

Rural Producer Organizations
(RPOs)
for pro-poor sustainable
development

*Report of the Paris workshop
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The authors of this document are solely responsible for its content. Contents

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Introduction

■ Background to the workshop

Each year, the World Bank publishes a World Development Report (WDR) with focus on a given theme. The theme chosen by the World Bank for WDR 2008 is "Agriculture for Development". To collect material for the report, consultations are organized on the various themes that would be covered therein. The first draft of the report must be completed by December 2006. In early 2007, several workshops shall be organized to discuss it. The final version of the report shall be published in June 2007.

The WDR core team deemed it necessary to include in the different chapters of the report information on the role played by Rural Producer Organizations (RPOs) in the light of current challenges faced by farmers. In agreement with the team chosen by the World Bank to prepare the report, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE), the French Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAP) and IFAD decided to host a two-day workshop on the theme "RPOs for pro-poor sustainable development". The workshop was held on 30 and 31 October 2006 in Paris, and the logistical and technical organization of the workshop was entrusted to CIRAD-TERA, and in particular to the "Collective action, Markets and Public Policies" research unit which is also the author of this report. Cirad-Tera carried out the various tasks assigned to it under the supervision of MAE.

■ Objectives and conduct of the workshop

In accordance with decisions taken by the organizers (meeting of 14 September in Paris), and as recalled during the opening ceremony by the representatives of MAE, MAP and IFAD, the workshop had two objectives:

- enrich the work of the WDR 2008 core team on the theme of Rural Producer Organizations (RPOs): (1) determine the role of Rural Producer Organizations in defining and implementing a pro-family farmer system of agriculture that contributes to rural poverty reduction; (2) determine the difficulties faced by RPOs and identify the challenges arising from the changing agricultural context;
- make proposals relating to the debate on the tentative draft of WDR 2008, within and with RPOs, in early 2007.

The workshop was organized in nine (9) sessions (see agenda in annex 3).

Session 1: Objectives of the workshop, expected results and working method.

Session 2: Presentation of the current outline of the report and first discussion; discussion on RPO participation in the debate on the first draft of the report, early 2007.

Session 3: RPOs, empowerment of farmers and results of collective action.

Session 4: RPOs and access to markets.

Séance 5: RPOs and agricultural innovation.

Séance 6: RPOs, decentralization and local development.

Session 7: RPOs and public policies.

Session 8: RPOs and construction of the institutional environment

Session 9: "Round-table" on priority messages for WDR 2008 concerning the role of RPOs.

Preparation of proposals for RPO participation, in early 2007, in the debate on the first draft of WDR 2008, was assigned to a working group made up of RPO leaders from the various sub-regions represented at the workshop, with the contribution of MAE and IFAD representatives. These proposals were presented and discussed in a plenary session on Tuesday, 31 October, after session 7.

■ Plan of the report

This report seeks to:

- present the contributions arising from the keynote presentations of the various sessions and the ensuing discussions;
- present the report in a format that makes it more readable than the “proceedings” format presenting the deliberations of each session in a chronological order;
- incorporate the “messages” formulated by participants during the various sessions and especially the last session.

The report is organized under seven (7) points as follows.

- WDR and its key messages
- Global tendency towards the emergence and strengthening of RPOs
- Significant but contrasted performances
- The main functions of RPOs. How can RPO performances and impact be assessed?
- Rebalancing State/Markets/Civil society relations
- Priority “messages” for WDR 2008
- Participation of RPOs in early 2007 in the debate on the first draft of the WDR.

The following are appended to this report:

- Transcription of the “messages” formulated by participants during the round-table that marked the end of the workshop;
- workshop agenda and list of participants;
- Keynote presentations (PowerPoint slides or summary of presentations without hard or soft medium).

Acknowledgements

In spite of extremely tight deadlines, persons invited turned out in their numbers. The organizers wish to thank all participants for having made time out of their busy schedules to participate in the workshop and for the richness and quality of their contributions.

1 - WDR 2008 and its key messages: presentation and discussions

■ The introduction (A. de Janvry) was organized in 7 points

(See PowerPoint slides in the accompanying CD-ROM).

1. What is the World Development Report (WDR)?
2. Consultation process for the preparation of WDR 2008.
3. Why a report on Agriculture?
 - a major sector of private economic activity;
 - a major social sector: a form of life;
 - a major user of natural resources.
4. Why is it so important to invest in agriculture for development?
 - agriculture, the prime mover of national growth in many countries;
 - agricultural growth may be an efficient tool to reduce poverty;
 - some sub-sectors have a decisive comparative advantage;
 - agriculture must reduce its natural resource intake and can offer environmental services.
5. The world of agriculture has changed radically since 1982, when the last WDR devoted to agriculture was published:
 - globalization, structural adjustment, technologies...
 - emergence of differences at national and regional levels and in households
6. There are three categories of countries depending on the share of agriculture in the GDP and the extent of rural poverty:
 - urbanized countries (Brazil, Argentina, etc.);
 - agriculture-based countries (Benin, Tanzania, Laos, etc.);
 - transformation countries (Thailand, etc.).

There are five key messages:

- reverse the situation of under-investment in agriculture;
- tap new sources of agricultural growth;
- make growth more pro-poor and more sustainable;
- minimize the risks and vulnerability to shocks;
- collaborate in tackling global problems.

The main question of the workshop therefore was as follows: “what messages are to be included in WDR on the role of producer organizations in agriculture for development?”

■ The main points raised during discussions

THE NEED FOR AN ASSESSMENT-DIAGNOSIS THAT DRAWS LESSONS FROM PUBLIC POLICIES IMPLEMENTED SINCE 1982

“The fact that agriculture produces poor people is not inevitable. When it so happens, it means there are causes..., such causes have to be identified.”

“One needs to know why the situation of smallholders is what it is today; one needs to know where one went wrong ...”.

“The question that arises is to know who will meet food demand: Is it millions of smallholders or a handful of large farmers?”

REMARKS ON WDR PRIORITY MESSAGES

“Valorization of sources of agricultural growth in export markets poses problems: we did it but we were not competitive because prices dropped and we had food problems; in Africa, the priority is to produce to first of all guarantee food security for the people”.

“Minimizing risks and vulnerability to shocks warrants Government intervention to regulate the markets; the market alone cannot respond to the aspirations of rural peoples”.

“We are working to achieve sustainable agriculture but governments have different policies...”

2 - The emergence and strengthening of Rural Producer Organizations (RPOs)

■ The following points were underscored in keynote presentations

⇒ RPOs emerge (or restructure) during periods marked by an intensification of the process of transformation and modernization of agriculture, increased integration of rural peoples in the markets or change of the conditions under which such integration occurs. These are intermediation bodies acting as an interface between rural societies and their environment; their aim is to regulate relations between farmers and external economic, institutional and political actors. RPOs strive on the one hand to support the changes that occur, and on the other hand, to negotiate conditions (general and specific) so that the rural dwellers may address the change and redesign of their activities under favorable conditions: nature and pace of change, attendant measures, etc.

“For farmers, the organization is not a fashion even if it is so for some nurturing communities”. In most OECD countries (EU, USA, Canada), producer organizations play a central role in providing factors of production and particularly in marketing produce (cooperatives). They play a very important role in representing the interests of farmers before State authorities, at national and sometimes sub-regional levels (EU).

In many African, Latin American and Asian countries, producer organizations were set up decades ago by development bodies or governments; they were for quite a long time considered as instruments necessary for the implementation of development strategies most often developed without consulting the farmers. In many countries, such is the case with many cooperatives, associations and very diverse groups set up within the framework of national policies or specific projects (irrigation districts, groups performing some economic functions, etc.).

⇒ For about twenty years now, economic and institutional reforms have transformed the production conditions of farmers. Some farmers were able to take advantage of the opportunities offered by market openness. However, many smallholders are faced with serious economic difficulties often compounded by the lack of infrastructure and very limited access to support services. These changes were accompanied by the development of RPOs illustrated by:

- the proliferation of local groups (there are thousands of them in most countries) arising from the empowerment of grassroots groups hitherto under supervisory authority and the setting up of new groups. These groups are very diverse in nature as illustrated by their articles of association, objectives and levels of activity which may vary greatly;
- the strengthening of federation dynamics with the setting up/re-organization, in many countries, of national and regional sector organizations (such as the Fédération des Périmètres Autogérés in Senegal), the establishment of coordination bodies at national (such as the Conseil National de Coopération et de Concertation des Ruraux in Senegal, the Mesa Nacional Campesina in Costa Rica), sub-regional (ROPPA in West Africa, PROPAC in Central Africa, EAFF in East Africa, COPROFAM in MERCOSUR countries) or continental levels (The Asian Farmers Association in Asia, for instance).

Members of these RPOs are essentially small- and medium-sized family farmers. They constitute a major social phenomenon even if the intensity and magnitude of organization dynamics vary depending on the country, the political context and the level of democratization, the specific background and agricultural economies, etc.

⇒ Depending on very diverse modalities, activities carried out by RPOs aim to improve the production and living conditions of rural peoples, particularly through (1) the provision of services for individual production, directly by RPOs or, more frequently, in partnership with other economic and institutional actors; (2) the enhancement of the purchasing power of farmers; (3) the participation, very often, in the making of agricultural policy decisions from local to international levels.

The emergence, proliferation and federation of rural producer organizations is translated by sometimes multiple dynamics and by producers' commitment to seek solutions to many challenges: support to production, innovation, supply and marketing of produce, management of equipment, social investments as well as the statement of claims, negotiation with other actors, etc.

