



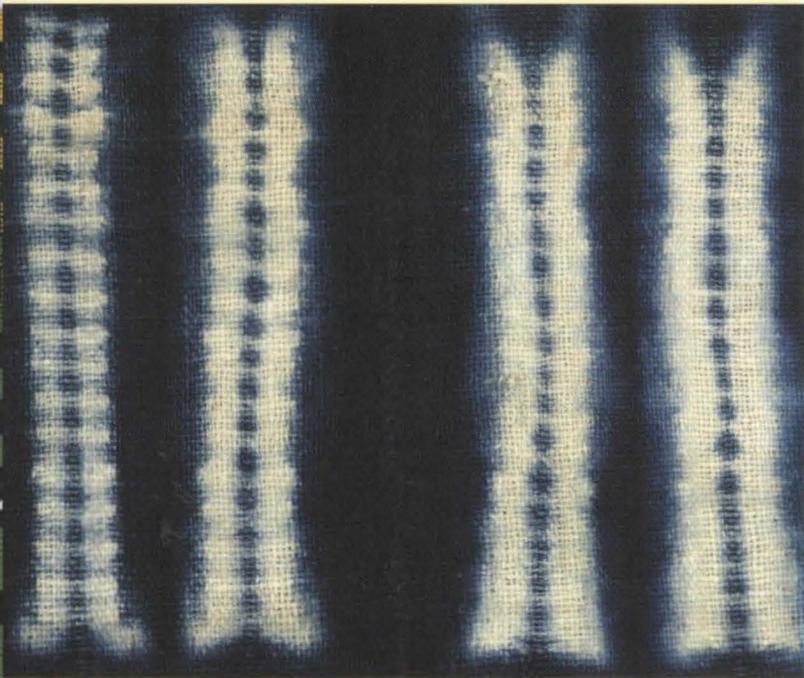
INTER-RÉSEAUX
DÉVELOPPEMENT RURAL

Franco-British-West African research and policy initiatives in West Africa



Relevance to rural development policies

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making processes need to be established. A key issue remaining is establishing the appropriate balance between regional, national and local or meso-level approaches to tackling these problems: is there a way to combine these approaches to that each adds value?

Study 2: West and Central African cocoa policy research and analysis networking⁹

(Bruno Losch, CIRAD-Tera and Jim Gilling, OPM)

Overview

This research programme set out to enhance knowledge and improve the policy-making process in the cocoa sub-sector in West and Central Africa. The programme remains unfinished having been halted midway through. However, a number of important results to date should be highlighted.

There is a need to monitor the rapid changes occurring in the cocoa sub-sector linked to the process of economic liberalisation. This monitoring process should involve a range of actors.

Agricultural research generally has a poor understanding of the economic and institutional dynamics of change in the cocoa sub-sector. There is a need to monitor the rapid changes linked to the process of economic liberalisation occurring in the cocoa sub-sector. This monitoring process should involve a range of actors, including representatives of government, farmers' organisations and private sector producers that play a major role in developing these policies and in cocoa production. This can be done through the establishment of policy networks. However, establishing policy networks involves high transaction costs and therefore cannot succeed without adequate funding and long term commitment.

Background

It has been difficult to establish effective holistic, multi-sectoral agricultural policy initiatives (e.g. West African Policy Network (REPA/WAPN) promoted by France with UK support in 1996). This programme therefore decided to focus on a single sub-sector: cocoa. The entry point was via a research network. The cocoa sub-sector was selected for a number of reasons:

- cocoa is of great social, political and economic importance in the sub-region;
- production of cocoa is still carried out predominantly by poor smallholders;
- cocoa is one of the principal sources of revenue for the rural poor;
- the continued spread of cocoa production into new areas has had significant economic and environmental impacts; and finally
- cocoa has been at the heart of the economic liberalisation debate

⁹ Copies of the full research summary distributed at the workshop are available from ODI and further publications from the organisations referenced in Appendix 1 (p. 73).

in West Africa and a major focus of policy debate between donors and partners.

Aims and objectives

Primary objectives included to:

- enhance local knowledge on the impact of liberalisation;
- improve training, policy and management in the cocoa sector;
- initiate a dialogue between researchers and decision-makers and between anglophone and francophone agencies; and
- identify themes and opportunities for investment in local policy research.

Additional objectives included to:

- strengthen regional and national capacity for policy research;
- identify African partners that had demonstrable competence for financial and technical support in the sector;
- help strengthen anglophone and francophone links; and
- improve the process of formulation and management of cocoa policy in the context of liberalisation and globalisation.

The programme was funded by DFID and MAE, managed and facilitated by CIRES (Centre Ivoirien du Recherche Economique et Sociale), a research organisation based in Côte d'Ivoire, and had a predominantly African steering committee. Technical support was provided by the University of Birmingham, OPM and CIRAD.

