TOMATO PARTNERSHIP MEETING REPORT, 2016
IRINGA, Tanzania.

A. INTRODUCTION

The Tomato partnership workshop was convened by the SAGCOT Centre Ltd with the overall objective of addressing tomato productivity issues in the Ihemi Cluster by engaging stakeholder’s along the tomato value chain. The workshop brought together 35 participants, drawn from private companies, NGOs, farmer associations and government institutions, all committed towards increasing sustainable production and productivity of tomato smallholder farmers.

There has been a rapid increase in the demand for table and processing tomatoes. However, due to challenges such as poor agronomic practices and high post-harvest losses amongst farmers, demand continues to outstrip supply. As a result of the demand-supply imbalance, tomato processors compete against middlemen for tomatoes in the market, and as a result often unable to meet their processing targets. For example DARSH Industries, an agro-processor running a tomato processing facility in Iringa, had planned to process 225,000 MT of tomatoes but until the end of the first quarter of 2016 was only able to process 10 % of the expected target, due to limited supply of quality tomatoes for processing.

With the right interventions, there is high potential to increase the quantity and improve the quality of tomato production in Iringa. As a result, processors such as DARSH can provide a consistent market throughout the year, leading to an improvement in the incomes and nutrition of smallholder farmers and their families.

The Tomato Partnership Workshop was therefore organized for tomato value chain actors to:
1. Review and consolidate their experiences from on-going efforts in the tomato value chain
2. Establish the Tomato Partnership by developing an action plan to address the constraints within the tomato value chain within the Ihemi and SAGCOT region. The participants assigned themselves roles, responsibilities and timelines for 2016/17
3. Develop Terms of Reference (TOR) for the partnership
4. Network as well as find opportunities for their organizations to do business

B. KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE WORKSHOP:

1. Interventions on extension services:

Tanzania’s population is growing rapidly, increasing the demand for food. However its production still remains low due to limited use of improved technologies and modern farming practices. There is urgent need for the provision of extension services to farmers, such as training on the benefits of new technologies and education on the limitations of the production methods that they currently use.

2. Organization of farmers into groups and strengthening the existing farmer groups:

The importance of farmer groups and associations was discussed in detail. Due to economies of scale, the groups would be able to benefit from reduced transaction costs from input suppliers as well as financiers. These groups would also ease access to training. However, sustainability of farmer groups was raised as a point for concern as many of them did not survive past the life of the project which formed them. Organizations involved in farmer mobilization were urged to invest in strengthening the governance structure of the groups.
3. Education on contract farming:

Many farmers have not honoured contracts to supply tomatoes to DARSH in the past, especially when the market offers higher prices. This is because many do not understand that contracts are legally binding documents. The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that contract farming contracts are not enforceable. There is need for training on the concept of contract farming, as well as the benefits of honouring contractual obligations.

The possibility of DARSH offering competitive prices (competitive against middlemen) was also suggested, in order to curb side-selling.

4. Environmental conservation through improved technologies:

Many of the farmers in Iringa grow tomatoes in water catchment areas, resulting in pollution from use of agrochemicals and water wastage. As tomatoes are grown throughout the year, there is need for farmers to adopt the use of water efficiency technologies. Introduction of alternative technologies to agrochemicals is also important to reduce on the pollution caused by chemical pesticides. To successfully switch farmers, training on use these technologies as well as financing options for these technologies is key. Long term plans should also be made to relocate farmers from the catchment areas to other pieces of land.

C. DESCRIPTION OF KEY CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND POSSIBLE INTERVENTIONS;

Thematic area 1: Farmer Organization and extension services

1. Main challenges
   - Farmer organizations are not well structured to succeed beyond the life of the project which formed them
   - Farmers often do not honor contracts

2. Opportunities
   - Training farmers on best agronomic practices
   - Conduct soil testing provide information on the status of soil nutrients
   - Change of mind set for most farmers to do farming as a business. There is need to provide training, field visits, demo plots and exhibitions

3. Main interventions/activities
   - Train farmers on post-harvest handling techniques, input access, financial literacy, and good agricultural practices
   - Linking farmers with inputs suppliers
   - Linking tomato farmers with markets
   - Training farmers on the contract farming

Thematic area 2: Processing and marketing of tomato

1. Main challenges
   - Poor quality tomatoes from smallholder farmers
   - Tomato supply is not consistent throughout the year
• Limited access to finance for smallholder farmers
• Limited access to crop insurance
• Lack of financial and technical support to small tomato processors
• Farmers lack business skills like record keeping

2. Opportunities
• Training of farmers on farming as a business
• Possibility of forming strong farmers organizations which can negotiate and benefit from reduced transaction costs on inputs and financing
• Establishment of collection centers as a solution to the transportation challenges faced by farmers supplying to DARSH

3. Main interventions/activities
• Look into the possibility of providing competitive prices for tomatoes by DARSH
• Work with extension officers to communicate with farmers about DARSH’s quality standards as well as best practice production techniques
• Establishment of tomato collection centers
• Farmer education on contract farming
• Performance of a tomatoes supply chain analysis
• Linkage of farmers to financial institutions.
• Linkage of farmers to crops insurance institutions.
• Provision of support to small tomatoes processors such as equipment and building processing skills
• Financial literacy training for farmers such as record keeping and performance of cost benefit analyses

Thematic area 3: Water use efficiency and sustainability
1. Main challenges
• Most for the land in rural areas do not have land use plans hence poor utilization of the area by tomato farmer
• Farmers are not sensitive to environmental sustainability issues due to lack of knowledge
• Unavailability and unaffordability of improved water technologies

2. Opportunities
• Subsidies for tomato farmers by government and removal of VAT on agricultural inputs such as drip irrigation, making them affordable
• Encouragement of local production/manufacturing of irrigation equipment to create employment opportunities and reduce the cost associated with importation, allowing the equipment to be easily attainable by farmers

3. Main interventions/activities
• Design of village land use plans for informed decision making
• Map potential tomato farming areas
• Link the mapped tomato growing areas with the ongoing land use plan projects undertaken by different stakeholders like MALF and BRN
- Awareness creation on modern technologies for tomato farming and demonstration of drip irrigation as an alternative to farming along the river banks and moisture reservoir area
- Buying of tomatoes from farms practicing environmental conservation practices by DARSH, and as a result encouraging tomato farmers to practice environmentally friendly practices
- Demonstration of rain water harvesting and use for irrigation to minimize demand for irrigation water from the rivers, lakes and other water bodies.