

CTB Niger translation

The Belgian Technical Cooperation in Niger (CTB-Niger), through co-financing with the Ministry of the Interior, decentralization of customary and religious affairs, is implementing a food security program in 14 communes in the Dosso region from 2012 to 2018. The main focus of the program is to strengthen the capacity of communities and communities vulnerable to food insecurity.

The program has contributed to the empowerment of vulnerable populations, including rural women, through the financing of agricultural investments for intensification of irrigated crops and the development of skills in accounting and financial management. Agricultural land conducive to the development of irrigated crops is increasingly difficult to access vulnerable women in rural areas because of socio-cultural constraints such as demography and the place of women in rural societies. "In these areas, women has little access to agricultural land because it is always considered to be under the care of a man, either her husband, her father or her brothers ". With the frequent crises of rain-fed agriculture and the continued degradation of agricultural land due to climatic phenomena, irrigable lands have become valuable and coveted by all.

It is in this context that the program intervenes to improve the access of vulnerable rural women to irrigable agricultural land in order to diversify their sources of income and food. The main strategies developed to improve access and sustainable use of irrigable land by women are:

- Strengthening the operational mechanism of the rural code in the Dosso region;
- The realization of investments for the development of community irrigated areas of vegetable crops;
- Establishment of a mechanism to support vulnerable women in the management and sustainable use of managed vegetable plots. To implement these strategies, several activities have been planned and carried out by the program for the benefit of vulnerable women to ensure access to agricultural land.

Land security for managed perimeters of vegetable crops:

In the program's intervention communes, there is a potential for irrigable agricultural land whose ownership rights are generally held by men. The observed agricultural practice shows that women generally lend land to men to exploit them in the off-season crops of vegetable crops and in the rainy season men take back their property. In the annual investment plans of municipalities, the development of market gardening areas is eligible for the Local Development Fund (LDF) of the "PAMED2" program. Securing land for agricultural land is the main financing requirement for the irrigation schemes of vegetable crops.

To prevent and manage conflicts related to the exploitation of natural resources, the State of Niger has created an institutional and legal framework for securing the land rights of rural operators (farmers, stockbreeders, fishermen ...) by adopting the rural code under Ordinance N ° 93-015 of March 2, 1993. Thus the implementation of the provisions of the rural code will only be effective if the land commissions are functional and operational. It is within this framework that the program has supported municipalities and local populations in creating the best conditions for access to natural resources and securing the land rights of women exploiting the lands in the managed perimeters.

Capacity Building for Land Commissions (COFO):

These land commissions are planned to be set up at the level of the departments, communes and villages / tribes. They are colleges made up of all actors of rural land. These actors exercise individual or collective rights of access and use of natural resources in rural areas. These COFOs have two (2) main missions, the securing of natural resources and the extension of the texts of the rural code. At all these levels, there were:

- Creation / revitalization of land commissions: each COFO has a representation of the local authorities and the various socio-professional groups in order to make legitimate acts in matters of land security; there have been mainly information and awareness-raising actions to improve the level of representativeness of women in these COFOs;
- equipment and equipment for the land security of COFOs (motorcycles, GPS, computers, printouts of acts of land security ...);
- Facilitating several training sessions for the appropriation of the legal texts of the rural code, mapping, procedures for securing land resources for individual and shared resources in rural areas and management of natural resources;
- support for keeping the rural file: the rural file is the first land security tool to be kept and managed by COFOs: registration, filing, and archiving of documents and documents (maps, ..) of land security.

Fora for land negotiation of irrigable land;

The municipalities each year identify the villages for carrying out investments for the management of the irrigated collective irrigation schemes for vegetable crops. Then, it is up to the communal and basic land commissions (village) to facilitate these land negotiation sessions. During these public meetings, the permanent secretariats of the COFOs and the communal officials inform the communities about some important aspects of the rural code and the financing conditions of the investment which are:

- According to the provisions of the rural code texts, the rights of all landowners are respected and procedures are in place for securing these land rights;
- The existence of an opportunity for the development of irrigated fields of vegetable crops through the PAMED2 financing window for vulnerable populations without agricultural land;
- The condition sine qua none of the obtaining of the financing for the development of irrigated perimeters is the acquisition of the land for a long term exploitation considering the costs of the investments that will be realized.

At this point, a major challenge is launched, as financing may be transferred elsewhere if the primary condition is not to acquire the land to be developed. Several landowners have come forward to propose potential sites for the irrigation schemes of market garden crops.

Determination of the status and securitization of agricultural land in developed areas

The land proposed for the development of the perimeter will be subject to all the procedure provided for by the rural code in terms of securing the various rights that can be evoked during a land transaction. The COFOs of the communes and villages that will be responsible for this mission will proceed as follows:

- Recognition of the site, to verify its physical existence;
- Identification and validation of land owners at village meetings;

- Land advertisements through rural radios, public criers ...;
- The establishment of a land deed between the landowner and the applicant;
- Registration of the deed in the rural file;
- And the transmission of copies of the acts to the administrative and judicial authorities of the locality of spring.

In the case of maraichers perimeters, the land rights of women on the perimeters developed are safeguarded by the documents issued and registered in the rural file. Typically, land is loaned to women and loan contracts are established by COFOs for terms ranging from 10 to 20 years. During the term of the loan, COFOs will respect the terms and conditions of the loan agreement signed by both parties (producers and landowners).

