



Farmers organizations /cooperatives professionalism and access to sustainable inputs and outputs markets in Benin –Market Scope Study

1. Context

The Agribusiness Market Ecosystem Alliance (AMEA) is a global network of public and private organizations working to accelerate the professionalization of agricultural organizations. AMEA's vision is a future where millions of professional farmer organizations have access to finance and markets, enabling them to deliver meaningful benefits to their members.

AMEA's approach is an integrated and dynamic approach that among other consists of:

- IWA 29 (International Workshop Agreement 29)¹ guidelines for professional agricultural organizations.
- Toolbox with assessment, training, and coaching tools for FOs to improve their professionalization.
- Promotion and facilitation of access to finance and investment
- Promotion of agricultural technologies including digitalization.

By implementing such approach, the level of professionalism of farmer organizations will increase. This in turn means an improvement in yields and livelihoods, contractual requirements will be met, and the overall viability and sustainability of farmer organizations will be strengthened.

Agriculture is one of the main drivers of economic activity in Benin. Several of Benin agricultural value chains – Pineapple, maize; soja, cotton, cashew, Vegetables, Palm oil, etc. – are comprised of smallholders who often (but not always) belong to a growing number of farmers organizations and agri-SMEs including cooperative societies. It is estimated to nearly 2500 cooperatives societies including cotton cooperatives in Benin. Many smallholders and those cooperatives in Benin lack the managerial and technical capacities needed to act as professional businesses, or organizations which hinders their access to finance and new markets. Furthermore, the development and capacity- building sector is characterized by a fragmented approach to building business management capacity and a disconnect with market opportunities, buyers, banks, and input providers. In addition to that, services provided by national extension institutions to farmers are limited and not satisfactory for these farmers, as it is analyzed in the report of the review of performances of the agricultural sector (DPP /MAEP, 2020). Furthermore, regarding access to finance for agricultural entrepreneurs and farmers' organizations, the Government has installed the national Fund of the development of the agricultural sector and has devoted 150 million EUR in 2020 to mitigate COVID-19 negative effects. Unfortunately, the depletion rate of this fund is not yet high, and the lack of capacities of farmers' organizations and agricultural entrepreneurs is one of the factors explaining this. This results in sub-optimal outcomes throughout the value chain.

Several organizations are active in Benin in the agricultural field and working with the farmers organizations. This raised the interest of setting up an AMEA local network in the country with ambition to : (i) standardizing and increasing farmers' and cooperatives' professionalization to impact

¹ The [IWA 29:2019 - 'Professional Farmer Organization Guidelines'](#) was published by [ISO](#) in February 2019. This document defines the core capacities of professional farmer organizations, clarifying what it means to be a professional farmer organization and what it takes to successfully get there.



agribusiness; (ii) Facilitating the emergence of a local ecosystem with qualified service providers pool, curating high quality training for farmer organizations, promoting the use of effective and probed assessment and training tools, and ensuring high adoption rates; (iii) driving sustainability efforts in diverse agricultural commodities; (iv) facilitating access to finance, access to international markets and new commercial opportunities, i.e. replanting facilities for farmer organizations; and (v) Improving cost efficiency of capacity builders to uphold standards of professionalism for capacity builders.

All this can be reached by sharing knowledge, collaborating, learning, and adjusting as well as scaling capacity building interventions and finding sustainable exit strategies.

With that ambition the AMEA network will act as a member-driven platform through which the following products, services and best practices can become available for members:

- assessment tools for different types of farmers organizations.²
- training and coaching materials matching the assessment tools.
- a (national) database of accredited and qualified trainers, assessors, and coaches. The format of such database will to be discussed with members.
- a cooperatives/farmers organizations directory with harmonized definitions of professionalism categorization levels.

This package will help cooperatives and other farmers organizations to strengthen their capacity, giving them better opportunities to access finance and new markets. It will also allow financial institutions and private companies to identify cooperatives with whom they can collaborate, and subsequently better serve them. Finally, it will help Technical and Financial Partners to ensure the efficiency of their FO professionalization programs.

2. Objective of the assignment

The overall objective of this assignment is to conduct a comprehensive market assessment of the landscape of farmers organizations/coops professionalization with the perspective to identify the key challenges and the role that AMEA network can play.

Results of this study will be used as the basis for structuring AMEA Benin's efforts to advance its mission.

3. Scope of work

The consultant (or consulting firm) will conduct a Demand analysis and Supply assessment as described below.

• Demand Analysis

The demand analysis aims to have a comprehensive understanding of the scope of farmers organizations and cooperatives in Benin including women and youth organizations or agri-SMEs. The firm is not expected to conduct a deep FO/coops analysis, rather a consolidation of existing reports and available information.

For each of the main crops in Benin: a comprehensive list of existing coops with their characteristics, a tentative categorization, and any relevant information that might be for the interest of AMEA.

² Any tool promoted within AMEA is first mapped against the IWA 29 criteria which integrated inter alia local or national regulation requirements in terms of farmers organizations or cooperatives societies.



- **Supply assessment**

The supply assessment aims to gather information about stakeholders who have an interest in creating an environment in which professionalized cooperatives exist.

