

Introduction

The Uganda Oilseed Subsector Platform (OSSUP) prioritized technological upgrading and innovative capacity as a key element for building a competitive and sustainable subsector. The platform took an interest in exploring pathways for clustering competencies to enhance innovation, upscale proven and locally invented technologies, and promote a demand driven R&D that links farmers and processors with research and stimulates local innovativeness. The subsector, however, is challenged by a fragmented R&D system. Therefore, a policy perspective that looks at competitiveness as a set of institutions, policies and factors that determine the level of productivity in a subsector or in regional business systems is promising. In Uganda, this perspective aligns closely with the

Competitiveness and Investment Climate Strategy (CICS), which looks at individual firms but also emphasizes competitiveness at value chain or subsector level. At levels beyond individual firms, the strategy says, competitiveness is achieved when there is sustained increase in productivity, efficiency and innovation throughout the oilseed value chain or subsector. And, when there is a shared understanding of the need for joint and collective action between and amongst the private and public sector actors. Clearly, the public and private sector are expected to play different but interrelated roles. A commodity-based platform, such as OSSUP, may be able to enhance connectivity for the purpose of technological upgrading and innovative capacity and concentrate on pre-competitive interests and the creation of public goods.

Local innovative capacity

Local innovative capacity was investigated in a selection of case studies of novel technological practices in farmers' fields or processing units. The case studies indicate that technology users can drive innovation. A perspective of user-generated or user-driven innovation recognises that poor people or small-scale enterprises are resourceful, innovative and often solve their own problems through their own means. To have greater impact, it is important to recognise and incubate these innovative practices and to induce concerted action for dissemination to other users. For a subsector platform, an important issue may be to explore the right conditions for out scaling; how to replicate the problem solving strategies invented in one locality in other circumstances?

Detected local novel technological practices in Ugandan oilseed subsector

Farming	Post-harvest / Processing / Value addition
Concoction of red peppers to scare birds	Standing stock in the field to dry the harvest <i>in situ</i>
Planting with hole making stick to confuse birds and mice	Use of Tarpaulins in drying and cleaning
Planting string with knots to achieve right plant density	On-farm moisture control
Planting sunflower seeds in furrows made by ox-plough	Charcoal drier
Crop rotation and intercropping in sunflower production	Solar drying
	Electric batch drier
	Integration of farm enterprises – cake as poultry feed
	Seed cake sales
	Ram press with higher capacity



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For quality of life:

Technological upgrading and innovative capacity in the Ugandan oilseeds subsector

VC4PD

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April 2010

VC4PD Brief 3

Also, the presence of local innovative capacity in the oilseed sector invites technology companies to consider an open innovation strategy. Many companies are soliciting ideas, knowledge and resources from outside their own institutions — not only from expert advisors, but also from amateur enthusiasts, customers and end-users. Enhancing such technological connectivity gives an opportunity to harness creativity for technology products and services.

Services provision

Connectivity of farmers and processors to research and technology providers enables technological upgrading and innovative capacity. An inventory (2008) of the technologies offered and services provided in five sunflower producing districts in Uganda found the following. The provision of seed, either open pollinated or hybrid varieties, is most important in service provision. Public and private actors with access to seed are predominant sources of technology in the oilseed subsector. Next to seed, materials for on-farm drying were provided, either as grants or for subsidised prices. Ram presses for village processing and motorised mills were provided by public support programmes. In the

case of ram presses, support agencies encouraged fabrication or repair modification by local artisans. Farmer groups, for example involved in produce bulking or seed multiplication, or associated farmers, for example grouped around contact farmers or site coordinators, were important entry points for service delivery.

Up scaling pathways

The necessity to bulk farm produce in the oilseed subsector may open a promising avenue for technological upgrading and innovative capacity. On the one hand, technical changes in drying, processing and value addition are taking place at bulking nodes. On the other hand, existing organisational structures and reliable institutional arrangements at bulking

nodes may enable a two-way exchange of technology and knowledge essential for out scaling local innovation and enhance connectivity in the subsector. Consequently, bulking nodes can be effective entry point for service provision and for linking technology users to research organisation and private technology suppliers.



This brief is a result of the action research program Value Chains for Pro-poor Development (VC4PD), implemented in collaboration with Agriterra and AgriProFocus. In Uganda, the programme supports the Uganda Oilseed Subsector Platform (OSSUP), which acts as a steering committee of the action research, in collaboration with Makerere University, the Netherlands Development Organisation SNV, and UOSPA (Uganda Oilseed Producers and Processors Association).