Strengthening the capacity of women in sustainable management and exploitation irrigated perimeters:

Optimal development of the managed perimeters requires a mechanism to accompany women producers. Women must be able to make a return on investment in these areas, as land is generally exploited on the basis of loan contracts. Thus, the support system has two main components and several capacity-building activities:

Organizing and structuring women producers:

- To strengthen the capacities of vulnerable women, they are organized as cooperatives under the guidance of the State technical services agents of cooperative action. The creation of cooperatives strengthens solidarity between women and the mobilization of capital for operating expenses and maintenance and repair of agricultural equipment in the perimeter. The maintenance and repair of agricultural equipment is now supported by women from the first year of development of the perimeter.
- The process of setting up cooperatives follows the following steps: drawing up the list of women farmers in each perimeter, holding a General Assembly (AG) to elect the officers of the cooperative, setting up specialized committees management of agricultural production activities and the distribution of tasks and responsibilities between members concerning the supply of agricultural inputs, management of equipment (wells, motorcycles, etc.), distribution of parcels ...

Advice on management and exploitation of irrigated crops:

In all organized areas, women are organized as a basic cooperative. These cooperatives are connected to unions and / or federations of POs for the purposes of supplying agricultural inputs and marketing agricultural products. These cooperatives are empowered by the municipalities to take charge of the management and operation of the managed perimeters. But unfortunately the managers of these cooperatives do not have all the skills in management of organizations and in accounting and financial management. The main tools / techniques of management put in place for the benefit of the members of the cooperatives are:

- The action plan and capacity building of cooperative members: the administrative activities of a cooperative (meeting, membership fees, compliance with internal rules, etc.), the implementation of the administrative management tools of a cooperative (Minutes of meeting,

register of members), accounting and financial management tools (cash register, inventory sheet, equipment inventory, bank account)

- The annual production campaign plan: it allows to plan all the operations of production of a campaign, to establish the production budget and to foresee the sources of financing;
- Technical and financial evaluation of production campaigns: at the level of each cooperative, participatory self-assessment sessions are organized with the operators of the perimeters.

These capacity-building actions in the management of irrigated crop schemes are currently initiating women in the self-management of economic investments through the creation of own funds and the organization of agricultural campaigns through the division of labor.

Description of relevant tools / methods:

The process on improving the sustainable access of women to rural land was carried out around certain activities that required the use of tools and methods:

In order to secure the rights of rural operators on lands in managed areas of market garden crops, there were:

- development of a strategy for the operationalization of the institutional and legal framework of the rural code in the Dosso region: establishment of basic COFOs, functionality of COFOs, extension of rural code texts, maintenance of the rural file;
- Workshops to share experiences on women's access to rural land and the sustainability of land commissions in the Dosso region;
- Facilitation of a dialogue framework for rural land actors in the Dosso region;
- Landowners always have priority when allocating parcels to managed areas;
- Participation in the development of the land management scheme of the Dosso region to determine the land resources, their vocations and the rights that are exercised there.

To strengthen the capacity of women in the management and exploitation of developed areas, there were also:

- self-diagnosis of the capacities of women exploiting the maraichers perimeters;
- The preparation of action plans;
- The development of the campaign plans for the development of the developed perimeters;
- Facilitation of follow-up sessions and support / proximity councils in action on the maintenance of management documents, technical production routes and management of a cooperative organization;
- Organizing and facilitating the workshop to share experiences of the management and exploitation of community perimeters of irrigated crops.

Main results of activities / processes undertaken:

- Improved nutrition for women and children over the entire period of the irrigated agricultural season thanks to the availability of fresh vegetable crops on the perimeters;

- A total of 868 women benefited from the agricultural investments of the program, each of which has, on average, 472 m² of agricultural land developed for the cultivation of vegetable crops;
- The practice of vegetable crops in all seasons (rainy season, dry season) is adopted by certain producers / producers on the developed perimeters;
- Female producers in the developed areas earn more than before because vegetable crops are well protected and therefore yields increase;
- Rural operators access local land services through the activities of the municipal and village land commissions.

Mrs. Damana Sahidou, president of the women's group of the village of Angoual Hassada / CR de Doumega testifies: "Last year, I realized a turnover of more than 500,000 CFA francs. As the head of the household, I assure you that I do not encounter any difficulty in covering my family responsibilities, which is why I invite the people of this village to redouble their efforts in this agricultural work, especially market gardening crops "

Description of lessons learned and good practices identified:

- Participatory landholding negotiations with landowners for community-based operations offer women more opportunities to access public and private land resources;
- Access to agricultural land by women will be more sustainable if the State and local and regional authorities agree to invest in the management of public land resources;
- Improvement of women's organizational and financial capacities is very important for the sustainable access and use of managed agricultural land;
- The activities of COFOs improve the knowledge of rural operators on the conditions of access and security of public and private land resources.

Description of the main challenges identified:

- Sustainability of land commissions to provide quality rural community services to rural operators;
- Capacity-building of rural women for the sustainable use of managed agricultural land;
- Securing and managing public and private land resources through the inventory and their registration on the municipal level.

Next Steps (if applicable):

- Land-use planning schemes to determine the vocation and status of public and private land estates of the State or local authorities;
- Networking of organizations of women producers to optimize the development of managed areas.