



Lean-period cereal banks

I. Background:

<p>1. Name of innovation: Lean-period cereal banks, a mechanism for the prevention and better management of food crises</p> <p>2. Country - Region: Niger : Maradi Region, Aguié Department</p> <p>3. Organization and originator: Project for the Promotion of Local Initiative for Development in Aguié (PPILDA) and IFAD</p>	<p>5. Actors involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project team - Beneficiaries or vulnerable women - Government and traditional authorities - Support partners <p>6. Implementation date: June 2006, following the 2005 food crisis</p> <p>7. Type of innovation: (Technological, institutional, policy or knowledge sharing)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Socio-organizational (mechanism to prevent and manage food crises)
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II. Key Issues:

8. Summary:

Food insecurity is a crucial problem in the Maradi region in general and in the PPILDA intervention zone in particular. There are several reasons for this situation, particularly (i) the shortage of suitable land for cultivation, given accelerated demographic growth (an annual growth rate of about 3 per cent) and (ii) poor growing seasons due mainly to the reduction in soil fertility, drought and parasite attacks. All these factors mean that there are major cereal shortfalls almost every year, placing households in a situation of food insecurity, especially during the lean period (July-August-September). Faced with this situation, the project started to establish lean-period cereal banks with local people. This initiative is intended to support rural women's contribution to food security by setting up a sustainable crisis prevention and management mechanism. Managed basically by women, these banks are able to make foodstuffs available to vulnerable women during the lean period. The stocks are replenished after the harvest on the basis of repayment in kind, with an interest rate negotiated with the beneficiaries (a maximum of 25 per cent).

9. What issue does the innovation address?

The innovation is intended to reduce the length of the lean period for the most vulnerable households. Potential impacts are thus felt on several levels:

- a. A contribution to the food security of the most vulnerable households by setting up a village-level mechanism to protect the households most exposed to food difficulties during the lean period;
- b. An improvement in agricultural production through the time farmers dedicate to their own fields by undertaking farm work at the right time;
- c. An improvement in the nutrition of women and children through a significant increase in the number of days of food cover provided by the bank: for children, the number of meals per day is now between three and five, as compared with the usual two to three in lean periods; the nature of the foodstuff (millet) received at the bank in many cases reduces the consumption of scarcity plants or unaccustomed foodstuffs (wild leaves) and thus leads to a qualitative improvement in the food ration of the women and children in beneficiary households;
- d. A contribution to maintenance of the household's capital by reducing the sale of livestock, indebtedness, pawning and the sale of farm equipment and women's possessions;
- e. A contribution in social and organizational terms: women beneficiaries of the lean-period banks form a group and meet regularly to ensure that the bank operates properly, thus strengthening social ties and developing mutual aid among them;
- f. The boosting of women's capacities through management training: this participation is viewed positively by men, who do not hesitate to let them take part in all development activities.

10. Key success factors for replication:

- Premises made available to the women by the community
- Women's support for the initiative

- Women's assumption of full responsibility for managing the bank
- Actors involved at the household level: women
- Information and awareness-building for beneficiaries
- Better choice of committee members (in a general village assembly of women)
- Empowerment of actors (management committees and authorities)

Main results

- Availability of cereals during the lean period
- Greater household security (reduction in the outflow of food or agricultural wage-earners and in malnutrition, and preservation of the dignity of the most vulnerable people by preserving their meagre capital and reducing calls on them from well-off people)
- Boosting of women's technical and organizational capacities

11. Accessibility: (Poor, gender, youth, migrants...)/ Target group

Women from vulnerable households (sedentary and nomadic)

12. Difficulties encountered:

- Low level of women's literacy in some communities, so that a young man has to be appointed as secretary
- Insufficient stocks in some communities, given the large number of beneficiaries

13. Financial aspects:

Cost of a lean-period cereal bank: CFAF 2,475,000, made up as follows:

- Purchase of stock (10 t of cereals): CFAF 1,450,000
- Training of the management committee: CFAF 50,000
- Building and equipment of the storehouse (non-definitive materials): CFAF 975,000, CFAF 200,000 of this contributed by beneficiaries

III. Technical Summary:

(Main technical characteristics - In addition to section 8 summary)

The lean-period cereal bank consists of making a supply of cereals available to the most vulnerable women of the village during the lean period, with a weekly distribution. The amount allocated to each woman will be repaid in kind at harvest time, with a maximum interest rate of 25 per cent to replenish the stock and meet various charges connected with the working of the bank. The stages in setting up the bank can be summarized as follows:

- Identification of beneficiary villages, based on the extent of the food insecurity problem
- Storage premises made available by the villages (in year 1)
- Information/awareness-building in the villages regarding the establishment of a lean-period bank
- Identification of beneficiaries on the basis of vulnerability criteria discussed with the local people (availability of land, livestock capital, level of food security)
- Establishment and training of management committees (composed essentially of women: president, treasurer and secretary)
- Purchase of foodstuffs, placing them in the villages (by the project)
- Foodstuffs made available to beneficiaries (by the management committees)
- Replenishment of stocks at harvest time (by the management committees)
- Monitoring and evaluation of activities (by the project and the management committees)

IV. Follow up:

15. Key contacts:

Information given in the previous sections

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16. Useful web link:

FIDAFRIQUE network

17. Key documents: (Name of the document + Link or Contact or Co ordinates)

Banque de soudure, un outil de gestion et de prévention des crises alimentaires (= Lean-period cereal banks: a tool to manage and prevent food crises)

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