



# FEED THE FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative



## AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND VALUE CHAIN ENHANCEMENT PROJECT (ADVANCE)

FY2019 THIRD QUARTERLY REPORT: APRIL – JUNE 2019



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# USAID's ADVANCE PROJECT FY19 Q2 REPORT

APRIL – JUNE 2019

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# ACRONYM LIST

ADVANCE	Agricultural Development and Value Chain Enhancement
AEA	Agriculture Extension Agent
DFID	Department for International Development
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FaaB	Farming as a Business
FAW	Fall Armyworm
FBO	Farmer-Based Organization
TFTF	Feed the Future
FTFMS	Feed the Future Monitoring System
FY	Fiscal Year
GAIP	Ghana Agricultural Insurance Pool
GAP	Good Agronomic Practice
GASIP	Ghana Agriculture Sector Investment Project
GCX	Ghana Commodity Exchange
GESSiP	Catholic Relief Service Ghana Extension Systems Strengthening Project
GGC	Ghana Grains Council
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MADE	Market Development Programme for Northern Ghana
MEL	Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
MOFA	Ministry of Food and Agriculture
(M)SME	(Medium,) Small, and Micro Enterprise
MT	Metric Ton
NBSSI	National Board for Small Scale Industries
NGGA	Northern Ghana Governance Activity
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OB	Outgrower Business

PFJ	Planting for Food and Jobs
PHH	Post-Harvest Handling
PPRSD	Plant Protection and Regulatory Services Directorate
RADs	Rural Agri-input Dealers
SSPs	Safe Spray Providers
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAA	Village Agro-input Agent
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
ZOI	Zone of Influence
WAP	Women in Agriculture Platform

## A. Executive Summary

The USAID funded Agricultural Development and Value Chain Enhancement project (USAID's ADVANCE project) received additional funding to extend implementation from May 1, 2019 to April 30, 2020. The project started the current extension phase with a work planning workshop in Tamale from May 7 to 10, 2019 and invited representatives from the zonal and regional outgrower business (OB) networks established in the zone of influence (ZOI) of USAID's Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) for Ghana. The meeting laid out the new project implementation approach which focuses on building the capacity of the OB networks in broadening and catalysing relationships with value chain actors to expand their members' businesses and advocating for their members' common interests.

The project subsequently organized three regional stakeholders' fora in Tamale, Bolgatanga and Wa from June 17 to 21 as platforms to share the project's achievements and challenges and strategize on the sustainability of the project's results and impact. During the events, the project also shared findings of learning studies, which assessed the sustainability of the OB model, business case for buyer-sponsored outgrower schemes, the grants program as incentive for value chain competitiveness, impact of village savings and loans associations (VSLAs) on smallholder farmers, level of expansion of input dealer businesses for sustainability and impact of the project's pest management programs for fall armyworm (FAW). The fora were attended by 114 participants, with representatives from USAID, the Government of Ghana, OB networks, private sector, and other donor projects.

During this quarter, as part of fulfilling objectives under sub-purpose one (increase agricultural productivity in targeted commodities), the project focused on assessing capacity of actors and actor groups to operate independently and become sustainable in supporting smallholder farmers to improve productivity. The project developed training curricula and conducted training to fill the identified capacity gaps. The project developed training needs assessment tools for the OB networks, VSLAs, safe spray providers (SSPs), and Village Agri-input Agents VAAs). The project deployed the tools and started to analyse the assessment results. Nine out of the 10 Zonal OB networks have acquired offices to host their secretariat and eight networks are operating bank accounts. The project supported all 10 networks to complete their strategic plans. The project is currently engaged with the future trainers like the national Board for Small-scale industries (NBSSI) to provide OBs and networks with training on business and management, to improve their capacity to conduct annual planning and budgeting, to keep and use business records and access to, and management of financial resources. For the long term the project will facilitate agreements between the networks and NBSSI for regular need-based support.

The project staff assisted in organizing annual review meetings of OBs and field agents and introduced a standardized format that enables easy recording of proceedings, compilation and comparative results across networks. During the review meetings, OBs indicated that they were able to adequately provide most of the services to their smallholders, except for ploughing services where demand continues to exceed their capacity to deliver. They also called for additional training in managing FAW. They also expressed the need to develop methods to reduce the percentage of farmers who default on repayment of input credit and other services.

The 10 Zonal networks started to negotiate with input dealers to set up field demonstrations and provide services without project facilitation but with project staff supervision. The 10 OB networks plan to conduct 74 field demonstrations (60 for maize and 14 for soybean) targeting over 2,000 smallholders on good agricultural practice (GAPs). The project drafted a guide outlining steps required to establish and run a field demonstration. The networks continued to seek sponsorships from the input companies. Two of them, Sissala area OB network and Wa OB network, already secured 195 kg of seeds worth \$78<sup>1</sup> and 116 bags of fertilizer valued \$1,653.

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<sup>1</sup> Exchange rate for FY19 Q3 is GHS 5.263 to 1US\$

USAID's ADVANCE project conducted activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of "third party" services providers including VSLAs, rural agri-input dealers (RADs), and spray services providers (SSPs). The project sensitized VSLAs on benefits of owning mobile phones and using them as digital financial tools. The project staff assessed mobile network strength and connectivity in areas where VSLAs operate to advise on the most suitable telecommunication operators to collaborate with. Staff held other sensitization sessions on expanding input dealership businesses, setting up OB offices, and improving business management skills.

The project continued to collaborate with the FAW National Taskforce to manage the pest. The project enhanced the existing alert and surveillance system to include the OB networks, OBs and lead farmers at the district and regional level. The project participated in monitoring visits to assess the FAW management preparedness in the Upper West Region. The reports indicated there are shortfalls in FAW control information materials and pesticides, which the project will help address.

During this quarter, as part of fulfilling objectives under sub-purpose two (increased market access and trade in targeted commodities), the project focused on the buyer-sponsored outgrower schemes. The OB networks initiated discussions with the buyers, and project staff supported afterwards. Six buyers (including four new entrants) negotiated with the networks, which indicates that OBs and their OGs are strengthening trust and improving their businesses.

As part of Sub-purpose three (strengthen capacity for advocacy and activity implementation), the project focused on activities that promote sustainable behaviour change in business practices. Generally, lessons from OB assessments indicate the OBs continue to make and sustain progress, despite the varied backgrounds of business owners with respect to education, resource endowment, and point of entry into the project. From the lessons learned in implementing the OB benchmarking tool, the project developed and tested several value chain capacity assessment and benchmarking tools in collaboration with value chain actors, including Safe Spray Providers (SSPs), Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs), Rural Agri-input Dealers (RADs) and Village Agri-input Agents (VAAs). The tools measure and grade business behaviours and practices in order to identify areas for business performance improvement. The common areas of which the project assessed business practices and behaviours include group leadership, fulfilment of group objectives, use of digital finance tools, management and digitization of business records, engagement of stakeholders, inclusion of women and youth, and environmental stewardship. The project benchmarks their practices against standard practices with the goal of identifying those with expertise and a willingness to share along with those requiring support. The benchmarking exercise also categorizes the OBs into classes that serve as an incentive for improvement.

The project commenced activities aimed at opening appropriate entry points for the youth to participate in the maize and soybean value chains. One of the key areas identified is the use of ICT for which the project plans to engage Kosmos Innovation Center that supports start-up companies owned by the youth and help them set up their businesses through a competitive entrepreneurship contest. The project also sensitized OB networks and other value chain actors on the business sense of including youth in their business operations as employees, clients or successors. The project also advocated for inclusion of women, especially to improve access to land and other productive resources. In addition, the project has initiated discussions with MADE-Ghana to collaborate on several issues on women inclusion, including supporting young female students/grandaunts of the Damongo Agricultural College to gain field agribusiness experience and joint celebration of achievements by women, during the UN International Day for Rural Women, among others.

During this quarter, the project reached 13,994 participants, which represents 70 percent of FY2019 target of 20,000. The beneficiaries include 79 OBs (3 women) and 13,915 smallholders of which 50 percent or 7,054 are women and 27 percent or 3,716 are youth. The 79 OBs plan to provide production services to 23,068 including 11,176 males, 11,892 females and 5,689 youth farmers when the production season progresses.

