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Food Security Through Agribusiness in South Sudan (FSABSS)

Annual Report January 1 to July 31, 2023

Food Security Through Agribusiness in South Sudan (FSABSS) is a five-year project funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Juba to improve food security, increase income and create job for 10000 Farmer Households in Bor, Yambio and Torit. The Project is implemented by a Consortium Organizations including CORDAID, SPARK and AGRITERRA

CORDAID South Sudan



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Abbreviation

AR	Action Research
A2F	Access to Finance
A2I	Access to Input
A2M	Access to Market
A2T	Access to Technology
B2B	Business-to-business
BDAs	Business Development Advisers
BPC	Business Plan Competition
BSC	Business Support Centre
BSO	Business Support Officer
BST	Business Skills Training
C-BED	Community Based Enterprise Development
CLAP	Community Led Action Plan
CMDRR	Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction
COOPs	Cooperatives
CRA	Conflict Risk Analysis
CRR	Conflict Risk Reduction
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EKN	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN)
FEMA	Farmer Economic and Marketing Association
FFs	Field Facilitators
F2FE	Farmer-to-Farmer Extension
FSABSS	Food Security through Agribusiness in South Sudan
HH	Household
GAIS	Global Agriculture Innovation Solution
GoSS	Government of South Sudan
M4P	Making Market Work for Poor
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MOExt	Market-Oriented Extension
MPC	Multi-Purpose Cooperatives
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises – Existing Business
MSP	Multi-stakeholder Platform
NGOs	Non-Government Organization
PDRA	Participatory Disaster Risks Assessment
PfR	Partnership for Resilience
PfRR	Partnership for Resilience and Recovery
PVCA	Participatory Village Community Analysis
RBDS	Resilient Business Development Services
RLF	Revolving Loan Fund
RUFi	Rural Finance Initiative
SSAPU	South Sudan Agriculture Producers Union
SSP	South Sudan Pound

SSRA	Seed Security Resilience Assessment
STO	Star Trust Organization
TiT	Trainers in Training
ToT	Training on Training
UN	United Nation
VCA	Value Chain Assessment
VEMSA	Village Economic and Marketing Association
YWAE	Youth and Women Agribusiness Entrepreneurship
YWE	Youth & Women Enterprise – Start up Business

Project data:

Project Location/S	Bor, Yambio and Torit
Project Name/Acronym	Food Security Through Agribusiness in South Sudan (FSABSS)
Project Number (Code)	JBA- 4000001744
Implementing Organisation(S)	CORDAID, SPARK and AGRITERRA
Project Period	August 2018 to July 2023
Total Project Budget (€)	9,928,924
- EKN Contribution (€ & %)	100%
- Contribution from Requesting Organisation (€ & %)	0%
- Other Funding to The Project (€ & %)	0%
Period of Current Narrative Report	January 2023 to July 2023
Current Financial Reporting Period	January 2023 to July 2023
Total Budget Planned Current Reporting Period (€)	1,969,946
Total Utilized Budget for Current Reporting Period (€)	N/A
Burn Rate for Current Reporting Period (%)	N/A
Previous Report(S) Submitted	Yes, six reports were submitted – <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Inception Phase (Aug 2018 - Jan 2019)- Interim Report (Feb 2019 - July 2019)- Annual Report (Feb 2019 - Dec 2019)- Annual Report (Jan 2020 – Dec 2020)- Annual Report (Jan 2021 – Dec 2021)- Annual Report (Jan 2022 – Dec 2022)

1. Introduction

The Food Security Through Agribusiness Development in South Sudan (FSABSS) is a five-year project that runs from late 2018 to July 2023 with a fund, 10 million Euros, secured from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN) in South Sudan. The project is implemented by a consortium of three international NGOs including Cordaid (lead agency), SPARK and Agriterra, with three local partners including Rural Finance Initiatives (RUF) for Access to Finance (A2F), South Sudan Agriculture Producers Union (SSAPU) for Cooperative Development and Premium Agro Consult PLC for Business Development Service.

The overall goal of the project is to improve food security, increase income and create job for agribusinesses based on Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P) approach in Yambio, Torit and Bor. Moreover, the project strives to increase farmers' and agribusiness' (MSMEs, Cooperative, VEMSA) access to organization, technology, markets, and finance. The project has four interlinked outcome results which contribute to achieve the intended goal through ten outcomes and nineteen outputs.



During this reporting period, the project reached 360 (243F) individual farmers engaged in vegetable production who are organized into 12 Vegetable groups. The community managed disaster risk reduction activities strengthened 357 (162F) CMDRR community members.

Coaching and mentoring start-ups and existing agribusiness on Business Plan Preparation and Business Skill was conducted. A total of 6 (all male) Business Development Advisors (BDAs) were equipped with new Training materials in entrepreneurship and Business Skills Trainers of Trainees (ToTs to trainers in Training TiTs). Overall, result, 863 (517F) Youth and Women Entrepreneurs (YWE) were identified and trained and 203 Micro-Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) were identified, trained on BST, and supported to develop bankable business plans which enabled them to access loans from RUF) which has been managing the revolving loan grants. RUF) disbursed 54,050,000SSP (about USD 84,026.35) to 234 borrowers (117FM) of various types like cooperatives, FEMA, individuals, YWE and MSME. Three Private sectors were supported with stimulus grants to enhance and strengthen the backward and forward business to business linkages.

Commented [DR1]: Individuals or groups?

Commented [IB2R1]: Individuals

Commented [DR3]: Why no females?

Commented [IB4R3]: No female BDA right from the beginning due to literacy levels among female candidates

Commented [DR5]: What do these stand for?

Commented [IB6R5]: Trainers of Trainees (ToTs) to trainers in Training (TiT). This training is facilitated by senior BDAs who trained the junior BDAs on job.

Key findings of end of project evaluations

1. At least that 89.9% of the farmers were aware of CMDRR plans while 72.0% reported having derived some benefits from the plans in terms of successfully using the plans to address shocks such as floods, land disputes and cattle raids.
2. Overall, 89.2% of the farmers in the three counties reported being aware of the various hazards that can impact their various livelihood activities.
3. At least 88.0% of the farmers in the 3 targeted counties were aware of the existence of early warning systems, while 68.4% reported that they had used information from the systems.
4. The end of term evaluation found that 75% (3) out of an overall target of 4 lessons learnt were incorporated in project implementation through evidence-based action research.
5. The SSADP II project targeted the provision of various inputs to 8,000 farmers and eventually exceeded this target by 138% as it eventually directly benefited 11,054 farmers.
6. The number of farmers applying good and climate smart agricultural practices including nutrition education, gender and resilience increased by 118% from 6,500 to 7,690.
7. At least 92.4% of the farmers in the three counties were aware of improved seed production, while 71.8% of these have benefited from use of improved seeds.
8. At least 91.8% of the farmers reported being aware of issues on climate smart agriculture and among these, 74.1% have gone further to apply these practises.
9. The evaluation found that the SSADP II overachieved its target on number of farmers accessing the available improved formal market outlets by 106% (8,000 targeted with 8,507 achieved).
10. There was also an overachievement on targeted number of agri-business owners using market information as part of their decision making from 750 to 1,213 (162%).
11. Overall, 90.8% of the farmers reported being aware of the distribution channels for their agricultural produce.
12. There was an overall increase in the proportion of farmers who reported having access to markets and market information from 45.7% in 2018 to 81.1% in 2023.
13. The project target on the number of farmers that make use of the available post-harvest facilities was surpassed by 6%, the target was 8,000 and the achieved was 8,476 which is 106%.
14. Overall, 89.0% of the farmers reported that they were aware of the various post-harvest technologies.
15. At least 88.0% of the farmers were aware of improved warehouse facilities that have been supported by the programme and 65.9% of them indicated that they have made use of the facilities.
16. The number of businesses that grow after one year was 439 out of a target of 500, thus attaining a success rate of 88%.
17. Overall, 85.4% of farmers in the three counties reported that they were aware of functional business support services in the project locations for VEMSA, Cooperatives and MSMEs.
18. At least 93.3% of farmers in the three counties believed that youth and women have improved capacities to start up and grow their businesses.