Throughout the world, RPOs have recorded many achievements. However, they have also known failures and "half-successes" that are neither pleasing to members, to organizations leaders nor to the institutions that support them. The often difficult national contexts, the heterogeneity of agricultural potential and infrastructure, the highly unequal distribution of human and material resources, are the causes of the contrasted performances of RPOs, which in addition are faced with difficulties connected with any form of collective action and with the limited resources invested to enhance their capacities and skills. In spite of sometimes considerable differences in internal organization, capacity for action and results, the ascendancy of RPOs is translated by the gradual improvement of the production conditions of rural peoples and a growing influence on decision-making centers.

■ During discussions, emphasis was laid on the following five points

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CURRENT AND POTENTIAL ROLE OF RPOs IN VARIOUS DOMAINS

The RPOs are considered as "indispensable to develop a people-centered system of agriculture". They play a role in "cushioning social shocks and crises" and they have sometimes been obliged to play the role of the State, by default, in the face of the rollback of public services". The importance of the technical and economic performances of some RPOs "revealed their ability to manage themselves and the economy in the place of "standard projects". "According to financial donors, the return of investments in RPOs is high provided that such investments are in the form of "negotiated assistance".

RPOs ARE VERY DIFFERENT DEPENDING ON THE COUNTRY

While in some countries, RPOs remain dependent on governments and sometimes on NGOs, etc., the general tendency is that of independence. The internal difficulties faced by RPOs have been underscored: insufficient number of trained RPO leaders, lack of qualified technicians and unstable resources, etc.

THE CONTEXTS WHEREIN RPOs OPERATE ARE GENERALLY UNFAVORABLE FOR THEIR INITIATIVES

"Politicians do what suits them and challenge agreements"; there is no recognition of the legitimacy of RPOs in the long run"; "market access conditions are very unfavorable"; "the State meddles with the functioning of RPOs" but its influence at the economic level is very limited; etc.

THE ROLE OF RPOs CANNOT BE TO ADDRESS THE CONSEQUENCES OF DECISIONS MADE WITHOUT THEM

This presupposes the negotiation of political (concerning the definition of public policy guidelines) and economic (inter-professional contracts) compromises and the establishment of new relations with public services.

RPO CAPACITY BUILDING IS INDISPENSABLE

This concerns training (with special emphasis on the youth), access to resources and "sustainable assistance", for the limited duration of some external assistance packages is "incompatible with the objective of building the capacities of farmers and of their organizations".

3 - Undeniable but contrasted performances

A sector by sector assessment of RPO performances indicates that significant progress has been made but, at the same time, some conditions should be put in place to improve on such progress and to ensure its sustainability.

■ RPOs strive to improve market access for family farmers and to make markets more pro-poor

THE KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS HIGHLIGHTED THE FOLLOWING POINTS

⇒ Market openness, urban development and diversification of demand have profoundly changed markets over the past twenty years: process of segmentation, heavy concentration of food processing and distribution, new standards, etc. Deprived of government assistance, smallholders find themselves excluded from the most dynamic markets. At the same time, they are faced with the drop in prices on “traditional” commodities markets. They have been able to find a place in national and sub-regional markets but have to face stiff competition.

With varying degrees of success, RPOs are striving to improve market access conditions for small- and medium-sized producers.

For a more or less long time, RPOs have explored the following four methods :

- vertical integration that aims to reduce the number of intermediaries within a sector;
- negotiation of new forms of coordination with other stakeholders of a sector;
- specialization that allows to comply with standards set by some markets but which is often accompanied by a selection of members;
- organization of new sectors controlled by producer organizations or in partnership with individual private actors (fair trade for instance). Downstream production activities carried out by RPOs are very often coupled with group purchase of inputs, which makes it possible to get better quality products at more advantageous prices.

Efforts made by RPOs and their members to improve the competitiveness of their products are seriously undermined by competition with larger farmers who, in addition, often receive government¹ assistance. Such efforts are also undermined, in some cases, by the acute lack of infrastructure, the difficulty to access credits and, sometimes, limited professional skills.

The experiences presented highlighted the importance of the opportunities offered and their limitations.

There are many positive experiences that augur promising prospects even if their scope of achievement is still limited and market access processes are complicated.

This is exemplified by a series of experiences in Central America (Jano P.) that concern access by smallholders to supermarket distribution. It is a long, complex, daily exacting and lasting process. Time appears to be an important parameter for enhancing human and social capacities indispensable for securing market shares that are difficult to conquer and that may be rapidly challenged. The studies carried out show that access by smallholders to large and medium-side markets may become reality and have positive spill-over effects on agriculture-related rural employment (packaging, management of logistics and administration of the organization). The cases

¹ National agricultural production levels are marked by variable discrepancies depending on the product, but which can be considerable (Mazoyer, 2001); the aggregate level of support to agriculture in OECD countries has remained globally unchanged since the 1980s (Hervieu *et al.*, 2000 and OECD, 2001) even if the nature of assistance is evolving progressively.

studied also revealed that such conditions alone, added to the performance of the organizations, do not suffice; the cost of the requirements of some markets (standardization, certification...) may prove prohibitive and less conducive than domestic markets with limited requirements and lesser access costs. Lastly, one may see that access to supermarket distribution may entail investment costs often requiring external private or public assistance. Apart from the issue of the sustainability of such systems, there are problems of equity because such mechanisms are costly and inevitably limited in space. Consequently, there is a risk of excluding a great number of smallholders from the process of transformation of the food production and distribution systems in force in that region of the world.

In "traditional" export product sectors such as cotton, markets also tend to differentiate. One witnesses the emergence of niche markets which are attractive to producer organizations like APROCA². However, and even in the medium-term, it is unlikely that these markets may contribute significantly to increasing the revenues of the vast majority of farmers. "Conventional" markets are likely to remain for a long time the most important outlets in terms of large scale spill-over effects to generate revenue in the rural areas. In this respect, the developments observed in the last 25 years highlight two strong and non-exclusive trends.

- First, the increased power of RPOs in the governance of the cotton sector, for instance by taking shares in cotton companies or by carrying out certain activities such as ginning (RPO unions now own factories).
- Second, setting up inter-professional consultation forums, within the sectors, between producers represented by their organizations and other relevant actors. These consultation forums allow producers to better defend their interests as demonstrated for instance by the inclusion of the level of ginning in price calculation which is translated by an increase in the price of seed cotton bought directly from farmers (Burkina Faso for example).

Other experiences in Cameroon show for instance that the strategies developed by many organizations to reduce the number of intermediaries and thus "gain" a greater share of added value do not always prove useful. Indeed, some intermediaries have expertise, social and financial networks and are capable of taking risks that are beyond the capacity of organizations with diverse levels of development. It is therefore sometimes preferable to establish negotiated relations between downstream actors and RPOs, which would translate in the consolidation of trust and contractual ties. The experience of the Comercializadora Aj Ticonel in Guatemala demonstrates why it is important for smallholders to use the services of a competent intermediary: s/he makes it possible for them to export vegetables to markets which they would otherwise not be able to access alone; the readiness of the commercial actor to maintain lasting relations with smallholders facilitates the improvement of product quality.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM DISCUSSIONS

One retains the following three key points.

⇒ The need for RPOs to understand the different types of markets and their characteristics, as this enables them to identify the modalities and conditions required of farmers to access the markets; such diversity engenders the following recommendations (1) RPO support modalities that take into account the heterogeneity of situations; there is no standard intervention here ("no one size fits all"). Rather, there are "tailor-made" models, and (2) giving preference to intervention at local level.

⇒ The issue of access to markets by poor smallholders is inseparable from other challenges that have to be addressed concurrently. There can be no sustainable market access without suitable technical advice, accessible financing capacity for smallholders, knowledge of the evolution of norms and international standards (access to information and training); lastly, there can be no sustainable market access without the required capacities to translate such norms and new standards into suitable

² APROCA : African Cotton Producers Association

technical recommendations disseminated through a modernized technical advice.

⇒ While the importance of a local-oriented approach has been underscored, it is not sufficient because local markets cannot provide outlets for all the produce. More pro-poor markets also require “regulations”. Such regulations are indispensable even if they can not be reduced to an improbable unique model.

- Regulation mechanisms should be encouraged at the international level: indeed, pitting highly intensive agriculture that sometimes receives significant public assistance against agriculture with limited capital and directly exposed to world market fluctuations and competition may result in the rapid “production” of additional millions of poor people in Africa (examples include the case of cotton and the struggle of APROCA farmers) and on other continents too. Similarly, competition between family farmers and highly extensive forms of agriculture practiced over large surface areas generally leads to domination by the latter and to the collapse of small-scale family farms.

- Then, at the national level, there is need to create an enabling economic environment (public policies, infrastructure and public investments), put in place mechanisms that allow for equitable negotiation between RPOs and other actors, promote RPO capacity building (development of entrepreneurial skills, access to information and training), etc.

■ RPOs facilitate and speed up agricultural innovation

The “crisis” of national research and agricultural extension mechanisms results from a combination of two factors: (1) drastic budgetary cuts that weakened their action capacity, and (2) the inability of these mechanisms to take account of peasant innovation processes and producers’ diversified needs in order to guide their activities.

THE KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS UNDERSCORED THREE POINTS:

In an often very unfriendly context, and at a time when many family farmers felt “abandoned” by the State, RPOs played an important role in stimulating agricultural innovation among family farmers in three major ways.

