FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY

THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

Ineffective Implementation of Agricultural Projects/Programs: What are the Persistent Causes?

Overview

Over the years, different agricultural programs/projects have been initiated by the Government of Uganda (GoU) and development partners to contribute to the transformation of subsistence agriculture to market-oriented and commercial production.

However, implementation has been ineffective as the planned targets are not always achieved. This is due to causes that have persisted, as evidenced from the Budget Monitoring and Accountability Unit (BMAU) reports from FY 2011/12 to Q2 FY 2014/15.

The Policy brief highlights the key persistent causes that have led to ineffective implementation of the agricultural projects/programs. The brief also provides policy recommendations.

Key issues

- Persistent human resource shortage especially in Local Governments (LGs).
- Weak linkage between MAAIF, its agencies and Local Governments Production Departments in terms of; plans and budgets, and the channels of communication.
- Delayed initiation of procurements results in untimely distribution of agricultural inputs.
- High costs of inputs discourage farmers from engaging in commercial production.
- Insufficient and late transfer of funds from the MFPED/semi-autonomous institutions to the implementing agencies/ LGs affects timely and effective implementation of planned activities.

Overview of the Sector performance

The key mandate and function of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), is to ensure efficient and effective provision of critical agricultural public goods and services.

Since FY 2011/12, GoU has been allocating between Ug shs 380 billion to Ug shs 473.73 billion annually to the agricultural sector for delivering planned agricultural activities and outputs through different programs/projects.

The agricultural sector recorded annual growth rates of 0.7%, 3%, 1.3% and estimated 1.5% respectively for FYs 2010/11 to FY2013/14. However, the planned targets were not met in some projects/programs, For example: i) Planned targets were not achieved in FY 2012/13, and only one output out of five, planned in FY 2013/14 were achieved for the Labour Saving Technology, and Mechanization for Agricultural Production Project. ii) A total of 700 out of 2,000 planned plant samples were analyzed for pests and diseases in MAAIF laboratories in FY 2012/13, for the Crop Disease and Pest Control Project.iii) By the end of FY 2013/14, a total of

533 nursery operators who distributed coffee seedlings to farmers were not paid as planned by Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA). Failure to achieve planned targets was mainly due to high prices of agricultural inputs; insufficient funds; lower yields due to use of labour intensive farming methods; high prevalence of animal and crop pests and diseases; and adverse weather conditions. These causes are elaborated on in detail.

Key Implementation issues

1. Human resource shortage: The issue of staff shortage has been recurring mainly in LGs production departments. For instance, During the FY 2012/13, many positions of Agriculture Advisory Service Providers (AASP) in Kitgum and Lamwo districts were not filled, leading to ineffective implementation of the NAADs program in those districts. The poor implementation of the Production and Marketing Grant (PMG) activities in the Lower Local Governments (LLGs) of Abim, Lwengo, Kamwenge and Kotido districts during the FY 2013/14 was due to the laying off of NAADs staff in all LGs.

Similarly, by the end of Q2 FY 2014/15, activities of plant clinics and soil testing component were not undertaken in the districts of Iganga, Jinja and Rukungiri due to staff shortage.

The poor performance and follow up of on-farm adaptive trials in Abi Zonal Agricultural Research and Development Institute (ZARDI) under the National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) were due to under staffing of production departments and lack of extension staff in those districts. It was further noted that Abi ZARDI has been reporting a number of technology innovations and research findings that are not transferred to farmers due to absence of NAADs staff in LGs. This has led to increasing differences between the NARO station yields and farmers' yields in the West Nile region.

2. Weak linkage between MAAIF, its agencies and Local Governments' Production Departments: in terms of work plans, budgets and the channels of communication. Some of the MAAIF programs/projects are communicated abruptly to the LGs/ implementing agencies for implementation, and in some cases during the middle of the financial year. For example, during the FY 2012/13, the poor quality of work done under the Uganda Meat Export Development Program (UMEDP) was due to communication gaps and non-involvement of Uganda Meat Export Producers Union (UMPCU) in planning and budgeting by MAAIF.

Similarly in September/December 2014, the MAAIF trained 58 plant clinic doctors in 50 districts in Eastern, Central and Western Uganda. The trained district plant doctors were requested to operationalize the plant clinics through outreaches in the LLGs in the same period. Districts like Kabale, Jinja and Iganga did not operationalize this activity, because it was not planned for and there were no funds allocated in FY 2014/15.

3. Delayed initiation of procurements; resulting into untimely distribution of agricultural inputs. In FY 2013/14, drying up of cocoa seedlings in the gardens was due to late distribution in Mayuge and Luuka districts under Support to Cocoa/Tea Project. Under the NAADs program, banana suckers, oranges and mango seedlings that were distributed to farmers in Gulu, Buyende and Buhweju districts withered in the gardens due to late delivery.