Table 1: Summary of 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 Project Performance

Target type	Project End Year Target	2019 Result	2020 Result	2021 Result	2022 results	2023 results	Cumulative total as of July 31, 2023	%age of the Project End Target Reached
Payam	17	13	2	1	0	0	16	94%
Individual Farmers	10000	4501 (2,309F)	3515 (1,776 F)	2910 (1659 F)	2915 (1646 F)	360 (243F)	14201 (7633F)	138%
CMDRR	105	30	22	23	5	0	80	76%
PDRA	136	0	52	57	5	0	114	84%
CMDRR Activities outreach	8000	2593 (1,373 F)	2511 (1,275 F)	2910 (1,659 F)	2915 (1646 F)	357 (162F)	10929 (5953 F)	136%
Farmer Economic and Market Association-FEMA	350	91	79	90	90	0	350	100%
Cooperatives (coops)	135	8	45	60	17	0	130	96%
Village Economy, Market and Social Association (VEMSA)	120	0	60	51	9	0	120	100%
Private Sector Engagement	0	0	6	0	4	3	13	100%
Technology Machines	0	0	0	18	15	18	51	100%
Construction and renovation of Warehouses	3(18)	0	1(6)	0	2(5)	0	3(11)	100% (61%)
Seed Lab	3	0	0	3	0	0	3	100%
Business Development Advisors (BDA)	65	28 (3F)	24 (3F)	10 (1F)	0	0	62 (7)	95%
Micro-Small & Medium Enterprise (MSMEs)	750	75 (16F)	60 (23 F)	155 (42F)	307 (224F)	203	597 (305 F)	80%
Youth & Women Enter.	1000	88 (44F)	107 (32F)	160 (57F)	87 (47F)	28(19)	442 (180F)	44%
Access to Finance	3000 Individuals	267 (103F)	667 (337F)	318 (128F)	280 (129F)	138	1532 (697F)	51%
	895 Agribusiness	8	31	47	71		86	18%
		\$ 15735 Loan	\$ 115000 Loan	\$ 86809				

2. Progress.

2.1. Long-term Outcome Result A: Farmers and Agri-businesses more resilient to shocks and hazards – both natural and conflict

To enhance farmers and agribusiness capacity to be more resilient to shocks and hazards - both natural and conflict, over the last 4Years, the project formed and strengthened 80 CMDRR committees in the respective 3 project locations (Yambio Bor and Torit). In 2023, no new CMDRR committees formed. The strategy of focusing on strengthening the CMDRR committees formed was to build their capacity by providing the CMDRR Communities with range of trainings to enable them effectively to conduct PDRA within the communities. The PDRA process conducted by the CMDRR committees involved identification of common disasters and risks including raising community awareness on DRR. The Outcome of the PDRA process was the development of the Community Led Action Plans. The plans highlight common disasters in the community, community coping and mitigation measures. The PDRA process was adopted to enhance sustainability of the CMDRR interventions by harnessing existing community knowledge about the prevalent hazards, assessing community capacity to cope with hazardous events and community attitudes towards recovery. In 2023, Cordaid in partnership with Meteorology Department of GoSS ensured access and utilization of climate and weather information to determine the farming activities using the rainfall projections provided. The major channels for information dissemination to the project beneficiaries was FM radio stations, awareness in public places (Including churches, schools, marketplace and in funerals).

Commented [DR7]: How was this partnership arranged? Hasn't the Meteorological department been providing this data to communities before?

Commented [IB8R7]: This was a continuous partnership between the project and the department of meteorology. The Meteorology department has been providing the weather and climate data. Cordaid has encouraged the department to continue providing the data to the farmers

2.1.1 Result A1. Enhanced DRR and trust in targeted communities

Output A1.1	Farmers and Agri-businesses more resilient to shocks and hazards – both natural and conflict
Output A1.2	Enhanced DRR and trust in targeted communities
Output A1.3	Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction Plans & Peace Dialogues Operational

A.1.1: Farmers and Agri-businesses more resilient to shocks and hazards – both natural and conflict

In 2023, the project did not form new CMDRR committees but rather strengthened the CMDRR committees formed in 2020, 2021 and 2022 with knowledge and skills to conduct PRA assessments in their communities. A total of 357 (162F, 195M) community members selected from the previous CMDRR committees were provided with refresher training on early warning and early action. After the refresher training, the CMDRR committees reviewed and updated their community led action plans (CLAP). In Bor the community used the radio stations to pass awareness messages on peaceful coexistence among neighboring communities, while in Yambio the CMDRRRC conducted awareness sessions on dangers and prevention of fire outbreaks in public places like churches marketplaces, funerals, schools etc. In Torit, the CMDRR committees resorted to tree nursery planting to avert climate risks.



Figure 1members of CMDRR in refresher training-Yambio

Commented [DR9]: This number doesn't add up to 357

Commented [IB10R9]: Data corrected

Commented [DR11]: How about the implementation of these updated CLAPs? What strategies did the communities adopt to ensure this?

Commented [IB12R11]: In Bor the community used the radio stations to pass awareness sessions on peacefully coexistence among neighboring communities, while in Yambio the CMDRRRC conducted awareness sessions on dangers and prevention of fire outbreaks in public places like churches market places, funerals, schools etc. In Torit, the CMDRR committees resorted to tree nursery planting to avert climate risks.

During the review process no new hazards identified in the three project locations. In Torit, dry season fire outbreaks, lack of clean drinking water, and water logging of fields especially during heavy rains remains a challenge. The hazards were mitigated through continuous awareness sessions and the implementation of the CLAPs. In Bor South the main hazards identified during the review process included prevalent floods from the river Nile, associated human and livestock health challenges, and insecurity in some of the Payams bordering the Greater Pibor Administrative. In Yambio, Dry season fire outbreaks, crop pest and diseases continued to be the major challenges. The project team in Torit supported the CMDRR



Figure 2Local bridge in Mambu Boma

Commented [DR13]: How are these being mitigated?

Commented [IB14R13]: Through the awareness sessions and the implementation of the CLAPs.

Commented [DR15]: How are these being mitigated?

Commented [IB16R15]: Through the awareness sessions and the implementation of the CLAPs.

committees to establish tree nursery. As a result over 10000 tree seedlings of different species were distributed and this has encouraged the community to become environmentally sensitive. In Yambio, the project team encouraged the CMDRR committees to continue with raising community awareness about the potential hazards focusing on prevention and mitigation of wildfire outbreak which had become prevalent, the communities have adopted agroforestry practices in their gardens. They are also making fire lines around the homesteads and farms. Other actions taken by the Project team was encouraging farmers to undertake early land preparation and planting to avert pest and disease attack. In Yambio, the team also supported rehabilitation of local bridge in Mambu boma to connect farmers to Yambio Market. Communities contributed manual labour, sand, food for workers and gravels. As a result of the awareness sessions, incidences of fire Outbreaks in Yambio were not recorded during this reporting period. In Bor, conflicts amongst neighbouring communities reduced.

According to the end of project evaluation report, **Overall, 89.2% of the farmers in the three counties reported being aware of the various hazards that can impact on their various livelihood activities.** Of these, 70.5% reported that they have eventually derived some benefits from their being aware of these hazards. They are now able to anticipate their occurrence and to take proactive measures to minimise impact. The levels of awareness and benefits varies from one county to another, with Bor topping the list with a 94.0% awareness level and a 93.3% benefit level. Torit had a 95.3% awareness level, and a 70.8% benefit level. Yambio County had a 78.3% awareness level and a much lower 49.6% reporting that they have used the awareness to their advantage.

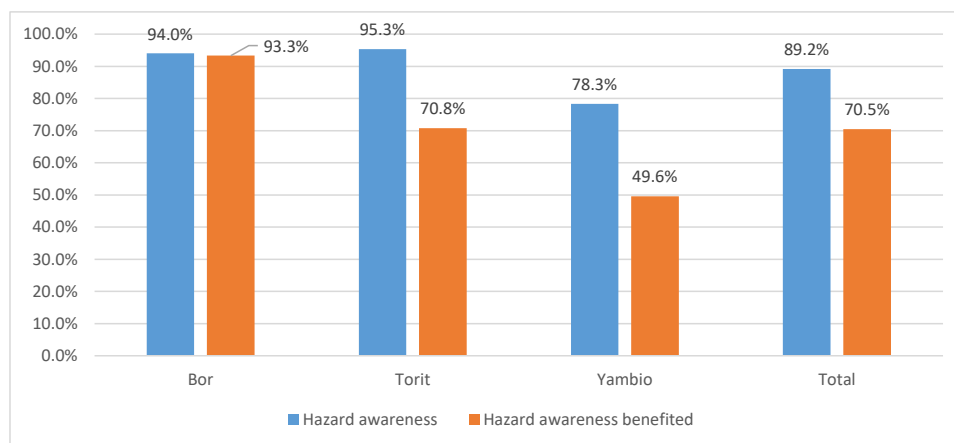


Figure 3: Extent of Awareness of Hazards and Benefits from that Awareness

A 1.2 Enhanced DRR and trust in targeted communities

In 2023, the project supported CMDRR committees to review and update their CLAPs. During the review process, it was noted that no new hazards were identified in the 3 project locations. The aim of reviewing the CLAPs was to enhance ownership of the CLAPs among the community, to review and update proposed measures, and to collectively implement their action plans. This was achieved through a collective review of identified hazards affecting their livelihoods and through consensus building identified priority actions that were implemented. DRR activities fostered coexistence among the conflicting communities by implementing actions in the CMDRR plans that focused on addressing the impacts of common hazards that were affecting the communities. Implementation of the community action plans was not based on political borders but rather on protecting assets that were contributing to improved livelihoods of the communities.