⇒ Through exchange mechanisms, they contribute to consolidate and to disseminate peasant know-how and innovations developed by farmers themselves (as illustrated, for instance, by Mviwata in Tanzania or FONGS-Action Paysanne in Senegal, and “De campesino a campesino” in Central America).

⇒ RPOs put in place specific support/counseling mechanisms, which they manage in partnership with technical assistance (research, extension) and external financial donors (for instance, the case of the Fédération des Paysans du Fouta Djallon in Guinea that works with IRAG and SNPAV).

⇒ In several countries, RPOs strive to tailor research and extension mechanisms to the needs of farmers (1) by contributing to define research and extension themes (Commission nationale des utilisateurs de la recherche CNU-Mali; partnership between the Fédération agricole Argentine-FAA and the University) ; (2) by participating directly in the governance of new research and agricultural extension institutions as is the case for instance with the CNCR, thanks to the “programme d’appui aux services agricoles et aux Organisations paysannes” (PSAOP), in Senegal.

DISCUSSIONS MADE IT POSSIBLE TO DRAW LESSONS FROM EXPERIENCE

The following four points were underscored.

⇒ The weakening of research institutions has an impact on production as has been demonstrated in Guinea for instance.

⇒ The enhancement of innovation processes in family farms (with a view to achieving pro-poor sustainable development), requires that RPOs play a greater role in setting up the relevant institutions and in defining the orientations thereof. Such institutional innovation should be accompanied by an intensification of efforts with a view to:

- supporting the mechanisms put in place by RPOs to “consolidate and disseminate farmer innovations that solve many problems”; creating conditions to enable farmers influence research orientation through RPOs;
- enhancing the resources needed by RPOs to reduce inequalities concerning access to scientific information.

⇒ RPOs can only play their role of intermediation between farmers and other actors contributing to technical innovation if the institutional environment wherein they operate is more favorable to their initiatives. This presupposes:

- a reduction of inequalities concerning access to science and its results, for “the competitiveness of farmers is also threatened by inequality in the scientific potential of different countries”. In many cases, this is done through a reconstruction of public research mechanisms endowed with the requisite resources which work with RPOs in accordance with clearly defined modalities, produce results that are public property and take account of two key dimensions: solve the short-term problems encountered by farmers and enable them to anticipate;
- the setting up of requisite institutional mechanisms so that international research institutions (CGIAR) may take into account the opinion of RPOs and mainstream their concerns when programming research;
- the setting up of institutional mechanisms to correct market failures concerning credit, access to inputs and marketing.

⇒ The increased involvement of multinationals in the production of new agricultural technologies recalls the issue of intellectual property rights, the new dependence thereupon that these may engender for farmers and the possible threats that some technologies may represent. “With globalization, it is essential for RPOs to strengthen their negotiating capacities at world level”; this raises the question of negotiation between public research, RPOs, multinationals and government authorities.

■ FOR contribute to the construction of local development dynamics

Apart from the special missions assigned to local governments, and the attendant redefinition of RPO activities, one of the central stakes of decentralization is the creation of conditions that are conducive to the emergence of local development dynamics, valorizing the specific resources of the relevant territories based on initiatives developed by local actors. This poses the problem of the distribution of duties between local governments and RPOs, and especially the issue of articulating their respective initiatives.

THE KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS HIGHLIGHTED FOUR POINTS

⇒ The creation of local governments changes the working programs of RPOs. In some countries, the creation of RPOs precedes decentralization and the setting up of local governments. In the face of government weaknesses, RPOs have often striven to provide technical and economic services to production as well as basic services which the State does not provide satisfactorily (health, education, etc.). Yet, such services henceforth fall within the ambit of local governments. Similarly, some RPOs have in the past played an important role in planning regional development (Senegal, Burkina Faso), a function that is now incumbent on local governments. Decentralization thus modifies the areas of intervention of RPOs, which does not however mean that RPOs should not be interested in the choices made by local governments.

⇒ Complementarity between local governments and RPOs is indispensable to create local development dynamics. There are three factors that come into play here:

- in general, local governments are responsible for providing public amenities that are indispensable to economic and social development: market, communication, transport, education and health infrastructure; Now, agriculture at the service of development needs both appropriate infrastructure indispensable to access markets under the best conditions and operational public utilities;
- local governments are often responsible for the management of natural resources and land and for enacting local regulations on the modalities for accessing and using such resources; Now, farmers cannot be disinterested in such issues given that (1) their activities are based on the valorization of natural resources, (2) land security is a prerequisite for investment and (3) a clear sharing of resources with other actors within the territory is often indispensable to the development of economic activities as a whole;
- valorization of the specific resources of territories by mobilizing products with special characteristics, combined with know-how that brings out their intrinsic qualities, represents a real socio-economic potential. Such dynamics which are based on the notion of “localized food systems” enable to create jobs in the rural areas and to keep therein a greater share of the overall added value as well as strengthen social ties through the organization of stakeholders and the creation of synergy between them. Such strategies are promising even if they sometimes concern only a limited number of farmers. The contribution of local governments to these approaches (often spurred by specific organizations) may sometimes be very significant, be they quality-based approaches, geographical certification or joint promotion of products with the same territorial identity.

⇒ Local governments thus constitute a strategic stake for RPOs. The first thing here is the central role that local governments may play, once they are vested with institutional legitimacy, in coordinating local development approaches and in creating a more conducive environment for the initiatives of local actors. The second thing is the effective and institutionalized participation of RPOs in defining and implementing strategies prepared under the stewardship of local governments. In many countries, RPOs constitute the most organized collective actors at local level and their contribution may be really great in defining the local development guidelines and in implementing actions in domains that concern them directly (contribution to building infrastructure and amenities and managing same, for instance).

⇒ The experiences presented highlighted the developments in this respect and the constraints that sometimes emerge:

- in Cameroon, many RPOs have been multifunctional organizations, operating beyond the strict sector framework where stakeholders sometimes wanted them to limit their action for reasons of technical and economic efficiency. With the advent of decentralization, RPOs must strengthen “their mediation and negotiation function in order to participate in the design of programs that take account of their interests and points of view, particularly regarding the management of natural resources”;
- in Tanzania, the role played by RPOs in the local development planning process is clearly defined at different levels, from the level of the neighborhood to that of the district. Their primary role is intermediation with local authorities so that local governments may provide a basis and support for the projects of the various categories of farmers. The Tanzanian State is now aware of the potentials of RPOs in the creation of wealth through the development of productive activities that contribute to improving the living conditions of the rural poor. The Sector-Wide Approach (SWAP) thus provides that 70% of public investments must be used at the level of the decentralized unit.

THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM EXPERIENCE

- RPOs may and must get involved in the decentralization process in order to influence regional development and thus ensure better mainstreaming of all the dimensions of agricultural activity, taking care to discuss their positions with other rural actors.

- To achieve this, RPOs need to have the intellectual and material resources to invest in the various territorial consultation forums being set up and participate in the preparation and implementation of local budgets. They can also play a positive role in mainstreaming women and young people in local development support mechanisms.

■ The capacity of RPOs to influence decision-making centers is growing

In many African, Latin American and Asian countries, small- and medium-sized farmers were, for a long time, left out of political decision-making processes and could not make their voice heard. With varying modalities and pace depending on countries, one has observed, since some ten or fifteen years, the emergence or strengthening of entities representing the interests of family farmers that express their willingness to influence decision-making centers at national, sub-regional and international levels.

THE KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS HIGHLIGHTED THREE POINTS

⇒ In spite of the importance that other levels of governance have gained, the national level is still highly important (1) for the definition of agricultural and rural, sector and cross-cutting policies (financing, research, land, etc.) and also for the definition of strategic guidelines (framework law) and (2) to influence decisions made at sub-regional and international levels. The influence of RPOs on political decision-making centers at national level is highly varied. It is connected with the degree of democratization, proposal and negotiation capacities of RPOs and the alliances that they are able to form. In addition, the agreements reached between RPOs and government authorities may be challenged by governments that sometimes feel not bound by certain agreements to which they are signatories.

⇒ The sub-regional level is gaining importance because of regional integration processes (MERCOSUR, WAEMU, ECOWAS, etc.). The ability of RPOs to influence sub-regional agricultural policies is growing with the structuring of RPOs and their mobilization around a common objective: in this respect, COPROFAM secured the setting up of the Reunion Especializada de Agricultura Familiar (REAF) within MERCOSUR; ROPPA participated actively in the preparation of ECOWAP. The outcomes of negotiations can however be challenged. Such is the case of ECOWAP in West Africa, which is “demolished by projects, programs, special free trade agreements, etc.” (AGOA, EPAs).

⇒ RPO influence on international decision-making centers is limited by a number of factors: the technical complexity of discussions which is translated by a “confiscation of the political arena” by experts; the power relationships between countries, etc. Increasing RPO influence in international decision-making centers requires: (1) to enhance expertise within RPOs; (2) to form alliances between RPOs at continental (as was the case with the agricultural component of NEPAD, for instance) and international levels and (3) to build alliances between RPOs and national governments (the case of cotton in some African countries, for instance).

LESSONS LEARNED FROM EXPERIENCE

The discussions highlighted four points.