Activities and outputs

An initial workshop was held in February 1998 in Abidjan to engage regional universities and research institutions (from Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Nigeria and Cameroon). A region-wide call for papers was put out and a steering committee established to guide research in preparation for the main workshop. A regional workshop on liberalisation was then held in November 1998, which aimed to identify principal themes for further research. An extended list of outputs can be found in Section C, Appendix 1, page 76.

Problems encountered

The project encountered a number of practical problems, the most serious of which was the failure of the regional secretariat, eventually leading to the suspension of the programme. There was some confusion between the concepts of 'networks' and 'networking'. The fact that the group was composed mainly of researchers was also limiting, and a number of problems arose due to changes in the original team. Two other constraints were critical:

- lack of consistency between the strategies of different donors (especially in levels of financing and duration of support); and
- high transaction costs of working with regional assemblies and inter-agency working groups.

There were a number of technical difficulties associated with the research partners: quality of the majority of research papers tended to be given a lack of resources; knowledge of core policy issues and practical issues faced by growers tended to be weak; knowledge about stakeholders in the liberalisation process was limited; and analytical approaches were weak.

Lessons learned and themes for future work

Four key lessons for cocoa policy development were drawn:

- inter-government economic competition can be an obstacle to regional economic integration in certain sectors;
- there is a lack of awareness and analysis of the impact of liberalisation;
- the process of building development policies is a public good; and
- local ownership of the policy debate is needed for policies to be ultimately sustainable.

Local ownership of the policy debate is needed for policies to be sustainable.

In spite of the suspension of the programme in response to the problems cited above, the importance of cocoa policy indicates that further work is required. However, this should take account of the following lessons:

- it is imperative to include public, private and non-governmental agencies in the process of policy development; and
- strengthening the capacity of all key actors (including partners) for policy research and analysis is an important precondition for enhancing ownership of policies and therefore information and training-based programmes should be supported.

Strengthening capacity for policy analysis and formulation through networking is costly. It requires long-term engagement, adequate financing, flexible management and institutional support from donors.

An important operational conclusion is that strengthening capacity through establishing networking is costly. It requires long-term engagement, adequate financing, flexible management and institutional support from donors.

Summary of discussion

Many West African partner institutions have not yet fully taken on board current international policy and research debates (e.g. contemporary thinking on economic liberalisation, the roles of the private sector and civil society). Bridging the gap between the knowledge and practice of partner institutions and current international policy debates is therefore vital. In order for West African partners to be able to articulate their problems and engage in meaningful policy debate with potential donors, efforts need to be devoted to increasing their exposure to new information quickly and enhancing their capacity for critical analysis. However, government and partner participation in the liberalisation debate remains limited, and this can stifle ownership of policy responses. Hence, in order for this network to be successful, all stakeholders

need to be actively involved, an enlarged and active steering committee needs to be established to provide strategic advice to the network, and there needs to be a sustained financial commitment.

In a globalised economy, it is important that actors are aware of what other countries are doing in a sub-sector, as isolation undermines the competitive position of producers. However, the extent to which this is a regional rather than a national policy issue is debatable: cocoa producers compete within the region and may have difficulty in agreeing common objectives.

Other important issues include:

- European development agencies have a poor record on funding capacity building for management systems and research networks; and
- it is important to establish stronger links between research and policy discourse. Research programmes with less ambitious aims and tighter deadlines can provide more manageable, relevant and timely inputs into decision-making processes, and that have greater influence on policy.

Establishing policy networks is a complex task which requires a flexible, iterative approach.

Remaining questions include:

- how best can producers be involved?
- what added-value is there in taking a regional approach?
- What type and degree of donor funding is required to support the establishment of an effective network? Is it affordable?

Success ultimately depends on donor commitment to support lengthy processes of negotiation and on the fundamental commitment of West African countries themselves.

Establishing policy networks is a complex task which requires a flexible, iterative approach. The challenge of institutional complexity often overshadows core research objectives. Success ultimately depends on donor commitment to support lengthy processes of negotiation between various stakeholders, and on the fundamental commitment of West African countries themselves: without national ownership, there can not be any long term sustainability.

Study 3: Research-extension-farmers' organisation linkages¹⁰

(Pierre-Marie Bosc, CIRAD-Tera, Karim Hussein, ODI and Jean Zoundi, INERA, Burkina Faso)

Overview

This study in West and Central Africa was carried out within the framework of the CORAF Initiative, with support from MAE,

¹⁰ Copies of the full research summary distributed at the workshop are available from ODI and further publications from the organisations referenced in Appendix 1 (p. 73).