A 1.3 Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction Plans & Peace Dialogues Operational

Commented [DR17]: Have communities behaviors started changing based this awareness raising? Comment on any observations you noticed.

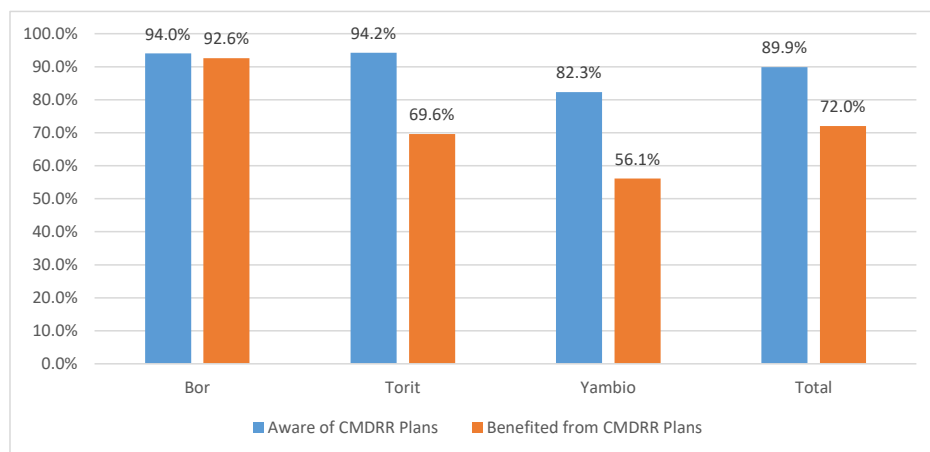
Commented [IB18R17]: Yes, the communities have adopted agroforestry practices in their gardens. They are also making fire lines around the homesteads and farms.

Commented [DR19]: What was the communities' contribution towards this?

Commented [IB20R19]: Manual labour, sand, food for workers and gravels

During this reporting period, the Project supported the CMDRR committees to review and update the already existing CLAP and encourage the committees in the 3 Counties to take ownership of the plans. During the review process the common hazards still affecting the communities in the three project locations include droughts, Floods, Wild bush fire, crop pest and diseases, human diseases, and resource-based conflicts mainly between farmers and pastoralist. To cope with the impacts of drought in Torit County the CMDRR committees resolved in their action plans to carryout commercial tree nursery and tree planting. The communities contributed land, labour for establishing the tree nurseries, and management of the tree nurseries. The project provided trainings, tree seeds and related inputs. This initiative resulted in the distribution of over 10000 tree seedlings. In Yambio, the CMDRR committees in their action plan resolved to control bush fires through awareness sessions and creation of fire lines before dry season. Other activities implemented include construction of one bridge (local bridge in Mambu boma) connecting farmers to Yambio Market. Some of the CMDRR members were engaged on awareness sessions through Anisa FM radio station on the benefits of controlling bush fire. To foster coexistence among conflict communities, Cordaid carried out awareness session through Jonglei FM station on the need for peaceful coexistent. According to the end of the project evaluation, 89.9% of the farmers were aware of CMDRR plans while 72.0% reported having derived some benefits from the plans in terms of successfully using the plans to address shocks such as floods, land disputes and cattle raids. Regarding floods communities constructed dykes, for land disputes , dialogues among disputing communities were conducted facilitated by the CMDRR committees while in Bor, the CMDRR committees raised awareness on the dangers of cattle raiding among the neighboring communities.

The figures were higher for Bor, in which 94.0% reported were aware of CMDRR plans and 92.6 of them benefited. Torit followed where 94.2% reported being aware and 69.6% had benefited. In Yambio 82.3% reported being aware while 56.1% indicated that they had benefited. These differences were resulted from the fact that Bor is much more prone to flooding which can be widespread in the county and almost occurs on a perennial basis compared to the other two counties.



Result A2: Continued Action Research Supporting Informed Decision-Making

Output A2.1	Lessons learned generated from action research
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In 2023, there was no action Research conducted. At baseline, there were no lessons documented., Overall, several lessons were targeted from action research to be used to support decision-making. This was achieved as several

- Commented [DR21]:** Did the communities fund this initiative?
- Commented [IB22R21]:** The communities provided land, labour for establishing the tree nurseries, and also managed the tree nurseries. The project provided trainings, tree seeds and related inputs.
- Commented [DR23]:** Were these seedlings planted? What is the survival rate?
- Commented [IB24R23]:** Yes, these seedlings were distributed and planted towards the end of the project period. Survival rate has not been measured due short duration of time.
- Commented [DR25]:** How?
- Commented [IB26R25]:** Through awareness sessions and creation of fire lines before dry season.
- Commented [DR27]:** how were these shocks addressed? Specify for each land disputes, cattle raids and the floods?
- Commented [IB28R27]:** Regarding floods communities constructed dykes, for land disputes , dialogues among disputing communities were conducted facilitated by the CMDRR committees while in Bor, the CMDRR committees raised awareness on the dangers of cattle raiding among the neighboring communities.

Lessons learnt and recommendations from action research carried out were used and implemented between the period of 2022 and 2023. The following were some of lessons learned and recommendations generated were used.



Lessons and Recommendations.docx

Sample lessons learned

a. Long-term Outcome Result B: Enhanced sustainable production and productivity

To enhance sustainable production and household nutrition, the project established 12 new women groups, comprising 360 (243 female) in the three counties. The groups were supported through trainings in good agronomic practices (GAP), integrated pest management (IPM), post-harvest handling techniques and aspects of marketing their vegetable products. The Vegetable groups were also supported with assorted vegetable seeds and solar pumps. The expected outcome from the capacity building through inputs support, training and field-based extension advisory support for the vegetable farmers are increase in yields, productivity, and income. In 2023 no new FEMA were formed, but the project provided coaching and mentorship to the FEMA groups on good agronomic practices and climate smart agriculture. The mentorship and coaching were done at FEMA level and through radio programs. During field supervision visits, there was evidence of increase production and productivity of the crops promoted by the project among the supported FEMA members. Data from end of project evaluation indicate an increase in volume of the main value chains. On average maize increased from baseline data of 330 kgs to 862 kgs, Sorghum from 183 kgs to 756 kgs, and Ground nuts from 352 kgs to 948 kgs. The increase in production and productivity is attributed to the application and adoption of good agronomic practices taught to the farmers during training.

Commented [DR29]: New groups?

Commented [IB30R29]: Yes, these are 12 new women vegetable groups

Commented [DR31]: What evidence?

Commented [IB32R31]: Evidence provided in the text.

2.2.1. Outcome Result B1. Availability of and Access to Agricultural Inputs (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, tools) ensured.