⇒ The effective contribution of RPOs in defining agricultural and rural policy guidelines and implementing same is indispensable. Financial donors and the World Bank in particular, can work towards this goal: the concern here is to “support, at relevant levels, the most consensual definition possible and implementation, in utmost partnership, of a project to transform agriculture for development”. Indeed, the concern is to define “the type of agriculture one wants to promote: agro-

business that takes up a lot of land and causes hundreds of thousands of peasants to leave the rural areas or family farming". Any complementarity between these two major types of agriculture should be defined in public policies that should explicitly state the conditions of co-existence and their eventual articulations.

⇒ Enhancement of the influence of RPOs in decision-making processes and in the implementation of such decisions requires that they build their capacity to make proposals (internal expertise), negotiate (alliances) and mobilize in a sustainable manner. This requires the setting up of institutionalized consultation forums that allow for equitable negotiations, enhancement of internal skills (access to information and training) and lasting funding mechanisms for the representation functions that do not engender new forms of dependence.

⇒ "Good policies are those that are negotiated" and major financial donors could back the negotiation processes in favor of agriculture for development (1) by promoting the consolidation of democracy in some countries, (2) encouraging States to involve RPOs in the preparation of public policies, (3) complying with and supporting the implementation of negotiated guidelines at national and sub-regional levels and (4) increasing resources earmarked for agriculture.

⇒ Harmonization of decisions made within different forums and at different levels of governance is indispensable to stimulate agricultural growth that is compatible with the objective of food security and rural poverty alleviation, that is environment-friendly and that ensures development while preserving social equilibrium.

4 - How can RPO performances and impact be assessed? The different functions of RPOs and their articulation

RPOs are a gamut of highly diversified organizations: such diversity has been analyzed in several studies and reference documents³. The workshop did not dwell on these issues but it can be useful to briefly recall the characteristics of major RPO categories. A first element of differentiation is their level of organization: from the local to the national through the regional level. The level of the organization makes it possible to determine whether it is a second or third degree organization. The international level may also be added following the setting up of RPO networks, which were largely represented during the Paris workshop. A second element of differentiation is the function performed by the RPO: here, one generally identifies several areas of intervention: management of natural resources, support to production, support to marketing, predominantly social functions, representation functions, etc. Some classifications distinguish organizations by the nature of their members (women, livestock breeders...). One should especially bear in mind that there is no absolute classification of RPOs. The endeavor to establish a typology makes it possible to understand the real situation: the typology reflects always and above all the concerns of the person seeking to establish it.

■ Four inseparable intervention areas

Assessment of the performance of RPOs often lays emphasis on their technical and economic efficiency, and the members of organizations as well as external actors have great expectations in this respect. However, as highlighted in figure 1, RPOs also operate in other areas that condition their internal credibility and have an impact on their technical and economic performances.

In spite of the constraints observed, RPOs strive to operate in four areas.

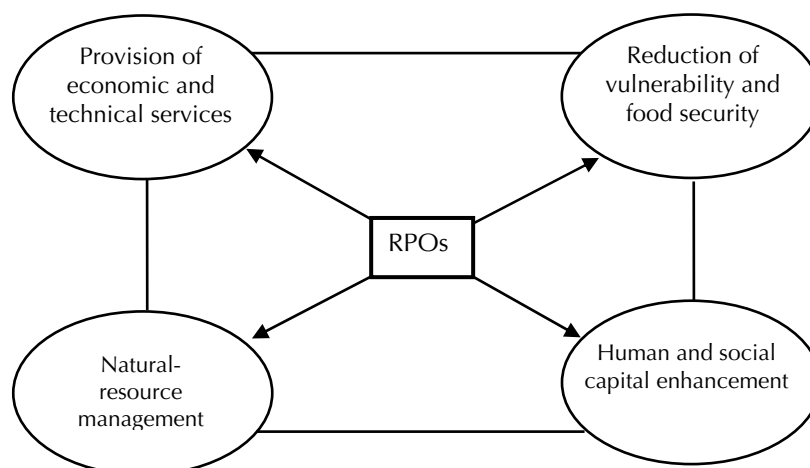


Figure1. The four areas of RPO intervention.

³ See in particular: Mercoiret M-R, 1997, *Etats désengagés, paysans engagés : perspectives et nouveaux rôles des organisations paysannes en Afrique et en Amérique latine*, Paris: Fondation Charles Léopold Mayer (FPH), Dossier pour un débat n°75, 189 p ; Banque mondiale, 2002, *Le rôle des organisations paysannes et rurales (OPR) dans la stratégie de développement rural de la Banque mondiale*, Stratégie de développement rural – Basic Document 8, CIRAD TERA, ODI, MAE, DFID 133 p ; Pesche D, 2001, *Classification et typologies des organisations paysannes*, AGRIDOC / Inter-Réseaux, 3 p.

PROVISION OF TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC SERVICES

By assuming responsibility directly or in partnership with other public and private actors, for functions that are indispensable for the improvement of production and farmers' incomes (support to innovation, marketing, etc.). RPOs cannot and do not intend to assume the roles of other actors: they seek to improve existing coordination and, through collective action, often make up for the weaknesses of other actors (State, sector actors) or institutions (markets). In some cases, RPOs strive to create alternative services to those provided by private actors when the conditions imposed by the latter are not favorable to producers; they thus create competition by limiting situations of quasi monopoly.

MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Family farms that constitute the bulk of RPO membership are complex systems of activity based on a rational use of natural resources. In situations of high population density that generate increased pressure on natural resources, many RPOs provide a significant contribution in establishing environment-friendly rules and providing environmental services.

RISK MITIGATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF FOOD SECURITY

The current context is marked by an increase in the number of shocks suffered by rural people (climate, prices, etc.). The vulnerability of rural populations is a critical element that can cause drastic decline into poverty. RPOs can make a significant contribution to stabilize and diversify the incomes of poor rural households. In so doing, they contribute to build the resistance of local societies and their capacities to adapt and to transform.

HUMAN AND SOCIAL CAPITAL ENHANCEMENT

RPOs are the forums wherein collective decision-making is learned and contribute to human and social capital enhancement, often beyond direct members of the organizations (a RPO with a limited number of farmers often plays a revitalizing role in a village).

Through these four areas of intervention, RPOs contribute to the production of marketable goods, public goods, and contribute to maintaining equilibrium within local societies, to the benefit of the entire society. These different functions are interrelated. Family farmers cannot be considered only as "producers". Obviously, production is at the center of their concerns because it conditions the family's food security and the satisfaction of monetary needs ; it is inseparable from the management of natural resources (often considered as a heritage), improvement of the living environment (services), social cohesion and concerns relating to the future of territories where the people live. In varying degrees, members expect RPOs to intervene in these different areas, contribute to improve their standard and "mode" of life and take account of the general concern about equilibrium. Obviously, all FOs do not necessarily have the same impact in these four areas, but none can survive by acting only in one of these areas; the social viability of an organization and its economic efficiency are interrelated.

At a given time, the activities of organizations reflect the situation of the economic and institutional environment wherein farmers operate. As RPO investment in some activities grows; some activities may disappear from their "portfolio of activities" if competent actors take them up efficiently or may continue to be carried out by RPOs in order to guarantee sound competition vis-à-vis other actors that may take unfair advantage of monopoly situations.

■ Public policies affect the contribution of RPOs to the production of marketable goods and public goods

Disharmonized public policies laying emphasis mainly on the search for competitiveness, contribute to generate tensions that tend to destabilize local societies thus compromising either the sustainable management of natural resources, or human and social capital, or the people's food security or the three at the same time. (See figure 2).

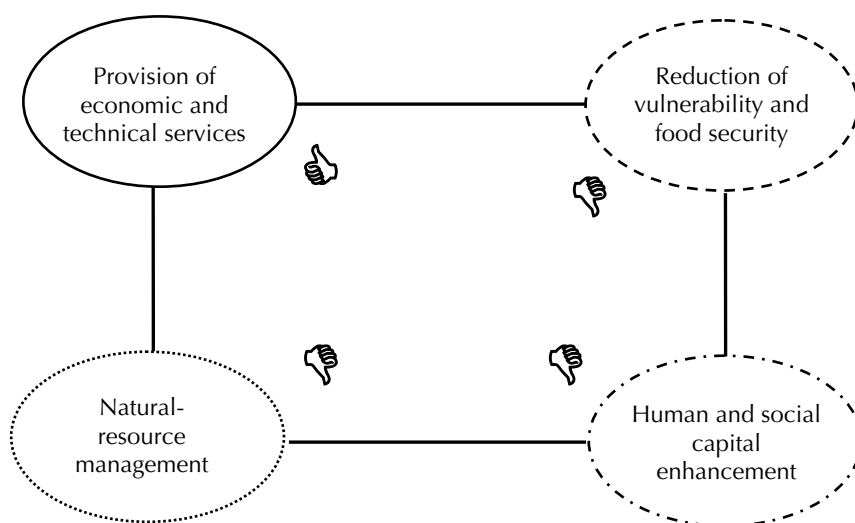


Figure 2. Competitive agriculture but with imbalances.

Public policies based on the search for competitiveness engender exclusion and lead to the development of “corrective policies” which often take the form of public programs centered on specific themes and targeting categories that reveal social imbalances. These include for instance programs to manage natural resources, fight poverty or in favor of socially excluded or marginalized categories (women and the youth), etc. Such programs are very expensive; they are coordinated in various ways and may induce opportunistic behaviors that contribute sometimes to destabilize social capital that organizations make enormous efforts to build.

