Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Grain Legumes

Bean Technology Dissemination (BTD) project experience with Community Seed Banks in Central America

Session on: Innovations in Sustainable Seed Systems for Grain Legumes

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Outline of this Presentation

- Background on BTD project rationale and implementation
- The BTD project in numbers
- Key Innovations in CSBs in Nicaragua
- Key Innovations in Local Ag Research Committees (CIALs) in Honduras
- Sustainability highlights of CSBs in Nicaragua
- Sustainability highlights of CSBs in Honduras
- Key conclusions and recommendations for the future

Some Key Characteristics of Seed Systems in Central America

Big +s	Big -s
• Available trained human resources at NARS to collaborate • Available inventory of good genetic materials developed in the region in the last 30 years • Existing successful experiences of CSB and similar models that can be replicated exponentially	• Strong coordination among partners only happened in waves (once a in a while) • Limited investments in quality seed dissemination to smallholders • Sustainability achieved in some of these groups still fragile, needs further support

The BTD Project in Numbers

- 41 varieties disseminated in four countries (Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Haiti)
- >100,300 beneficiary households in four countries (>20, 20, 10 and 5lbs of seed depending on land tenure characteristics of targeted communities)
- Creation of 260 CSBs in Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala
- Strengthening of 66 Local Agriculture Research Committees (CIALs)
- 15-30% productivity increases on average attributed to access to improved seed varieties

Key Innovations in CSBs in Nicaragua

- Facilitating access to “registered seed” of a traceable source for a large number of CSBs (scaling up the concept from 5 existing CSBs in 2009 to 220 in 2014

Key Innovations in CSBs in Nicaragua

- Strong collaboration with NARS to monitor seed production during key phases of the crop

Key Innovations in CSBs in Nicaragua

- CSB is responsible for disseminating seed to 50 farmers (20lbs/farmer) or more in some regions instead of NGO/NARS

CSB

Beneficiaries

Key Innovations in CSBs in Nicaragua

- Low investment cost to start-up a new CSBs (circa $320/Ha/ first season, $190 the following season)

Key Innovations in CIALs in Honduras

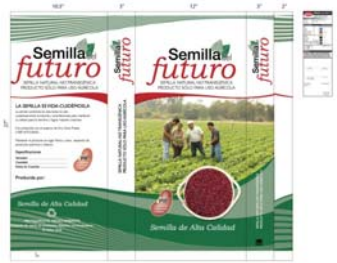
- Disseminate seed of high performance varieties through loans, trade-in, financing or other mechanisms according to the situation of each community

Key Innovations in CIALs in Honduras

- For advanced CIALs, increase capacity to produce bean seed (quality, volume, logistics) as a source of income for their members

Key Innovations in CIALs in Honduras

- Stronger branding and better packaging to reinforce the appreciation of farmers for the CIAL-produced seed



Key Innovations in CIALs in Honduras

- Some CIAL's venturing in seed sales beyond their community positioning the group as a permanent supplier of high quality seed

Key Innovations in CIALs in Honduras

- Empowering CIALs to become “technology dissemination centers” such as use of Rhizobium inoculum and organic fertilizers

BTD Project Lessons Learned in Achieving Sustainability

- Community-based seed production is a sustainable model, but success rates are still modest
- Not every community was eager to work in groups and just for the common good
- Communities that figured out how to recover costs and **generate profits** will continue with this activity (applicable to CSBs and CIALs)

BTD Project Lessons Learned in Achieving Sustainability

- The model of CSBs has many variations according to each community’s situation. For example:
  - CSBs of only one or two members responsible for production and dissemination of seed were not atypical and the most effective
  - Large groups were the most inefficient needing more supervision/support to move forward (more intensive monitoring by project partners)

Conclusions

- After 3.5 years, the project is over as of March 2014 with very positive results
- Investing in a forming a high number of CSBs was important to generate lessons learned across a wide variety of communities and situations
- Only about 27% of established CSBs in Nicaragua (64) have confirmed they will continue with seed production on their own with close monitoring from NARS and supplies of registered seed
- Most of the 66 CIALs will continue their activities with the support of Zamorano and local NGOs

Thank you!

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