During this quarter, five individual OBs in the Northern Region accessed cash credit valued at \$10,029 to invest in their production from Opportunity International Saving and Loans Ltd. We expect more participants to access loans to invest in their businesses as the production season progresses.



## B. Introduction

This report presents the main accomplishments of USAID's ADVANCE project implemented by ACDI/VOCA during the third quarter of fiscal year 2019 (FY19). The project was originally scheduled to end on April 30, 2019. However, a cost extension modification changed the closing date to April 30, 2020. The project's goal is to increase the competitiveness of the maize, rice, and soybean value chains in Ghana. However, the project will focus on the maize and soybean value chains during the cost extension period. The report summarizes the project's achievements against this goal and its indicators, and presents the main results and activities undertaken during the quarter. It is organized along the project's intermediate results as follows:

- Increased agricultural productivity in targeted commodities
- Increased market access and trade of targeted commodities
- Strengthened capacity for advocacy and activity implementation

The report starts by summarizing the project's collaboration with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA), followed by a summary of key results. The report also covers the project's cross-cutting activities, including gender and youth, environment, and monitoring, evaluation, and learning activities.

## C. Collaboration

### Collaboration with the Ministry of Food (MOFA) and Agriculture and decentralized units

The project is collaborating with MOFA on two broad fronts; Combating the fall armyworm (FAW) infestation and building capacity of OB networks.

Project staff joined other representatives of the National Task Force to conduct monitoring visits in Wa East, Nadowli-Kaleo, Daffiama-Busie-Issa, Sissala East and Sissala West Districts of the Upper West Region. The team assessed the readiness of regional and district staff to respond to any FAW emergencies and support farmers in managing infestations. From the number of insecticides and publications in stock, and based on infestation levels in 2018, the Ministry was deemed ready to respond to farmers who may require help in combating the pest. The materials were however yet to be distributed to communities to inform farmers, as at June.

MOFA is also supporting the project in ensuring that OB networks access relevant agricultural services and products, especially those introduced by government agencies. In this quarter, four OB networks (Bawku, Nalerigu, Mamprugu-Moadguri) received 5 MT of improved seeds of maize from the Planting for Food and Jobs program.

The OB networks, with project support, are negotiating with MOFA decentralized units to avail office space to spare to house some networks' secretariat. During this quarter, the Upper East Regional OB Network and the Bawku Zonal Network were granted space in the respective MOFA premises to host their secretariat.

### Collaboration with Other Partners

#### USAID NORTHERN GHANA GOVERNANCE ACTIVITY (NGGA)

The NGGA established a platform named Women in Agriculture platform (WAP) which offers a common avenue for advocacy to promotes agricultural reforms and development that benefit women. The platform's functions include bringing in agribusinesses and other actors to discuss with women leaders on issues that

concern women. The project engaged NGGA to incorporate OB networks on the WAP platform to support land rights and production resources for female crop producers in the project's zone of influence.

#### MADE-GHANA

There were several engagements with UK Aid funded (DFID) project, MADE-Ghana, during the quarter, with the view of strengthening collaboration in the areas of gender mainstreaming, reduction of redundant overlaps in operations and joint hosting/supporting public events such as the UN International Day for Rural Women and Pre-Harvest Agribusiness and Networking meeting. A draft memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been signed and full implementation will commence next quarter.

#### NATIONAL BOARD FOR SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES (NBSSI)

The project is drafting an MOU with National Board for Small Scale Industries to provide OBs and networks with training on business and management, to improve their capacity to conduct annual planning and budgeting, to keep and use business records and access to, and management of financial resources. For the long term the project will facilitate agreements between the networks and NBSSI for regular need-based support.

#### GHANA AGRICULTURE SECTOR INVESTMENT PROJECT (GASIP)

The project has commenced discussions with Ghana Agriculture Sector Improvement Project's management to provide capacity building to OBs and farmer groups. The discussions are at the early stages and specific areas have not been finalized for field implementation.

#### CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICE GHANA EXTENSION SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING PROJECT (GESSIP)

GESSIP is establishing a corps of self-employed Village-Based Advisors (VBA) to support the agricultural extension system of MoFA. The project is discussing with GESSIP, how the VBA can provide services to the OB networks and other actors such as VSLA members and SSPs.

#### GHANA GRAINS COUNCIL – GGC

The project is working with the Ghana Grains Council to train OBs and OB networks on grain quality standards, and to develop and roll out an internal produce certification system. GGC will finalize the training schedule and start to train in the next quarter.

#### GHANA COMMODITY EXCHANGE – GCX

Ghana Commodity Exchange collaborated with the project and trained five OB networks on the operations and benefits of the commodity exchange. The OB networks expressed strong interest in signing up to the GCX platform as a group and/or as individuals to avail them an alternative marketing channel for their grains.

## D. Summary of Results

### Individual Participation

During the quarter, the project worked with 79 OBs (three women) and 13,915 smallholder farmers, of which 7,054 (51 percent) are women and 3,716 (27percent) are youth. With these results, the project reached a total of 13,994 participants which is 70 percent of the FY2019 (20,000 beneficiaries) target. Fifty percent (7,057) of all participants are women. The 79 OBs planned to provide production services to 23,068 outgrowers, including 11,176 males, 11,892 females, 5,689 of them being young farmers with support from 51 field agents.

### Agricultural loans

During the quarter, five individual OBs in the Northern Region accessed cash credits valued \$10,029 to invest in their production from Opportunity International Savings and Loans Ltd. We expect more participants to access loans to invest in their businesses as the production season gets very busy. Similarly,

six OB networks (Kusaug, Beimoni, Gushegu, Tumu, Nawuni Nsungti and Yendi networks) secured 2,809.45 MT of seeds, 395 liters of herbicide and 600 bags of fertilizer valued at \$21,181 from RMG, Simple Prince, Heritage seeds and support from IWAD to support their OGs.

## Village savings and loans associations and safe spray providers

During this quarter, the project worked with 461 VSLAs and 354 SSPs in the ZOI. The total number of participants included 10,199 VSLA members (7,054 female and 3,145 male) which is 254% of the target of 400. The female and youth participants constitute 69 percent and 38% (3,830) respectively. The VSLAs intentionally target women for financial inclusion.

# E. Progress with Technical Delivery

## Sub-Purpose I: Increased Agricultural Productivity in Targeted Commodities

During this quarter, the project focused on:

- Strengthening sustainable business systems for service provision and input distribution
- Organizing capacity building training for OBs' field agents on identified gaps
- Supporting OBs who set up offices to improve their business and management skills
- Strengthening the capacity of third-party service providers
- Linking VSLAs to mobile money service providers
- Increasing adoption of improved productivity-enhancing technologies and practices

### SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS SYSTEMS FOR SERVICE PROVISION AND INPUT DISTRIBUTION

#### ***Assess OB networks' capacity to operate as full business entities without external support***

The OB networks' capacity assessment is on-going and being conducted in two areas: institutional capacity and management (personnel) capacity. The results from the institutional capacity assessment indicate that nine out of the ten zonal networks have an office to host their secretariat. The only zonal network left is Jirapa Zonal network, which is in the process of finding an office. All three regional networks have acquired temporary offices which they are in discussions on conditions for occupancy. Five networks concluded registration of their networks as a business with the Registrar General's Department, whilst eight out of the ten zonal networks have bank accounts with financial institutions.

The project finalized the tool for assessing capacity of the networks' executives and members on leadership, office management, engagement with stakeholders, gender and youth inclusion, use of ICT and environmental stewardship. The results will feed into the development of a training program for the networks. The assessment tool and training curricula are developed with the networks for ownership and post-project use.

#### ***Support OB networks to develop long-term plans***

USAID's ADVANCE project continued to support OB networks in developing viable long-term strategic plans that will help the networks grow and be sustainable. During this quarter, project staff supported the network executives in reviewing the plans that had already been developed before the cost extension period. Four of the ten zonal networks located in Karaga, Gushegu, Yendi and Tamale already had their strategic plans developed.

