



Country: South Africa
Sector: Agriculture
Project: Sustainable production and commercialization strategies in the agri-food sector in South Africa
Grantee: Fundacion Sustalde
Partner: Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) & Agricultural Research Council (ARC)

Acknowledgements

The SWITCH Africa Green programme was developed by the European Commission to support African countries in their transition to an inclusive green economy, the main objective being to promote sustainable development. This is based on sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns, while generating growth, creating decent jobs and reducing poverty.

This impact sheet on 'Sustainable production and commercialization strategies in the agri-food sector in South Africa' provides a snapshot of results and achievements of the project under the Green Business Development Component of Phase I (2014-2019) of the SWITCH Africa Green programme. This component supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in applying and adopting SCP practices within their business operations.

The project was implemented by Fundacion Sustalde in partnership with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) and Agricultural Research Council (ARC) with the support of the SWITCH Africa Green National Focal Point Dr. Jenitha Badul - Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) and National Coordinator, Wakhile Mkhonza, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), South Africa. The grants were managed by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and coordinated by Celia Marquez with support from Mercy Gatobu.

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Background

The agriculture sector in South Africa is faced with threats of decreasing water resources and land degradation. The rate of land degradation is high, estimated at 70 per cent and it is projected that the country may experience a reduction of 10 per cent in average rainfall, reducing surface water runoff by between 50 to 75 per cent by 2025. Coupled with this, inappropriate and unsustainable farming methods and over-exploitation of the land pose a threat to the country's food security.

The SWITCH Africa Green supported project was implemented in the provinces of Limpopo, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa to promote SCP practices, along with green certification schemes, through increasing the knowledge and capacity of MSMEs in the agri-food sector.

Beneficiaries

The project engaged 112 smallholder farmers – 75 from Limpopo, 29 from Eastern Cape, six from KwaZulu-Natal,

one from Gauteng and one from Mpumalanga to promote sustainable agricultural practices.

Objectives

- Decouple economic growth from environmental degradation in the agri-food sector by assisting smallholder farmers to adopt best practices in sustainable production, including the efficient utilization of water for irrigation
- Promote agri-food operators to adopt more sustainable practices through voluntary agreements and green certification schemes, engaging in the transition towards an inclusive green economy
- Promote changes in policies, regulations and standards in order to foster the generation and implementation of sustainable practices and green certification schemes along the agri-food sector in South Africa

Outputs

Improved capacities of Business Development Services (BDS) to promote SCP practices by MSMEs

MSMEs were trained on business management practices through the project. The smallholder farmers were trained on how to keep financial records and to use the records in decision making. They were trained on reconciling income and expenditure to determine whether they were making a profit or loss and how to prevent losses and increase profits.

Four workshops were held through which 48 stakeholders gained knowledge on sustainable trade opportunities and their economic and environmental benefit.



Improved capacities of workers in green sectors

A total of 112 smallholder farmers were trained on SCP practices and benefitted from capacity building in clean production through sustainable irrigation and resources management in food production and agri-business development.

Toolkits on sustainable agri-food production were developed and disseminated among 464 key stakeholders in South Africa. The toolkits covered sustainable agricultural practices, green certification scheme guidelines, step-by-step sustainable production practices and the GLOBALG.A.P. brochure.

Improved awareness of consumers on the impact of the products they buy

Four workshops were held through which 48 stakeholders gained knowledge on sustainable trade opportunities and their economic and environmental benefit.

Outcomes

Uptake of SCP practices by MSMEs

With project support, the SUPRA green certification was developed and tested with 30 farmers (18 from Limpopo, five from KwaZulu-Natal and seven from Eastern Cape). The certification scheme covered three areas: soil conservation and management, pest and diseases management and water resources management. Individual recommendations were provided to the farmers for applying more sustainable practices on their farms.

Improved business performance of MSMEs supported

The smallholder farmers reported improved business operations and management owing to improved recording and analysis of farm production. There was also improved knowledge, change in attitudes and enhanced skills for adopting good farming practices among project beneficiaries.

Impacts

Environmental impacts

Beneficiaries who implemented the project reported a reduction in water and energy consumption as well as a reduction in the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. There was a 34 per cent reduction in energy consumption from implementing small-storage infrastructures in the irrigation system which reduced water pumping needs (water flows to the drip irrigation system through gravity). Beneficiaries also reported a decrease in the amount of waste they generated. Soil management interventions reduced the use of fertilisers through the use of green manure and adjustment of nutrient management based on the results of the water quality analysis and soil testing. Finally, water reduction was reported by different beneficiaries through adopting interventions such as water harvesting and small-storage infrastructures, water quality analysis to detect salinity problems in irrigation water and the reuse of wastewater for irrigating trees.

Economic impacts

The smallholder farmers benefitted from reduced production costs as a result of lower water, energy and feed

consumption during the project implementation period. Some of the farmers took up innovative ways of cost cutting through sharing transport with others located within close proximity.

Social impacts

There was an increased awareness of occupational health and safety. The smallholder farmers were trained on pesticide knowledge and safety practices and their awareness raised on the consequences of prolonged exposure to pesticides which can lead to cardiopulmonary disorders, neurological and haematological symptoms and skin disease.

Lessons learnt

- Smallholder farmers change the types of crops they grow depending on market demand, making it difficult to prioritize improvements needed in the subsequent season, as challenges are specific to the type of crop grown
- One of the most limiting factors at the time of improving the environmental performance of MSMEs is access to the funds required for implementing the recommended green interventions
- External factors such as price of supplies and climatic conditions also impact the results the farmer is able to achieve in terms of savings in production costs and volumes of produce.

“This project has enabled us to work closely with the extension officers who provide on the ground training and mentorship on sustainable farming practices,”

Mr Kobe, a farmer from Limpopo, South Africa.



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