

The present status of Post harvest, storage and transport technologies

Introduction

The off-line session opened with the National coordinator giving an over-view of the four papers from the other participating countries. The papers were not sent to participants having arrived a day to the meeting. The overview highlighted mainly the challenges and proposed interventions.

The bulk of the first offline session concentrated on the Uganda presentation, specifically to capture the main issues raised by participants as well as the draft paper. Having the modulator in Uganda helped to focus the presentation to the allocated time, without missing out the main points.

The report covers discussions at the National level, capturing the questions and responses from Uganda. The second part deals with the regional level, and key issues raised by the participating countries. The third part captures the recommendations from Uganda and the last part issues and recommendations on the modalities of preparation, and actual VC facilitation. These are presented in turn below,

DISCUSSIONS ON NATIONAL LEVEL

1. Questions and responses from Uganda

There were two specific questions FOR Uganda

a) Uganda desires to reduce its post harvest losses from 90% to 10%, what are the current measures to ensure this?

- The focus is to be on reconfiguration of procurement from producers to reduce the time and thus losses. South Africa coming to test the I-MCI which will reduce the losses in transit and storage.
- For international market access, Uganda is promoting wholesale market to increase volumes. There are already 2 private-public partnerships for citrus and pineapples.
- It was highlighted that Uganda Export Promotion Board had horticulture as one of the 12 sectors contributing to exports and seen as contributing to poverty reduction, and employment. There is an initiative to open up border market points to DR Congo, Southern Sudan, Tanzania and Kenya.
- At national level, Uganda signed on the CAADP of the African Union, in which strategies emphasis agro-businesses, private-public partnerships. Under this agreement are subsidies and other enabling factors for investors. Already the government commissioned a factory to produce packing materials; there is a post harvest program laboratory at Kawanda research station, processing has started in Teso region for citrus, planning to move next to Luwero for organic pineapple products.

b) What is the possibility of sending some of the Ugandan product by sea?

- There was a question on whether Uganda has considered Sea freight. There were trials on pineapples but the transmission time was on favorable due to poor roads and also the threat of pirates. There is need to try other products like Avocado.

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- There is need for a strategy to bring stakeholders at the national level to deliberate on this issue. There is need to embrace appropriate technologies to enable products to remain fresh for long distance travel. Also there is need to explore what other exporters are doing to learn and to inform the appropriation of technologies. Technologies that would be affordable even by poor exporters.

2. Issues raised by Uganda

- To Ethiopia: Some of the data quoted was from 2002. There was a question on updating data in general and accessing it for utilization. Discussions later highlighted the need for a regional body to facilitate the collection, management and sharing data on demand, and generally on how to capture data on the sector in the region. Data collection challenges were that the information was generic, not specified to inform timely decision making.
- To Kenya: Does the Kenya Cooperative movement involve smallholder farmers? How are they organized and what roles do farmers play in storage, post harvest handling and transportation? The response was that Kenya had farmers groups organized from the local to national levels. Farmers felt the need to come together for produce buying, transportation, access training and loans.
- General: Smallholder farmers are major in production, there is need to strengthen their organization, e.g in cooperatives to access storage facilities and need capacity to manage them sustainably. There is also need to address the financing mechanisms.
- Cross cutting issues: Inappropriate means of transport. Need an intervention on roads and packaging to suit the various modes of transport.
- The need for regional capacity building in research, to cease the opportunities to work together on post harvest handling, storage and transport issues.
- The question on railway lines - To lobby governments to harmonize the rail sizes to permit fast moving trains that would best suit fresh products.
- Need to develop and share technologies on drying products across the region
- Need to find innovative ways to provide regional power points for cold storage
- Need to bring on board the finance and training institutions to support value chains, as well as involve NGOs.

3. Discussions on regional issues

Zambia:

- One actor had been in the horticulture business for 28 years and issues raised have always been present and some are getting worse. Rather than focusing on these, there is need to share what is working.
- Zambia imports more than exports horticultural products. There is need to form strong HC associations and link up with regional markets, especially with countries bordering Zambia.
- From the Farmers' perspective the extensive paper work that delay the produce in transit on open trucks, farmers prefer buyers from Destiny countries to come and get the products so that they handle the papers on their side. He narrated a case of onions.

Madagascar

- Collaboration at the regional levels is possible on data collection and management
- Networking: With south and East African countries as well as other islands. This will provide access to training in Universities. Madagascar has a fruit/vegetable center and laboratory that can be opened to regional partners, and harbor that can be shared.
- There is need to share experiences
- Regional collaboration is not new, when cassava got a problem, the region came together and drafted a policy, the same can happen for HC.
- There are tools that can be used to improve quality and determine the product for processing.

Kenya.

- Kenya can facilitate the coming together countries on the issue of data, engaging the support of international partners. It hosts the Horticultural council of Africa.
- Kenya can offer cold storage, packaging produced by an industry set up to produce packing material types to suit long distance on long shelf life.
- For capacity building, Kenya Research institutes offer practical 5 day courses. There are already initiatives to network universities – Inter University council of African, RUFORUM, SSA-Challenge program...

