



Supporting women's incomes through market gardening during the dry season and reinvesting in a women's group: Association Kandili

Association Kandili hosts podcast episodes on change makers in West Africa's food and climate change sectors. Kandili aims to voice innovative and effective initiatives led by women to address drought, loss of biodiversity, agroecology, and food issues in Niger.

The women of the CERNAFA group, who are driven by firm solidarity, obtained land thanks to an ingenious strategy of 'onion contributions/membership' to develop their market gardening activities for sale and family nutritional needs. Their production is free of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, demonstrating remarkable community resilience, water resource management, consideration of biodiversity for agriculture, and a capacity to adapt to drought despite highly arid conditions.

Initiative overview

In 2002, the CERNAFA women's group was established by the women of Djoga with the main aim to offer all women in the community an income opportunity through market gardening during the dry season. Their business involves growing lettuce, onion, cabbage, and other vegetables to meet the nutritional needs of their households and to earn an income. Initially, they developed a first market garden site equipped with wells and fencing to secure the site, covering approximately 350 square metres per woman. Twelve years later, in 2014, the group experienced significant expansion, counting 247 women across four sites totalling approximately 19 hectares.



Women's involvement

The women of the CERNAFA group stand out for effectively mobilising resources and reinvesting them to benefit the market gardening community. Each woman member contributes to savings at each harvest by depositing 10 per cent of her onion production. During onion season, the bag's value is estimated at FCFA 10,000 (EUR 15.25). The CERNAFA group stores the onions for several months to resell them during more favourable periods when prices are higher, reaching around FCFA 40,000 (EUR 60.99) per bag.

Within the group, the women responsible for marketing sell onions at the Torodi market or are contacted directly by resellers. In 2014, the women estimated that they stored the equivalent of 100 bags of onions, with a loss

of around 20 per cent and a sale of 80 bags, thus generating a substantial income to reinvest in the expansion of the market gardening community. Profits from the sale of onions are used to provide equipment to women, maintain the sites, buy seeds, build an onion storage facility, and build savings to acquire new plots.

Challenges

Storage capacity: In the agricultural sector, more extensive capacity storage facilities are lacking to accommodate increased harvests and mitigate losses ranging from 10–90 per cent due to inadequate storage technologies.

International market: Local producers need help competing with larger international players, like the Netherlands and Burkina Faso, in the onion market.

Risk of attacks: Production is hindered by the risk of attacks in certain regions, leading to declines in output.

Training and knowledge-sharing opportunities: Addressing these challenges requires additional training and knowledge-sharing initiatives with neighbouring villages to enhance agricultural resilience and competitiveness.



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