As illustrated by diagram 3, RPO investment in the development of “good public policies as the source of progress for farmers and for the society at large” aims to take into account simultaneously the four dimensions of pro-poor sustainable development.

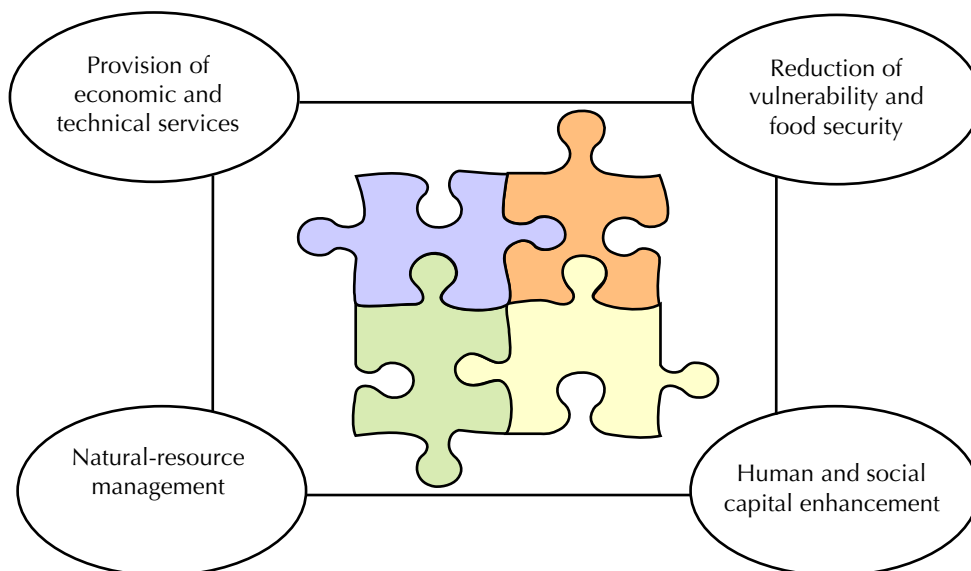


Figure 3. Pro-poor sustainable agriculture.

The question that arises is as follows: what role may RPOs play in the construction of a lasting and pro-poor institutional environment? Under what conditions should they play such role?

5 - RPOs and construction of the institutional environment: rebalancing State-Markets-Civil Society relations

■ Far-reaching stakes

In many regions of the world, which are also those in which small- and medium-sized family farmers are the most represented, living conditions have become extremely harsh. The high poverty level and chronic malnutrition which affect hundreds of millions of peoples, compounded by the absence of prospects, are accentuating the migratory flows, to the point that money transfers have become unavoidable for the survival of many rural families.

These trends have two consequences: (1) they deprive the rural world from a part of its active forces and often the best trained rural youths and (2) they weaken the social equilibrium in the global society. As a matter of fact, in many countries, there is no economic sector that is likely to accommodate “dropouts” from the agricultural sector, at least in the medium term, nor social fabric to match the demographic challenge. In addition, although considerable migrations have historically transformed agriculture, it is worth noting that the current geopolitical context is quite different from the past: possibilities of international migrations are reducing drastically in OECD countries (highly restricted entry, reinforced struggle against illegal immigration, expulsions, construction of “walls”, etc.) and are followed by human and social tragedies that are ethically unacceptable⁴.

In societies facing by considerable challenges, RPOs contribute, albeit modestly, to offering alternatives by improving production and living conditions, by enhancing the confidence of the rural dwellers in their own potential, also by encouraging the learning of new relations necessary to build more democratic societies.

■ State, civil society and improvement of the functioning of markets

The magnitude of the challenges relating to the future of small- and medium-sized farmers, the pertinence of the solutions brought in by some RPOs, as well as the constraints they encounter, all contribute to recognizing the need for a rebalancing of relations between the State, markets and the civil society. The idea is not to question the integration of farmers into the market, given that such integration is an old issue (through their articulation in markets as sellers and buyers, through their agricultural or non-agricultural wage-earning status), but to reflect on the role of State authorities and civil society in the development of pro-poor markets whose functioning would be compatible with the Millennium Development Goals.

The following three issues were raised.

- What are the institutions necessary to make the markets function more equitably and to make them pro-poor?
- How can the State (executive and legislative power) become more efficient, given that progress of democracy provide more flexibility in terms of negotiation, the need for political and administrative leaders to be accountable for their actions?

⁴ The 28 November 2006 issue (on the eve of the workshop) of the newspaper *Le Monde* estimated (in a snippet) that “since the beginning of 2006, 27 000 African immigrants have arrived by sea to the Canary Islands (not to mention those who failed to arrive); among this number, 4 400 Senegalese were repatriated in one month...”

- What role can RPOs play? This question also brings to mind the opportunity cost, given that it is not the aim of RPOs to take the place of other economic actors, even though they are sometimes forced to do so.

Considered in the perspective of the “role of RPOs in pro-poor sustainable development”, the above questions bring to mind (1) RPO capacity building and (2) their role in constructing an institutional environment conducive to the initiatives of farmers and their organizations.

RPO CAPACITY BUILDING

From the keynote presentations and discussions on this topic, it was revealed that RPOs “have a highly variable development level” which stems from internal factors but also from factors related to the environment in which they operate. In many cases, they have become “heavy-weight and trustworthy actors”, even though their performances are unequal and variously sustainable.

The investment of resources in RPO capacity building is justified by the following three reasons:

- RPO capacity building is a pre-condition to reduce the asymmetries that are characteristic of their relations with other actors; in this light, it is a guarantee for transparency and stability, both with regard to the functioning of markets and political decision-making;
- RPOs contribute to the production of public goods (natural resource management, food security);
- they contribute to social equilibrium and socio-political stability in local societies affected by very rapid change.

Three points seem to be essential in RPO institutional capacity building.

- The setting up of lasting RPO funding mechanisms is indispensable; it is possible to distinguish especially (1) the equitable remuneration of the functions that RPOs assume in these sectors, (2) the setting up of funding mechanisms at local and sub-regional levels in favor of RPOs and (3) the need for foreign actors to finance, on a long term basis, training/information and representation functions, according to modalities which guarantee the autonomy of organizations.
- It is necessary to support, in the long run, national and sub-regional programs on training, experience-sharing and inter-RPO consultation within sub-regional platforms (ROPPA, PROPAC, EAFF, SACAU, AFA, COPROFAM, etc.).
- Support to RPOs by foreign actors must be negotiated with the RPOs, as concerns the objectives of such support, their contents and implementation modalities; this should make it possible especially to adapt support to RPO priorities.

The sustainable efficiency of RPOs, in the various functions they occupy, is linked to an improvement of their environment (see above). In terms of capacity building, this also presupposes:

- enhancement of the skills of government services; this seems to be indispensable to enable them (1) engage in constructive dialogue with RPOs; (2) acquire the skills needed to efficiently support RPOs and (3) consider the fact of reporting their actions as one of the conditions for the establishment of balanced relations;
- consolidation of democracy; it is necessary in each country, in order to make dialogue between RPOs and the other institutional actors (governments, parliamentarians, higher council of agriculture, etc.) possible and efficient; in this connection, the appropriate channel to follow seems to be the formalization of the consultation framework with the civil society (“Economic and Social Council”).

THE ROLE OF RPOs IN BUILDING THE INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Although indispensable, RPO internal capacity building is not enough. Many experimented RPOs with asserted skills are wearying out in technical and economic action programs whose chances of success are jeopardized by the nature of the environment in which they operate: inability of government authorities to correct market shortcomings; disruption of agricultural services that are

reorganizing at variable pace depending on the country and region; lack of transparency in decision-making, thereby encouraging client-centered approach, opportunism and sometimes corruption, etc. Limited performances and repeated failures deal a blow to the internal credibility of organizations and affect their reliability vis-à-vis external actors; external support is becoming scarce, thereby further reducing the quality of results obtained, etc.

There are apparently two avenues: RPO contribution to defining institutional mechanisms and new rules, and the formation of alliances.

⇒ *Building of institutional mechanisms*

The institutional mechanisms to be built and the rules to be established are intricately linked to agricultural and rural policies and are indispensable instruments to translate the set guidelines into practice. RPOs should be closely associated to the design of these mechanisms and rules which should concern especially:

- the definition of legal statuses adapted to RPO diversity and activities as well as the setting up of sustainable financing mechanisms for such organizations;
- regulatory provisions mainstreaming and securing trade and which guarantee fair trade and equity, effective possibility to resort to legal action, etc.;
- provisions that ensure the land security needed by family farmers to invest; such provisions should limit the concentration of lands in areas with high agricultural potential, which is often done at the detriment of small- and medium-sized producers;
- institutionalization of the various multi-stakeholder consultation frameworks clearly stating their membership, their mandate, possible appeal channels in the event of non-compliance with signed agreements, etc.;
- organization of public services for farmers; equipped with enough human and material resources, they should function in accordance with the rules of effective partnership with the farmers;
- concerted definition and implementation of institutional regulations which correct the shortcomings of the markets and which provide answers to the questions raised, especially (1) through the concentration of actors intervening upstream and downstream of production (e.g. multinationals in position of quasi-monopoly), (2) through “unfair” competition between farmers with very different levels of production and who enjoy highly unequal government support and protection. It should be noted that institutional regulations also concern recognition of the role of RPOs in the production of public goods to which they contribute (food security, environmental services, etc.) in addition to the economic functions they assume;
- setting up of institutional and financial mechanisms that make it possible to take into account (1) the role played by RPOs in consolidating democracy (reduction of asymmetries between actors, equity in inter-actor relations) and (2) their contribution to social equilibrium.

