

Enhancing Cowpea Productivity for Sustainable Livelihoods of Farmers in West Africa

Promoting the supply of improved seeds, markets access, and the deployment of extension services for up-scaling best practices are important factors conditioning the rate of adoption and hence the increased contribution of cowpea to improved livelihoods of rural farmers.

Cowpea has been called "the poor man's meat," due to its high protein content. It produces easily picked crops at maturity. The bushy varieties provide forage for livestock. The vining varieties of cowpeas provide soil cover, thus smoldering noxious weeds, and protecting the soil from erosion. All varieties of cowpea capture and fix atmospheric nitrogen, hence improving soil health. The potential yield of cowpea is known to be up to 1.5 t/ha, but the actual yield in West African farmers' field still hovers below 300 kg/ha. This is largely as a result of the fact that recent innovations which should make it possible to realize the full potentials of this crop remain unknown and largely unused by producers.

This CAADP-aligned project is directly addressing such major challenges currently faced by the sub-regions actors in the cowpea value chain. These include supply of good quality seeds of varieties resistant to drought, *Striga* and the Maruka insect pest; poor capacity of actors to deploy integrated crop management systems; poor postharvest value-addition; and low availability of enabling information which could enable actors to make production choices.



Fully matured cowpea plant with pods ready for picking.
Photo: Kay Ledbetter

Main Beneficiaries

Farmers, traders, processors and consumers will benefit from good quality seeds, and from new innovations which should empower increased productivity. The research scientists will benefit from advanced integrated agricultural research for development techniques needed for working with producers in their fields. The cowpea supply chain will be more durable.

Main regional benefits

New cowpea management technologies will be out-scaled to countries of West and Central Africa.

Partners

This project is funded by DFID, and is coordinated by CORAF/WECARD. It is being implemented by Institut d'Economie Rurale (Mali); Institut National des Recherches Agronomiques du Bénin (INRAB); Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI); Institut National de l'Environnement et de la Recherches Agricoles (INERA), Burkina-Faso; Ghana Organic agriculture Network (GOAN), Ghana; and International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA),-Benin.

Components	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>Technologies & Innovations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved varieties of cowpea resistant to drought, pests and diseases identified • Dual purpose varieties of cowpea suitable for specific regions proposed • Improved IPM techniques suitable to specific regions proposed • Bio-pesticide options proposed 	<p>Outcome 1 Enhanced performance of the cowpea value chain</p> <p>Outcome 2 Adapted IPM techniques assimilated into cowpea production</p>	<p>Enhanced cowpea productivity in Burkina Faso, Mali, Benin, Sierra Leone and Ghana.</p> <p>Increased income and wellbeing of farmers and marketers of cowpea products.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p>Input-Output Markets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seed producer farmers and entrepreneurs identified • Input and output market demands and supply needs in cowpea production and consumption identified • Appropriate information dissemination strategy on cowpea value chain developed 	<p>Outcome 3 Sustainable business models for cowpea input supply and marketing enterprises developed</p> <p>Outcome 4 Increased investments in the cowpea value chain</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>Capacity Strengthening</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity strengthening needs relative to cowpea production specific for each region identified • Appropriate training modules for effective use of IPM packages by farmers developed. • Cowpea pest and disease diagnostic manuals for use by rural farmers developed • Farmer field forums strategy developed for specific regions for innovation uptake 	<p>Outcome 5 Tools and best practices for cowpea production assimilated by producers/marketers</p> <p>Outcome 6 Enhanced capacity of scientists to conduct integrated research for development in farmers' fields</p>	

For more information

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