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## **Cameroon : Extension Partnerships with the Private Sector**

The Cameroon *Projet National de Vulgarisation Agricole* (National Agricultural Extension Project) is a good practice example of partnership between the government extension service and private agro-input supply companies. The key to success is the ability to leverage the comparative advantage of each party without compromising the efficiency, objectivity or the principles of the extension services. The private suppliers provide new technology while the national extension service shares its experience in testing new technologies with farmers through small-scale demonstration plots.

### **Impact on the ground**

#### *Pelenguet*

Sales of Pelenguet's hybrid maize seed imported from South Africa (Pannar) increased from 30 to 70 tonnes and demand among farmers who had tested the variety during the preceding season far outstripped even these increased supplies. Seven thousand demonstration plots in farmers' fields were established in 1997 which will almost certainly lead to substantial increases in sales in 1998.

*Pamol* Sales of oilpalm seedlings by Pamol increased to 380,000 seedlings during the first eight months of 1997, compared to 140,000 over the same period for the preceding year. On the strength of this increase, the company has invested in a new seedling incubator and envisages increasing sales to a total of 8 million seedlings over the next five years, equivalent to more than 50,000 hectares of new oil palm plantations.

### **Lessons learned**

- The privatization and unbundling of state monopolies create opportunities for government agricultural agencies to team with private sector partners in the agro-input and supply sub-sector.
- Mutual interest in developing increased purchasing power in the rural areas contributes to breaking down distrust and suspicion between private and public partners.
- Private sector partners can profitably collaborate in the provision of extension services, improve coverage, and test appropriate technologies with farmers.
- Technology transfer using micro-demonstration plots provides excellent opportunities for private sector partners to develop their products and match their supplies with real demand from farmers for agricultural inputs.
- The extension service's opportunity to recover some of its costs from the private sector partners could be an important step towards sustainability.

### **In the pipeline**

#### *Rhone-Poulenc*

Rhone Poulenc plans to launch a pilot initiative in the South West province to train subject matter specialists in the use of a number of its products (herbicides and fungicides for horticultural crops) which will be introduced to farmers. Rhone Poulenc staff will participate in farm-level diagnoses to better appreciate farmers' problems and will supervise demonstration plots with extension staff.

#### *Hydrochem*

Details of an agreement with Hydrochem have been finalized. The company plans to develop a fertilizer blending plant. A pilot initiative will be launched in the Northern Province where Hydrochem is already supplying fertilizers to Sodecoton. Hydrochem will take over and sell non-cotton agricultural products from about 100 of Sodecon's retail outlets. The objective is for farmers to diversify into non-cotton crops.

Over the next twelve months, the unit of the extension and research service responsible for Linkages with Private Partners and Support to Farmers' Associations will monitor implementation of ongoing agreements with private partners and aims to negotiate a further five agreements.

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