Project staff held seven meetings with 32 executives and OBs in Upper West, Upper East, North East and Northern Regions. The sessions were interactive, and the OBs were guided to develop various aspects of the strategic plan including core values, mission and vision statements, objectives, SWOT analysis, fundraising opportunities, activities among others. Ten Zonal OB networks have completed their strategic and action plans.

### ***Review meetings with OBs' field agents and OBs***

This annual activity is held to create mutual learning from the operations of and services provided by OBs during the previous crop season. For this year's meeting, the project supported the networks to develop and use a simple format/agenda to guide such review meetings. The guide enabled participants at the review meeting to systematically assess each area of their businesses, provide a general rating in relation to the previous year's business, and make suggestions for improvement.

During the reporting period, seven zonal review meetings were organized with 68 OBs (67 men and 1 woman) in Northern, North East, Upper West and East Regions. The project tackled the topics of OB business operations (including establishing demonstration), FAW awareness and control, OB service provision, OB management, OB and field agent relationship, and use of ICT tools.

The following are some of the discussions and outcomes of the review meetings:

- Field agents have adequate experience in selecting appropriate lands for setting up demonstration plots.
- Dissemination of information on FAW through radio was rated as very good because it reached most farmers and provided important information for education and training.
- Supply of inputs under buyer-sponsored outgrower scheme was rated as very good.
- Services provided by OBs to smallholder farmers (except ploughing) were rated good and very good.
- Ploughing services were done late and were insufficient to meet demand
- Repayment by OGs was rated as good. They indicated that women and youth do better than adult men in repayment of credit provided.
- Field agents in Karaga, Gushegu and Nalerigu expressed satisfaction in terms of relationship with their OBs and incentives provided. However, they called for OBs to provide means of transport.

The following were some of the recommendations made at the meetings:

- Conduct additional FAW training for OB field agents.
- Improve access to insecticides for FAW control by linking OB networks, OB field agents, agrochemical dealers and MOFA.
- Introduce disincentives and punitive measures to OGs for credit non-repayment and written contracts with OGs to improve credit repayment.
- Work with OBs to improve incentives and motivation for field agents, including regularizing employment of some of the agents with OBs.
- Update tablets with information, pictures and videos on FAW.
- Train OBs and their agents on organizing review meetings with field agents using the new outline.
- Consider persons with disability when developing information and education materials.

### **CAPACITY BUILDING TRAINING FOR OBs' FIELD AGENTS ON IDENTIFIED GAPS**

The project conducted a training need assessment for the OB field agents. The assessment tool was developed with executives of the OB networks who provided inputs in knowledge and skills required for the field agents. Data will be used to develop a training program for new recruits and conduct annual refresher training.

Record keeping was also identified as an area for improvement. As a result, the project conducted a day's training on record keeping in Yagaba for six field agents in the Mamprugu-Moadguri District of the North East Region. They were taken through an interactive session on preparation of crop budget, OB input

investment data collection, personal farm records, assets inventory, tractor management and costing of ploughing services.

### SETTING UP OFFICES TO IMPROVE OB'S BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Together with OB networks, the project reviewed the status of OBs regarding office set up, operation, adoption of general office practice and procedures. The project staff and OB networks agreed on a requisite or minimum office ICT equipment that an OB's office should contain: a computer, printer and a phone. Thus, OBs will be encouraged by their networks to invest in these items, whilst the project will support in identifying affordable sources and specifications. Where possible project staff will also lead OBs in finding sources of funding, including credit. Two sensitization sessions on office setup and management were held for Beimoni and Yendi networks in which 14 members attended in Gushegu and four in Yendi, including one field agent.

During the sessions, participants discussed the use of radio, during which it emerged that OB networks and individual OBs did not have any direct business relationship with radio stations, hosts of agriculture radio programs, and other digital information service providers in the ICT sector. Based on this realization, efforts are being made to establish linkages between OB networks and the various radio stations and agriculture program hosts for a sustainable relationship which will ensure continuous flow of information to farmers.

The immediate identified priorities were:

- Business registration
- Records' management
- Acquisition and managing of a credit facility

Whilst the project prepares to support the OB networks to conduct a new OB benchmarking assessment by themselves, the above priorities and the results of the last benchmark assessment continues to guide facilitation activities.

The project facilitated the formalization of OB businesses and assisted an OB Sumani Fuseini from the Gushegu OB Network in the Northern Region to complete the necessary documentation to register his business. The registration forms were completed and submitted to the Registrar Generals Department for processing.

During this quarter, project staff supported 39 OBs from six networks including Bawku, Sissala area, Gushegu, Moagduri, Karaga and Yendi in improving their businesses' record keeping on mechanization service provision, tractor maintenance and marketing.

### STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF THIRD-PARTY SERVICE PROVIDERS

The project's OB model includes a web of "third party" service providers, including input dealers, SSPs, VSLAs, rural Agro-input agents (RADs), digital agricultural information providers, crop insurance companies, and others. As part of activities to improve the sustainability of the OB model, the project works to ensure that these service providers have the requisite capacity.



*Meeting with OB Suban Nabegmado and his Field Agent in Bagmak in the Yendi Municipality on records keeping*

### ***Support input dealers to improve on management systems and expand their distribution networks, and develop business plan***

During this quarter, the focus under this activity was supporting input dealers to improve their use of digital financial tools for transactions, such as mobile money. The project conducted a rapid appraisal of the 23 input dealers targeted for improvement in the new GFSS zone. The appraisal results indicated that 14 (61%) already have links to OBs, all 23 have and use mobile phones, 18 (78%) are on social media (WhatsApp@ or Facebook@) but only four (17%) have business plans. Therefore, the project will support those without business plans to develop one.

The project staff had several discussions with the MTN regional office in Tamale, and later identified input dealers who were ready to be enrolled as mobile money merchants. Two input dealers, NASOR Enterprise and RHINOSAS Enterprise located in Yendi Municipality of the Northern Region were set up by MTN on mobile money after a short training.

### ***Strengthen linkages between OBs, RADs, VAAs and SSPs to expand input distribution***

Agricultural input wholesalers continued to show interest in doing business with OB networks and OBs, based on the number of contacts they made to project staff and OB networks. These included those who already worked with the project, OBs and new wholesalers. During this quarter, those who contacted the project or OB networks included Agrilink, 18<sup>th</sup> April Company Ltd., Antika Company Ltd., Integrated Water Management and Agriculture Development (IWAD), Adama West Africa Ltd., RMG Ltd. and Heritage Seed Company Ltd. Some of the wholesalers were seeking business with local input dealers whilst others preferred OBs and OB networks. The products on offer include new products, such as liquid and organic fertilizer, some of who are being offered under the Government's Planting for Food and Jobs program (PFJ).

Three of the wholesalers – Adana West Africa, RMG and IWAD, after interactions with the OBs, concluded trade deals including the purchase 5.45 MT of improved maize seed varieties (Lake, Wandata, Sanzal Sima and Pan 12 and 13) worth \$3,102 by OB networks' members in Bawku and Karaga. The seeds were purchased at the Planting for Food and Jobs subsidized price of \$0.57 per kilogram.

### **LINK VSLAS TO MOBILE MONEY SERVICE PROVIDERS**

During this quarter, the project undertook several activities to improve the use of digital financial tools by VSLAs. These included:

1. Assessing mobile network connectivity in the VSLA areas
2. Discussing with telecommunication companies about providing services, including set up of mobile merchants and sale of low cost phones "locked" to the carrier/network.
3. Doing an inventory of mobile phone ownership (ongoing)
4. Sensitizing VSLAs on mobile telephony and digital finance tools

The assessment's results of 204 VSLAs in terms of strength of mobile network connectivity are as below:

- 21 associations are covered by all three (3) networks MTN, Vodafone and Tigo/Airtel
- 82 associations are covered by MTN and Vodafone only
- 83 associations are covered by MTN only
- 18 associations are covered by VODAFONE only

MTN appears to lead in network coverage of the areas where project ZOI's VSLAs operate. Project staff discussed with MTN about a pilot scheme to roll-out the use of mobile money for VSLA activities. The pilot involves setting up or identifying a local merchant for each group to help convert hard cash to digital, whenever the group requires such a service. The VSLA also has the option to acquire the merchant agency, which will absolve the group of the usual transaction charges. The pilot scheme will be rolled out for eight VSLAs located in Karaga, Gushegu, Yendi and Mion.

