The Impact of Social Approaches on Agricultural Technology Dissemination <Part 3>

Effects on the Implementation of Marketing Strategies and the Establishment of Cropping Systems

The Northern Uganda Farmers' Livelihood Improvement Project (NUFLIP), in which AAI was involved from 2015 to 2021, focused on two core pillars: Market-Oriented Agriculture (MOA) and Quality of Life (QOL) Improvement. This series highlights how the social approach, Improvement of Quality of Life, affected the adoption and dissemination of MOA technologies.

Impact on the Implementation of Marketing Strategies

In market-oriented agriculture, the first step is to conduct a market survey. The survey itself is simple, but many farmers had never done it before and found it hard to start. With a little encouragement through project training and follow-up, however, farmers were able to take action and get useful results.

In market survey training, participants were paired as male-female teams to ensure gender balance. They conducted surveys in nearby markets, and many participants noted that "women are better at interviews." Since most vegetable vendors in local markets were women, female farmers could more easily engage in casual conversations and collect necessary information. Some participants also mentioned that by becoming more market-conscious, women were able to naturally gather market information during their daily shopping.

When it came to sales, women often managed money more carefully than men did. One male participant even commented, "I let my wife sell the vegetables because she won't waste the money on alcohol or socializing after selling vegetables." While men still tended to take the lead in larger or higher-volume markets, compared with the past when men held control over all money matters, the current situation showed a more complementary style of marketing that utilized the strengths of both men and women.

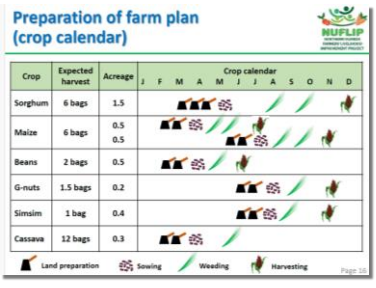
Impact on the Establishment of Cropping Systems

Even if farmers learned new cultivation techniques, these techniques would not be sustained unless they were integrated into the existing farming system. One of NUFLIP's challenges was how to incorporate vegetable cultivation as a cash crop into their traditional farming systems.

A symbolic incident occurred in the project's second year. One farmer group carefully managed his tomato field, and the plants grew very well. However, when the harvest season arrived, the tomatoes remained unharvested and turned red in the field. This was because the tomato harvest coincided with the sesame harvest. The farmers chose to prioritize sesame. In terms of profitability, tomatoes were more valuable. The farmers prioritized sesame because it is indispensable in the traditional cuisine. For many farmers, food crops had a higher priority than cash crops.

A tomato field where the harvest was delayed, and the fruits turned red without being picked.

To avoid repeating such failures, the training session on "Farm Planning for Food Production" played an important role. Originally the session was designed as part of the QOL component to address food shortages during the dry season and to promote nutrition improvement. In the session, farmers visualized their annual farming calendar and this helped avoid scheduling conflicts between food crops and cash crops. Additionally, the subsequent training on "Farm Planning for Vegetable Production" became much more effective. This effect was also unintended at the outset, and a positive outcome of the social approach to agricultural technology dissemination.



Training material for "Farm Planning for Food Production" (left) and a session on "Farm Planning for Vegetable Production" (right). By making a food production plan, farmers could clearly see how to include vegetable production in their yearly work.