- 1. Business Development Service (BDS) providers** (i.e., trainers and other relevant service providers)

- 1.a.** An analysis of the current landscape of business skills training providers:

- Description of the major potential providers of business skills training in the (agricultural) cooperative space, both for direct training and for training of trainers
- Description of each identified provider's operations and general capacity for training farmers organizations
- Description of current business skills training marketing means
- Description of available training modules and materials regarding farmers organizations
- Description of the business model behind those services: do all the programs depend on donor/development funds and projects or are sustainable market-driven business models.

- 1.b.** An analysis of current trends and opportunities in business training and skills development that training organizations must be aware of

- An evidence-based estimation of the number of potential training providers with specializations in farmers organizations and cooperatives business skill training who are ready to conduct training on a commercial basis (without donor funded support);
- An evidence-based estimation of how many potential training providers could be ready to conduct training with a modest amount of support.
- Analysis of the gap between the present situation of the training service providers on business skills, both for direct training and the training of trainers.

- 2. Technical and Financial Partners, NGOs**

- 1.a.** An inventory of the main Technical and Financial Partners and NGOs involved in the domain of FO/coops' professionalization and business skills.

- 1.b.** For each of them: description of their specific program, objective, targeted audience, approach and methodology, existing training materials.

- 3. Agribusinesses** (i.e., traders, processors, exporters, and other agribusinesses)

Identification of private initiatives that agribusinesses companies undertake to strengthen their coops' technical and financial capacity, the scope of these initiatives within each company, their strategy, approach, and partners.

- 4. Government Agencies** (inter-professionals, Ministries, ...)

The identification of training and capacity-building programs within each identified agency with the following information: objective, approach, targeted audience, and partners. If the program is co-funded by a specific donor, it should be included in part 2).

- 5. Financial Institutions** (i.e., banks, microfinance institutions, and other financial institutions)



One of the objectives of farmers organization and cooperative professionalization is to strengthen their capacity for easing access to finance.

The consulting firm will identify relevant financial institutions working in the agri-finance space and other potential financial services providers, and any relevant information that might be for the interest of the local AMEA.

4. Deliverables

The consulting firm will deliver both in English and in French language:

- a comprehensive report that provides an overview of the smallholder FO/cooperative support in Benin and that details the findings for each stakeholder category. Additional sections that provide qualitative analysis of the findings may be necessary to ensure the report is comprehensive. This report must clearly present the results of both the demand analysis and supply assessment and translate this in precise and relevant insights as well as workable recommendations.
- a PPT presentation for a large audience during the official meeting of prospective local AMEA members.
- PPT presentations that will serve as input for each of AMEA working groups (IWA 29, Access to finance; Toolbox; Agtech)
- Recommendations towards AMEA network

5. Special terms & conditions

The duration of the assignment will be for 20 working days. The consulting firm will report to AMEA global through the Regional Network Facilitator, who will be available to provide guidance to the consulting firm, as required. He will work closely with the Direction de La Législation Rurale, de l'appui aux Organisations Professionnelles et à l'Entrepreneuriat Agricole (DLROPEA).

Prior to the assignment, AMEA will provide the required orientation about the assignment and background information regarding the project through the study kick-off meeting and subsequent availability of their contact persons. Additionally, AMEA would have to approve the materials used for data collection prior to start.

6. Profile

The consulting firm shall demonstrate experience and competence in following areas.

- agribusiness, with a deep knowledge of the farmer and cooperative organization space, including:
 - knowledge about how to judge the capacity of farmers and coops and their needs in the sectors where they operate
 - knowledge of the players in the cooperatives and farmers organizations space
- agricultural and rural finance.

The contact person for this project should be fluent in oral and written French and English

The consulting firm should be able to prove track record of working and delivering in both languages

Each team member will:



- Hold a master's degree (or equivalent) in agribusiness, international development, development economics, development finance, agricultural finance, management, or another relevant discipline.
- Have at least five (5) years of relevant experience conducting ecosystem studies in Africa.
- Have knowledge of cooperatives' and other farmer organizations' practices, specifically in Benin.
- Have knowledge of agricultural markets and their requirements.
- Be computer-literate and comfortable working with technology, experienced in Microsoft Office Suite.
- Be comfortable working with team members from different countries and across multiple time zones.
- Be comfortable making visits to the field in sometimes challenging environments.

7. Confidentiality

All data and information received from partners for the purpose of this assignment are to be treated confidentially and are only to be used in connection with the execution of these Terms of Reference. All intellectual property rights arising from the execution of these Terms of Reference are assigned AMEA. All materials produced or acquired under terms of this contract - written, graphic, film, magnetic tape, or otherwise - shall remain the property of AMEA and may not be used for other purposes than the execution of these terms of references and will not be disclosed to any third parties without the expressed advance written authorization of the AMEA. The rights and duties provided for in this paragraph shall continue, notwithstanding the termination of the contract or the execution of its other provision.

8. Proposal submission

All the proposals should be submitted to: info@ameaglobal.org not later than 10th September 2021.

For more information, please contact

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