This continued to be an issue with Vegetable Oil Development Project 2 (VODP) in FY 2014/15, where: (i) the delay in acquisition of inputs, negatively affected the establishment of Farmer Learning Platforms (FLP) in Gulu district and hindered some farmers from growing oilseeds. Where planting was carried out in Amuru and Soroti districts, the yield was very low.

4. High costs of inputs. The BMAU annual report for FY 2013/14 indicated that the low prices of coffee seedlings coupled with high costs of transporting the seedlings to the distribution centers under the UCDA, reduces profits for the nursery operators; hence discouraging them from raising more coffee seedlings. Similarly in FY 2012/13, farmers in Butaleja district under the NAADs program were unable to sustain some enterprises such as exotic dairy cattle due to costly technology distributed to them.

This continued to be an issue in FY 2014/15 where; (i) Oil palm farmers in Kalangala district reported to have incurred losses in this venture, due to high prices of fertilizers and maintenance cost of palm oil gardens coupled with low farm gate prices of Fresh Fruit Bunches (FFB). (ii) Under the Uganda Cotton Development Organization (UCDO), there was limited crop expansion in Pader district due to unaffordability of tractor hire services by farmers at Ug shs 60,000 per acre and low farm gate prices of seed cotton, at an average Ug shs 1,000 per Kg.

5. Insufficient and late transfer of funds from the MFPED/semi-autonomous institutions to the implementing agencies/LGs limits maximum achievement of planned outputs**.** For instance, in FY 2011/12, Butaleja district supported 25 Food Security Farmers (FSF) instead of 50 FSFs and four Market Oriented Farmers (MOFs) per parish, due to budget cuts. In FY 2013/14, under the UCDA, payments to nursery operators delayed for a year thus discouraging the production of more coffee seedlings in West Nile. For the year 2013, January coffee planting season, requisitions for payments were submitted in January/February 2013 and payments were made in July and August 2014.

Similarly, stalemate of research projects in Kabale ZARDI and poor implementation of planned outputs in Mbarara ZARDI were due to late release of capital development funds for Q2 FY 2014/15 from NARO Secretariat. Also the delayed payments by VODP secretariat for the earlier consignment of fertilizers provided by Oil Palm Uganda Limited in Kalangala district led to low provision in FY 2014/15.

6. Overdependence on weather. For instance, during the FY 2012/13, 50 farmers in Kabarole district were trained and provided with 50Kgs of NERICA IV rice seeds. However, due to drought, only four farmers realized a fruitful harvest. In FY 2013/14, some of the tea/cocoa plantlets distributed towards the end of the rainy season by MAAIF in Kyenjojo and Mayuge district, withered in the garden.

Similarly in FY 2014/15, the sunflower seed varieties delivered by VODP 2 secretariat to the West Nile hub office were not distributed to farmers, due to late receipt (in the middle of the planting season) and were stored for distribution in the following planting season.

The stored VODP2 Sunflower varieties that were delivered in the middle of the planting season to be distributed in the following planting season

Conclusion

Evidence shows that smallholder farmers using rudimentary tools, dependence on ordinary seeds and weather still constitute the bulk of producers of food and cash crops in the country. This has led to non-achievement of planned targets mainly under the NAADs program, Labour Saving Technology and Mechanization for Agricultural Production Project, VODP, MAAIF projects, UCDO, UCDA NARO and PMG activities in LGs. This is due to a number of causes which include; delayed procurement process, high costs of inputs, overdependence on weather, insufficient and late transfer of funds and weak linkage between MAAIF, its agencies and LGs production departments. The elimination of these constraints will eventually translate to better implementation of projects/ programs for the development of the sector and overall national growth.

Policy Recommendations

- The LGs in liaison with Ministry of Public Service (MoP) and MFPED should revise the structure of production departments in LGs and provide adequate funding for recruitment.
- The MAAIF should reinforce the interface of work plans and budgets for MAAIF and LGs.
- The MAAIF should ensure timely procurement and delivery of sufficient agro inputs to farmers.
- The MFPED and semi-autonomous institutions should ensure proper planning and align sufficient resources to the cropping season.
- The GoU should encourage rainwater harvesting and create irrigation facilities to reduce over dependence on weather.
- The GoU should also emphasize mechanization, through subsidizing and availing more tractor hire services to farmers.

References

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2. MFPED, Budget Monitoring Reports for FY 2011/12 to Q2 FY 2014/15
3. Vegetable Oil Development project; Phase 2; Report for the Midterm Review. November 2014.
4. MFPED, 2014, Background to the Budget for FY 2014/15

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