Uganda

- Need for regional standards on movement of goods across borders
- Regional trade fares
- Distribution market points.
- Need to lobby for preferential treatment at border points to limit the time of waiting out of cold storage (it is done for fish and flowers)
- Universities to research and disseminate post harvest, storage and transport technologies.

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- Uganda-Kenya railway renovation being re-negotiated to appropriate the width of the rail to suit faster transportation. There are other regional considerations to extend lines to Southern Sudan.

Ethiopia

- Regional trade fares in HC should be funded. There are common crops that bring Africa together.
- Need for a common research institute to bring knowledge together.

4. List of key recommendations/ resolutions from the offline session

National level

- Data: There is need for a streamlined structure and system to collect, process and manage HC data covering the whole value chain.
- Stakeholders platform to address all key commodity sub-sectors. The platform would deal with data, quality control measures, storage, transportation, cold room inputs and spares.
- Strengthen farmers organizations in HC to capture data at local levels, carry out group storage and marketing, run collection centers with cold facilities, have input shops for spares e.g. plugs, valves and packaging materials.
- A national cold chain mechanism, private and backed up by technical persons, supplies, spare parts in the immediate future. In the mid term and long term future, there is need to invest in College and University education to provide the needed human resource to innovate, design logistical models as well as handle management and maintenance of the cold chain. There is only Kyanbogo University that provides hands on training in this regard at diploma level.
- Appropriate technologies in post harvest technologies, especially processing. Two Universities have departments of HC – Makerere and Mountains of the Moon. There is need to train human resource to promote innovative and appropriate processing mechanisms.
- Sea route: There is need to explore parameters for keeping fresh products for longer periods. Static trials have been conducted on Avocado but there is need to try out other products such as pineapples, mangoes, etc.

Regional level

- Infrastructure: Need to work on regional transportation – railway, roads, and for Countries around L. Victoria water transport.
- Regional research program: ASARECA is one regional research network that can be used to look into issues of post harvest handling, storage and transportation.
- Trade fairs, to show case innovations and to share knowledge and strategies for strengthening the position of HC goods from East and Southern Africa.
- Border collection points to provide infrastructural facilities such as power points, cold storage, custom services and other legal procedures to HC regional members.
- Regional trial on sea route: Workout mechanisms to share facilities and services a long the route. Explore technologies to prolong shelf life after the sea route.

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- Develop guidelines and regulations at ports to ensure fair treatments of regional members using ports for export. Need to study how countries in Europe access ports equitably.

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

Preparation before the meeting

1. It was not clear whose responsibility it is to find the technical persons to write the national papers.
2. To follow up on the above, it will be good to have these people identified early, given strict guidelines to prepare and present. Papers need to arrive early so that National Coordinators have time to read and send to participants.
3. Now that all National Coordinators are in place, it will be good to start early to identify participants to each meeting. There was an issue raised in Uganda: should we go for institutions or individuals. The advantage of institutions is that alternatives can be found to replace the others incase they opt out at the last minute, which happened for 3 participants (only one was not tuned in and seemed lost from the start!). Going with the individual leaves the meeting at the mercy of prioritization in case something considered more urgent turns up. Remembering that this is voluntary, we need to bear in mind that people's salaried jobs may be preferred.
4. We were reminded by the commissioner crop production that if we invite people from Government we need to follow certain set procedures. For instance copy letters to the Permanent secretary. However other sources were saying it is not necessary... We need to find out the appropriate procedures and follow them to avoid last minute cancellations.
5. In the guidelines there were few bullets that were not so clear
 - a) Under Present status at national level:
 - Produce indicators at national level... (We handled is as general background and performance indicators ...)
 - National organization apparatus (Structure/ systems)
 - b) In the guidelines the topic is worded as "Present status of the storage, transport and logistics for horticultural production", while in the brochure it is "Post Harvest ad Transport Technologies: Reducing losses and improving quality on F&V". I used them interchangeably but we need to stick to one.

Presentations online

6. Some presentations spent more time giving the background and hardly had time left for the main issues. I think the pre-online sessions need to be guided as well. What we did was to have the paper presented, then have the other participants add, comment, etc. We then worked on keeping the main issues to 10 minutes, and had a rehearsal of the presentation.

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7. For some reason whoever was controlling the sessions put Uganda on mute, when the modulator was in Uganda, he could not control time when one of the countries overshot the 13 minutes. There is need for the country where the modulator sits not to be muted.

Last off-line sessions

8. This one went well but we had to remind ourselves that this session was also to consider any lessons, issues picked from the presentations of the other countries and not to focus only on Uganda.
9. Again a lot of care needs to be taken to ensure that the deliberations focus on the topic under discussion. Having the brochure and showing participants that there were specific seminars for standards and markets and involving smallholders helped to refocus the discussions back to Post harvest, storage and transport logistic.

Allowances

10. We need to sort this out early and to ensure that the WB sends money before the meetings. The GDLN agreed to pre-finance the food and drinks but requested that the WB sends the money early.