

Plans for a Rural Service Company: The Story of Babati District, Tanzania

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The AMSDP District Core Group

Babati is one of the districts participating in the Agricultural Marketing Systems Development Programme (AMSDP). It has a very strong core group comprising of the District Focal Person, Partner Agency: FARM Africa, a representative from the TCCIA and representatives from the farmers and traders. The Core Group tries to meet monthly and has already improved the marketing in the district through convening a Key Players' meeting. Also market information in the villages is more up to date through mobile phone contact with the Arusha and Dar Es Salaam markets by group representatives. Billboards in the villages carry market information which is up dated two or three times a week. The Core group is also discussing setting up an information centre with access to a library and the Internet. This will add to the information gathering and dissemination.



The FARM Africa library

The Idea of a Rural Service Company for Market Services

After the Morogoro workshop in April 2006, the Core Groups' first thoughts were to get loans for an information/internet centre. However, as there is already an internet café in Babati they decided that their priority is to start up a Rural Service Company (RSC) on commercial basis offering services for market information and brokering services. Babati want to be able to start the RSC and have it running and fully sustainable before AMSDP support is pulled out in 2009. Rather than setting up a new organisation the Core Group has found an association that they would like to revive (the Babati District Commercial Association). The TCCIA are also working in Babati district on marketing service but this concentrates on bigger

farmers and traders. However it will be important that the RSC group do not duplicate what the TCCIA are doing. TCCIA operates at a National Level and has links to other collaborators in the district. These many contacts in and outside the country are useful to the group.

Building on an Existing Organisation

The Babati District Commercial Association (BDCA) has been concerned with commercial promotion but is now dormant. It had been supported by the Land Management Programme. LAMP, a government initiative, started in 1990 for land management and conservation. The programme, now completed, collected information and disseminated it to farmers. The core group would like to revive the BDCA but need first to review the constitution to see if they are able to use it for the new RSC.



Mr Makengo is a government official who was coordinating the BDCA. Mr Makengo had already started to organize the farmers' groups to improve marketing. He has cooperated with the PA, FARM Africa, on this. At the last sitting with FARM on 26/07/06 it was proposed to form an association/company to promote marketing within the district. The aim of the Babati District Commercial Association is to support small holder farmers, small traders and small manufacturers. They also try to support Women's and Youth groups. The BDCA has already helped with the marketing of Pyrethrum and to introduce the marketing of flower seeds which are sold to a company in Arusha; the seeds are produced privately, then combined and transported to Arusha. The BDCA, operating with 50 members, aims to help marketing, fight poverty and help with savings and credit societies. The Core group is in the process of making a business plan for this as we feel public information is for the public good, but there must be some gain from brokering information. The work is only in the early stages. The Core group is now preparing for their negotiation with BDCA.

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¹ Story based on interviews with Moses Marwa and Mussa Singisha by Anne Dennig in August 2006