To improve the use of mobile phones and digital finance tools among VSLAs and women in general, the project continued to sensitize them on the benefits of these tools. The project also conducted an inventory of phone ownership and ownership of mobile money accounts among the members. Five VSLAs were

sensitized in Yemo Karaga in the Karaga District of the Northern Region, on the use and benefits of mobile money. Out of the 94 participants sensitized, 45 already had phones and 15 had registered their phones with MTN mobile money and uses them to transact their farming businesses. The phone owners and mobile money account holders contributed to the sensitization. Four women (who were aggregators) and three men testified how it helped them to pay for their services whenever they are aggregating produce. The women aggregators said it was safer to use the mobile money to do business than carrying cash to the market because of possible robbery. The men participants also said that they pay for tractor services and inputs through mobile money that saves them time and cost.

Whilst monitoring the current round of VSLA share-outs, the project assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the VSLAs, especially their leadership capacity. The feedback indicated that the leaders have the requisite understanding and capacity for almost all share-out processes, but some lack the understanding and confidence to do the calculations involved in the share-out processes.

The project strengthened the capacity VSLAs in ten communities located in Wa East, Sissala East, Karaga, Yendi and Gushegu Districts in properly conducting share-outs. Project staff observed that a mentoring arrangement from high performing VSLAs can help improve capacity and performance of others, and the project will institute a VSLA mentorship program in the next quarter.

Twenty-five VSLAs with over 400 smallholder farmers who are in their second and third cycles of savings granted \$4,287 as loans to members from a combined share funds of \$15,240 and a social fund of \$10,368.

Preliminary data gathered from the input sales during share-outs indicate good patronage. Farmers bought: 2.6 MT of fertilizer (NPK and Urea) worth \$728; 0.14 MT of maize seeds (Panaar hybrid seeds) at a cost of \$285; and 109 liters of pesticides. The data also showed that members set aside \$835 to pay for ploughing services to cover approximately 8.2 hectares. A sum of \$1,845 was spent on inputs and ploughing services by farmers from the 25 VSLAs after the share-outs.



Figure 1 share out being carried out at Tuasa in Wa East in the Upper West Region.

### **Improved Access to financial resources**

The financial institution, Opportunity International Savings and Loans disbursed production credit facility worth \$8,977 to OB Osman Sulemana from the Gushegu OB Network and Mahama Yakubu, Sulemana Suhununu and Ibn Sulemana from the Karaga network. The purpose of the credit was mainly to invest in inputs and working capital for OBs to procure fuel for their tractors to plough. The credit was the result of OB network's intervention. OBs are to repay within ten months with six months moratorium and 4 equal instalments.

To ensure efficient utilization of the loan, Osman was linked to Yelimangli Enterprise, an input dealer in Yendi Municipality and purchased 0.99 MT of Sanzal Sima maize seeds worth \$564 for 57 OGs (43 males and 14 females). The remaining amount will be spent on fuel to provide ploughing services to farmers.

## **ADOPTION OF IMPROVED PRODUCTIVITY-ENHANCING TECHNOLOGIES, SERVICES AND PRACTICES**

### **Assist OB networks to partner with input dealers to conduct actor-led field demonstrations to train smallholder farmers.**

This activity aims at building the capacity of OB networks to engage with input dealers to provide inputs and train OBs and field agents to set up field demonstrations. The OB networks indicated that they concluded arrangements with the input dealers and suppliers for the field demonstrations. Table 9 shows the planned number of field demonstrations per OB network.

**Table 9: Number of demonstrations planned by OB networks for 2019 wet season.**

	Network Name	Location	Maize	Soybean	Total
1	Tiniyangi	Nalerigu	7	0	7
2	Yendi	Yendi	10	6	16
3	Gushegu Network	Gushegu	4	4	8
4	Bemoni	Karaga	7	0	7
5	Tamale network	Tamale	1	0	1
6	Sissala Area Network	Tumu	10	0	10
7	Jirapa OB network	Jirapa	2	0	2
8	Wa OB network	Wa	7	4	7
9	Kosaug OB network	Bawku	5	0	5
10	Naawuni-nsungti OB network	Yagaba	7	0	7
	Grand Total		60	14	74

The Sissala area OB network and Wa OB network mobilized their own inputs including 150 kg of hybrid seed (Pioneer 30Y87) at \$1,396 and inorganic fertilizer RMG NPK 23.10.5+TE (116 bags) at \$1,653. Also, the Wa OB network obtained 45kg of improved maize seeds (local hybrid OPEIBRO) at \$26 from Antika Company Ltd. for their demonstrations

### Monitoring of FAW Activities

The FAW National Taskforce have various regional teams for monitoring and reporting on the preparedness of regional and district taskforces and MOFA offices for managing FAW. The project participates in the team that monitors activities in Upper West Region. The project collaborated with the Regional Director of Agriculture, the Plant Protection and Regulatory Services Directorate's (PPRSD) Regional Officer and District Directors of Agriculture from seven districts during the monitoring visit. The following is a summary of the main findings.

- Taskforce at the regional and district levels are yet to be formed.
- The regional office had in stock the following products from the 2018 stock, which can cover approximately 17,066 hectares.
  - Bypel - 926 sachets (426 from 2018) [can cover 148 hectares]
  - Eradicoate - 357 liters (all from 2018 delivery) [can cover 571 hectares]
  - Adepa - 1684 liters (1120 liters from 2018) [ can cover 1,347 hectares]
  - Emaster -2000 liters (all from 2019 delivery) [can cover 16,000 ha
- 600 posters and flyers were printed but not yet distributed to district offices for onward distribution to farmers.
- FAW presence was recorded at six irrigable dam areas where early maize has been planted. The irrigable sites include Busa, Yaliyeli, Sankana, Kpalinye, Jawia and Bouti in the Wa municipal, Wa west, Nadowli-Kaleo and Sissala West districts.
- The Department of Agriculture requested for further training from USAID's ADVANCE project for 83 newly recruited staff for effective delivery of FAW information.

### OTHER MONITORING VISITS

USAID's ADVANCE project also visited the Mamprusi Moagduri Department of Agriculture to ascertain their level of preparation to fight the pest. Interaction with the District Department of Agriculture indicated



that pesticides mainly adepa (30 liters), Bypel (10kg in sachets), emaster (60 liters) and eradicate (30 liters) were received and distribution to farmers was underway. The districts mounted pheromone traps in Kubori and Yizeesi for early detection of FAW presence to inform the necessary actions. The Director, however, disclosed that the district does not have enough educational materials such as posters, flyers and radio jingles to sensitize farmers. He indicated that the district office plans to work with the zonal OB network to reach out to sensitize farmers in the communities on FAW.

USAID's ADVANCE project proposed a strategy to use OB networks to increase FAW surveillance in the project's ZOI. The strategy hinges on encouraging the networks to use their communication channel to report FAW incidence to MOFA for prompt intervention. The networks agreed to compile the list of their lead farmers and plant doctors trained by the project for a technical training to effectively implement the proposed FAW plan.

## Sub-Purpose 2: Increased Market Access and Trade in Targeted Commodities

During this quarter, as part of fulfilling objectives under sub-purpose two (increased market access and trade in targeted commodities), the project focused on the buyer-sponsored outgrower schemes. The project focused on:

- Developing end market supplier relationship.
- Developing labelling and traceability system for OB networks.

### END MARKET SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The OB networks identified nine end buyers ready to invest in production of maize and soybean through the networks. As of May 2019, the OB networks had engaged all the firms at least once, and discussed with these firms on types of input, cost, repayment arrangements among others. The details of the firms involved are indicated in table 10 below.