⇒ *Formation of alliances*

The reduction of the huge discrepancies that characterize relations between RPOs and actors which make up their economic, institutional and political environment, presupposes the strengthening of alliances between RPOs and civil society actors as well as with certain private sector actors in order to extend the democratic processes and to improve on the functioning of markets. The indispensable civil society capacity building could be achieved through alliances between RPOs and other actors.

The following four factors are often favorable to the formation of such alliances, at varying degrees, of course:

- poverty is not only rural, even though it is in the rural world that we find the highest number of poor people; urban poverty is fed by the intensity of rural exodus which increases unemployment and job insecurity at alarming proportions in many countries;
- farm producers and consumers (both urban and rural) have interests that may be convergent with regard to the functioning of local, national and sub-regional markets: food preferences, quality of products, prices, etc.;

- farm producers and some private actors who intervene downstream may have short-term convergent interests which may need to be reinforced (more regular access to quality agricultural produce, price consistency, etc.); these may be small-scale processors, traders and also large-scale intermediaries willing to establish sustainable relations with RPOs and take their interests into account;
- the future of agriculture does not concern only farmers, but also the entire society with regard to food security, employment, natural resource management and regional development, civil security and peace.

Alliances between RPOs and other civil society organizations and private sector actors would make it possible to:

- increase the influence exercised by the civil society on government and their staff, on elected officials, at the local, national or sub-regional levels in order to (1) reinforce the coherence between decisions taken in the various sectors of economic and social life, (2) reassert the need for government authorities to be held accountable for their decisions and their practices and (3) consolidate democracy;
- improve on the functioning of markets, alliances between farmers and consumers, between farm producers and certain private sector actors which may, for instance, enhance their capacity to negotiate with the economic macro-actors who control certain markets.

This does not entail therefore to pit family farmers and their organizations against other types of private actors who operate on the markets, but to form alliances which encourage the correction, through institutional mechanisms, of the imbalances which leave farmers and RPOs as well as certain private actors in a very unfavorable position, especially vis-à-vis certain multinationals.

6 - Priority “messages” for WDR 2008

“The fact that agriculture produces poor people is not inevitable”

(A workshop participant)

This report proposes a series of 6 messages. These messages attempt to capture the main thrust of the messages formulated by participants, reproduced in full in Annex 1. Another way of rephrasing the messages was proposed by MAP representatives. This alternative possibility features in Annex 2.

■ Message 1

Rural producer organizations play and can play an increasingly important role in the transformation of family agriculture, provided they are considered as full-fledged actors in the definition and implementation of agricultural and rural development strategies, and not as instruments of policies designed and implemented without consulting them.

Family agricultures, in their diversity, are the most widespread form of organization of agriculture in the world; their contribution is and will remain considerable in the production of goods destined for various markets and they are essential for the production of public goods, namely food security in rural families, sustainable natural resource management, regional development and reduction of rural dwellers vulnerability to shocks. At this period characterized by a transformation of the context of agricultural activities, rural producer organizations, which for the most part bring together small- and medium-sized family farmers, play a major role and can play, in the future, a central role in the modernization of family agriculture at the service of development, as well as in the definition and monitoring of the transitions which are indispensable for guaranteeing civil peace and security and a better mastery of migrations, especially international migrations.

However, in their capacity as intermediation structures between farmers and other civil society actors, rural producer organizations may not be considered as mere instruments for the implementation of policies defined without consulting them; in this way, they would lose their social legitimacy and their efficiency in terms of economic results.

Rural producer organizations are and should be considered by other actors (economic, political and institutional) as full-fledged actors; they should enjoy (1) institutional recognition for the definition, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of pro-poor agricultural and rural development strategies and (2) recognition of the functions they assume in the production of marketable goods necessary for growth, public goods indispensable for sustainable development and societal balance.

■ Message 2

The efficiency of RPOs in the various functions that they assume will considerably increase if decisions taken and the modalities for their implementation are based on negotiated compromises, at relevant levels, between RPOs and other economic, institutional and political actors.

The capacity of RPOs to bring in changes in the practices of family farmers (who are independent economic actors) in view of a pro-poor sustainable development, presupposes that relationships between RPOs and the other actors should be driven by a logic of consultation and construction of negotiated compromises, at the local, national and regional levels.

Agreements negotiated between RPOs and the other private economic actors within the sector must take into account the comparative advantages of the relevant parties and their respective interests, which are considered for a longer period than the short term.

Collaboration between RPOs and government services endowed with the necessary resources and which assume cross-cutting functions (research, extension, information, training, etc.) is indispensable for the promotion of poor farmers; the aim is to establish balanced relations capable of resolving the short-term issues raised by farmers and which enable them to also anticipate.

The definition of negotiated relations between local governments and RPOs seems essential to give an impetus to the regional development dynamics and should concern the division of duties, the search for complementarities and the creation of synergies.

Consultation and the search for negotiated compromises are essential at the national and sub-regional levels with the various institutional and political decision-making circles (see *infra*).

■ Message 3

Given the importance of the national and sub-regional levels in designing a project for the transformation of agriculture, which would be at the service of sustainable development and lead to poverty reduction, RPOs should influence public policy-making processes, the modalities for their implementation and be part and parcel of their impact assessment mechanisms.

The national level remains a major decision-making level: first, supra-national commitments are made by national States and, secondly, the capacity of farmers to tap the opportunities offered by globalization and to overcome the resultant obstacles depends, for the most part, on national and, more and more often, sub-regional public policies.

At the national level, “an agricultural and rural policy in favor of family agricultures is a source of progress for farmers and also for the entire society”; this presupposes a review of the public policy-making processes and the setting up of transparent and fair RPO/government consultation frameworks enabling:

- the negotiated definition of medium- and long-term guidelines for the agricultural and rural sector, and the identification of priorities;
- the concerted elaboration of agricultural policy instruments necessary for the implementation of the set guidelines;
- the concerted definition of mechanisms to organize the partnership with RPOs and enable the implementation of the elaborated guidelines and instruments;
- the negotiated establishment of mechanisms that allow for the involvement of RPOs in the monitoring and evaluation of implemented programs.

Over and above the agricultural policy, RPOs may make an important contribution for the harmonization of specific sector policies and programs concerning the rural world: rural infrastructure programs (in conjunction with local governments), specific poverty reduction programs, natural-resource management programs, training programs, etc.

As they get organized at the sub-regional level, RPOs must be associated to the definition of sub-regional agricultural policies, in accordance with the mechanisms defined in a concerted manner with government.

It is obvious that the possibility for RPOs to influence the definition of public policies and play a role in their implementation varies a lot from one country to the other: degree of organization and very variable skills of the RPOs (see message 6); more or less democratic political context; etc.

■ Message 4

The improvement and consolidation of RPO performances are intricately linked to the construction of an institutional environment which is more conducive to the initiatives of family farmers and their organizations.

The contrasted performances of RPOs in the various areas in which they operate is due mostly to their economic and institutional environment which is more often than not highly unfavorable to their initiatives: failure of government authorities to correct market shortcomings; poor organization of services rendered to farmers who reorganize at variable pace depending on the countries and regions; inadequate infrastructure; insufficient consideration of the non-market functions they assume and which are indispensable for their economic efficiency; etc.

The institutional mechanisms to be built and the rules to be set are intricately linked to agricultural and rural policies and are indispensable instruments for putting the set guidelines into practice. RPOs should be closely associated to the design of such arrangements and rules which should concern especially: (1) the definition of legal statuses adapted to the diversity of RPOs and their activities; (2) the regulatory provisions governing commercial transactions; (3) provisions that ensure land security for family farmers; (4) the institutionalization of the various multi-stakeholders consultation frameworks; (5) the organization of government services, their functioning and their supply in resources; (6) institutional regulations which make markets more pro-poor; these include especially regulations concerning the concentration of actors intervening upstream and downstream of production, “unfair” competition among farmers with very diverse production levels and who enjoy highly unequal public support and protection, etc. The institutional regulations should also enable RPOs to assume their role in the production of public goods and in ensuring social equilibrium.

■ Message 5

RPO internal capacity building is a priority in the sense that it conditions the sustainable efficiency of the technical and economic actions that they undertake and improves their contribution to the production of public goods. Such capacity building should be followed concomitantly by the enhancement of government capacity to organize and promote dialogue with RPOs and to be held accountable for their actions.

The development of RPOs and the numerous results they have obtained should not overshadow the fact that their level of organization and their performances are very diverse from one country and, at times, one region to another.

The following three points seem to be essential in RPO institutional capacity building:

- the establishment of sustainable funding mechanisms which should enable them operate without creating of new dependencies;
- long-term support to national and sub-regional programs on training, experience-sharing and inter-RPO consultation;
- negotiation of external support programs with RPOs.

The sustainable efficiency of RPOs also presupposes:

- to enhance the skills of government services and establish new relations with RPOs based on dialogue and consultation;
- to consolidate democracy in countries where the political context is still unfavorable to RPOs, and more generally, to private sector and civil society initiatives.

■ Message 6

The reduction of discrepancies which are characteristic of relations between RPOs and other actors of their economic, institutional and political environment presupposes the formation of alliances to consolidate the democratic processes and to improve the functioning of markets.

Experience has shown that many types of alliances could be useful.

