

Buy Burkinabè!

Yam Pukri's Agripol advocacy platform in Burkina Faso

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CTA Technical Brief



The project

Project holder Association Yam Pukri, agripol.faso-dev.net

Application Agripol (lobbying website)

CTA project @gripol: Citizens' inquiry into the monitoring and implementation of agricultural policies through ICTs in Burkina Faso

Location Burkina Faso

Clients Farmers' organizations, government, public

Topic Developing electronic platforms to support advocacy for agriculture

Project description Yam Pukri formed an alliance of producer organisations to strengthen their advocacy activities and internal management using electronic tools. It developed a website, trained staff on ICTs and advocacy, and provided backup and support.

THE 2014–15 SEASON was a difficult one for women's rice-marketing cooperatives in Burkina Faso. Locally grown rice was slightly more expensive than imported grain, and big imports in the previous years meant that small-scale rice farmers and cooperatives were no longer able to sell their grain. Their national association, UNERIZ, was left with over 2,000 tonnes of unsold stock. Growers who had borrowed to invest in production were unable to repay their debts.

A change in government policy to prioritise locally grown grain and to deter imports would help. But the Comité Interprofessionnel du Riz du Burkina, the group mandated to lobby on the growers' behalf, lacked the tools to put pressure on the government. So Agripol, a CTA-supported project run by Yam Pukri, stepped in to help. It used social media to call on people to choose locally grown rice.

The campaign reached thousands. It created so much pressure on the government that the Prime Minister's office ordered public procurement to prioritise the local grain. Previously, only institutions had purchased only 16% of the national rice output; after the policy change the share rose to 30%, and the sellers were able to shift their excess stock.

This story illustrates the approach used by Agripol, a CTA-financed pilot project that uses information and communication technologies to promote agricultural policy

Project partners

The **Confédération Paysanne du Faso** (CPF) is a confederation of 14 umbrella organizations covering various farming sectors. CPF acts as their voice in dealing with the government. It has been active since 2002, but much of its work has been one-time efforts and has not been documented or made available to members online. CPF saw in Agripol an opportunity to make its work more visible and accessible.

The **Comité Interprofessionnel du Riz du Burkina** (CIRB) links actors in the rice value chain. It promotes the production, processing and consumption of this staple commodity. It uses classic advocacy methods such as billboards, but these are expensive and do not necessarily reach their target.

The **Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs de l'Afrique de l'Ouest** (ROPPA) is a large organization working across West Africa on advocacy and advice to national groups. ROPPA has a long-standing collaboration with CTA, so the link with Agripol was able to build synergies with its activities. ROPPA was eager to work with Agripol to further a knowledge-management project it implements.

The ICT and agriculture group within **Burkina-ntic**, a development portal devoted to Burkina Faso, includes ten rural development organizations that deal with advocacy in agriculture. This group is an integral part of Agripol: Yam Pukri coordinates Burkina-ntic, and the group's expertise in ICT and agriculture was vital to Agripol's work.

The **Réseau de Veille sur la Commercialisation des Céréales** (RVCC) is a network of organisations and farmers' associations that monitors cereal marketing and does advocacy on related issues. This network wanted Agripol to build its ICT capacity.

The **Union Nationale des Mini Laiteries et des Producteurs Laitiers du Burkina** (UNMLPL) brings together mini-dairies, milk producers and other stakeholders in the dairy industry. It is concerned with the organization of the milk sector, promotes milk consumption and is engaged in dairy policy. It was interested in innovative advocacy strategies and ways to influence the government.

The **Fédération des Unions de Groupements et Coopératives Maraîchères du Bam** (FUGCOM-Bam) is a federation of market gardeners in Bam in north-central Burkina Faso. This group wanted to learn how to use modern communication techniques and wanted to promote its efforts to buy inputs for its members in bulk – a scheme that suffered from government indifference.

The Ministry of Agriculture's **Directorate-General for Rural Economy** was interested in better identifying and targeting key issues.

advocacy. Yam Pukri, which manages the Agripol initiative, is an association specialising on training, information and advice on information and communication technologies. Founded in 1998, it works mainly in Burkina Faso, but since 2000 has also launched initiatives in Mali and Niger.

Where are the 10%?

The 2003 Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in Africa commits signatory governments to spend at least 10% of their national budgets on agriculture and rural development. Burkina Faso has been a model pupil: it has surpassed this goal for the last 5 years.

