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

Feed the Future Liberia Agribusiness Development Activity

Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture (CNFA)

FACES of LADA:

Agro-dealer Edition



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CNFA
Cultivating New Frontiers
in Agriculture

Increasing private sector investment in agricultural inputs systems in Liberia:



Joan Agriculture Business Center

Joan and Mackie Kamara were already keeping records at their store in the heart of Goba Chop Market near Monrovia; however, they were not practicing the safe and efficient handling of agrochemicals or properly tracking their customers. This caused the business to remain static even as interest in agrochemical use began to grow.

Like many agro-dealers in Liberia, Joan and Mackie had little understanding of the complexities of agro-inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides, as well as of running an agro-input business. Typically, agro-dealers sell inputs directly to farmers from their shops without the formal knowledge of crop and soil management, effective dosing of agrochemicals, environmental compliance, health and safety, or marketing and business management.

Then in 2016, after being recruited to join LADA's training on "building markets" intended to facilitate agribusiness market linkages in the area, Joan was invited to participate in LADA's agro-dealer strengthening and certification program.

"LADA taught us that we should not be static." – Mackie Kamara

According to Joan, since the training and certification of her enterprise, her business has improved – particularly regarding the safe use of chemicals and the company’s expansion and outreach to farmers. Joan has even extended her business into Ganta, a major economic hub in Nimba County, where she has built relationships with new clients outside of Montserrado County.

In the future, Joan and Mackie want to expand to all of Liberia’s 15 counties, grow internationally, and improve the quality of the chemicals they purchase from neighboring countries. Additionally, they hope to open a farm and local NGO to promote the capacity building of agronomists and farmers to teach them about effective use of pesticides and agrochemicals.

Moreover, Mackie is participating in the organization of the National Agro-Inputs Dealer Association of Liberia (NAIDAL), a network founded through LADA which includes the 48 certified agro-dealers as well as agro-dealers from counties outside of LADA’s zone of intervention. The National Agro-Inputs Dealer Association of Liberia (NAIDAL), an umbrella body of agro-input retailers, organized for the purpose of networking and advocacy, and ensuring the provision of affordable agro-inputs and essential farm services to farmers across Liberia.

In Fiscal Year 2019, LADA-supported certified agro-dealers delivered direct on-farm trainings on the importance and safer use of agro-inputs to a total of 298 smallholder farmers in Montserrado County alone, the county that includes the Liberian capital, Monrovia. Of the 298, 156 are female, representing more than 50%. LADA has certified a total of 27 agro-dealers in Montserrado County and 48 nationwide.





Sunrise Agro Chemical

Moses Cammue, CEO of Sunrise Agro Chemicals in Monrovia, began his agrochemical business in 2009. He first came into contact with LADA in 2016 when he was recruited to participate in a 10-day training in Gbarnga, Bong County as part of LADA's effort to strengthen agro-dealers' capacity in Liberia.

At the training, Moses was exposed to many new concepts such as pesticide safety, and how to identify and diagnose a variety of pest and disease problems through trainings and field demonstrations. Additionally, he and the other participants had the opportunity to network and engage with one another as well as with the Ministry of Agriculture.

“Before LADA, we were selling dangerous chemicals like ordinary commodities - we did not know the dangers.” – Moses Cammue, CEO of Sunrise Agro Chemicals

After the training, Moses and the other agro-dealers learned how to use safety equipment such as face masks and gloves in order to protect their health while handling chemicals. He also learned the benefits of sharing technical knowledge with farmers in order to better address problems encountered during production. Furthermore, Moses benefitted from LADA's efforts to refurbish agro-input shops, creating a more professional-looking store and attracting new customers. In total, the certified agro-dealers have trained 539 smallholder farmers in Bong county in Fiscal Year 2019, consisting of 293 males and 246 females.

Now that he has come to know the dangers in addition to the importance of agrochemicals, Moses is able to better recommend products to his customers, something he claims has contributed to the growth and success of his business. He also asserted that the training has helped him to understand the effect of bacteria, viruses and fungi on plants which he can pass along to his customers.

“Our shop is now more like a classroom.” – Moses Cammue, CEO of Sunrise Agro Chemicals

Since the training, Moses' customer base has expanded and he is now servicing farmers in rural Montserrado and Margibi counties.

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EMERGENCY AGRICULTURE
DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY GRANT
Certificate of Completion
This is to certify that
Quanglu Business Center
has successfully completed the
Safe Agribusiness Initiative and Business Management
Training Program. This certificate is awarded to the
participants of the program who have successfully
completed the program and are now ready to
operate their own businesses.
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Quapolu Business Center

Established in January 2010, Quapolu Business Center is situated in Totota, Bong County.

Unlike many agro-dealer input shops in Liberia, field agents of Quapolu Business Center had always traveled outside of the shop to provide extension services to their farmers. However, they were not always able to provide tailored advice or maintain records of their customers since they did not have the appropriate agricultural knowledge or a formal record-keeping system.

But in 2016, the Business Manager of Quapolu Business Center, Peter Kollie, was enrolled in LADA's agro-dealer strengthening and certification training program which covered four modules encompassing safer input utilization and basic record keeping; guiding principles of good customer service and extension outreach; common pests and diseases of food crops in Liberia; and pesticide first aid. In 2019, 48 agro-dealers graduated from the program, seven in Bong county specifically. In addition to the certification, LADA worked with Peter to expand his agro-inputs business, refurbish his shop, and increase the quality of his products.

