



2SCALE

Stories from the Field

Women and veggies

For many years, vegetable farmers in Benin punched below their weight. Not any longer, thanks to a network that 2SCALE helped to build, and now involves 30,000 smallholder farmers and more than 200 local businesses.

We began with production, introducing new varieties developed by another partner, East West Seeds. As production grew, the focus broadened to agribusiness development: markets, credit, business linkages... Here's how the story unfolded.

The technology base

Communities identified five crops (chili, onion, tomato, cabbage, cucumber) with the best market potential. For each crop, East West provided high-yielding, disease-tolerant varieties suited to local conditions. We then established a network of 24 demonstration fields across the country to showcase the new varieties and the right management practices. More partners came on board, supplying foliar fertilizers, biopesticides and other inputs at affordable prices. Quality and productivity improved substantially; some farmers increased yields five-fold. In 2016, a single cluster in Grand Popo sold 53,000 tons of vegetables to wholesalers in Benin, Nigeria and Togo.

The business end

In partnership with the Dutch-funded ACMA project, we established a guarantee fund that offers loans at half the market interest rate. Loans are given to individuals but guaranteed by the group; social pressure ensures

2SCALE consortium



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Grand Popo chilies – better seeds, better husbandry, bigger profits.

“I took a loan and bought a sprinkler. My children were helping me water the field. Now I use the sprinkler, so they have more time to study.”

– Bernadette Sossou, vegetable farmer

that nobody defaults. In the past two years, loans of 650 million FCFA (\$ 1.2 million) have been disbursed to more than 900 producers (nearly 300 women).

Another innovation was the creation of hubs, bringing together multiple clusters producing the same crop. There are three hubs – for onion, cabbage and solanaceous crops – each with several thousand members. Farmers, acting collectively, can get better prices, reduce transaction costs, and coordinate production cycles to avoid gluts and shortages. The hubs allow farmers to share experiences not only in production techniques but business practice as well. For example, onion farmers in Grand Popo visited their counterparts in Malanville, 1000 km away. Following the visit, the Grand Popo cluster switched from selling ‘per bed’ to selling per bag – slightly riskier but much more profitable.

Woman power

Women play a major role in vegetable production and trade, which is why the partnership focuses heavily (but not exclusively) on women. Cooperatives that were managed entirely by men now have quotas for women’s participation in management. New women-only cooperatives have been created. The percentage of women among credit recipients has increased from 20% in 2014 to 40% in 2017. More than half the small businesses in the partnership are headed by women. And at least 40,000 women have benefited directly, through employment on vegetable farms and in processing and trade.



The 2SCALE project is funded by the Netherlands government and implemented jointly by IFDC, ICRA and BoPInc. 2SCALE was launched in June 2012. By mid 2017, our partners included 567,000 smallholder farmers, 1300 agribusinesses and nearly 1500 cooperatives in nine countries across sub-Saharan Africa.