But has it made a difference on the ground? Rural producers still face the same problems: a lack of credit, a lack of inputs and poor access to local and foreign markets. Most of the 10% seems to go on the salaries and operational costs of the Ministry of Agriculture. Farmers and their organisations have little say in who the money is spent.

The Agripol project

A diagnostic study at the start of the project identified various clients: umbrella organizations, advocacy groups, farmers' organizations and the government. Each had a different reason to work with Agripol (see box).

The project has focused on three main types of activity: the development of the Agripol website to facilitate information exchange, training on ICTs and advocacy, and support for client organisations on these topics.

The Agripol website

Many agricultural organisations use mobile phones and perhaps email, but otherwise ignore the potential of ICTs for internal management, contact with members and external communication. If they have a website, they fail to maintain it, or it may fall victim to ageing software or a hacking attack. Many organisations also lack advocacy skills, so cannot effectively plead their case with the government.

Agripol uses cartoons to carry its message



The Agripol website (agripol.faso-dev.net/) acts as a gateway to various types of agriculture-related information. It presents news related to agricultural policy, highlights the activities of farmers' organizations working on policy issues, and alerts visitors to innovative ICT services. It records current and past advocacy initiatives: an important resource for future work in organisations where staff turnover is high and institutional memories fade quickly. It contains a database of organisations and information resources relevant to the agriculture sector in Burkina Faso, making it possible for users to get in touch with each other and collaborate on joint concerns.

The project operates two Facebook pages and has developed a mobile application to gather information about farmers' organisations and to act as a demonstration tool.

Training on ICTs and advocacy

The project created three training modules to overcome these barriers:

- Data processing and computer security
- The use of social networks – such as how to create and maintain a Facebook page or blog and how to use them in advocacy
- Techniques and strategies for lobbying and advocacy.

The project's technical team and the Ministry of Agriculture checked these modules, then used them in a series of four workshops attended by 100 agricultural trainers from the organisations listed in the box. These participants then went on to use the modules to train members of their organisations.

Support on ICTs and advocacy

Advocacy carries more weight if several organisations with similar views and interests work together. Bringing information from these organisations into a common platform reduces management and maintenance costs, helps maintain continuity and enables organisations to benefit from each other's initiatives.

Training on ICTs and advocacy is not enough: the diagnostic study revealed that farmers' organisations also needed technical support and advice on these topics. The Agripol project has tried to do this. Some examples:

Leveraging social media

Agripol uses two Facebook pages to publicise its causes:

- facebook.com/Agripol-135010676574816/ with news on the Agripol project
- facebook.com/Burkinantic/ with updates on the Burkinantic group.

The Agripol website opens the door to agricultural advocacy in Burkina Faso



- It created a database where CPF can enter information on its constituent organisations, showing details such as their contact details, member numbers, activities, production area, etc. This helps CPF itself understand what each organisation is doing and enables them to coordinate activities and get in touch with them quickly. This database is being integrated into the CPF website, which Yam Pukri is building (cpf-bf.org).

- Together with RVCC, it conducted a study of government funding for agriculture. This will help target the funding of farmers' organizations and of government contributions.

- It helped several of the client organisations to create two “buy Burkinabè” posters to promote local products, aimed at government agencies and professional associations and NGOs. They urge that half the food and drink budget at training courses and other events be spent on Burkinabè products. Over 100 trainings and workshops are held every day in Burkina Faso; many of the organisers advocate local products but do not buy them for their own events. Agripol planned to send postcards bearing the same message to government officials, but postponed this action because of political turmoil at the end of 2015.

- Agripol has made videos to support the advocacy work of both CPF and FUGCOM.

Drawing on experience

Agripol has drawn on the wealth of experience that Yam Pukri has gained over the years, including its work coordinating the Burkina-ntic network since 2002, in managing the national development portal (faso-dev.net) since 2006, a democracy project funded by the United Nations, and its experience with Web 2.0 and Social Media Learning Opportunities, a previous CTA-supported project.

Yam Pukri relied on consultants to assist with one-off activities: the diagnostic survey and advocacy training. It used its own staff to develop the web platforms and mobile applications. That makes it possible to maintain and further develop these services in the future.