As a result of their partnership with LADA, particularly on the provision of extension services, Quapolu Business Center has been able to hire specialized staff who understand the applications of agro-chemicals and who are able to conduct record keeping in order to visit nearby farms and select market days.

Quapolu Business Center also now specializes in supplying smaller packages of agro-inputs in order to improve the affordability of expensive agro-chemicals for smallholder farmers, in addition to supplying inputs such as water pumps, sprayers, spraying cans, and other farm equipment.

Peter emphasized that the demand for his products have increased and therefore his business has grown. This has made his business more competitive than that of other agro-dealers and has allowed him to expand his customer base from under 500 farmers to over 2,000 farmers across Liberia. In some instances, the demand for Peter's products have even exceeded his supply.

Moving forward, Quapolu Business Center hopes to continue their success and work with networks of agro-input retailers such as the National Agro-Inputs Dealer Association of Liberia (NAIDAL) to meet future challenges and the demand for quality, safe and affordable inputs for smallholder farmers in Liberia.



Kessellie M. Bazzie Agro-Inputs Shop

Kessellie M. Bazzie and his wife Gaydou Korti run an agro-input shop in Voinjama, Lofa County that services farmers in the area with agricultural inputs and advisory services.

Before LADA, the Kessellie M. Bazzie Agro-Inputs Shop used to sell their agricultural and veterinary chemicals alongside dry goods like rice, and other foods.

But in 2016, LADA supported shop owner Kessellie M. Bazzie to participate in the agro-dealer certification program which trained and certified 48 agro-dealers in Bong, Nimba, Lofa and Montserrado counties on the safe use of agro-inputs, proper chemical applications, business management, and improved record keeping and customer service. LADA also supported the refurbishment of Kessellie's shop by partitioning the store into two different shops – one for food and household goods, and another for agro-inputs and supplies.

Since the shop upgrades, the business has grown and the company's knowledge of how to use agro-chemicals has improved. This gives the Kessellie M. Bazzie Agro-Inputs Shop a competitive edge over its competitors because customers know that the inputs and services they receive from Kessellie are reliable and high quality. His outreach and extension to farmers has also improved as a result of the trainings, and he is now teaching farmers how to use his products directly on their own farms.

To further support his extension efforts, Kessellie and Gaydou were able to create a demonstration plot on their farm to teach farmers and customers about the comparative benefits of their products. The additional profits from the shop have also supported the purchase of a motorcycle and pickup truck which they use to transport goods to and from their farm, and a small rice mill that they share with their community to process rice. They have also expanded into pig and palm oil production where they aggregate locally sourced palm nuts to process kernel oil and transform the residue into kernel cake to feed their pigs.

Moreover, as a result of their success and growth, the Kessellie M. Bazzie Agro-Inputs Shop hosted two interns from LADA's youth entrepreneurship and readiness training program. These interns helped Kessellie in the shop, and supported the shop's business services by acting as extension agents to nearby farms.



Kessellie M. Bazzie
Inputs Shop
Voinjama Market, Lofa County
• FERTILIZER • EQUIPMENT

Kessellie M. Bazzie
Inputs Shop

- SEEDS
- EQUIPMENT
- FERTILIZERS
- CHEMICALS

VOINJAMA MARKET, LOFA COUNTY +231



Rainforest Agriculture Enterprise

Frederick Gonkartee is the President and CEO of Rainforest Agriculture Enterprise, an agro-input business that has benefited from LADA trainings and agro-dealer certification.

Farmers visit Rainforest Agriculture Enterprise to purchase inputs and receive extension services through guidance from Frederick and his team. Frederick, an agronomist by trade, is known in his community for his knowledge of agriculture and the success of his enterprise.

But, prior to participating in LADA training, Frederick was unaware of the dangers of handling pesticides and chemicals without proper protection, or on how to expand his business through proper business management.

***“We received training in safe handling of pesticides, business management education, record keeping, customer tracking, and others. The trainings have carried the business to another level.”
– Frederick Gonkartee, President and CEO of Rainforest Agriculture Enterprise.***

Since the trainings, business for Frederick has increased – he has opened a second shop location and increased his customer base allowing him to go out and train/reach more farmers.

“They don’t just purchase inputs and go. We have to educate them on how to use the inputs and how to safely handle chemicals in order to be environmentally friendly.” – Frederick Gonkartee, President and CEO of Rainforest Agriculture Enterprise.

Furthermore, Frederick has set up a farm for Rainforest Agriculture Enterprise where he grows vegetables such as tomatoes and onions for sale through the shop, and a palm oil nursery where he grows 10,000 palm oil seedlings. These palms, which are sold to nearby farmers, are an improved palm variety and yield up to 20 MT/ha of palm oil per harvest as opposed to the traditional variety of trees which yield about 3-7 MT/ha per harvest. These trees can also live and produce for 40-50 years, contributing to the country’s sustainable palm oil production.

“I want to thank LADA for their level of support because we used to do this on our own without any assistance from anybody. Then LADA came and built our capacity to the extent that we can at least do this on our own now and help our farmers in Liberia.” – Frederick Gonkartee,



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