Output B1.1	Distribution channels for agricultural production operational for farmers up to the village level
Output B1.2	Improved seed production by targeted farmers
Output B1.3	Local seed testing facilities established and operational

B 1.1: Distribution channels for agricultural production operational for farmers up to the village level

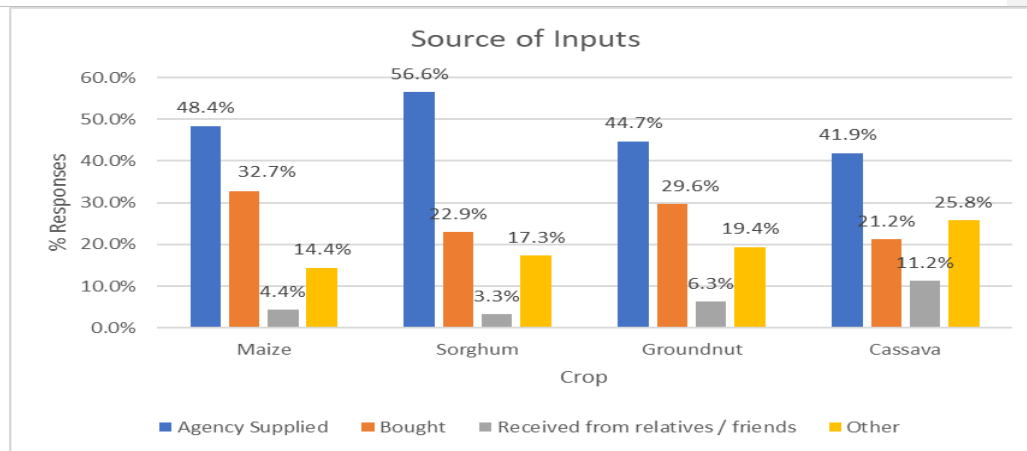
During monitoring visits in 2023, farmers reported improvement in the availability, access to, and quality of agricultural inputs. From 2021 to 2023 the project engaged Five Agro input dealers including Key Agro Input Supply LTD (Yambio), Bakiki Quality Seeds LTD (Yambio), WAP (Bor), Suncity (Bor) and Nile Agro Tech LTD (Torit). The input dealers were provided with stimulus grants (\$20,000 Dollars each) to improve on their businesses and support farmers better. The support to Agro Input dealers has helped smallholder farmers to easily access quality and affordable Agro inputs in the respective Counties. The support to Agro input dealers brought inputs closer to farmers with affordable with subsidized prices. Based on the signed MoUs with Cordaid, the agro dealers agreed to provide the same goods at 5% discount to the farmers. This is could likely change depending on the currency inflation. Apart from the SSADPII the REPRO project implemented by FAO and A3SEED project implemented by IFDC greatly contributed to availability and access to quality agricultural inputs. According to the end of project evaluation, the main source of inputs is agency supplies, ranging from 42% for cassava to 57% for sorghum (Figure 12). The next major source of inputs is purchasing inputs, ranging from 21% for cassava to 33% for maize. An analysis by county and gender of household head shows a similar pattern across counties with agency supplies as the main source of inputs followed by purchases.

Commented [DR33]: Will this arrangement continue after the project or do agrodealers return to the market prices of inputs?

Commented [IB34R33]: Based on the signed MoUs the agro-dealers agreed to provide the same goods at 5% discount to the farmers. This is could likely change depending on the currency inflation.

Commented [DR35]: Good to see this attribution here.

Commented [IB36R35]: Thank you



B 1.2: Improved seed production by targeted farmers

To improve local seed production, in 2021 the project engaged Pro-seed company limited, to provide capacity building on improved seeds production. The company conducted a rapid farmers' needs assessment on seeds production. Sixty farmers, from Torit and Yambio counties, were then registered voluntarily, to participate in local seed production and multiplication. Through Contract farming arrangement, Pro-seed company trained the selected farmers on seeds production practices and seed business management. The trained farmers received maize, sorghum, and groundnuts as their start up seed sources. Relevant tools (3 sets including hoe, panga, and rake per farmer) were also provided based on the geographical area. Farmers produced enough seeds which were bought by Pro-Seed Company at agreed price. In 2023 the Project did not target new farmers because the community-based seed production strategy is not sustainable due to free seed distribution by other implementing partners. This equally demotivated the old seed producers targeted by Pro-seed company to continue with contract farming arrangement. The Project continued to advocate with local authorities and implementing agencies through FSL Cluster to undertake seed availability assessment so that seed aid is provided to areas where there is high need. This advocacy is still ongoing within the FSL cluster.

B 1.3: Local seed testing facilities established and operational

In 2023 the project ensured the local seed testing facilities established in 2021 are adequately supported. The project handed over 3 motorbikes (1, Bor, 1 Torit and 1 Yambio) to the state Ministry of Agriculture who are in charge of the seed laboratories to facilitate the activities of the local seed testing facilities in the three project locations. The project also equipped the local seed testing facilities with computers and other valuable equipment for proper running of the facilities. The project trained 6 Lab technicians (2 in Yambio, 2 in Bor and 2 in Torit) who have ensured the continuous operation of the seed laboratories, in addition donated computers and assorted testing equipment to ensure sustainability, the seed Laboratories operate on cost recovery basis where Cooperatives, farmers and NGOs pay some fees for each sample of seed tested. During year 2023 Multi-stakeholder Platforms, the project negotiated with state Ministries of agriculture to reduce testing fees for farmers and farmer groups. After the negotiations, the testing fees was reduced from SSP 5,000 per sample to SSP 2,000 per sample, across the 3 locations.

2.2.2 Result B2: Good Agricultural Practices Enhanced and Extension Services Improved

- Commented [DR37]: How?
- Commented [IB38R37]: Are adequately supported with motor cycles, computers, and assorted testing equipment.
- Commented [DR39]: To who?
- Commented [IB40R39]: To the state Ministry of Agriculture who are in charge of the seed laboratories
- Commented [DR41]: Which items?
- Commented [IB42R41]: Motor cycles, computer, and assorted testing equipment.
- Commented [DR43]: Disaggregate per location
- Commented [IB44R43]: Added
- Commented [DR45]: What was the outcome of this negotiation?
- Commented [IB46R45]: The testing fees was reduced from SSP 5,000 per sample to SSP 2,000 per sample, across the 3 locations.

To enhance good agricultural practices and improve extension services, seconded government extension workers engaged continued to provide extension services delivery to farmer till end of project in July 2023. The project also retained the extension services provided by SSAPU till end of July 2023. The government extension workers will continue offering extension services. The project has signed an MoU with the respective state Ministries of Agriculture and Forestry and donated motor cycles for the continuation of the services. Through the seconded government extension workers and SSAPU extension workers, the project continued to provide coaching of the farmer groups and Cooperatives on good agronomic practices. Some of the agronomic practices provided include training farmers on early land preparation, setting deep dug nursery beds for vegetables, raw planting, early weeding, pest identification and management among others. According to the end of project evaluation results, at least 89.3% of farmers in the three counties reported being aware of the extension services support offered by SSAPU (Table 2). Out of these farmers, 73.9% reported having benefited from the extension activities offered by SSAPU. The levels of awareness and benefit were higher in Bor on 94.7% and 90.9%, respectively. This was followed by Torit, which had an awareness level of 92.8% and a benefit level of 75.0%. Yambio had an awareness level of 81.3% and a benefit level of 55.6%.

Commented [DR47]: What happens with these extension worker following the project closure? Are they still offering services?

Commented [IB48R47]: The government extension workers will continue offering extension services. The project has signed an MoU with the respective state Ministries of Agriculture and Forestry and donated motor cycles for the continuation of the services

Commented [DR49]: What distinguishes awareness and benefit?

Commented [IB50R49]: Awareness is the action (sharing information), while the benefits are the results generated from the action.

Output B2.1	Farmers apply good and climate smart agricultural practices
Output B2.2	SSAPU Operations & Extension Service Delivery Improved

B 2.1: Farmers apply good and climate smart agricultural practices

- In 2023, a total of 360 vegetable farmers were trained to apply good agronomic practices, climate smart agriculture and specialized vegetable production practices for the market. The project used a combination of extension approaches including the farmer-to-farmer extension approach and using the lead and model farmer approach. During the follow up monitoring visits, farmers reported they had received training on good Agricultural Practices such early land preparation, setting deep dug nursery beds for vegetables, raw planting, early weeding, pest identification and management among others and are now applying the knowledge and skills in their daily farming practices. According to the end of project evaluation, there is positive change regarding adoption of good and climate smart practices attributed to the training given to the farmers by Cordaid. For example, in Bor, farmers have been taught on the processes of clearing the land before the rainy season. They have also been taught planting in rows of which traditionally they just would scatter the seeds in the fields. All the 3 Counties, Cordaid provided the farmers one walking tractors after they had been successfully participated in a business plan writing competition. These were meant to enhance the farmers capacities to open bigger land for farming to enable them increase production. crop nutrition, crop spacing, pests and disease control, proper field demarcation and local storage mechanisms. In Torit County the Arthuro Multi-Purpose union highlighted that farmer were provided with training including post-harvest handling and agro technical dealing in agricultural best practices. The farmers have been putting these new skills into practice including the use of the walking tractors which has resulted in more than 5-fold increase in the area prepared for planting. Example of Anyaak Cooperative society where the following improvement was registered; In the year 2021, about 10 feddens were cultivated, in the year 2022, about 22 feddens were cultivated and in the year 2023, about 47 feddens were cultivated.

