Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rurale (IPAR)

Supporting farmers' organizations in collecting and analyzing data for decision making

** CONTEXT **

The 2008 food crisis helped to put agriculture back on the agenda of major international institutions. This renewed interest in the sector led to a reflection on the models of agriculture best suitable to meet food and nutritional needs of the 9 billion inhabitants projected in 2050 and to ensure sustainable management of natural resources. Worldwide, various types of farms coexist and transform themselves by making use of these resources.

The Senegalese agricultural sector has undergone major transformations due to population growth, urbanization, market access, climate change and public policies. Likewise, family farms diversified by developing various strategies. But these changes are insufficiently understood and documented. Building on its experience of monitoring how family farms contribute in feeding Senegal, CNCR a farmer apex organization, teamed with IPAR to take the opportunity of the World Agricultural Watch project, and address the knowledge gap on the Senegalese agriculture transformation processes.

** WHAT WE DID **

With a view to strengthening the monitoring and analysis of farms, their functioning, performance and transformation and better adapt policies and interventions to this diversity, a typology of farms was developed. First, exploratory work was carried out to assess the current situation and to inform on the needs of the various actors. Second, interviews were then conducted with national entities with knowledge on typology and monitoring of farms. The methodology developed draws on previous experience and literature on farm typology along with economic theory. To compensate for the insufficiency of the existing data (annual surveys and census), a complementary survey was carried out on 229 holdings in order to obtain data on land, main activity, labor and market orientation. A second typology exercise was implemented using the deductive method. The minimum wage (SMIG) was adopted as the threshold because it not only reflects what a worker earns, but also gives the best distribution of family farms in Senegal. The hourly minimum wage in the agricultural sector is CFAF 182.95. Overall, 30 reference farms have been selected for the purpose of an in-depth monitoring and evaluation.

** CHALLENGE **

Several challenges were encountered including: (i) insufficient financial resources for annual surveys and subsequent data processing; (ii) maintaining the same reference farms with the risk of farmer fatigue; (iii) incentives for reference farms to record regular and accurate data on the books provided.

** OUTCOME **

Based on the minimum wage and the surveys administered, it was possible to characterize a diversity of family farms. For each of the four categories, we highlighted using key indicators, the characteristics of the farms, their production system, their economic situation, their performance and their food security status. This information is used by farmers’ facilitators to sensitize family farms and to explore avenues of improvement. The data is also shared with policymakers in the hope they will inform decision-making.