

MULTI-FUNDER INITIATIVE

Canadian International Food Security Research Fund (CIFS RF)

Using information campaigns to bring proven solutions to more legume farmers in Tanzania

Smallholder farmers in Africa have shown in field trials how improved legume varieties, nitrogen-fixing bacteria, high-quality seeds, and fertilizers can increase yields, reduce production costs, and enhance nutrition. Efforts are now underway to harness the power and reach of radio and other media to spread word of these technologies to 500,000 farming families in the Northern and Southern Highlands of Tanzania.

Solutions tested and driven by farmers

Improved technologies and practices for growing common beans, groundnuts (peanuts), soybeans, and other legumes represent one of the most cost-effective and affordable approaches to improving food and nutrition security and enhancing soil fertility in many African countries. In 2015, Tanzania approved the use of a rhizobium inoculant that converts nitrogen from the air to a form legumes can use, improving soil fertility, while maximizing plant growth and yields.

Unfortunately, few farmers know about or have reliable or affordable access to these technologies.

A bigger role for media and local agro-dealers

Addressing these challenges is the goal of an award-winning team of research institutions, NGOs, and business partners from Canada, the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Tanzania. Together, they are launching and evaluating farmer-driven campaigns designed to increase awareness, adoption, and sustainable use of proven technologies.

The team will evaluate the effectiveness of various communications tools, including radio programs, comics (targeted at youth), text messages, social media, point-of-sale information materials, and field days. For example, radio programs will feature women and men farmers discussing the pros and cons of a particular practice and how it can help improve their family's nutrition and household income.

At least 30 regional agro-dealers will be trained on new technologies. They, in turn, will train a larger number of community-based female and male agro-dealers who will distribute the seeds inoculants and fertilizers to farmers.

Expected results

- Improved knowledge among 250,000 smallholder farmers of the benefits of proven legume technologies, with 100,000 farmers (of which 50% are female/youth) adopting the new practices
- Improved local availability of new technologies and practices
- 20% higher legume yields
- Improved capacity of Tanzanian radio stations, designers, and writers to run similar campaigns in the future
- More informed policies to facilitate access and use of legume technologies

LEAD RESEARCHERS

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Country: Tanzania

Funding: CA\$1.5 million

Duration: November 2015 to February 2018

The **Canadian International Food Security Research Fund (CIFS RF)** is a program of Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada provided through Global Affairs Canada (GAC).



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