Zimbabwe’s agribusiness sector is constrained by limited access to input and output markets, inadequate access to agri-credit and the poor capacity of market actors to respond to smallholder farmers’ needs remain some of the biggest constraints in the sector. It is these constraints that the nascent LFSP Programme is trying to address.

On 14 July 2015, GRM in partnership with FAO organised a half-day Markets-matching fair at the Agriculture Show Ground’s Nelson Mandela Hall in Harare with the aim to foster business-oriented synergies and interactions between 84 participants drawn from private agri-businesses, Government and the LFSP consortia of INSPIRE (Improved Nutrition for Sustainable Production and Increased Resilience for Economic growth), EXTRA (Extension and Training for Rural Agriculture) and ENTERPRISE (Ensuring Nutrition, Transforming and Empowering Rural Farmers and Promoting Resilience in Zimbabwe), representing the livelihood interests of over 120,000 smallholder households benefitting under the Programme.

The objective of the fair was to develop a shared understanding of the Programme, foster linkages among the programme’s value-chain actors, serve as a marketing platform for private agri-businesses, showcase the various livelihood interventions being promoted and enhance a deeper understanding of the agri-business market opportunities for participants.

INSPIRE highlighted its approach to agriculture and markets with a presentation on leveraging technology and market information systems to enhance market access and improving farmer readiness to access formal financial services among other aspects of the interventions promoted in Makoni, Mutare and Mutasa Districts. ENTERPRISE gave a presentation of their approaches to market development.
and nutrition enhancement approaches for small holder farmers in Guruve and Mt. Darwin Districts, while EXTRA gave a presentation of its activities in strengthening linkages between smallholder farmers and markets in addition to other facets of its interventions in Kwekwe, Gokwe South and Shurugwi Districts.

The main thrust of the fair was a clear call to Zimbabwe's agribusiness sector to wake up and harness the partnership opportunities small holder farmers have to offer for input and output marketing of smallholder produce and to help address their constraints to productivity, market supply, strengthening agriculture business value chains and enabling innovative, entrepreneur-oriented farming that can grow to scale under the LFSP and beyond.

Regardless of how well designed data collection instruments are, the quality of data collected through surveys depends ultimately on the data collection skills of the enumerators who conduct the interviews. Impact evaluations are contextual in nature and Coffey who lead the evaluation of the LFSP have Target Research as a partner with the knowledge and understanding to conduct large baseline surveys and impact evaluations of smallholder development programmes in rural Zimbabwe.

To this end, Target Research is assisting Coffey with the Livelihoods and Food Security Programme (LFSP) Evaluation and embarked on this task by brining on board enumerators and training them in order to familiarize them with the objectives of the MR&E, provide a comprehensive understanding of the survey instruments, and equip them with knowledge and skills that will enhance their ability to collect good quality, consistent and reliable data using the COSMOS (Coffey Spatial Mobile Solution) tool. The training lasted this training took place over a the week 13th-18th July at the Agriculture House building in the Marlborough, Harare and included a
one-day visit to Mt Darwin to pilot the questionnaire. Throughout the training sessions which involved practical and theoretical sessions, the facilitators underscored competence, professionalism, and commitment of the enumerators as the key ingredients to good quality data. The workshop particularly covered:

- a general overview of the study’s methodological approach, as well as key logistical aspects including reporting structure and research ethics
- the general background, objectives and rationale for MR&E
- a review and understanding of the COSMOS tool and how to competently use it
- the roles, responsibilities and conduct of field enumerators and supervisors
- understanding of the data needed to be collected and a refining of research questions
- Translation of the research questions into Shona and Ndebele dialects and refining the translations through peer critiquing

In line with the MR&E objectives and the design of the LFSP, XX enumerators including supervisors were equipped over a two week intensive training period to prep them ahead of extensive evaluation work across 8 districts (Mutasa, Mt. Darwin, Mutare, Guruve, Makoni, Kwekwe, Gokwe South and Shurugwi. The sessions were quite interactive, with all participants encouraged to share their insights and thoughts on how best to improve both the survey design and the instruments.

By the end of the workshop, evaluation teams were established, as well as roles and responsibilities of individual members. The team was able to dissect all the elements of the evaluation questionnaire and coupled with a series of pilot-testing the survey instrument in the field, the approach to data collection has been thoroughly refined.

For Tendayi Chiweshe, a young 23 year old vibrant researcher, the training from Target Research was very informative as he was able to fully understand what the researcher wants and how to use the COSMOS tool to structure the questionnaire.

TECHNOLOGY SPECIAL SEGMENT

The name sounds like an outer space system and indeed there is a connection with space. But before we get lost, we introduce you to COSMOS, the Coffey Spatial Mobile Solution that you might have come across on page 2 of this newsletter, otherwise it is a revolutionary, robust and easy tool that Coffey is employing to capture LFSP evaluation data in the field.

COSMOS allows researchers to customize each survey using modular fields that includes question definitions, variables, survey flow, languages and quotas. Completed survey templates are imported directly into the survey database and the new survey is then available for download to the pool of smartphones assigned to the Coffey LFSP enumerators. Every single piece of data including questions and photographs are automatically tagged with geographical identification metadata which includes a GPS co-ordinate, date and time using the smartphone’s built-in GPS (Global Positioning System) function. Ahh, that’s the space connection! Sounds very techy? Yes. Relevant? Maybe you don’t know yet. You can find out best when the results from Coffey’s Evaluation of the LFSP begin to be shared soon. Watch this space in future editions of this newsletter and let COSMOS do the talking.
TOGETHER WE CAN

A section of LFSP partner staff listens attentively to a presenter during the MR&E, MIS and strategic planning and information sharing workshop

On 26 May 2015, a workshop was jointly organised by FAO, GRM and Coffey to basically thresh out a common mindset across three broad but fundamental areas of the LFSP, notably the overall strategy, baseline information sharing and the Management Information System (MIS). The workshop was attended mainly by the Monitoring and Evaluation Officers, Information Managers, Technical Team Leaders of the respective organisations. At the end of the workshop there was a shared understanding of the LFSP Monitoring & Evaluation Strategy, key methodologies, capacity gaps and how they would be addressed and in addition the use of the LFSP MIS – for activity and output monitoring. It is through regular LFSP Programme meetings across and between organisations that is building a robust team spirit and ensuring that from the onset, the programme creates consistency in reporting, shares useful insights and lessons learned on programme performance and continuously seeks to ensure ownership and commitment by partners and beneficiaries. Together we can!

Enquiries

For more information about the Livelihoods and Food Security Programme (LFSP), send your information through our media enquiries info@coffeyzw.com and we will respond to you.

Disclaimer

The views represented in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the individual partners and donors. The greatest care has been taken to ensure the information represented is factual and true and is intended to promote development synergies to fight poverty in Zimbabwe. The LFSP is a consortium of partnerships that aims to assist the Government of Zimbabwe’s efforts in fighting poverty.