Commented [DR51]: From which area size to which one? How has this increase impacted production and productivity? Do you have data on the change in productivity in a measurable unit attributable to this mechanisation?

Commented [IB52R51]: Information provided

B 2.2: SSAPU Operations & Extension Service Delivery Improved

To ensure SSAPU operations and extension services delivery improved, the project divided the element of the cooperative trajectory into three: (1) number of farmers that joined cooperative membership, (2) number of farmers who benefitted from SSAPU extension services and (3) number of primary cooperatives that joined SSAPU/ County Cooperative Unions.

I. Number of farmers that joined cooperative membership.

For the period January to July 2023, the number of farmers who joined cooperatives as new members were 206 including 1286 in Yambio (60 Female and 68 Male) and 80 in Bor (38 Female and 42 Male). The new farmers who joined the cooperatives, initially participated as members of FEMA, and later upgraded into cooperatives upon meeting the requirements (at least 20 members, members have contributed shares, have elected board of at least 5 members, conduct meetings and have the records, actively producing and paid for registration as cooperative) for registration into a cooperative.

Overall, 4,503 farmers in all the three counties (2,445 Female, 2058 male) have joined cooperatives as of July 2023 as shown in the table below.

County	No PCs	Union	Active			Totals	Downgraded Inactive
			Female	Male			
Yambio	41	1	1,115	821	1,936	26	
Torit	22	1	485	500	985	30	
Bor	45	1	845	737	1,582	0	
Grand Total	108	3	2,445	2,058	4,503	56	

56 Cooperatives (26 in Yambio and 30 in Torit) were downgraded by the respective state Ministries of cooperatives and rural development to farmer groups due to failing to keep up to the requirements of a cooperative (having 20 active members, elected and active board of at least 5 members, conducting their annual general meetings, aggregating for sale).

II. Number of farmers who benefitted from SSAPU extension services:

Overall, 30 cooperatives benefitted from the refresher coaching in basic knowledge of production at the farms belonging to the lead farmers. The number of farmers who benefitted from such training were 145 men and 71 women. SSAPU also provided advisory services to the cooperative members in term of pest and disease control, financial management, networking and linking the primary cooperatives to the County Unions.

III. Number of primary cooperatives that joined SSAPU.

The initial objective of establishing SSAPU was for SSAPU to become a national farmers' organization with its board leaders, delegates from the grass root organisations (county unions or other regional farmer-based organisations). Unfortunately, SSAPU was formed through the top-down process. The board considers themselves the default owners of the organisation and unwilling to restructure SSAPU to include the leadership of the farmer organisations and cooperatives from the counties and states. This jeopardised the cooperative principle number two: democratic member control and eroded the faith of the county-based cooperatives and farmer organisations on SSAPU leadership.

Secondly, the operations of SAPHU contradict the legal structure of cooperatives (primary cooperatives at the Payam or Boma, county union at the county, state unions or federations and national farmer organisation).

On realising SSAPU's unwillingness to change, the project mobilized the primary cooperatives from each county to have their own union as stipulated in the Cooperative Act 2011 albeit with a lot of opposition from the executives of the state ministries of cooperatives and rural development especially in Yambio and Torit.

In Torit, the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development took over the assets (Including stores, offices and two commercial plots) as residence for the Ministry staff. The registration (reinstating) of the County union was considered as a threat and would advocate for return of their assets from the government. The project lobbied

Commented [DR53]: Review this accordingly

Commented [IB54R53]: Corrected

Commented [DR55]: Doesn't add up to 136

Commented [IB56R55]: Corrected

Commented [DR57]: Is this in 2023 or throughout the project period? Specify?

Commented [IB58R57]: Through out the project period.

Commented [DR59]: By who?

Commented [IB60R59]: State Ministries of Cooperatives and rural development

through the office of the governor for intervention from the top leadership and later the union was registered (reinstated), and the two commercial plots returned to the union where The Project constructed the Joint storage facility. The primary cooperatives now use the store for aggregation, but their capacity cannot catch up with the demand in the market.

For the case of Yambio, the storage facility was already constructed within the land for the ministry of agriculture and food security at the state, leased to Eden multipurpose cooperative to be used for aggregation. Though with the intervention of the governor, the county union was eventually restructured in May 2023.

Just like Premium Agro Consult Ltd that was formed during the SSADP1, these unions: Yambio County Farmers' Union, Bor Multipurpose Union and Torit County Cooperative Union are as well symbols and babies of the SSADP 2 that will need strengthening in the future. Though the project has laid together the strategic plan together with the leaders of the respective unions, human resource capacity, knowledge of cooperative enterprise management remains a big challenge. Some organisations are already looking at these county farmer structures as point of intervention to provide services to the farmers.

b. Long-term Outcome Result C: Improved inclusive agribusiness market functioning

To ensure improved inclusive agribusiness market functioning, the project deployed several approaches which includes (I) multi-stakeholder plat forms, (II) group marketing by cooperative members, (III) facilitating meetings and contract negotiations and (IV) value addition for quality produce and (V) market-oriented farmer field days. In 2023, the project facilitated 30 farmer market field days in Yambio, Torit and Bor which brought in a total of 2292 (1395F) farmers. These events also served as platforms for creating market linkages among various stakeholders or actors in the selected value chains. The project also supported 3 private sector companies with stimulus grants (\$20000) and are engaged in processing of Maize flour in Yambio and Torit and Input supply in Bor. During the farmer market field days, members of cooperative and FEMA were linked to the processors. As a result, a total of 530 Famers sold 80 tons of maize grains to the processor.

2.3.1 Result C1. Adequate and relevant Market Information Accessible and Available for Farmers and Agri-businesses

In 2023, 2292 (1395F) farmers accessed relevant market information to make decisions for their produce. The project organized 21 farmer market field days which brought agro input dealers, agro processors, and grain aggregators. Farmers also accessed market information aired on radio (Anisa FM Station in Yambio, Grace FM station Torit Jonglei FM Station in Bor). According to the end of project evaluation SSADP II, this indicator was overachieved with number of farmers accessing the available improved formal market outlets by 106% (8,000 targeted with 8,507 achieved). The number of agri-business owners using market information for their decision making was overachieved from the targeted 750 to 1,213 (162%). Overall, 90.8% of the farmers reported being aware of the distribution channels for their agricultural produce. The findings also show, an overall increase in the proportion of farmers who reported having access to markets and market information from 45.7% in 2018 to 81.1% in 2023.

Output C1.1	Formal market outlet access expanded by target farmers as part of their income base
Output C1.2	Market information is available and accessible for key stakeholders as part of their decision making

C1.1: Formal market outlet access expanded by target farmers as part of their income base.

To ensure farmers access formal market outlets as part of their income base, the project continued to improve farmers capacity in making informed decision about marketing of their produce. The Farmer market field days provided farmers with opportunity to meet with potential buyers including processors and bulk aggregators in the local markets. Access to regional markets for Yambio is a major issue due to poor road conditions connecting Yambio with other States within the Republic of South Sudan and its capital Juba. The road condition between Torit

and Capital Juba has improved and most of the farmers and Aggregators have started accessing markets in Juba such Konyokonyo, Gumbo and Custom markets. Bor has better road connection to Juba and most of the farmers have started accessing markets in Juba including Gumbo Market and Konyokonyo markets. The project has encouraged farmers in Bor and Torit to take up the opportunity of getting better prices in Juba compare to the local prices in the Counties.

C 1.2: Market information is available and accessible for key stakeholders as part of their decision making

Market information is updated monthly and made available to farmers as the project is part of the Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI) led by REACH. All data collected by participating agencies (Cordaid, CARE etc.) is consolidated and analysed through one commonly adapted tool and is then published in the form of monthly factsheets and datasets, as well as the online dashboard. Both farmers and cooperatives are benefitting from this information through several information dissemination channels such as radio stations, first-hand information through the field facilitators and agribusiness liaison officers. With increased access to market information, farmers reported during the annual data harvesting assessment that they were able to get better prices for their produce compared to what the middlemen were offering.