**Table 10. Details of end-buyer firms and engagement with OB networks**

#	Firm	Location	Commodity	Type of Support	OB network/s
1	Agricare	Kumasi	Maize	fertilizer and seed	Sissala Area, Wa, Beimoni, Gushegu and Tamale
2	EXECCEL BIT	Tamale	Maize	fertilizer	Beimoni
3	M'azara N'Arziki	Tamale	Maize	fertilizer and seed	Beimoni
4	Deagas	Tamale	Maize	fertilizer and seed	Wa
5	OCP	Accra	Maize	Fertilizer	Nalerigu
6	Tamaha Ghana	Tamale	Soybean	inoculant, seed and ploughing services	Beimoni
7	Cropcare	Kumasi	Maize	fertilizer and seed	Sissala Area Ob network
8	Agrisolve	Tema/Tamale	Maize/soybean	fertilizer and seed	Gushehu Ob Network
9	Integrated Agric and Water Mgt – IWAD	Yagaba	Maize	fertilizer and seed	Karaga Ob network

Four OB networks members organised meetings with AGRICARE Limited discuss access to quality inputs through outgrower schemes. Forty-five OBs from Yendi, Karaga, Gushegu and Sissala East and West met with Agricare in Tamale and Tumu to review the 2018/2019 season and plan adequately for 2019/2020 crop season. Agricare stated that all inputs are from MOFA's Youth in Agriculture project under the PFJ program. The seed (Pioneer 30Y87 hybrid) would be supplied at a cost \$122 per ha or \$50 per acre. The package also included four bags of RMG NPK 23.10.5+TE per acre at \$15. per 50kg bag. It was also agreed that 32 empty bags would be supplied per acre at a cost of \$0.29 per bag for bagging harvested produce. This did not include crop protection cost (weedicides, insecticides) which is \$23, which is still being negotiated and optional. They discussed input financing cost (interest on credit) of 27% of total cost with a 6% charge for crop insurance. This brings the total cost per acre to \$161. The produce (maize) price was pegged at GHS \$9.50 per 50kg bag resulting in an expected recovery of 16.99 mini bags per acre. When the cost bags and insurance are factored in, a total of 20 mini bags (50 kg) per acre minimum recovery would be expected as repayment to Agricare. The network was, however, dissatisfied with the price and proposed \$11.4 per mini bag. This would eventually reduce the expected recovery per acre and make it easier for OGs to repay. Agricare asked OB networks to submit list of their members interested in the package to allow for adequate planning and timely distribution of inputs.



*Agricare field manager (Reindorf Yeboah) discussing with 3 OB networks from Gushegu, Yendi and Karaga on 2019/2020 crop season input package held in Tamale*

Negotiations and contract discussions including input distribution were still ongoing between Agricare and the farmers. The OCP Group, a major fertilizer firm, has initiated business in the Northern Region with OB Benjamin Awuni to develop an outgrower scheme for smallholder farmers. Benjamin Awuni who is the secretary to the Nalerigu OB network in the East Mamprusi District of the North East Region provided 150 MT of fertilizer to 1,000 farmers on credit, with each farmer receiving 150 kg. The farmers are expected to repay credit with 250 kg of maize after harvest. The Karaga OB Network (BEIMONI) in the Northern Region reached an agreement on an input credit scheme with Excel BIT located at Dungu to support the network members with input credit which includes 150 kg fertilizer per acre (AFCOT brand) and in-kind repayment of 300 kg of maize.

### ***Review existing buyer outgrower schemes for improve performance***

Agricare held four meetings with five zonal OB networks in Gushegu, Tamale, Wa and Tumu prior to the production season to review the previous season outgrower scheme activities, contract terms and conditions for the 2019 production season. More than 82 OBs from the five networks participated in all the four meetings with Agricare represented by Reindorf Yeboah, the field representative for the company. Some of the concerns raised by OBs for discussions were:

- Late delivery of inputs (seeds), last minute change of agreed input package (e.g. change of “CHEMICO” brand of fertilizer to “FALCON” brand);
- Late contracts,
- Some farmers non adherence to production protocol hence low yields were recorded,
- Ned to review high credit repayment price,
- The buyer should consider bearing the cost of new bags used in bagging produce,
- OBs giving OGs fertilizers less than the required quantities per acre. Thus, some farmers paid back with less produce (two or three bags of maize instead of the required four bags per an acre).

At the end of the deliberations, both parties committed to addressing the issues raised to ensure effective implementation of the outgrower scheme during the 2019 production season. Agricare presented the 2019 production season outgrower scheme package to the groups which include fertilizer, agrochemicals (pre-

and post-emergence, and FAW insecticides) and seeds with an option that excludes agrochemicals. The OB networks provided feedback to Agricare after the various field meetings before finalizing the package

### DEVELOPMENT OF LABELLING AND TRACEABILITY SYSTEM FOR OB NETWORKS

During the quarter, the project developed a new coding system for labelling bags of produce, as a first step towards a traceability system. In developing new codes, the project reviewed the earlier codes that was initiated and used in the Upper West region during the previous project phase. The new information introduced in the new coding system are:

- OB network - currently an important trading unit in the value chain;
- Type of crop;
- Administrative region.

The new unique ID codes will apply to a product based on a 3-letter combination coding to preserve uniqueness of the code, as shown below:

- **Region** – Northern Region; NOR, Upper West – UWR, Upper East – UER and North East – NER
- **OB Network** – initials name of the network e.g. Karaga Beimoni – BMK.
- **Outgrower Business** – initials of the OB or company name– e.g. Alabani Ibrahim – AIB
- **Outgrower (OG)** – initials of the Outgrower name e.g. Alhassan Sumaila – ASU
- **Community** – Initials of the community name – Sung - SUN
- **Crop** – Maize: MZE and Soybean – SYB.

The summary code for the above example is: **NOR/BMK/AIB/SUN/ASU/MZE/001**.

Each end buyer, OB and other relevant actors will have a document on the coding system, and will be able to identify the source of a bag of produce. The project will support the buyers and OBs on how to determine the how the printing on the bags should be done, taking into consideration the likely changes in an OB's network, involving communities and outgrowers. The traceability codes will be added at the point of packaging.

## Sub-Purpose 3: Strengthen Capacity for Advocacy and Activity Implementation

As part of Sub-purpose three (strengthen capacity for advocacy and activity implementation), the project focused on:

- Assessing capacity of value chain actors to identify gaps in reaching sustainable behaviour change
- Facilitating working relations between MOFA and OB networks to participate actively in government agricultural programs
- Training OB networks on the concept of total quality management (TQM)

### CAPACITY OF VALUE CHAIN ACTORS TO IDENTIFY GAPS IN REACHING SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOR CHANGE

The project worked with key actors of the value chains to define “desirable behaviors” for each actor type with the view to set benchmarks for measurement and assessment (see next session). Staff developed several capacity assessment tools to document current business and organizational capacity with the view of identifying gaps between the current and desired state. The assessment tools cover four business systems

developed under the project, namely Zonal OB networks, VSLAs, safe spray providers (SSPs) and Village Agri-input Agents (VAAs).

Some of the capacity assessment areas for zonal OB networks include:

- Strong leadership
- Business opportunities for members through stakeholder engagement, advocacy and innovation
- Collective productive assets

For SSPs, the capacity assessment areas include:

- Record keeping
- Digitization of business transactions and records
- Business relations with OB networks and others such as MOFA
- Adoption of improved management systems

For VSLAs, the capacity assessment areas include:

- Leadership and governance
- Quantum of savings and loans
- Keeping records
- Digitization of business transactions and records
- Development of business relations.

The capacity assessment areas for VAAs are like those for SSPs and VSLAs. Those VC actors, incl. OB networks are also assessed for women and youth inclusion and environmental stewardship. The project initiated the assessment use of the tools in the field.

## CAPACITY OF OB NETWORKS AND OTHER ACTOR GROUPS TO PROMOTE PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKING

### **Benchmarks established for key actors**

Stemming from the activities on capacity assessment (section above), the project in collaboration with the OB networks, developed benchmarks for the various criteria. This will enable the networks, as business chambers to assess their own competitiveness and those of individual members and other affiliated actors such as, SSPs, VSLAs, RAD and VAAs. The benchmarking process also provides an opportunity for these actors to articulate their strengths and address weaker areas for improvement. The next steps with the assessment are the administration of the tools to the actors, analysis and development of interventions which may include coaching, training and mentoring in addressing the gaps.

