Approaches to sustainable agriculture and rural development

The development and improvement of sustainable production and site-adapted production methods are some of the trust’s central concerns. One example is the transfer of the “Conservation Agriculture” approach, which was developed in Brazil, to Africa. This soil-preserving cultivation method is particularly useful for reducing soil erosion and thus also reducing declines in production.

Another project aims to develop a methodology with which smallholder farmers can compare and evaluate their production to see if and how they can make it more sustainable (Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture System, SAFA). This can also be used as an extension tool.

A third example is to be found in the efforts made by the trust to facilitate improvements in training farmers as entrepreneurs (“Farming as a Business”), which included training and orientation of the national extension services in Kenya and Tanzania.

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It is a painful reality: 840 million people are suffering from hunger and malnutrition. The fight against hunger is definitely one of the most pressing global challenges. Crises and natural disasters together with long-term challenges, such as climate change, are threatening the successes that have been achieved. With increasing population and urbanisation, both fertile soil and clean water are becoming increasingly scarce resources all over the world.

The fight against hunger is one of the Federal Government’s top priorities. Agriculture has a central role to play in this regard. Who, if not the agricultural sector, is to feed humanity? Investments in agriculture in developing countries increase food production and boost the local population’s purchasing power. A strong agricultural sector thus constitutes a vital contribution towards realising the human right to adequate and healthy food.

The BMEL has been supporting concrete projects to fight hunger and malnutrition within the framework of a bilateral trust fund with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) since 2002. With an annual budget of € 8.3 million, over € 100 million have been provided so far, mainly for multi-annual projects, studies and regulatory undertakings. 90 measures in total have already received funding.

The overarching aim is to promote food security strategies at international and supra-regional level and also in the partner countries. With this flyer we would like to highlight some examples of themes covered by the BMEL-funded projects. I hope you find it an interesting read.

Christian Schmidt, Member of the German Bundestag
Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture

**Food security in Afghanistan**

In Afghanistan, a focus country of the trust, the families’ livelihoods are being strengthened through community-based programmes provided by the government, non-governmental organisations and other institutions. This includes the development of concepts, educational materials and training measures as well as selected pilot projects, e.g. on processing agricultural products or laying out (establishing) school gardens. This strategy is accompanied by providing intensive support to Afghan policy-makers.

Based on the experiences made so far, the trust is currently also promoting the development of a national extension service for women featuring programmes such as growing vegetables, processing and marketing food and opening up new income opportunities.

**Strengthening nutritional education in Africa**

In spite of the great importance of nutritional education, there are almost no suitable concepts for spreading knowledge even though it has become clear that nutritional education in local communities alone has the potential to reduce or even end malnutrition.

New education schemes for the transfer of nutritional knowledge are currently being created in two projects in Africa. Together with African universities, a basic certificate in “Nutrition Education and Communication (NEAC)” has been developed and integrated into the curricula of selected institutions.

The target groups which are to act as multipliers are, for example, students, teachers, midwives or providers of agricultural extension services. Courses, educational materials and an on-line platform are being developed for their studies and vocational training.

**Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land and other Natural Resources**

Secure rights of access to land and other natural resources are of existential importance to people in rural areas. These rights are a key factor for implementing the right to food. The trust supported the development and negotiation of the “Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests” which were adopted by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in Rome on 11 May 2012.

The Voluntary Guidelines are intended to serve the states all over the world as a guiding principle for the shaping of their legislation and administration. In order to support the implementation of the guidelines the BMEL promotes institutional and personnel capacity building in selected countries through the development and implementation of educational programmes and the secondment of experts. This relates, for example, to the recognition and protection of communal rights of ownership and use (land grabbing) or to fair administrative structures without discrimination and corruption.

**Bioenergy and food security**

The competition between the cultivation of bioenergy crops and food security – fuel vs. food – is a current issue, especially in developing countries. The principal focus is on what strategies a country can pursue to ensure food security and at the same time use bioenergy potential for its benefit.