

ANNEX 4: CASE STUDIES

Weekly market for organic products in Thiès, Senegal¹

Origin and background

As part of its activities for promoting sound agriculture, AGRECOL has started a program with REFABEC (a community-based organization), and the municipality of Thiès. A six-day organic-products outlet has been launched, as well as an organic restaurant which is open every day. In addition, an annual fair and a weekly market for organic products have been set up. The objective of these two activities is to create an organic marketing space for producers and consumers. The idea is to avoid marketing organic products in the same places as conventional products and, at the same time, to guarantee the quality of the products.

Introduction

The stakeholders in the market for organic products in Thiès are:

- The Réseau des Femmes en Agriculture Biologique et Commerce Equitable, (REFABEC; Network for Women in Organic Farming and Fair Trade). This organization puts together eleven organic clubs around the city of Thiès, all partners of AGRECOL
- The municipality of Thiès, a city of 1,305,500 inhabitants 70 km from Dakar
- AGRECOL Afrique, a Senegalese NGO based in Thiès and active in the promotion of organic farming

The market has the same principles of operation as the other local markets around the city, which should ensure its sustainability. The municipality supplies the logistic support (tents and tables) and collects taxes from the market.

The market started with nine stalls. The objective was to reach at least fifteen stalls by the end of 2006. Today, there are twenty regular stalls and many consumers wish to see the opening of similar markets in their own districts. Some institutional partners, such as the municipality and the Fédération des Associations Féminines du Sénégal (FFS; Federation of Women's Groups in Senegal), are interested in developing the activity in other areas.

A project management committee has been established. It is composed of twelve members: four representatives of the traders (two men, two women); four representatives of the consumers (two men, two women); two elected representatives of the municipality; and two representatives of the market organizers. This committee allows the actors to work together with the objective of reaching a participatory and permanent monitoring and evaluation of the market.

Market strategy

The launching of the market has brought together all the actors concerned, including producers, consumers, REFABEC, AGRECOL Afrique, the municipality and the inhabitants of the district which harbors the market.

¹ Written by Mass Dieng and Soleïman Bassoum; edited by the author.

Set-up considerations

To popularize the market prior to its installation, there was a door-to-door campaign and consensus-building meetings with the inhabitants of the district (who are involved in the management). These activities were jointly conducted by the municipality, the chief of the district and AGRECOL Afrique. Thanks to these activities, the group of consumers interested in certified products grew considerably.

Product line management

The market offers a wide range of food products such as lettuce, carrots, tomatoes, turnips, radishes, mangoes, grapefruits, pawpaw, oranges, lemon, millet, maize, sesame, sweet potatoes, potatoes, milk, fish (dried or smoked), dried seafood, and palm oil. The market also offers products originating from Mali and Burkina Faso (dried fruits and shea butter).

The objective is to present certified meat and fresh fish vendors in the near future, but the issue of certifying the supply chain has to be addressed first.

Organization of the supply chain and handling

Traders have their own contacts for their supplies. REFABEC and AGRECOL can help establish the first contact, but the relations need to be maintained by the traders.

Due to the insufficient means of the majority of traders in the market, AGRECOL has opened a warehouse so that they can stock their goods. This will make them less vulnerable to speculation and price deflation when the products are in abundance. This is made possible by the availability of revolving credit jointly funded by AGRECOL and REFABEC.

Marketing (promotion) and sales management (including deliveries)

As far as the promotion of the market is concerned, different strategies are utilized: news broadcasting and awareness-raising through the radio; door to door communication with the REFABEC women; songs and videos; and articles published in the AGRECOL review (Acacia).

Costs, margins, price-setting and value addition

In order to avoid any speculative fluctuations, prices are set after some consensus building between the organizers and traders. In that prospect, a market study is conducted so as not to have sharp differences between the prices of the organic products and those of the conventional ones.

Price comparison organic and conventional		
PRODUCT	THIS MARKET	CONVENTIONAL MARKET
Grapefruit	300	400
Papaya	400	500
Honey	1600	1800
Palm oil	1400	1600
Orange	500	500
Aubergine	300	350
Manioc (cassava)	500	400
Carrots	400	300
Okra	500	600
Sweet potato	400	400
Peppers	500	600
Tamarind	500	600
Millet flour	500	400
Millet	160	200

Currency: CFA

Organic assurance and certification

There are three types of traders in the market: garden producers, retailers and processors of local products. For each type of trader there is a specific monitoring system. For producers, field visits are made while for retailers we make sure that organic standards are met by their suppliers. The price structure of their products is also checked. For the processors, there is monitoring with regard to the origin of their supplies as well as their standards of production.

Certification at market level is ensured by AGRECOL Afrique. It checks the chain of custody of the products from the fields to the consumers' baskets. It takes care of this side of the program, as the costs would be too high for the traders if the certification were made by a private body.

The range of products sold in the market has been extended to organic producers guaranteed by other organizations active in the promotion of organic farming in Senegal (mainly NGOs) that are themselves guaranteed by AGRECOL. The latter has the responsibility of checking the chain of custody of all products distributed in the market and to conduct random inspections in production sites. This check is reinforced by the market users (traders as well as consumers) who are also entitled to make a direct check.

Beside these internal controls, the activities of the market users are also checked by an independent Inspection and Arbitration Committee (IAC) set up by the founders of the market. This committee guarantees conformity with organic farming and fair trade standards and norms, on the basis of the dispositions of the terms of reference agreed upon by the organizers (AGRECOL and REFABEC) and the traders. It contains the signatures of all parties.

Other issues

The products sold in the market will supply the restaurant and the Saturday leftover is displayed in the organic products outlet during weekdays.

Summary and conclusion

A participatory research action approach is used in this project. The market should develop further but above all it must survive as a trading facility, offering an alternative to the conventional system for the benefit of the consumers.

It is not common in developing countries, to see local communities and populations get so much involved in such experiences, because, indeed, their priorities are different. However, in this case, there is a strong involvement of these parties and they even participate materially and financially.

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