTEP) Nigeria;
- Roots and Tuber Development Project (Programme de développement de la culture des racines et tubercules) (PDRT) Benin;
- Roots and Tubers National Development Project (Programme national de développement des racines et tubercules) (PNDRD) Cameroun ;
- FIDAFrique ;
- NEPAD Pan Africa Cassava Initiative (NPACI).

THE PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

Beneficiaries

Cassava small scale producers and processors, rural poor.

Outputs

The RCPMI supported R&T projects in:

- Exchanging / sharing best practices /specific know-how on themes of common interest in a more intensively and consistently manner;
- Getting acquainted with, and eventually acquiring, cassava related technological and market/trade knowledge available outside national boundaries;
- Identifying and developing new cassava derivatives and/or revitalizing traditional derivatives;
- Making use of new marketing tools and techniques also in the trade of cassava derivatives;
- Implementing trade activities within so far unexploited segments and niches of regional and international markets; and
- Strengthening chain integration of the actors within the various derivatives' chains.



Impacts:

Regional level

- Exchange fostered, within the WCA region, of cassava processing know-how and of processing and marketing good practices for producing cassava derivatives;
- Guidance provided to national R&T projects in the selection/development of Market and Trade Information Platforms and Systems;
- An on-line database on cassava equipment makers and on their prototypes in WCA implemented and accessible to general public;
- Advocacy dialogue among/with regional institutions advanced;
- Meetings for all the four R&T IFAD-funded R&T projects' staff organized.



National level

- Investment proposals to develop new cassava derivatives implemented for the use of WCA private operators;
- New approaches to upgrade production of traditional cassava products worked out and currently piloted throughout WCA;
- Opportunities for trading cassava derivatives on national and external markets investigated and secured;
- Integration of the various actors within the various cassava derivatives 'chains pursued;
- Advocacy dialogue with national institutions entrusted with cassava industry development advanced.

Constraints faced during the implementation:



- *Cassava has an image problem:* Cassava is frequently associated with poor processing techniques, low quality and irregular supply.

- *Structured supply lines and outgrower schemes do not exist:*

Although farm gate prices are often low, bulking significant volumes is quite expensive and time-consuming because of small surpluses per farm and small transactions with the result that most production zones with a 50-km radius are not able to supply a significant volume (more than 100 tons/day) during an extended period.

- *Cassava prices have a strong cyclical component:*

Only at levels of less than USD 30 per ton cassava appears to be capable to compete with grains. Furthermore, market margins are very low for both cassava roots and its main traditional derivatives.

Sustainability, Acceptability and Accessibility:

The **sustainability** of the initiative has been systematically supported through: i) the elaboration of market studies/investigations at different levels: country, region-wide and EU focused –for the ethnic, fair-trade and organic market; ii) the working out of marketing or export strategies for those selected domestic market segments or external markets that show to have the most promising potentials; and iii) the implementation of promotional campaigns to stimulate the consumption of cassava derivatives and to support the trading activities, on domestic or external markets, of private operators.

The following deliver mechanisms have been developed with the aim of promoting the **accessibility** of achieved results at all levels: i) pilots on specific themes; ii) training/demonstration exercises to support the adoption of the new technologies and ways of operating what proposed through the pilots; and iii) delivery of technological, market and trade supporting information.



Acceptability has been supported through the following actions/deliver mechanisms: i) specific pilots targeting the constraints currently limiting chain integration (such as: lack of actors' organization; gaps in the trade flows; shortage of instruments supporting integration); ii) educational work on subjects related to the strengthening of commodity chain linkages; and iii) promotional events (such as: seminars/workshops and awareness campaigns) focusing on benefits achievable through a higher chain integration and measures/tools to be put in place to attain it.



Gender dimension:

Women have been closely involved in the initiative's activities as they are traditionally responsible for processing cassava. Various trainings have been organized focusing on cassava processing techniques and marketing of cassava's derivatives.

Dissemination pathways:

- E-forum involving actors from the cassava commodity chain, researchers and IFAD staff involved in cassava related activities (through FIDAFrique);
- Reports, studies and publications;
- Regional and national workshops and fairs;
- Regional catalogue and online database on cassava equipment makers and on their prototypes.

All above mentioned publications and studies are available on line on the IFAD electronic network for the WCA region:

www.fidafrique.net/rubrique556.html



Further research needs:

- Need to investigate the potential use of cassava peels for biogas production;
- Need to explore the potentials of using the value-chain development approach piloted in Nigeria also in other WCA countries;
- Need to investigate the potential use of cassava starch for producing shoppers meant to be used by consumers sensitive to more friendly environmental practices.

USEFUL INFORMATION¹

Useful links and references:

www.fidafrique.net/rubrique554.html

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Acronyms:

IFAD: Internal Fund for Agricultural Development

NEPAD: New Partnership for Africa Development

NPACI: NEPAD Pan Africa Cassava Initiative

RCPMI: Regional Cassava Processing and Marketing Initiative

R&T: Root and Tuber

WCA: Western and Central Africa

¹ In view of the informality of the series, the manuscript has not been prepared in total conformity with the requirements of formal IFAD publications. The views and interpretations contained therein are those of the authors and should not be attributed to IFAD.