



USAID ADVANCE NEWSLETTER

USAID ADVANCE Adopts Planting Basin as an Alternate Method of Land Preparation for Smallholder Farmers

USAID ADVANCE has adopted planting basins as an alternative for smallholder farmers who are unable to obtain timely land preparation services such as ploughing and ripping. Hence, it is branded as “manual ripping”. The advantages of basins are enormous. Basins enhance water retention from the first rains of the wet season and enable precise application of both organic and inorganic fertilizer (where available) as it is applied directly into the pit and not broadcasted. Basins help concentrate the fertilizer (manure or chemical) where the crop is planted. Also, maize under basins develops extensive rooting systems that makes them effective in tapping water and minerals required by the plants for growth and development. Incidents of lodging in maize is reduced due to the enhanced rooting system that aids in proper anchoring of the plants to the soil.

USAID ADVANCE has established ten basin demonstration sites in the Upper West Region since June 2017. The project's observation on the basin sites as of August 2017 (within two months of establishment) showed that plant growth on basin sites was more uniform in height and looked healthier and more robust than those on conventionally plowed plots. During short periods of drought, the plants planted in basins thrived while the ones on the plowed field showed serious stress signs. The widespread root development of plants in basins made them more resistant to lodging than conventionally prepared plots.

The participating farmers made interesting observations during top dressing activities at three of the basin demonstration sites, namely: Bullu, Joleryiri, and Guo. At the three sites, farmers reported that most plants in the basin had new shoots sprouting (tillering) up into new plants with some almost the same size and height as the original plant. These encouraging results are attributable to the suitable conditions including moisture conservation, localized nature of fertilizers in the basin and loose soil created by the basins because the hard pan has been broken.

USAID ADVANCE will continue to promote this conservation agricultural technique in the coming crop season. Approximately 50 more planting basin demonstration fields will be set up in the next farming season, in locations not reached by mechanized land preparation services.



Conventional plot

Basin demo

This farm (in the picture above) belongs to a smallholder farmer, Polee-na Mahame, in Joleryiri community in the Wa West District. There are two sets of maize plants shown in this photo. The one on the left is on a conventional plot while the other on the right is a demo prepared with basins. Maize seeds were planted on the same day but the results of plants on the basin demo have high and uniform growth compared to the ones planted on the conventional plot. The farmer, Polee-na, is touching the plant on the basin to show its height. Acknowledging the benefits of the basin, he has avowed: “if God doesn't take my life, I can assure everyone that I will adopt the basin technology on my 25-acre land next year. The basin shows good results and is easy to practice.”

The basin technology will promote sustainable land preparation technologies for smallholder farmers in northern Ghana

“What is remarkable is the uniformity of growth of the maize crop on the planting basins. Next year I plan to prepare my 5-acre maize farm using planting basins” –

Nasir-deen Mohammed (Lead Farmer, Banungoma Community in the Upper West Region)



A smallholder farmer in the Upper West Region and his team marking out lines for laying out and digging for a hand dug precision Basin

Meet USAID ADVANCE's Senior Capacity Building Specialist

Chrysanthe Ataarem Ranson Fortunate is the Senior Capacity Building Specialist for the USAID ADVANCE project. He joined the project in 2014, from Innovation for Poverty Action (IPA, Ghana) where he served as the Zonal Coordinator for the Teacher Community Assistant Initiative (TCAI) Project from 2010 to 2013. He also worked as a Community Development Facilitator for Plan Ghana, from 2003 to 2010.

A product of the University of Cape Coast, Chrysanthe holds a Master of Arts (MA) in Good Governance and Sustainable Development and a B.Ed. (Hons) Degree in Sociology and Economics. He also has a Postgraduate Certificate in Project Management from the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA)

As the Capacity Building team lead, his work includes but not limited to: identification, assessment and categorization of local institutions using Organization Capacity Assessment (OCA) tools for capacity building; identification, assessment and categorization of Farmer-Based Organizations (FBOs) using the Membership, Marketing, Money and Management (M4) Tool; development of Farmer Based Enterprises (FBE) assessment tool as a means of assessing and transforming FBOs to FBEs; reviewing and development of existing Numeracy and FaaB curricula for community level training; and organizing numeracy and FaaB trainings both at the trainer of trainers and community levels.

Over the stretch of his working career, Chrysanthe has progressively learnt how to work with different



Chrysanthe Ataarem Ranson,
USAID ADVANCE's Senior Capacity
Building Specialist

caliber of staff and farmers especially farmer based organizations, has become adaptive to new ideas and skilled in the USAID processes and procedures.

Chrysanthe hails from Wiagah in the Upper East Region, and is married with two children. He intends to venture into large scale capacity building activities for FBOs in the future to assist them realize their full potentials.

Strengthening Market Linkages for Increased Commodity Sales



Imoro Tijani by the side of his stored grains in Gushegu District

One of the main objectives of the USAID ADVANCE project is to increase market access and trade for maize, rice and soybean farmers in the project's zones of operation. The project's approach to achieving this objective is through a multi-facilitated market linkage approach including trade missions involving buyer and seller business exchange

USAID ADVANCE's Facilitated Market Linkages Has Led to Expansion of Commodity Sales by Outgrower Businesses in northern Ghana

visits, pre-harvest agribusiness events, market or trade fairs and events, transport linkages and capacity development of the value chain actors to participate actively in the value chain.