2.3.2 C2: Improved post-harvest handling and physical market infrastructure

Output C2.1	Improved warehouse facilities at county/local level
Output C2.2	Post-harvest handling technologies adopted

C 2.1: Improved warehouse facility at the county/local levels

The Project improved warehouse facilities at the County and Payam levels. In 2023, the project procured 140 pallets and distributed to 6 warehouses. The project also coached the farmers on how to store their produce in the construed warehouses. The project also taught the farmers on ways to properly dry the grain so that the moisture content is exactly right for preservation. According to the end of project evaluation, there has been reported increase in the use of various grain storage technologies including traditional bins, 74.8% (compared to 54.8% in 2018; wooden walled silos, 52.8% (29.0% in 2018); plastic bins, 58.1% (18.4% in 2018); brick-mud walled silos, 38.1% (20.6% in 2018), and storage bags, 73.6% (Table 10).

C2.2: post-harvest handling technologies adopted.

During this reporting period, project distributed 140 pallets and distributed to 6 Warehouse. To ensure proper storage of farmer produce, all farmers have access to store their produce in the constructed and renovated warehouses in Yambio, Torit and Bor. The Unions were linked to Agro-input dealers in the project location to enable the Unions continue accessing the hermetic bags at subsidized prices.

2.3.3 Result C3: Market Linkages Enhanced through Cooperatives/ Associations/ Farmer Organizations

Output C3.1	Improved market access and availability for selected and developed value chains
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The project continued to use several approaches to support improved market linkages, availability and access for the cooperatives and farmer groups. The approaches adopted by the project includes (i) multi-stakeholder plat forms, (ii) group marketing by cooperative members, (iii) facilitating meetings and contract negotiations, (iv) value addition for quality produce, and (v) market-oriented farmer field days. In 2023, the consortium partners Facilitated 21 Farmer Market field days which attracted 50 FEMA, 45 Cooperatives, 30 VEMSA groups 7 MSMEs and 20 YWE. The events were attended by 2292 (1395F) in Yambio, Bor and Torit. These events were used to identify challenges facing farmers and cooperative marketing, generate a common understanding on tackling the challenges of marketing and ways of working together through the cooperative structures especially with the private sector players that purchase produce from the farmers.

c. Long-term Outcome Result D: Improved Performance of Cooperatives and Agri-MSMEs and new jobs are created.

2.4.1 Result D1. Cooperatives have adequate organizational and financial management capacity.

Output D1.1	Cooperatives organizational and financial management capacity improved/enhanced
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Agriterra employed two sets of tools (financial and governance health checks) for grading the capacity of the cooperatives with the aim of strengthening their financial management. Due to the robustness of the financial health scores, Agriterra modified the governance health check to suit the context of the cooperatives operating in South Sudan. The governance health check is a set of statements of good practice that leaders of the cooperatives use for self-assessment with the guidance of the field facilitators. In 2023 Agriterra and SSAPU scored 17 primary cooperatives and one union (BMU) after assessing the strength of their governance. The pillars that Agriterra investigates allow each cooperative to mirror its performance include (1) structure, (2) roles and responsibilities of the board, (3) relationship between cooperative and its members, (4) recruitment, development, succession planning, (5) transparency and ethics and (6) strategic vision or forward-looking. Overall, 70% primary cooperatives as well as the county unions have improved in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th pillars. However, the 4th and 6th pillars remain a challenge due to limited resources to employ independent management team to help run the business of the cooperatives including illiteracy that the cooperative will not be able to address soon.

Table 5: Summary of health checks

Summary Health Checks			
Risk Categories			
County	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk
Yambio	0	5	0
Bor	1	4	1
Torit	2	2	2
Totals	3	11	3

D2: Women, youth, MSMEs are capable and equipped with skills to start and grow their business.

Output D2.1	Functional Business Support Ecosystem in the Project Locations for VEMSA, Co-ops/MSMEs
Output D2.2	Youth and Women have improved capacity to start-up and grow businesses

D 2.1: Functional Business Support Ecosystem in the Project Locations for VEMSA, Co-ops/MSMEs

In 2023, SPARK together with Premium Agro Consult effort was geared towards consolidating the achievements, nurture sustainability and monitor outcomes. Key intervention areas focused on upgrading existing structures for business development support services to operate sustainably, growing micro enterprises in medium scale enterprises, development of bankable business plans and increasing business to businesses collaboration.

The absence of physical infrastructure of BSCs alongside lack of mainstreamed income sources for the BSCs remains a big impediment to sustainability of Business Development Support services (BDS) for the MSMEs. Therefore, in the last year of the programme, under a shared value partnership (50% cost shared – total investment was 4,000 USD), the project supported the establishment of one hybrid BSC under Premium Agro Consult (PAC) in Torit County. Under this initiative, the BSC under PAC is offering BDS to smallholder farmers as well as supplying inputs. It is important to note that, the project co-investment was directed towards purchase of training aids, setting up of the Agro-input shop, branding, and marketing of the BSCs. Currently, the BDAs are attached to the PAC BSC and they have so far supported the development of 203 (98F) business plans (both for grant competition and linkage for blended finance) and coached 490 (315F) Agribusiness on how to grow their businesses

with primary focus on marketing and financial management. This business model will enable PAC to sustainably continue to offer BDS to MSMEs, offer advisory services and linkage to financial service providers.

Additionally, supported was geared towards establishing and developing a sustainable model for extension of on farm vegetable producers, PAC and SPARK supported the upgrading of six on-farm vegetable model farm to facilitate training to producers within their proximity. The vegetable model farms were the primary target because it has proven one of the most profitable agribusinesses among the project participants, especially to women and youth. The technologies introduced at the model farms include irrigation technology, green nets for seedling raising and effective use of fertilizers– see the list item provided below.

Table 2: Start Up kits provided.

Category	Bor		Yambio		Torit	
	Makol Daniel	Akim Peter Garang	Christine Lakot (happy farm)	Mundari & Team	Amanya Tonny	Itwari Natalina
Irrigation technologies equipment	1 irrigation pump,1 suction pipe, 1 delivery pipes,2 nipples and 1 nozzle	1 irrigation pump,1 suction pipe, 1 delivery pipes,2 nipples and 1 nozzle	1 delivery pipes,2 nipples and 2 nozzles	1 irrigation pump,1 suction pipe, 1 delivery pipes,2 nipples and 1 nozzle	1 nozzle	1 suction pipe, 1 delivery pipes,2 nipples and 1 nozzle
Seeds and agro chemical	Assorted	Assorted	Assorted	Assorted	Assorted	Assorted
Nursery share (green house)	Agro-net and assorted kits and PHH equipment	Agro-net and assorted kits and PHH equipment	Agro-net and assorted kits and PHH equipment	Agro-net and assorted kits and PHH equipment	Agro-net and assorted kits and PHH equipment	Agro-net and assorted kits and PHH equipment

It is important to note that, the 6 (2F) model farmers were selected based on their production potential, willingness to train others, co-investment contribution, access to sustainable water source and repetition within the community. Prior to the establishment of the farm incubation centers, 6 (2F) model farmers received three days as TOT on vegetable production. The TOT training was tailored towards equipping resident BDAs & FBICs hosts to provide effective, modern agricultural advisory services to the farmers.

After the TOT, the Business Development Advisors together with the model farmers organized field days to share knowledge on vegetable production (nursery bed management, pest and disease control) to over 537 (307F) in the three Counties. The farm incubation centers have become popular among the farmers with the proximity to access information on vegetable production and access markets. Additionally, through the farm incubation centers, 120 (60 F) farmers received training on pest and disease management.

D 2.2: Youth and Women have improved capacity to start-up and grow businesses

To trigger the shift from primary production into industrial processing of primary products, the project trained 52 agro-processors (i.e., juice making, maize flour, peanut butter, honey packaging, vegetable processing, and species

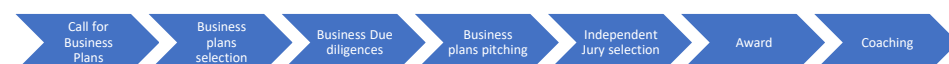
etc.) on Agro-processing techniques. The training covered food processing techniques, food safety and quality, use of preservatives, food packaging and labelling among others.

