

Starting a Rural Service Network. The Hai District Story

By Kain Mvanda, Eva Mallya, Matilda Mfoi and Clarence Chitemi¹

The First Steps to Forming a Rural Service Network

After the Agricultural Marketing Systems Development Programme's assessment workshop in Morogoro in March 2006, the Hai District Core Group decided to form an organization owned by farmers to help with marketing - a rural service network. They formed a task force to develop the initial ideas; seven selected members worked for three months and came up with a draft of constitution.



The Hai District Core Team

The farmers' group is called MTAHUMAHASI – for network marketing services in Hai. The network is to be owned by all the farmers. They have been advised by a District legal officer to set up a network rather than a company, which they feel means that it is easier for the farmers e.g. the constitution can be in Swahili and the registration is cheaper. Faida MaLi, a local NGO and partner agency to AMSDP in the district, feels that the formation of another company could lead to conflict.

MTAHUMAHASI Objectives and Functions

The objectives of the MTAHUMAHASI are: “poverty alleviation; to provide market service; to unite groups that were under AMSDP and to find proper crops of high market demand as well as good price inside and outside the country for the farmers”. Their functions are as follows:

- Link farmers with their food and cash crops to markets.
- To publish information of market prices through notice boards of all farm groups in and outside the District.
- Have connection so as to know the price for different crops and to advertise goods present in and outside the country.
- Contract farming to find crop buyers and signing contracts with them before production.
- To provide education as to the groups need.
- To solve conflict inside the groups.
- To receive and distribute grants to the community when the need arises.
- To form SACCOS of the organisation in the future.

The membership is open to any person who is interested and is ready to participate in activities that will be organised by the organisation.

On Becoming Sustainable

MTAHUMAHASI will need a vision of how to become sustainable and AMSDP will give guidance on this. The membership fee will be 10,000 Tsh per group; other farmer groups will be able to join the network. There are plans to continue to develop information centres by using mobile phones and billboards so that the farmers can access up-to-date information from the district market monitor and different people or elsewhere. MTAHUMAHASI also wants to extend this information service to farmers that will pay for e.g. an internet café offering services of surfing for information etc. The network also plans to use Hai radio to transmit information to the farming groups. In Oct/Nov 2006 MTAHUMAHASI will have the draft of their strategic plan and Nov/Dec 2006 MTAHUMAHASI strategic plan will be ready. They will need to find an office, furniture, staff and how they will collaborate with other stakeholders like Fert, RFSP etc and work out how they can run the network as a business. AMSDP's partner agency in Hai, Faida MaLi, will assist MTAHUMAHASI with training and exchange visits.

Contact Information for Clarence Chitemi
Email: chitemic@yahoo.com

¹ Story based on an interview with Clarence Chitemi, Eva Mallya and Matilda Foi by Anne Dennig in August 2006.