### RELATIONS BETWEEN MOFA AND OB NETWORKS

As part of the sustainability strategy, the project is supporting the OB networks to build and improve relationships with various agencies and organizations in both government and private sector. Although their manpower at the “last mile” is not at optimum levels, and agribusinesses now dominate service provision in the agricultural sector, MOFA still play important roles in the agricultural economy at all levels. The Government of Ghana, through MOFA, continues to roll out initiatives and programs that agribusinesses can benefit from. Thus, the project initiated a series of fora for MOFA staff to brief the networks on government programs and at the same time learn from the networks, some of their initiatives, such as the end buyer outgrower scheme. The fora also provided opportunities to build stronger relations.

During this quarter, the project supported five zonal OB networks in Yendi, Bawku, Wa, Karaga and Mamprugu-Moadguri Moagduri to engage district assemblies, for the purposes described in the previous paragraph. Some engagements took the form of formal meetings with the directors of the agriculture departments by the networks’ executives or participation in OB networks’ meetings by the departments. During the meetings, they discussed the modalities for accessing agro-inputs and fertilizers from the Planting for Food and Jobs program. Through these engagements, the Bawku Municipal Agricultural development Unit allocated an office within its office premises for use by the OB network.

## THE CONCEPT OF TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT (TQM)

The project developed assessment tools for OBs and networks to determine capacity and level of implementation of TQM in their operations. TQM is a system of management which consists of organization-wide efforts to develop a culture where employees continuously improve their ability to provide goods and services that clients and customers would pay for. The tools would be administered to OBs and networks for analysis and identification of TQM gaps in the next quarter. There will be training and coaching to address gaps identified.

## F. Program Support

### Gender and Youth Inclusion

During this quarter, the project focused on supporting female participants to consolidate gains made by increasing access to agricultural inputs through community input promotion and VSLAs, and training them in leadership and entrepreneurship, to improve agency for women and the youth.

#### BARRIERS WOMEN FACE IN ACCESSING PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES.

During this quarter, project staff arranged with a female owned agribusiness, Agrisolve Ghana Ltd to provide input on credit and advisory support to 200 female farmers. Three meetings between Agrisolve, women leaders of VSLAs groups and OBs took place in Limo, Zinindo and Kpanashe all in the Gushegu Municipality of the Northern Region. Agrisolve agreed to supply hybrid seeds (Variety; PAN 12), inorganic fertilizer, herbicides for weed control and insecticides for FAW control to the women. Agrisolve also agreed to continue to provide mechanization services for field preparation to the women.

During the quarter, the project started promoting female-only groups for training as the gender study conducted in January 2019 showed that female smallholder farmers learn better when they are grouped together rather than in mixed groups<sup>2</sup>. Thus, the project introduced this concept to OB networks and other VC actor groups and developed a concept note and model guide for facilitators. So far, four OBs in the Wa and Jirapa Networks have selected four women from four communities of the Upper West Region to host demonstrations this year with inputs provided by the OBs. These technology demonstrations will expose female and young farmers to the benefits of adopting GAPs using a 'learning-by-doing' methodology and targeted at enhancing participation and improving learning and adoption. Also, the Wa OB Network were linked with women in agriculture platforms (WAP) of NGGA for support in advocating for improved access to production resources such as lands through the traditional authorities.

#### SKILLS AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR WOMEN

As part of activities to take stock and understand the baseline conditions in the GFSS ZOI, the project initiated a gender and youth integration framework analysis. The assessment seeks to collaboratively (with the networks) identify gender and youth-based constraints or problems, desired outcomes, and planned activities to address the constraints.

The tool is based on the standard eight areas of desired outcomes for women and adapted for assessment of youth inclusion. The project has assessed three OB networks so far using the framework. The results will be used to formulate activities and set measurable indicators by OB networks to address gender and youth constraints.

Under the cost extension phase, the percentage of female OBs in the GFSS ZOI is 7.2%. Except for VSLAs, the representation of females in other VC actor groups is low and needs improvement. Therefore, the project staff held sensitization and training sessions on inclusion of women and youth to encourage the

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<sup>2</sup> Also show in publication by Rasheed Sulaiman and T.S. Vamsidhar Reddy, 2014. Assessment of extension and advisory methods and approaches to reach rural women; examples from India. Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services (MEAS), USAID Feed the future.

networks to promote affirmative action strategies aimed at greater inclusion. Fifty-nine VC actors participated in the training program in three zones (Gushegu, Karaga and Yendi), including eight OB network members (all male), one field agent, and 41 VSLA members (all female). During the training, staff shared relevant gender and youth inclusion's results and lessons learned from the project's studies on gender inclusion, buyer-sponsored outgrower schemes, and VSLAs.

The participants proposed the following actions to improve participation;

- Stronger links of the networks to female leaders of VSLAs
- Incorporation of female processors and aggregators within the zonal networks
- Recruitment of youth as lead farmers/agents and secretaries,
- Exclusive positions within networks for women and youth as organizers
- Formation of youth groups who will be supported with farm inputs
- Youth mentoring through peer learning strategies aimed at highlighting gains in agriculture

The zonal OB networks will be encouraged to set a minimum quota (indicated in the gender and youth integration framework) for the participation of women and youth and will monitor to ensure that these groups have the support to participate and contribute to meetings and succeed in agribusiness.

#### LINKING GRADUATES TO OB NETWORKS TO FACILITATE USE OF ICT IN SERVICE DELIVERY

The Kosmos Innovation Center (KIC), a subsidiary of the Kosmos Energy Group, focuses on training young entrepreneurs through “a mix of skills training, mentorship and seed funding”. In 2017, the center initiated an ICT for agriculture-based mentorship competition (Agritech Challenge) to select and provide seed money for young entrepreneurs. The focus of this activity is to tap into the entrepreneurial spirit and drive created in the competitors and winners to explore service provision to OB networks.

During this quarter, the project contacted four of the 2018 KIC Agritech Challenge winners, namely; Soil Solutions, Techshelta, Kwidex and Growth Factor for possible collaboration and provision of services to farmers.

- Techshelta focus is on greenhouse farming, offering agricultural advisory services, process automation, market linkages and training.
- Kwidex operates virtual farming and provides a platform for crowd funding of “projects”. Contributors in exchange get an agreed share of the profits from the projects they contribute to. Kwidex mainly facilitates the aggregation of the money, monitoring of the projects, provision of relevant updates to contributors and facilitation of the payment of contributors.
- Soil Solutions offer “do it yourself” soil test kits for analyzing for soil nutrients. The kit is branded “ASAASEPA” which means “good” or fertile soil.
- Growth Factor plays an intermediary role between buyers and suppliers by offering an unsecured loan to buyers to enable them (buyers) pay suppliers without delay.

Two out of the four; Techshelta and Kwidex responded and arrangements are being made to finalize modalities for possible collaboration.

## G. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

During the reporting period, the project focused on updating the monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) plan, developing a new MEL system, and building the capacities of staff and OB networks and their agents to effectively implement the new plan.

#### UPDATING THE MEL PLAN

The project's MEL plan combines the performance monitoring plan (PMP) and the knowledge management and learning (KM&L) plan into a single document that describes how the project management will implement a system to monitor, analyse, evaluate, and report on the results of the project to USAID. The MEL plan details the project's approach to promoting a learning culture and an applied monitoring

and evaluation (M&E) system that promotes evidence-based decision making, sparks innovation and advances critical information to outgrower businesses and project management in various contexts. The MEL plan also includes the project’s approach to information and spatial data management and utilization of technology relevant to outgrower business management and lays out the organizational structure (both personnel and workflow) for implementing the M&E system.

### DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW MEL SYSTEM

During the cost extension phase, the project adopts a market-system-oriented monitoring and evaluation approach that deepens the sustainability of the outgrower business model by empowering private sector partners to take ownership and utilization of their business data while complying with USAID and ACDI/VOCA’s requirements. The project adopts the following approach:

- **Facilitative approach;** the OB networks and the OBs collect routine monitoring data directly from the smallholders;
- **Tailored capacity building;** the project will develop data management tools tailored to the OBs’ and the OB networks’ constraints and abilities and provide the networks, the OBs, and their agents with hands-on trainings as well as constant mentoring.
- **Win-win strategy:** The data collected by the OB networks will be mostly beneficial to the networks and OBs to accurately and timely monitor the state of their businesses and relevant to track progress on project. They will share this data and information with the project to use in tracking results and progress.