Location	Peanut butter		Juice Processing		Total per location
	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Torit	10	0	12	0	22
Bor	11	4	0	0	15
Yambio	2	2	6	5	15
Totals	23	6	18	5	52

The reality on the ground is that most of the entrepreneurs in the areas of operation are micro as per the EU definition -SME definition (europa.eu) and operating on working capital of between 500 to 2,000 USD. The existing small and medium enterprises are owned by foreigners and primarily cannot be targeted. The small size of these South Sudan owned agribusiness has made it less attractive for the Financial Institutions including RUFU to extend credit unless they have land as a collateral. Considering this challenge, the project implemented a competitive grant facility where 28 (19F) agribusinesses out 203 that applied were provided grants totaling to 70,000 USD (each 2,500 USD) to scale up their enterprises as detailed in the table below. It is important to note that the competitive grant leveraged co-investment worth of 270,000 USD from these agribusinesses. The follow up on the impact of grant on the businesses could not be made because of the short remaining period of the project.

S/N	Value Chain	TORIT		BOR		YAMBI O		TOT AL	AMOUNT (USD)	TOTAL (USD)
		M	F	M	F	M	F			
1	Vegetable Retailer	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	2,500	7,500
2	Paste processing	1	1	1	1		1	5	2,500	12,500
3	Juice processing	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	2,500	5,000
4	Grain aggregation	1	6	0	1	1	0	9	2,500	22,500
5	Poultry production	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2,500	2,500
6	Salted fish	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	2,500	5,000
7	Bakery	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	2,500	5,000
8	Sorghum flour milling	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	2,500	7,500
9	Maize flour processing	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2,500	2,500
	TOTAL	2	8	5	5	2	6	28		70,000

It is important to note that these agribusinesses were selected through the following processes – see annex below for the guideline.



These grants were intended to support these agribusinesses to acquire Agro-processing machinery and PHH equipment including purchasing raw materials/aggregation of produce, development of new products or prototypes, market testing, branding and promotions among others.

2.4.2 D3: Availability of- and Access to Appropriate Financial Products and Services Ensured

Output D3.1 VEMSAs, Co-ops & MSMEs have Bankable BP & access to finance services

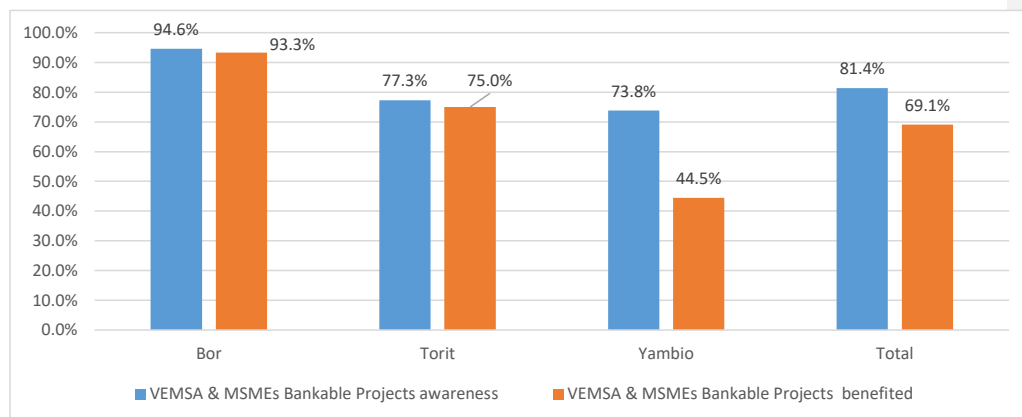
Under this component, the BDAs undertook one-on-one coaching of MSMEs and Start-Ups seeking credit to develop business plans. Prior to the business plan development, the agribusinesses were tasked to conduct market research on prices, market demands, competitors, branding, and promotion, among others. Under this activity, 203 Start-Ups and MSMEs benefited from coaching which enabled them to develop their business plans.

Out of the above supported agribusinesses supported to developed bankable business plans, the following achievement were registered.

- 28 (19F) Agro-processors and aggregators were provided with matching grants totalling to 70,000 USD (each receiving 2,500 USD) to scale up their enterprises
- 234 (117F) agribusiness and farmers were linked to RUFII resulting to disbursement of 54,050,000 SSP and equivalent of 84,026.35USD (info euro rate of December 2022)

The turnaround time for the loan disbursement in 2023 by Rural Finance Initiative (RUFII) was faster compared to previous years. This is attributed to the proper screening/vetting of credit MSMEs by the BDAs and SPARK team prior to submission to RUFII.

According to the end of project evaluation, 81.4% of the survey participants were of the view that VEMSA and MSMEs could develop bankable business projects. Out of this figure, 69.1% of them highlighted that they have been able to develop bankable business projects. The responses were higher in Bor where 94.6% indicated that they were aware of the services, while 93.3% indicated having benefited. This was followed by Torit where 77.3% were aware and 75.0% benefited. In Yambio, 73.8% were aware of the business development services, while 44.5% of them reported having benefited. Under this component, the BDAs conducted one-on-one coaching of MSMEs and Start-Ups that were seeking credit to develop business plans. Prior to the business plan development, the agribusinesses were tasked to conduct market research on prices, market demand, competitors, branding, and promotion, among other activities. In the end 209 (77F) Start-Ups and 353 (239F) MSMEs benefited from coaching to developed business plans in 895 sessions (SSADP II Annual Report, 2022).



Output D3.2 Farmers and agri-businesses have access to appropriate financial products/services

To ensure farmers and agribusiness have access to appropriate financial products and services, the project engaged the Rural Finance Initiative (RUF) to establish a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) scheme since 2019, aiming to create improved availability of, and access to, appropriate financial products and services to agribusiness and farmers targeted by the project. RUF received USD 300,000/= as the revolving loan fund in 3 instalments. During this reporting period RUF Financed 96 MEMS and 138 members of Cooperative and VEMSA with total amount of **84,026.35** USD. The loan uptake has increased compared to previous years due to the new loan products (Group and VEMSA loan) introduced by RUF in 2022.

RUF did not stop lending because of the project ending but continued disbursing loans to the farmers. Lending and recoveries will therefore continue, which is the incentive that will make the farmers continue repaying even after project closure. The available cash shall therefore continue to fluctuate based on recoveries and demand for more loans. Since the inception of the project RUF did not write off any loans. This was deliberate on the fear that if any leakage of write offs reached the borrowers, others would intentionally default on the assumption that this was donor-money. Recoveries and continuity would therefore be curtailed. However, by June 2023, loans that are non-performing and deemed unrecoverable amounted to SSP 12,327,678/=. In general, the project considers the access to finance component a success given the number of rural people who have been financially included, especially the percentage (53%) of women which has surpassed the project target. A mindset change has also been realized among the beneficiaries who now tend to think in terms of development other than relief. As the project has come to an end and RUF is still disbursing and recovering the RLF in the 3 locations, we are of the opinion that the fund should be allowed to revolve among the farmers for the next 2 years, at the least. Should this be the case, the 'donor and/or project money' mindset shall be eventually wiped out from the farmers. In the event similar projects come up in future, farmers will now know that access to finance components are ongoing interventions. The culture of repayment shall therefore improve and so will financially discipline to use such funds. As the project has come to an end, a decision should be made between Cordaid and the EKN on the final fate of the RLF funds.

Commented [DR61]: What makes you so certain about this?

Commented [IB62R61]: Changed to eventually instead of completely.

Commented [DR63]: By who?

Commented [IB64R63]: Cordaid and EKN

2. Analysis

Resilient to DRR: To enhance farmers and agribusiness capacity to be more resilient to shocks and hazards - both natural and conflict, over the last 4 years, the project formed and strengthened 80 CMDRR committees in the respective project locations. In 2023, the committees were engaged to review and update their community led action plans. During the review process, no new hazards identified. The Project team in Yambio encouraged the CMDRR committees to continue with awareness raising on the potential hazards focusing on prevention and mitigation of wildfire outbreak which had become prevalent. Other actions taken by the Project team was encouraging farmers to undertake early land preparation and planting to avert pest and disease attack.

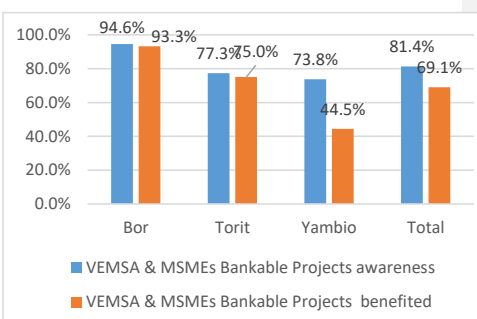
FEMA/FFS approach: - To enhance sustainable production and household nutrition, the project established 12 women groups, comprising 360 (243 female) in the three counties. The groups were supported through trainings in good agronomic practices (GAP), integrated pest management (IPM), post-harvest handling techniques and aspects of marketing their vegetable products. The Vegetable groups were also supported with assorted vegetable seeds and solar pumps. The expected outcome from the capacity building through inputs support, training and field-based extension advisory support for the vegetable farmers are increase in yields, productivity, and income.

