

## BEST OPTIONS FOR IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS AND FOOD SECURITY IN ZINDER REGION, NIGER

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Multiple Use of Water Services (MUS) component of the USAID West Africa Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (USAID WA-WASH) Program is implemented by Winrock International in the Zinder region of Niger. MUS comprise two aspects: (1) water supply, hygiene and sanitation; and (2) gardening and income generating activities. The gardening and income generating activities aspect was implemented as part of USAID WA-WASH food security activities. The Program conducted a study in 40 villages in the communes of Bandé, Gouna, Wacha and Guidimouni. The specific objectives of this study were: (1) to identify promising agriculture value chain activities that could be promoted to improve community livelihoods through increased incomes in USAID WA-WASH intervention areas, (2) to analyze each of the identified promising activities, (3) to conduct a comparative analysis of the identified value chains and, (4) to recommend actions to promote the identified value chains.. Support to selected value chains is geared towards increased incomes and improved living conditions of over 2,000 producers.

The study relied on participatory approaches and engaged all community social strata through focus group discussions. Previously developed data collection sheets were used to establish the state of the various value chains, their opportunities and their challenges. Furthermore, a three-column table was used to analyze the existing knowledge on production and processing among the producers, access to inputs and markets of the various value chain products. The gaps identified in this analysis formed the basis of the recommendations made to improve the value chains.

Seven promising value chains were identified in the study area. They include Moringa production and processing, fodder maize, natron extraction, groundnut oil extraction, small scale livestock farming, fishing and fish marketing and market gardening (tomato, cabbage, onion, melon, sugar cane, cassava, lettuce, etc.). Producers in the target communities had considerable knowledge on agronomy and production on most of the value chains except in fodder maize and Moringa production. After comparative analysis, five activities were selected based on their potential to contribute to improved livelihoods.

The first activity was market gardening (tomato, onion, and squash). This was attributed to high levels of production in the area, favorable market prices during the dry season and availability of land. The second activity was fish production as the demand for fish was high within and outside the region and the existence of potential sites for production of fish. The third activity was Moringa production and processing for the high nutritional and economic values and availability of potential growers. The fourth activity was fodder maize production as the demand for it as livestock feed was high and productive soils and water for its production are available. The fifth promising activity identified by the study was groundnut oil extraction as the study area produced large amounts of ground nuts and the high economic value of the groundnut oil. Further, groundnut oil extraction was the only activity solely practiced by women as an income generating activity.

The potential of these value chains is however constrained by inadequate knowledge in production and conservation in all the value chains and inadequate knowledge in preservation and processing in fish and groundnut oil. Other value chain specific constraints are fluctuation of market prices of market gardening products, inadequate access to Moringa seeds, inadequate irrigation equipment for forage maize production and high cost of raw materials and low demand for groundnut oil.

The study identified a set of actions to be undertaken to build the local producers' technical and operational capacities to improve their competitiveness. The actions include training on production and processing techniques in all value chains, farmer exchange visits to other regions such as Madaoua, Konni and Maradi to acquire knowledge on market gardening, collective marketing for market garden products and forage maize for improved prices, training on breed diversification and identification of potential sites for fish production and training on indigenous knowledge on soil conservation and low cost irrigation techniques in forage maize production. Other actions include linkage to seed producers in Moringa value chain and exploration of competitive markets for groundnut oil. Finally, mobilization of producers in all value chains to form strong producer organizations is recommended to improve access to inputs, trainings, and equipment.

*The full report is available (in French) upon request via our website. For more details about our program activities and other reports please visit <http://wawash.fiu.edu/>.*

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