**ICT powered and built on past experience:** selection of our most user-friendly ICT based business intelligence tools combined with offline and online mobile data collection and analysis.

**Social inclusion tracking;** monitoring how women and youth participants are affected by, involved in, and benefitting from the project interventions through relevant indicators and learning efforts.

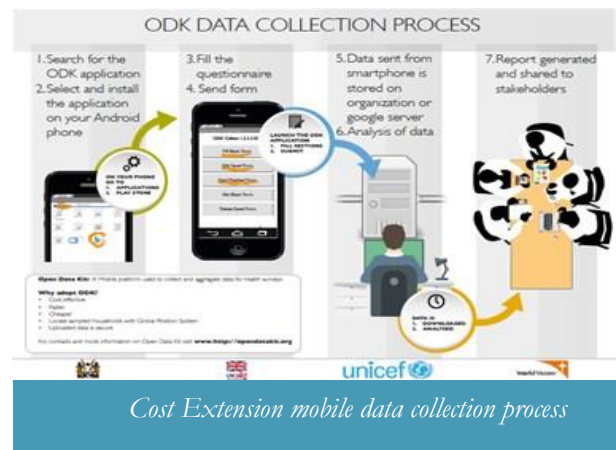
To support the networks and OBs to fulfil that responsibility, USAID’s ADVANCE project developed data management tools tailored to the OBs’ and the networks’ constraints and abilities. The project has developed an open data kit software (ODK) and quick response code (QR code) to facilitate data collection by outgrower businesses on their services to smallholder farmers. The QR code which contains basic data on smallholder farmers is a 2-dimensional barcode that can be read optically, using a mobile phone camera. The project combines the QR code with open data kit (ODK) software that allows for offline and online mobile data collection and analysis.



*A snapshot of barcode for project participants (left) and ODK data collection interface (right)*

### TRAINING ON THE NEW MEL SYSTEM

In the week of June 24 to 28, the project trained OB networks and key field agents on the use of the ODK software to facilitate data collection and data management by OBs on the services they provide to smallholder farmers. The training provided 65 OBs (including two women) and 51 OB field agents from all 10 zonal networks with hands on practice to use the ODK platform, by setting up the application on their android phones and tablets and completing electronic data forms; including service provision form, sales form, repayment form among others. Participants expressed



*Cost Extension mobile data collection process*

their willingness to use the data management system citing its user-friendly interface and data protected and confidentiality.

The training, which used a participatory monitoring and evaluation approach, empowered OB networks to take ownership of the data management tools tailored to their record keeping systems, abilities and constraints in order to deepen the sustainability of the OB model after project closure.

### USING INTERNS

The project hired three regional data interns to collect and process data in a timely manner. The interns are youth who worked with the project as enumerators on annual surveys. In addition, the project plans to support each network with an intern to enhance effective data collection. The networks will share compensation cost of the interns until December and take on the full cost afterwards.



*Robert Sackey MIS Specialist taking members of Gushieou OB network through the ODK software*

## Public Relations and Communications

The project promotes visibility of its achievements and lessons learned through a variety of events and communication materials. The following were the activities undertaken through the public relations and communications component, during this quarter.

### BI-WEEKLY UPDATES

During the quarter, the project submitted six biweekly updates to USAID. The bullets outlined the project's key activities and short term results in areas of empowering OB networks for agriculture productivity and market sustainability, enhancing private sector collaboration and growth, establishing market linkages and networking for VC actors as a result of stakeholder and planning meetings, and including women and youth as part of project's sustainability strategy.

They also highlighted how USAID's ADVANCE project enhanced OBs' capacity in contract negotiation, commodity aggregation, as well as OB networks involvement in participatory data management through the use of an open data kit software and quick response code for evidence-based decision making.

### QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

The project produced its April to June 2019 edition of newsletter and will distribute it to over 1,000 stakeholders including partners, clients, and actors involved in the project, in both electronic and printed formats. The newsletter showcased how USAID's ADVANCE project accelerated the transformation of agribusiness in northern Ghana through building capacity of OB networks for sustainability.

### EVENTS AND FIELD VISITS

#### Regional Stakeholders Fora

The project organized three stakeholders' fora in Tamale, Bolgatanga and Wa from June 17 to 21, 2019 to share project results, lessons learned, and discuss the sustainability of the project's interventions and impact.

The three fora, held under the theme "Enhancing and sustaining productivity and markets with the project's end in mind: The role of outgrower business (OB) networks", were attended by 136 (54 in Tamale, 38 in Bolga and 44 in Wa) stakeholders, including USAID representatives, officers of the Department of Food and Agriculture, outgrower business owners and networks, farmers, financial institutions, input and equipment dealers, members of village savings and loans associations, buyers and processors, and representatives of other donor-funded projects.

The project also received feedback from participants on strategies to sustain agricultural productivity and inclusive markets through the operations of outgrower business networks after project has closed.



### **9<sup>th</sup> Annual Pre-season Event**

The 9<sup>th</sup> Annual pre-season event was held on April 4 at the Modern City Hotel in Tamale in the Northern Region to showcase various agricultural inputs, machinery, technological services for agricultural value chains, among other agricultural related goods and services.

The event, under the theme "Vibrant Agricultural Value Chain Networking: A key to National Transformation and Beyond Aid" was organized by the National Seed Trade Association of Ghana (NASTAG) in collaboration with the Northern Development Authority, Ministry of Food and Agriculture and the Savannah Agricultural Productivity Improvement Program (SAPIP), with key sponsorships from RMG Ghana, SAPIP, and Antika Company Ltd. About 400 participants, including farmers, staff of government and donor agencies attended the event. Staff of USAID's ADVANCE project mounted an exhibition stand to display some of the projects' achievements through publications and photos.

## H. Annex I: Indicator Table

### USAID'S ADVANCE PROJECT INDICATOR TARGETS AND ACHIEVEMENTS — FY19 Q3

Indicator Source	Indicator Type	Indicator/Disaggregation	FY19 Targets	FY19 Q3	% FY19 Achievement	Comments
				Actuals		
GFSS	OP1	Number of individuals participating in USG food security programs	20,000	13,994	70%	Participants include mainly VSLA members who are actively engaged in savings and share-out activities. Besides, 79 OBs planned to provide services to 23,068 of their regular outgrowers when the season starts in earnest.
		Female	10,000	7054	71%	
		Male	10,000	3145	31%	
		Youth		3716		
		Non -SHF		79		
		SHF		13,915		
GFSS	OC1	Yield of targeted agricultural commodities among program participants with USG assistance				Data based on gross margin survey of 2018 production season.
		Maize	3.7	3.69		
		Male		3.78		
		Female		3.5		
		Youth	NA	NA		

Indicator Source	Indicator Type	Indicator/Disaggregation	FY19 Targets	FY19 Q3	% FY19 Achievement	Comments
				Actuals		
		Soybean	2.0	2.03		
		Male		1.99		
		Female		2.05		
		Youth		NA		
GFSS	OC2	Number of individuals in the agriculture system who have applied improved management practices or technologies with USG assistance	75,545	75,545		The FAW control efforts, coupled with high adoption of in integrated pest management gave the overall technology application rate.  Data based on gross margin survey of 2018 production season.
		Male	37,578	37,578		
		Female	37,967	37,967		
GFSS	OC3	Number of hectares under improved management practices or technologies with USG assistance	59,373	59,373	100%	Almost all project participants applied one or more improved technology and management practices.  Data based on gross margin survey of 2018 production season.  Target revised to align with result of the survey.
		Male	25,938	25,938		
		Female	33,435	33,435		
		Youth				
GFSS	OC4	Value of annual sales of farms and firms receiving USG assistance (USD)	\$48,276,995	\$48,276,995	100%	Data based on gross margin survey of 2018 production season.

