

Linking Local Learners

An internet learning support service for linking local learners (LLL).

The service brings together people, who want to improve a common practice, and then form a local learning group. LLL has been used to work together to manage natural resources or make a new road or water supplies in the village or raise funds to start new agricultural enterprises. More recently learning has focused on setting up market access services for small farmers on a commercial basis. All the time improvement in their selected practice is guided by a common future vision of where they want to be.

Learning is continuous. It starts with a future vision and ideas to try out and proceeds with gaining experience in new ways of working. Learners then reflect on: What worked well? What can we improve? How can we act more effectively next time? After reflecting they decide what to try out next and so continue the action learning cycle.

Each local learning group is linked with other local groups from far away places who are learning about the same practice. They use the LLL internet learning support tools to exchange and pool their ideas, experiences and outcomes. They give each other advice and learn from each other as peers who are generating their own 'doledge' on the same practice.

(Do-ledge is knowledge that has been used in a practical way; knowledge that is tried and tested and shown to be relevant to a particular group of learners. So therefore there is a link between the do- ledge and the group who have made it their own and can then give advice to others directly from their experience.)

For more details visit the web site: www.linkinglearners.net

Marketing help for ginger

Agriculture is the mainstay of Tanzania's economy, but the sector is not performing as well it should due to various factors. One reason is marketing - farmers don't understand it and lack the organisation and information needed to participate effectively. There are organisations that can help and Enirisha Magohe and Masasa Makwasa report how ginger growers in the Same district are benefiting.



Harvesting ginger

Credit Annie Dennig

Ginger was introduced in the Same district over ten years ago. Current yearly production is around six thousand tons. A third of its population are involved in ginger production. They also grow some cardamom coffee and cinnamon.

In August and September ginger plots are prepared and the ground is dressed with manure. From September to November small pieces of sprouted ginger are planted with one foot between each plant and two feet between rows. The ginger is planted before rains on floodable terraces which can be irrigated. A complex system of pipes and ditches connect the mountain streams to the terraces.

Irrigation for the ginger terraces

Between September and October the terraces are flooded. Then the fields are weeded and irrigated as the ginger grows. After eight months the ginger is ready and about one kilo per small piece of ginger planted can be harvested. The raw ginger is harvested from April to August and put into 250 kilo bags ready for sale. The crop is increasing yearly at an average of 46 per cent. In 2005/2006, six thousand

tons were produced from six hundred hectares. The yield per hectare is low as farmers are only getting 10 tonnes per ha instead of a possible 20 tonnes. About 90 per cent of the ginger is cultivated organically only using farm yard manure for inputs.

Marketing ginger

At the moment the ginger is being sold to the middlemen from Kenya and Dar es Salaam and sent to Zanzibar. The middlemen go direct to the farmers and the price range is from 260-400 Tsh per kilo for raw ginger. Also Ugandans take ginger from Same when they cannot get enough to fulfil their export quota.

There are various selling points for the raw ginger along the road where the trucks pick it up. We have between seven and eight trucks per week collecting fresh ginger from Same. Here up in the hills the roads can be badly affected in the rainy season. A few farmers instead of selling as individuals now sell as a group to get a better price.

Our marketing is very inefficient. Farmers are disorganised, getting no reliable market information and domination by speculative middlemen. Moreover, there is no quality management, no quality standards, and no grading.

The ginger market chain appears to be in a deadlock. Farmers are reluctant to invest because their market outlets are unreliable, and market agents are reluctant to invest because farm production is sub-optimal.

Coordinating marketing

The district is attended by local service providers in finance (RFSP), water management (TIP) and marketing (Faida Mali). Considering these resources it can be expected that coordinated action by the chain actors and supporting agencies will give a decisive push to the ginger chain and trigger significant economic growth and poverty alleviation in the district. The Agricultural Marketing System Development Programme (AMSDP) (see box) core group in Same has started bringing key players together with farmers to improve marketing.



Irrigation piping for the ginger terraces

Credit Annie Dennig



In Myamba, ginger is being cut and laid out for drying

Credit Annie Dennig

As a result new potential buyers have been found in Unifine (a Dutch export company) and Kenya Jambo biscuits in Nairobi. The biscuit company needs powdered ginger and demands 1.5 tons per month. Unifine needs dried and chopped ginger. A better price has been negotiated with Unifine. In farm gate prices it offers 567 Tsh/kg versus the local price of 349Tsh/kg. Farmers can double their profits from 218 to 475 Tsh per kilo.

Future potential with value addition

To realise these new market opportunities farmers must dry and slice their raw ginger product. Recently, AMSDP has organised training for producers in processing sliced, dried ginger with Devotu Shenyu the food processing trainer from the Small Industry Development Organisation (SIDO).

Dried ginger gets a better price. It is sent to the local markets of Dar, Moshi, Tanga and Arusha where the price per



250 kilo bags of ginger ready for collection

Credit Annie Dennig

The Agricultural Marketing System Development Programme (AMSDP)

In 2002, the Government of Tanzania formulated AMSDP with assistance of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) Investment Center. The aim was to remove the constraints that were preventing an effective marketing system to operate, and to assist small-scale producers to acquire the ability to participate on favourable terms in the open market.



Packed dried ginger ready for market

Credit Annie Dennig

kilo of chopped dried ginger is 1,000 Tsh. SIDO started with training for forty producers on chopping, drying and packing ginger. Already more than ten solar driers have been bought and installed through SIDO loans. The resulting dried produce has been shown at the Nane Nane in Arusha. Price for the dried sliced ginger sold at the Nane Nane was 1,500 Tsh for 100g!

AMSDP' core group in Same are now helping farmers draw up plans for processing equipment which will enable the farmers to produce ginger powder in the ward. This will ensure a higher price and lessen the problems of transporting the raw ginger. The farmers have set out plans for the business explaining the market research they need from AMSDP.

Possible Impact

Ginger provides 50 per cent of the income in the district. Any improvement in the ginger market chain will have huge impacts on the local economy and quality of life. Villagers would like to have water in the village and would like to use any extra income for schools and a dispensary. Finding ways to sustain the coordination, collaboration and other roles played by AMSDP's core group in Same becomes a critical challenge.

A number of core group members and entrepreneurs are now setting up a commercial Market Access Company to meet this challenge. They are using Linking Local Learners (LLL) to learn with other entrepreneurs in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania how to operate market access services on a commercial basis.

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