- Alliances between RPOs and other civil society actors which are gradually coming together (consumers as well as certain civil society actors who have convergent interests with family farmers): they may make it possible to increase the influence of RPOs in decision-making processes at the national and sub-regional levels.
- The experience of many OECD countries shows the interest for RPOs to mobilize elected officials (at local, national and at times sub-regional levels) and to “send through messages” leading to legislative and regulatory provisions favorable to family farmers and to a better distribution of public resources.
- Alliances between RPOs, civil society and governments help to build the capacity of States to influence the international agenda in order to (1) permit more equitable access of smallholders to markets, (2) recognize the role of family agricultures in the production of public goods, and more generally, (3) state commercial rules that are consistent with the Millennium Development Goals.

In a context that has become very complex and unstable, alliance strategies may not be designed in a dichotomous manner (family farmers and their organizations versus the private sector and the State, for instance) and should be formed at various levels:

- asymmetries between farmers and their organizations on the one hand, and institutional and political actors on the other hand, lead to alliances within the civil society in order to influence State authorities;
- the influence acquired by certain economic actors as a result of concentration (multinationals) justifies the formation of alliances between RPOs, certain private actors and State authorities;
- the asymmetries that are characteristic of relations between countries, in international negotiations, encourage to form alliances (at the national and sub-regional levels) between the civil society, the State and certain private actors in order to (1) influence the global agenda (international negotiations), (2) influence bilateral trade agreements and (3) regulate the constitution of economic macro-actors which often find themselves in a position of quasi-monopoly.

7.- RPO contribution to the debate on the first draft of the WDR, early 2007

■ This issue was addressed at the second session of the workshop (30 October 2006)

Presentation of the schedule for elaboration of WDR 2008, consultations and discussions (A. de Janvry).

- The first version will be available in January 2007;
- RPO reactions to the report should be provided between January and February 2007;
- RPOs may also participate in the discussions planned for West Africa and Latin America;
- After June 2007, the report (2nd draft) may be used during the dissemination phase at sub-regional level; electronic consultations may take place.

RPOs underscored the need to brainstorm so as to react on the first draft of the report.

IFAD and MAE expressed its interest in supporting RPOs in their brainstorming on the first draft of the report.

A working group was set up. It comprised farmers' representatives of sub-regional organizations attending the workshop and was expected to come up with proposals.

■ Proposals retained

The working group set up and which received inputs from representatives of MAE and IFAD presented its report on Tuesday, 31 October, during a plenary meeting. From the ensuing discussions the following were retained:

- the first draft of the WDR, in English, will be made available to RPOs between 15 and 20 January 2007;
- a sub-regional network of RPOs will work on the report;
- a workshop will bring together representatives of sub-regional networks of RPOs in Dakar, late February 2007, in the presence of a representative of the WDR core team.

IFAD will support the RPO brainstorming on the WDR 2008 and other contributions are expected, from MAE especially.

Practical modalities for the implementation of the process retained will be laid down rapidly; they concern (1) the precise terms of reference for each stage of the process (sub-regional organizations work, Dakar workshop agenda), (2) the necessary budget, etc.

On this occasion, it was recalled that the Paris workshop will give rise to a report to be drafted by CIRAD. RPOs will be called upon to react thereto, to complete same, etc.

Annexes

Annex 1

Messages proposed by participants

The last working session of the Paris workshop was opened by a round-table discussion bringing together representatives of RPO networks of the various regions present (three continents). This annex recapitulates the contributions made by these farmers' leaders followed by the messages proposed by all the participants during the round-table discussion.

■ Messages from farmers' leaders constituting the round-table discussion

⇒ There is need to create a conducive environment to consolidate and strengthen organizations and thus empower them to undertake actions in favor of an enterprising and sustainable family agriculture for poverty reduction. There is need to assist in the formalization of frameworks of consultation between the State, RPOs and development partners in order to build, through negotiated relations, a common political and strategic vision and collaboration in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies. (PROPAC)

⇒ The World Bank should respect the agricultural and rural policy frameworks that were negotiated in countries where they intervene.

The World Bank should consider that RPO empowerment is a cross-cutting objective of most of the interventions in rural areas. The World Bank should facilitate the participation of various actors, particularly RPOs, during policy negotiations: to this end, it should provide support and expertise that would enable RPOs to better participate in consultations and make clearer proposals. The Bank should recognize that RPOs exist and invest in building their capacities (EAFF).

⇒ RPOs are at different levels of development in their organizational life cycle with different capacities and requirements in terms of support needed. There should not be a "one size fits all" approach to providing development support to RPOs. RPOs provide services of "public good" nature. There is therefore a need to provide some kind of public support towards them. (SACAU)

⇒ Family agricultures and organizations supporting them are the most suitable means to eradicate poverty. The World Bank may head a coalition to support States and sub-regional groups in the formulation of policies and strategies for the transformation of agricultures, negotiated with RPOs. If the WDR 2008 could achieve this, it would be some progress (ROPPA).

⇒ Challenge for the Bank and all actors to design policies for RPOs' capacity building to implement programs aimed at improving the income of farmers. In all consultations with rural people, ensure that RPOs enjoy enough capacity to consult, analyze the situations and prepare agreed proposals to negotiate (AFA).

- The role of RPOs is underestimated in the current draft of the WDR. We need agriculture with farmers, agriculture with a human face; the World Bank should support agriculture with body and soul instead of multinationals that do not need any support. There is need to take into account the environmental issue: disfiguring nature is like perforating the boat wherein one is sailing. There is need to define a pro-poor agricultural policy; this implies especially not giving land to those who already have much.

⇒ The World Bank may have an important role to play in training, health and education, but it is

also important that its support does not create new external debt for our countries. The World Bank should consider neo-liberalism as a dead and buried ideology and take into account the diversity of situations (COPROFAM). The World Bank should pull and channel economic support to farmers and for the management of their organizations.

- The contribution of RPOs in the development of countries in the world should be included in the World Bank report and made available to all actors, especially governments that criticize us, to be aware of the major role played by RPOs; We should be provided support in capacity building (especially among the youth) necessary for elaborating best economic, social and cultural policies... The role of family agricultures and organizations should be recognized in our food self-sufficiency, a major concern in our national security. (Mesa Nacional Campesina).

■ Messages from other workshop participants

- There is need for recognition and direct support to the process of developing RPOs as keystone to agricultural and rural development and sustainable environmental management.

- The World Bank should facilitate the elaboration of agricultural policies in conjunction with RPOs. To that end, it is necessary to help RPOs make solid proposals, defend them and participate in the design and implementation of policy monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

- The World Bank has several sections, and therefore requires more synergies between the various areas of activities.

- There is need to create more coherence and synergy between the various World Bank interventions in rural development, infrastructure, decentralization, natural resource management, agriculture, RPO support, etc.

- Only powerful actors may carry out powerful actions; this presupposes the empowerment of actors which would lead to shared responsibility by all the actors.

- Agriculture should occupy a pride of place in the agenda because it is and will still be at the center of world issues such as poverty, migrations, water, soils... Having interest in the development of agriculture and helping it to develop also implies promoting peace in the world. Despite their importance, there is more than just export markets; local and sub-regional markets may be developed.

- This entails building harmony between OECD countries and the others and not pitting them against each other.

- It is a major challenge to get interested in the Agrarian Reform in Latin American and also in Africa. RPOs have a fundamental economic, social and institutional role which can not be measured with exclusively economic criteria.

- It is necessary to accompany RPO initiatives in the long term. It is important to invest in perennial agricultural services co-managed by RPOs and the State.

- The technical innovations needed by smallholders to tap growth resources are conditioned by negotiated institutional innovations; this is where there is the most under-investment. It is necessary to invest much in RPO autonomy in a way to enable them negotiate institutional innovations likely to generate technical and economic innovations in favor of family agriculture.

- We can not claim to understand the complexity of reality with categories like agriculture, farmers and RPOs. It is necessary to use more relevant sub-divisions. A conceptual framework which sees in the inequalities of the world the result of market failures misses the point of the power relationships which are the cause. It is necessary to adopt a new conceptual framework which takes into account the power relationships.

⇒ The WDR is a great opportunity which has not been presented since 1982. The report dwells much on economic opportunities, though it is impossible to leave out policy advocacy. Could the

report not have focused on the place of agriculture in societies? Is it really possible to sidestep policy advocacy if the next opportunity is in 25 years?

⇒ Critical problems include dumping and new barriers. The EU uses the rollback of their assistance as a weapon in negotiations with other countries.

⇒ Market deregulation makes milk to be more expensive than cocoa; the social and environmental cost of a product should be included in its price.

⇒ RPOs are key actors in development strategies and may not be assimilated to mere production means. The place, role and functions assumed by agriculture are such that “a good agricultural policy is favorable to farmers and to all”. Given the economic and social weight of agriculture, its role in the employment structure, agriculture is the sector which absorbs most of the labor force and particularly the youths who are just entering the labor market. Boats reaching the Canaries Island are jam-packed with people saying “Barcelona or death”...

The World Bank should lay emphasis on countries where agriculture remains the major activity.

⇒ Recognition of the important role of family agricultures and their organizations in poverty alleviation should imply restoring agriculture and especially family agriculture at the core of national and regional agricultural policies and defining a sustainable funding mechanism for the various RPO functions.