Indicator Source	Indicator Type	Indicator/Disaggregation	FY19 Targets	FY19 Q3	% FY19 Achievement	Comments
				Actuals		
		Maize	\$43,243,67	\$43,243,676		Target revised to align with result of the GM survey.
		Male		\$28,149,772		
		Female		\$15,093,904		
		Soybean	\$4,592,365	\$4,592,365		
		Male		\$1,665,419		
		Female		\$2,926,946		
GFSS	OP2	Value of agriculture-related financing accessed as a result of USG assistance	\$120,000	\$10,029.	8.36%	Still early days in the production season.
		Male		\$10,029		
		Female				
		Youth				
GFSS	OC5	Number of organizations with increased performance improvement with USG assistance	20	13	65%	10 Zonal OB networks and 3 regional networks increased capacity to partner private sector service providers and advocate for participation in planting for food and jobs program.
GFSS	OC6	Number of individuals participating in group-based savings, micro-finance or lending programs with USG assistance	4,000	10,199	254%	VSLA concept has gained recognition and relevance in the project ZOI because of the practical impact it has had on the lives

Indicator Source	Indicator Type	Indicator/Disaggregation	FY19 Targets	FY19 Q3	% FY19 Achievement	Comments
				Actuals		
						of the participants which explains the high numbers (461 groups).
		Female		7,054		
		Male		3,145		
		Youth		3,716		
		Savings		10,199		
GFSS	OC7	Percentage of female participants in USG - assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources	20	50	150%	VSLA members are dominated by female, which explains the high percentage.
GFSS	OC8	Percentage of participants in USG- assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources who are youth (19-29)	12	27	125%	VSLA and SSP are primarily composed of youth.
GFSS	OC9	Number of value chain actors accessing finance	50	5	10%	We expect more participants to access finance when the season starts in earnest

## **I. Annex 2: Success Stories**



## MECHANIZATION FOR OUTGROWER BUSINESS INCREASES YIELD

### How Fabuk Farms acquired equipment to increase crop yield.

USAID's ADVANCE project has worked with 424 OBs and 131,493 smallholder farmers to improve their yields and gross margins in the maize, rice and soybean value chains. From 2010 to date, the project trained 124,572 beneficiaries (male: 63,344, female: 61,228) on good agronomic practices (GAPs), post-harvest handling, and produce quality standards, and other agribusiness areas which improved farmers' knowledge, productivity, and income.

Fusseini Abubakar from Niebilgbin is the vice chairman of the Karaga OB Network and owner of Fabuk Farms in the Karaga District of the Northern Region. He now considers farming as a profitable business because his income has significantly increased by adopting the good agronomic and farming practices, he learned from the USAID's ADVANCE project's trainings.

The annual increase in his income enabled him to acquire two tractors, two corn shellers, two conventional ploughs, one ripper, one manual planter and one harrow for his farming business in 2016.



*Fusseini Abubakar showcasing one of his rippers*

As a result of acquiring these equipment his productivity improved and has been able to take care of his 12 children.

Prior to becoming a project participant in 2010, Fusseini provided services to 57 smallholder farmers (outgrowers) with only one tractor.

He narrated that supporting himself and his smallholder farmers with ploughing services was very difficult.

“There were no chemicals to spray and kill weeds before planting and also we have to manually prepare and plant seeds. When ADVANCE came, they taught me new farming techniques by showing me how to plant in rows and supported me to get one particular variety of pannar seed”.

Fusseini who cultivates maize, rice, soybean, groundnut and cowpea mentioned that since he became a project participant, the project has trained him on row planting, effective fertilizer application methods, use of certified seeds such as pannar hybrid variety of maize, post-harvest handling (PHH) and OB management practices such as record keeping, crop budgeting, profit calculation and contract negotiation.

He adopted these practices and used one of his farmlands as a visible model farm to show off good practices in his community.

“After I sowed and it sprouted, the staff of ADVANCE came to monitor and brought smallholder farmers to see my model farm. I then decided to plant on a larger land close by the road side for it to be visible for all eyes to see when passing”

As a result of adopting new technologies and management practices, Fousseini’s yield on his maize farm almost doubled, increasing from an average of 2.0MT/ha in 2011 to 3.7MT/ha in 2012. During the 2018 production season, his production increased to 6.2MT/ha. The number of outgrowers with whom he works also increased by over 1,000% from 58 in 2011 to 750 (of which 328 are women) in 2018.

He trained his outgrowers and monitored their farms to make them productive. His trainings and regular monitoring of his outgrowers also helped increase their yields from 1.7MT/ha in 2011 to 4.5MT/ha on average in 2018.



*Fousseini Abubakar and his secretary*

“I am working with my secretary who is a youth who handles all my records and mobile money for all payment to mobilize the young children of all my aged OGs so that I can train them to take over their parents farms as a business”, Fousseini said.







## ENCOURAGING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN AGRIBUSINESS

### Sulley Adams urges youth to take up farming as business

Sulley Adams, 28 years old, is an outgrower businessman from Lagbenshi in the East Mamprusi District of the Northern Region who defied the notion that farming is for the elderly and illiterate and took over his father's farm to manage as a business. Sulley took over the management of his father's 130-acre soybean farm in 2015, after completing senior high school decided to cultivate maize for himself in addition to managing his father's farm. He then became a USAID's ADVANCE project's participant with 40 smallholder farmers. The project trained him and his smallholder farmers on row planting, post-harvest handling, record keeping, appropriate application of fertilizer and agrochemicals. By 2019, Sulley had progressively cultivated an 85-acre maize farm.



*Sulley Adams displaying his tablet on his farm*

Sulley now works with 345 smallholder farmers (40% women) who cultivate about 1,380 acres of land across ten communities in the district. He provides his outgrowers with services and agro-inputs, including ploughing services, fertilizer, and improved hybrid seeds.

“I assess of the farmers, profile them, then I do my own investigations and visit their farms unannounced to see the realities on the ground because I want them to succeed so that I can also succeed”, he noted.

He also received a Samsung Galaxy tablet from the USAID's ADVANCE project which he uses to profile his farmers and to teach them good agronomic techniques. He subscribes to Esoko and Ignitia Ghana to receive weekly text messages on agronomic tips, commodity prices and weather information, which he shares with his outgrowers to better schedule their farming activities.

Thanks to the training provided by USAID's ADVANCE project, Sulley's outgrowers realize higher yields, which enable them to repay him for the services he provides to them.

“Before joining the project, our previous yield for maize was 2.0MT/ha and 0.7MT/ha for soybean. Most of my farmers, especially the men could not repay their credit; but now with the improved seeds and good agronomic practices, they are able to produce 4.5MT/ha of maize and 1.75MT/ha for soybean” he narrated.

Sulley's farming business growth also enabled him to invest in the rearing of livestock and has a mango plantation. He pays for his younger siblings' education and currently mentors six young men who assist him in supporting his 345 outgrowers.



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## GENDER INCLUSION FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

**Celebrating the success of a female smallholder farmer who became an outgrower business**



*Fati Zakari, an OB from Nyong Yapalsi in the Karaga District.*

Fati Zakari, once a smallholder farmer of outgrower business (OB) owner, Fousseini Abubakar, has successfully become an OB in Nyong Yapalsi in the Karaga District of the Northern Region. Fati, who worked with her OB for two years, adopted all the good farming practices she was taught by USAID's ADVANCE project and received production inputs (hybrid seeds, fertilizer, and agrochemicals) on credit from Agricare through project facilitation.

“Due to all the trainings I benefitted from ADVANCE and my OB, I started row planting, using certified seed, applying appropriate fertilizer with good record keeping and can now produce and sell more for re-investment into my farm and family upkeep”, she said.

In 2014, she cultivated 20 acres of maize (10 acres of yellow maize and 10 acres of white maize), 10 acres of rice and 10 acres soybean. By 2019, Madam Fati had increased her acreage by 20 acres for maize and 10 acres each for soybean and rice. She also increased her yield in maize from 2.0MT/ha to 3.72MT/ha by 2018.

Madam Fati, who now supports 90 smallholder farmers (out of which 60 are women) with seeds, is also the leader of a project facilitated village savings and loans association (VSLA). During meetings, she also shares knowledge on good agronomic practices which she has obtained from listening to the radio. She also conducts monitoring visits to the farms of the outgrowers advise them.

Through the project, she was linked to Opportunity International Savings and loans and negotiated a loan to buy a tractor to render ploughing services to her outgrowers.

“As soon I am able to access the loan to get the tractor, I would work hard to increase the acreage of soya so that I can also buy a planter in order to attain higher yields”, Madam Fati noted.