Increase in Production and productivity: The continuous coaching and mentoring (i) empowered farmers with knowledge and skills to make them an expert in their own fields, (ii) improved farmers ability to make critical and informed decisions that render their farming profitability and sustainability, (iii) sensitized farmers in new ways of

thinking and problem-solving ability, and (iv) helped farmers on how to organize themselves for collective production and marketing. According to the end of project evaluation, an analysis of the percent households with crop yields greater than the mean targeted yields of 30% more than the baseline yields is 78% for maize, 94% for sorghum, and 84% for groundnut.

VEMSA: In 2023, the VEMSA groups formed under the project continued with the saving activities and lending cash to the group members. Due to the short remaining period of the project, no data collected on the performance of the VEMSA groups.

MSMEs: According to the end of project evaluation, 81.4% of the survey participants were of the view that VEMSA and MSMEs could develop bankable business projects. Out of this figure, 69.1% of them highlighted that they have been able to develop bankable business projects. The responses were higher in Bor where 94.6% indicated that they were aware of the situation, while 93.3% indicated having benefited. This was followed by Torit where 77.3% were aware and 75.0% benefited. In Yambio, 73.8% were aware of this while 69.1% of them reported having benefited. Under this component, the BDAs conducted one-on-one coaching of MSMEs and Start-Ups that were seeking credit to develop business plans. Prior to the business plan development, the agribusinesses were tasked to conduct market research on prices, market demand, competitors, branding, and promotion, among other activities. In the end 209 (77F) Start-Ups and 353 (239F) MSMEs benefited from coaching to developed business plans in 895 sessions (SSADP II Annual Report, 2022).



Cooperatives: During financial health and governance score exercise, overall, 70% primary cooperatives as well as the county unions have improved in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th pillars. However, the 4th and 6th pillars remain a challenge due to limited resources to employ independent management team to help ran the business of the cooperatives including illiteracy that the cooperative will not be able to address soon.

3. Strategic changes

During this project cycle there were no major strategic changes to the plan developed during the inception period. The End of project evaluation Report suggested that the project was on the right track, with some recommendations on implementation, which do not require major strategic changes.

4. Sustainability

1. The Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR) process which involves forming of CMDRR Committees, strengthening their capacity to facilitate Participatory Disaster Risk Analysis (PDRA), Conflict Risk Reduction and development of the Community Led Action Plans enhances ownership of proposed measures and resilience of farmers to potential shocks. The Committees are supported to implement, review and monitor these DRR action plans, enabling them to have more resilient livelihoods.
2. The project built a strong network of stakeholders in both the public, private and NGO (Non-Governmental Organizations) sectors and these are likely to remain on the ground and continue to provide relevant services to the farmers and other value chain players.
3. The MSP helped value chain actors in each project location to interact and know each other and to create a “win-win” B2B linkage. The RLF filled agribusiness financial gap and stimulated cooperatives and farmers to invest and start farming as a business.

4. The Loans provided by the VEMSA groups will also contribute to fill the financial gap faced by members through saving mobilization and enhance solidarity among the community. The amount of loan revolved and mobilised saving by VEMSAs will ensure the results of Access to finance will be sustainable.
5. The cooperative unions formed at state level by the project will increase the ability of the cooperatives to do aggregation at scale, support internal capital formation and plan investment in value addition that will enable the activities to be carried beyond the life of the project.
6. The strategy of including lead farmers in the advisory services for cooperatives increases efficiency of the team on the ground and localises knowledge at the cooperative level and makes training accessible to members of the cooperatives. This is an effective path to sustainability in terms of advisory services.
7. The increase in cooperative membership in Yambio and Bor by 5% and 10% compared to the registered 2019 membership will give confidence for the project as coops development is gaining momentum.
8. The commitment of Coops and VEMSA to prepare their own business plans as per the guidance from the project during C-BED and Farming as a Business training indicates the project contributed to the farmers mindset to be business oriented.
9. Working with Government line departments; for instance, with Ministry of Agriculture in Extension Service delivery and with local partners such as RUFU, SSAPU and Premium Agro Consult. The project has handed over Motorbikes and Computers to the above-mentioned entities to continue providing services to the cooperatives, MSMEs, FEMA, VEMSA groups.

5. Lessons Learned

1. From the above analysis several lessons can be drawn which could be used in the constructing and development of future related interventions.
2. The group approach can be very effective in supporting the development of farmers and other value chain players in a developing, low income and low literacy environment. The approaches ensure that those members of the value chain that seem to lag behind are pulled up by the others along the way and their weaknesses or challenges are generally be overcome by the combined efforts and successes of the groups that they belong to.
3. To get buy-in from the local communities and have them adapt new approaches and technologies, it is necessary to introduce these gradually and with the use of demonstrations and lead farmers. The programme allowed for a participatory approach that involved the farmers, for example, continuing to make use of local seed varieties. The lead farmers and demonstration plot approach also helped the farmers in observing the differences between their traditional approaches and the more modern ways of farming.
4. The phased approach in the development of the farmer and the entrepreneur can be a powerful method in brining development and uplifting of marginalised communities. The project allowed for the gradual movement of individuals from being an individual farmer, to a group of less than 30 people and into a cooperative of 30 people and above. It also allowed the farmer access to various support services at each of these stages including participating in vegetable production and VSLAs.
5. Success of the project is guaranteed by good stakeholder coordination through an all-inclusive multi-sectoral approach which enables buy-in and programme ownership from stakeholders. Community based structures including CMDRR committees, Peace Dialogue committees, FEMA Groups, VEMSA groups and Cooperatives are effective methods for monitoring and delivery of extension support to farmers on the ground during Covid-19 imposed restriction.
6. Community based structures if properly capacitated can help complement government and development organisations efforts in addressing challenges brought about by natural disasters and macroeconomic shocks. ISALs are the bedrock upon which rural finance development interventions can be anchored. In an economic environment where access to formal sources of finance for agricultural activities are limited, community-based microfinance institutions offer a viable alternative for financing smallholder agriculture and increasing financial inclusion for the marginalised farmers.
7. The farmer-to-farmer extension approach through use of lead farmers and group extension approaches offers an alternative viable farmer extension method for increasing extension coverage. This is especially

so in an environment where the traditional public extension system struggles to raise enough resources to fund its extension programs. It also motivates fellow farmers to adopt new technologies as they are afforded the opportunity to learn through observation.

8. Practical learning experiences through demonstration plots, farmers field schools, agricultural shows, exchange visits, study tours, and field days among others, are better means of learning for farmers than those that focus on theoretical impartation of knowledge.
9. Market linkages can potentially serve as a motivating factor for surplus production and marketing avails income for purchase of inputs, thereby sustaining production.
10. Groups especially marketing groups lower transaction costs per farmer as marketing costs are shared by the group and it also increases bargaining power of the farmers.
11. Strong gender balancing in the implementation a development projects can result in sustainable local economic growth, social development, and environmental sustainability. The active involvement of women in leadership positions of associations and groups can result in stronger and more durable local institutions.
12. Capacity building for beneficiaries including the lowest social strata is highly essential to make them more confident on technical and social issues. It also facilitates participation by all and enhances the ownership of project interventions.
13. It is difficult to cater for beneficiary needs when an intervention stands and operates in isolation. Effective coordination, coordination and resource sharing among stakeholders is essential as this generates synergies and increases project effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.

6. Communications and Creating Linkages

1. The project published the results, both activity and financial, every quarter on IATI website.
2. The consortium through Cordaid has been sharing the project outcomes and lessons learned in different forums and cluster meetings such as PfRR and the Food Security Cluster.
3. The project strengthened its partnership and linkage with WFP, FAO, and UNDP.
4. Cordaid published articles on its website on success of the project.

7. Annexes:

Annex 1: Programmatic Phaseout plan



FSABSS Programatic
Phase out Plan (1).doc

Annex 2: Risk Matrix



FSABSS Risk
matrix_update_2023.d

Annex 3: Results Framework



FSABSS 2023 Results
Framework Data_Fina