⇒ RPOs play a key role in cushioning shocks and crises as well as in innovating. The State and the public sector should play a major role; the environment, poverty alleviation and more equity are issues that must compel the World Bank to invest in the public sector. Farmers need a State which arbitrates and provides services.

⇒ Regional development can be achieved through new relations between the State, markets and civil society.

⇒ RPO enhancement may reduce poverty.

⇒ Agriculture with a human face is indispensable to reduce poverty; brainstorming on agriculture should always focus on the poverty alleviation objective.

⇒ It is necessary that the World Bank encourages States to create an institutional, legislative and professional environment which is necessary to encourage intra-national and regional trade in agricultural produce.

⇒ Sustainable funding mechanisms are indispensable for RPOs.

- Farmers have proven their worth... For the World Bank, it is worth investing in RPOs because they are best placed to secure a return on investments. It is not proper to impose public policies on RPOs; better negotiate properly with them.

- Valorization of endogenous knowledge is indispensable.

- The multi-functionality of farmers leads to the multi-functionality of RPOs; their impact should take into account the quantitative and qualitative aspects.

- RPOs appear as often vulnerable actors that play a mediation role by representing farmers. They should be assisted and reinforced; consultation frameworks should be set up to enable them air their views, constitute a check and balance on issues relating to food security, market management, natural-resource management, etc.

- RPOs exist at all levels; all what should be done is to assist them to build their human capacities; help train RPO leaders and wage-earners.

- There is need to reinforce the role of RPOs in the areas of migration, the environment, poverty and sustainable growth. This also raises the issue of power relationships.

⇒ It is necessary to strengthen RPOs so that they may become influential partners vis-à-vis the State and other actors. It should be borne in mind that when the State is not functioning properly, RPOs will take the place of State authorities to render services.

⇒ Land issues are a priority.

⇒ MDGs have not been achieved, poverty has not been eradicated. We cannot continue like this; we should seek another way out. The Paris report on the efficiency of aid underscored the importance of participatory processes. The central role of smallholders was underscored, thereby raising key issues: land tenure, efficient market instruments, the need for farmers not to lose the fruit of their labor, etc. When farmers are placed at the center of interest, results follow; this should encourage capacity building and better regulation of markets. Why not trust farmers?

⇒ It is indispensable to reconstruct statistical tools in order to base policies on a better knowledge of the realities of the rural world. RPO impact is not only quantitative and social sciences must progress to help take into account the qualitative dimension of RPO impact on the living conditions of inhabitants.

Annex 2

Alternative proposal for rephrasing the messages

Ludovic LARBODIERE and Anne-Sophie CERISOLA
Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries

■ Message 1

RPOs are legitimate actors performing several key functions:

- economic: producer access to market, production of growth-inducing marketable goods, technical and economic actions, provision of services to individual production, etc.
- social: production of public goods necessary for sustainable development and social equilibrium, etc.
- political: consultation with other actors, particularly public actors (government services) and other private civil society actors, involvement in decision-making, etc.

■ Message 2

RPOs can perform such functions with improved efficiency only if they enjoy institutional recognition and build their capacities.

INSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION

The institutional mechanisms to be built and the rules to be set are intricately linked to the agricultural and rural policies and are indispensable instruments for putting the set guidelines into practice. RPOs should be closely associated to the design of these arrangements and rules which should concern especially: (1) the definition of legal statuses adapted to the diversity of RPOs and their activities; (2) the regulatory provisions governing commercial transactions; (3) provisions that ensure land security for family farmers; (4) the institutionalization of the various multi-stakeholder consultation frameworks; (5) the organization of government services, their functioning and their endowment with resources; (6) institutional regulations which correct market failures (for instance concentration of actors intervening upstream and downstream of production, “unfair” competition between farmers with very different levels of production and who enjoy highly unequal government support and protection, etc.) and which enable RPOs to assume their role in the production of public goods and in ensuring social equilibrium;

CAPACITY BUILDING

Three points seem to be essential in building RPO capacity:

- the setting up of funding mechanisms which enable them operate without creating new dependences;
- long-term support to national and sub-regional programs on training, experience-sharing and inter-RPO consultation;
- negotiation of external support programs with RPOs.

The sustainable efficiency of RPOs also presupposes to:

- reinforce the skills of government services and establish new relations with RPOs based on dialogue and consultation;
- consolidate democracy in countries where policies are not favorable to RPOs.

■ Message 3

Given the importance of national and sub-regional levels in the definition of a project to transform agriculture, which is at the service of sustainable development and which brings about poverty reduction, RPOs should influence the elaboration of public policies, the modalities for their implementation and take part in their impact assessment mechanisms.

- The action of RPOs may thus be carried out at three relevant levels: national, sub-regional and international

The national level remains an essential decision-making level: first, supra-national commitments are taken by national States and, secondly, the capacity of farmers to tap the opportunities offered by globalization and to overcome the resultant obstacles depends for the most part on national and, more and more often, sub-regional public policies.

At the national level, “an agricultural and rural policy favorable to family farming is a source of progress for farmers and for the entire society”; this presupposes a review of the public policy-making processes and the setting up of transparent and equitable RPO/State authorities consultation frameworks enabling:

- the negotiated definition of medium- and long-term guidelines for the agricultural and rural sector, and priority-setting;
- the concerted elaboration of agricultural policy instruments necessary for the implementation of the set guidelines;
- the concerted definition of mechanisms to organize the partnership with RPOs and enable the implementation of the elaborated guidelines and instruments;
- the negotiated establishment of mechanisms that allow for the involvement of RPOs in the monitoring and evaluation of implemented programs.

Over and above the agricultural policy, RPOs may make an important contribution for the harmonization of specific sector policies and programs concerning the rural world: rural infrastructure programs (in conjunction with local governments), specific poverty reduction programs, natural resource management programs, training programs, etc.

As they organize at the sub-regional level, RPOs must be associated in the definition of sub-regional agricultural policies, in accordance with the mechanisms defined in a concerted manner with State authorities.

It is obvious that the possibility for RPOs to influence the definition of public policies and play a role in their implementation varies a lot from one country to the other: degree of organization and highly variable skills of the RPOs (see message 6); more or less democratic political context; etc.

- The reduction of asymmetries which are characteristic of relations between RPOs and other actors of their economic, institutional and political environment presupposes the formation of alliances to consolidate the democratic processes and to improve the functioning of markets.

It is necessary to form alliances between the State, RPOs and other civil society actors to influence the international agenda in order to (1) enable more equitable access to markets for smallholders, (2) recognize the role of family agricultures in the production of public goods and, more generally, (3) state commercial rules in line with the Millennium Development Goals.

In a context that is has become very complex and unstable, alliance strategies may not be designed in a dichotomous manner (family farmers and their organizations versus the private sector and the State, for instance) and should be formed at various levels:

- asymmetries between farmers, RPOs and their institutional and political actors lead to alliances within the civil society in order to influence government authorities;
- the influence acquired by certain economic actors as a result of concentration (multinationals) justify the formation of alliances between RPOs, certain private actors and State authorities;

– the asymmetries that are characteristic of relations between countries, in international negotiations, lead to the formation of alliances (at national and sub-regional levels) between the civil society, the State and certain private actors in order to influence the global agenda and combat the constitution of economic macro-actors which often find themselves in a position of quasi-monopoly.

Annex 3

Workshop agenda

MONDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2006

9 a.m. – 9.30 a.m.: Session 1: Introduction

Opening of workshop (MAE/MAP/IFAD/WB)
Introduction of participants
Workshop objectives and expected results (WB)
Program and working method (CIRAD)

9.30 a.m. – 11 a.m.: Session 2: Current WDR outline

Presentation (A. de Janvry)
Discussion
Modalities for RPO participation in discussions on the first draft of the WDR

11 a.m. – 11.30 a.m.: Coffee Break

11.30 a.m. – 1 p.m. : Session 3: RPO, empowerment of farmers and results of collective action

Introduction : MR. Mercoiret (CIRAD) and J. Minla Mfou'ou (CANADEL)
Interventions of RPO leaders
Discussions

1 p. m. – 2.30 p.m.: Lunch on the spot

2.30 p.m. – 4 p.m.: Session 4: RPOs and access to markets

Introduction: L. Peppelenbos (KIT) with contributions from Pilar Jano (RIMISP) and de V. Achancho (Ministry of Agriculture, Cameroun)
Interventions of RPO leaders
Discussions

4 p.m. – 4.30 p.m.: Coffee Break

4.30 p.m. – 6 p.m.: Session 5: RPOs and innovation

Introduction: B. Wennick (KIT)
Interventions of RPO leaders
Discussions

TUESDAY, 31 OCTOBER 2006

9 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.: Session 6: RPOs, decentralization and local development

Introduction: P.M Bosc (CIRAD)

Interventions of RPO leaders

Discussions

10.30 a.m. -11 a.m.: Coffee Break

11 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.: Session 7: RPOs and public policies

Introduction: D. Pesche (CIRAD)

Interventions of RPO leaders

Discussions

12.30 p.m. – 2.30 p.m.: Lunch on the spot

2.30 p.m. – 4 p.m.: Session 8: RPO and the construction of the institutional environment

Introduction: Frans van Hoof (Agriterra) with contribution from F. Destrait (Inter-Réseaux)

Interventions of RPO leaders

Discussions

4 p.m. – 4.30 p.m.: Coffee Break

4. 30 p.m. -6 p.m.: Session 9: Stock-taking

“WDR: what key messages concerning the role of RPOs in agricultural and rural development?”

Annex 4

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