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Agência Suíça de Desenvolvimento e Cooperação

Secretaria de Estado para Assuntos Económicos

Regional Programme Southern Africa RPSA

Strengthening Seed Input and Outputs in Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Swaziland

Duration: 3 Years (2010-2013)

Budget: CHF 3.6m.

Implementing Agency: GRM
International

Partners: SAT, Local NGOs,
Governments of Zimbabwe, Lesotho
and Swaziland

Project location: Masvingo
Province, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, and
Swaziland.

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Current Situation

Once known as southern Africa's "bread basket", food insecurity is now a critical issue for millions of Zimbabweans. A decline in productive labour; effects of climate change, food price volatility; and overall economic decline increased rural household vulnerability. Unavailability of, or inaccessibility to, key inputs such as seeds and fertilizer, coupled with weak market linkages and a collapse of agricultural advisory services, compound the deterioration of agricultural productivity and production.

Building on a previous SDC Humanitarian Voucher for Seeds (VfS) project in Zaka District that supported food insecure farmers with seed inputs, the Regional Programme Southern Africa (RPSA) plans to support the resurgence of previously active inputs and outputs markets, and capacities of extension officers at the district levels. Zaka District in Masvingo Province is one of the drier districts of Zimbabwe with an average annual rainfall of less than 450 mm. The aim is to increase the positive impact of humanitarian aid received, and enhance farmers' resilience to external shocks to get to food sufficiency. Adapted seeds promotion, improved farming techniques and market linkages need to be created or restored as early as possible after a crisis as they need to be linked to efforts aiming at kick-starting input and output markets. This project is tackling supply and demand aspects of food security simultaneously to allow market mechanisms to develop rapidly.

Swiss Objectives

The goal of the project is to rebuild the self-reliance of vulnerable farmers after the food shocks of 2007-2010. Their renewed resilience will be achieved by removing barriers to these farmers' productive capacities that limit them to regularly relying on relief assistance. At the same time, the project will intervene to ensure that markets for both inputs and outputs are functioning well in order to increase farmers' access to inputs for production as well as avenues for selling their outputs surplus.

Using seed as the entry point, the following objectives will be pursued to achieve the project goal in the target areas of the three countries:

1. To develop actionable knowledge and good practice concerning the interface between humanitarian aid and sustainable market development, ensuring that approaches and emerging programme issues are captured and addressed through robust knowledge cycle practices. Key outputs will include policy briefs targeted at both SDC and regional actors, e.g. the governments of Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe.
2. To build the capacity building of government-funded extension service in target areas and a number of individual smallholder farmers that adopt farming practices that improve food production in the constraints of low rainfall levels
3. To kick-starting and/or develop input and output markets through strategies that open up decentralisation of seed multiplication, inputs as well as output markets for surplus production in targeted areas.

What will change?

Smallholder farmers in targeted areas of **Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Lesotho** will build their resilience to withstand food related shocks. Currently, these populations experience uncertainties in their food situations, which necessitate humanitarian assistance on and off each year. At least 50% of target households will increase their household food situation to beyond protection level (level at which a household can withstand medium to long term shocks). This is a significant change from their initial dependency on humanitarian support, towards self food sufficiency.

The overall expected result is to positively impact 40,200 households to increase their food security situation in the three countries. This number represents between 60-80% of the total population in the target areas. This will be achieved through improved production as a result of extensive promotion of better farming techniques for dry land agriculture. In addition, the skills of government extension workers will be improved through targeted capacity building to equip them to train farmers adopting better methods of farming.

There will be changes in food and income security among women in the target areas as the project approach has a mechanism of targeting vulnerable women farmers with inputs and opportunities to access extension workers and output dealers to ensure that the benefits of increased food sufficiency are equitably shared across gender lines.