In pursuit of this objective, USAID ADVANCE, has since January 2017, assisted 36 outgrower businesses (OBs) and 12 farmer based organizations (FBOs), who are linked to over 10,080 smallholder farmers, to expand trade and market opportunities with formal end market buyers as well as strengthening existing trade relationships. Majority of these end market buyers are in the southern

Facilitating Economic Development through Climate Smart Agriculture Practices



A spray service provider in his Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) spraying a farm land

The health and safety of farmers, especially the vulnerable in farming communities, has been one of the prime concerns of USAID ADVANCE. In northern Ghana, some smallholder farmers continue to use pesticides without protecting themselves adequately from the hazardous effect of these pesticides. Notwithstanding the economic benefits of using these products, they turn to pose environmental and health risks to users and other natural resources. The effect of the pesticides on the environment can reduce biodiversity and aquatic life if not handled appropriately. There has been evidence of food poisoning and many skin diseases that could be attributed to inappropriate use and handling of agricultural pesticides in Ghana.

To mitigate the harmful effects of pesticides on users and the environment at large, USAID ADVANCE, in collaboration with Plant Protection Regulatory Services Departments (PPRSD) of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA), set up and trained 151 young men as spraying services providers across the Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions of Ghana in 2016. The training covered the use of various products, assembling and servicing of knapsack sprayers. It also included topics on the importance of the use of personal protection equipment, customer care, and basic records keeping. After being equipped with the knowledge and skills to provide professional spraying services at a high level of professionalism and expediency, the trained spraying service providers offered services to 2,953 smallholder

USAID ADVANCE's Spraying Services Provision Has Contributed to Improved Livelihoods of Youth in Northern Ghana

farmers with a total spraying service value of GHC 64,675, covering 7,907.5 acres. Additionally, 7,630 liters of various assorted products and crop protection products were used by these spray service providers trained by the project.

It is evident that the service provision provided seasonal jobs for the spray service providers who rendered these services at a fee. It provided additional income which enabled the service providers to increase their productivity through investment in production inputs. The income obtained was also used for social activities such as payments of school fees and funerals.

I generated GHC 2,544 from the 318 acres I sprayed in 2016, with which I bought nine bags of fertilizers and applied on my four acre maize farm. Through this, my yield increased from the usual 1.3 metric tons to 3.9 metric tons of maize. I give credit to USAID ADVANCE for exposing me to a business opportunity within my own neighborhood and helping me get enough food to feed my family.

Dauda Yakubu, a spray service provider in the Northern Region.

More so, high patronage of the spray services would significantly reduce the effect of pesticides on farms, families and the environment at large.

To make the spraying services more accessible to smallholder farmers, USAID ADVANCE is expanding the spraying services portfolio by training an additional 536 sprayers across the three northern regions of Ghana by the end of 2017. In terms of sustainability, USAID ADVANCE is developing dedicated supply chains for these spray service providers by linking them to private sector input firms, telecommunication networks, banks and outgrower businesses to establish business relationships that will inure to the benefit of parties involved in this kind of collaboration.

USAID ADVANCE Wins an Award for Digital Innovation

Story source: ACDI/VOCA President's Office Friday Notes (29/09/17)

As part of USAID Innovation Week, the USAID ADVANCE project won a Digi Award for digital innovation in its use of smart cards to capture data. The smart cards allowed the project's Monitoring, Evaluation, Report and Learning (MERL) system to become an effective tool for learning and management, refocusing programs for maximum impact. Dr. Niri Ramasinjatovo, who previously served as the USAID ADVANCE Deputy Chief of Party for MERL has recently joined Headquarters – and received the award on behalf of the Ghana team and the USAID Mission.

USAID, in conjunction with the Australian aid agency, the Hewlett and Gates Foundations, and the Center for Global Development organized the 2017 Global Innovation Week at the Reagan Building in Washington DC. The conference targeted “leading innovators, industry experts, researchers, and scientists to showcase the latest thinking around innovation in government, global health and international development”.



Women in Diare community of the Northern Region could not hide their excitement as they displayed their USAID ADVANCE smart cards after their first receipt. Picture by Charles Yaro

Strengthening Market Linkages for Increased Commodity Sales ... Cont'd from page 2

part of Ghana especially Ashanti and Brong Ahafo Regions who need soy, maize and paddy rice for processing. The end market buyers include Vester Oil Mills Limited, Royal Danemac limited (soymeal processors based in Kumasi), GhanaNuts, Yedent Agro Industries and EGABs Ghana Limited (soymeal and food processors based in Sunyani), Agricare Company, Premium Foods Limited and Agrisolve company (maize buyers and food processors based in Kumasi and Tema). AVNASH Industries Ghana Limited, Nyebu Biyoona, Tiyumba Women rice processing centers based in

Northern Region and Wurawura Rice Company in Volta Region are the major rice buyers.

As a result of these linkages, the 36 OBs and 12 FBOs have sold a total of 3,159.74 metric tons of maize, paddy rice and soybeans valued at GHS 3,329,314.40 within six months in 2017 compared to GHS 1,100,000.00 during the same period in 2016.

Imoro Tijani, from the Gusheigu District of the Northern Region, is one of the outgrower businesses who has benefitted from project interventions on market access.

Imoro joined USAID ADVANCE in 2015 with 64 outgrowers but because of USAID ADVANCE's market linkage approaches, he has expanded his reach to 250 outgrowers (in 2017) who are cultivating soya and rice.

For example: Imoro was linked to Royal Danemac, one of the major soya processors in Kumasi, in 2015. He sold 54 metric tons of soy to Royal Danemac in Kumasi for processing. Currently in 2017, Royal Danemac provides pre-financing to Imoro for aggregation with a total supply of 119.20 metric tons of Soya valued at GHS 140,935.

Contact:

USAID ADVANCE, Space B7,A&C Business Plaza, East Legon | Tel: +233 302 520231/2 | fkainoo@acdiovocaghana.org | Website: www.acdivoca.org



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