

BACK TO OFFICE REPORT (VS 7895)

IMPROVING THE LIVELIHOODS OF PERI-URBAN VEGETABLE GROWERS THROUGH MARKET PROMOTION OF FRESH AND PROCESSED INDIGENOUS VEGETABLES

B 0110

Visit to Zimbabwe from 26 November to 6 December 2000.

By Peter Greenhalgh and Rudy Schippers

Background

This project began on 15 Nov 1999. The major objective of the first phase of the project was to carry out surveys in the cities of Harare, Mutare and Bulawayo and their surrounding areas, aimed at identifying the main constraints and opportunities for producers, traders and consumers of both fresh and processed indigenous vegetables. These surveys were originally planned to take approximately four months to complete but serious transport and fuel shortages made this impossible. The survey findings would then be presented to a workshop for discussion and for a decision to be taken as to whether or not to proceed to a second phase, dealing with technical issues defined by workshop participants.

Visit objectives

The main objectives of this visit were:

1. To hold a workshop for the first phase of the project
2. To discuss the work programme for the second phase and redesignate responsibilities
3. To establish new contacts in the chosen cities
4. To check project accounts and rearrange the budgets for 2001 and 2002.
5. Any other business

The workshop

28 people attended the workshop, held at St Lucia Park Training and Development Centre in Harare. The participants represented a number of organisations including the NGO's CARE, ENDA Zimbabwe and ITDG, the University of Zimbabwe and the Ministry of Agriculture. Also present were some traders from Mutare and Bulawayo who were invited to attend along with CPHP staff based in Harare. A number of people could not attend because of transport problems.

The workshop was opened by Dr N. Gata, the head of the Department of Research and Specialist Services (DR&SS) who outlined the New Research Paradigm for DR&SS. This was followed by Mr Schippers' introduction to the project and presentations of the survey results in Harare, Bulawayo and Mutare. During the afternoon, Mr Mukwereza from Agritex summarised the marketing information constraints and Peter Greenhalgh presented an overview of the needs, constraints and opportunities, based upon the reports that had been made available so far. This was followed by some short paper presentations.

The workshop participants were then asked to form three groups, to discuss crop improvement, post-harvest handling and dissemination of the project's findings, including marketing issues. These topics were discussed at length and towards the end of the second day participants expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the survey results and recommended follow-up activities in line with the proposed outputs and activities of the original project proposal.

It was suggested that the project should concentrate on three indigenous vegetable crop species, namely spider plant, jute and cowpea. In addition, it was recommended that some limited attention be given to cucurbit crops, such as gourds and African cucumbers, which were not identified during the survey because they appeared at the markets at a later time.

The meeting suggested that if follow-up activities were limited to two regions, these should be Bulawayo and Mutare. While Harare would have been a good choice for further studies not only because of its proximity to the Horticultural Resource Centre in Marondera but also because of its large and diverse population and resultant wide range of vegetables consumed. However, Harare is said to be over-researched when compared with the two other cities. Bulawayo is considered to be behind in economic development and it was found that indigenous vegetables are often exported from Bulawayo to Botswana and South Africa. Further work on traditional crops could thus benefit the local community. Mutare has the advantage that there are nearby irrigation schemes that could assist follow-up work while Mutare residents are already familiar with indigenous crops, more so than Harare residents.

Programme for the second phase

This will be much in line with the original activities proposed in the project memorandum and include germplasm collection, characterisation and evaluation, followed by selection, screening and seed multiplication. Also in the programme are improved processing techniques plus the development of new processed products. People expressed their concern that such a programme of activities would not be achieved within the remaining time of less than two years. This constraint will need to be addressed before the end of this project. However, Mr Chigumira commented that the Horticultural Research Centre has the mandate to work on traditional vegetables and will continue with this work after the CPHP project has come to an end.

New Responsibilities

Some changes have been agreed upon whereby the officer in charge of HRC Marondera, Mr Nenguwo, will take overall responsibility for this project including financial aspects. He will also be responsible for the work related to processing. It was further agreed that Fabeon Chigumira would be responsible for project activities in and around Bulawayo whereas Ben Mvere will look after the Mutare region. Both will be involved in the development of new varieties of the chosen crops. It was further agreed that the project should appoint a new member of staff who will look after on-station trials at Marondera.

Contacts in Bulawayo and Mutare

After the workshop, Mr Schippers went to Bulawayo to investigate facilities for follow-up work. Contacts were established with the Matopos Research Station and its director, Mrs Siboniso Moyo, expressed her interest in collaborating with the project and making some irrigated land available, together with staff. HRC Marondera had co-operated with this station in the past and both institutes belong to DR&SS. Further, contacts were established with Mrs Mary Wilkins, a well-known cucurbit specialist who agreed to make germplasm available and to cooperate with the team when required. Further collaboration has been offered by Mrs Dube, the Agritex horticulturist based in Bulawayo.

Ben Mvere agreed to contact some potential experimental sites around Mutare and suggested the Save Valley Experimental Station, which has ample irrigation facilities and is located in a warm area. The advantage is that the project could continue working here whereas in most other areas the winter months will be too cold for the selected crops.

Project accounts and new budgets

The accounting through ARF is still not very clear, in the main because the HRC's accounts clerk has been away. On the day when he was to resume his duties the car in which he was

travelling was involved in a serious accident and we were informed that he has been admitted to hospital where he is currently in intensive care.

Mr Chigumira presented most bills, which were settled and the few outstanding questions will hopefully be dealt with in the near future through the officer in charge, Mr Nenguwo.

New budgets were agreed upon which also reflect the new activities in Bulawayo and Mutare. There will also be a budget of £300 per month for the new staff member. The project team was eager that the proposed seed-cleaning machine should be ordered as soon as possible.

Any other business

The new project Landrover Discovery was released just prior to the workshop and can finally be used.

Ben Mvere will be allowed to utilise the training budget for up to a total of £4,000 to study for a MSc or M.Phil. at the University of Zimbabwe. An effort will be made for him to register at the University of Greenwich, which will need to be investigated further.

Discussions were held with Mr Ben Christianson of CARE Zimbabwe regarding a proposed marketing study in Masvingo. Mr Christianson explained that the contract had recently been awarded but there may be possible opportunities for collaborative work in the future. He could keep NRI informed. He also mentioned a workshop on agricultural marketing being organised by CARE USA in Kenya in early 2001 in which he thought NRI would be invited.