Experimentation is an important part of Yam Pukri's strategy. It allows the organisation to find out what works and to build successful models that others can then replicate. The Agripol project has been an excellent example of this: it has enabled Yam Pukri to test the use of ICTs in agricultural advocacy. It has also led to deeper relationships with many of the partners. We have already described the work with RVCC (on government funding) and CPF (on its website and knowledge management) above. Yam Pukri also took part in the national farmers' day, a national meeting of UNMLPL (the dairy organisation) and the national week of the internet, all in 2015.

Some organisations have replicated the project's activities, such the training courses on ICTs and advocacy. RVCC offered such a course for 30 of its members in June 2016.

Other organisations have contacted Yam Pukri after visiting the Agripol website and asked for help in building their own sites. These include the Association Burkinabè d'Action Communautaire, which wanted a platform on the maize and soybean value chains (abac-bf.org/vacisbf/), and the Réseau Africain de l'Économie Sociale et Solidaire, which supports social projects across Africa (labo-raess.org).

Within Burkina Faso, the Ministry of Agriculture has begun to invite Yam Pukri to be involved in activities that involve new technologies.

Sustaining the effort

Some 60% of the Agripol project funds were spent on training and capacity building activities, 20% to develop the web platforms and mobile apps, and the remaining 20% for administration and telecommunications. Some 80% of the budget was supported by CTA, while Yam Pukri itself contributed the rest.

Yam Pukri will continue to work on the Agripol website and incorporate it into the Burkina-Ntic portal. This has become the national portal for development issues, and is supported by the Bukinabè government as well as various donors, so it is not dependent on short-term funding.

For Agripol to achieve wider recognition, it is necessary to continue investing in it and in

associated activities, such as demonstrations, social networks, radio broadcasts and posters. Even though it does not generate funds directly, Agripol is an excellent advertisement for Yam Pukri's web-design and consulting services, for which it charges a fee. The demand for such services can be expected to rise as more organisations realise the need to get digital.

Even as electronic communication reduces the distance between service policymakers, service providers, customers and producers, skilled humans are needed to design and develop the platforms that make this possible.

Agripol has the potential to become a wider initiative that serves several countries. To achieve this, Yam Pukri faces the challenge of developing it further and making it more versatile. But each organization tends to

Business model

Agripol is a platform that facilitates lobbying and advocacy of government, decision makers and the public ¹ by farmers' organisations and others interested in agricultural development ². Yam Pukri, which maintains the site, runs workshops and training courses ³ to help its clients gain lobbying skills and learn to use the information on the platform. Agripol lobbies via the website itself, as well as with posters, flyers, newspapers and video ⁴. Activities to provide these services have included developing and maintain the website, training the client organisations on information technology, and support on advocacy ⁵. The key resources have been staff skills and data ⁶. Major partners are the Ministry of Agriculture (which is itself a target of lobbying), research institutes, and civil society ⁷. Most of the income has come from a development organisation (CTA) ⁸; the biggest costs have been training and the development of the app ⁹.

⁷ Business services and partners	⁵ Key activities	¹ Product or service	³ Customer relationships	² Clients
Ministry of Agriculture Research institute NGOs Civil society	Website development and maintenance Training on ICTs Support for client organisations	Web platform Mobile platform Database Advisory services	Web platform Mobile platform Database Advisory services	Farmers' organizations NGOs
	⁶ Key resources		⁴ Channels	Government Decision makers in organisations Public
	ICT specialists Information Database Funding		Website Video Posters Flyers Newspapers	
⁹ Costs		⁸ Income		
Administration: €20,000 App development: €30,000 Training: €35,000 Power, telecoms: €10,000		CTA: € 50,000 Yam Pukri: €15,000 Other: €30,000 Total: €95,000		

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want its own platform rather using one that already exists. It is necessary to find ways for platforms to relate to and complement each other, and to find ways to continue to maintain them after the end of project funding.

Finally, organisations that promote information technology must devote a lot of time to understand the needs of their clients and to make sure that the solutions proposed actually take these into account. Many clients show a lot of enthusiasm for ICTs at the start, but over time revert to the old methods of information management. A tool that properly fills a need will avoid this problem by becoming a vital part of the organisation's work.

Poster calling on the government and NGOs to buy Burkinabè

ONG, Associations, Organismes étatiques et Para étatiques...



Vous parlez toujours de développement de notre pays et en particulier de la richesse de nos produits agricoles transformés

MAIS...

Que mangez-vous lors de vos pauses cafés et déjeuners?

Pour que 50% de vos budgets de restauration Soit consacré aux produits locaux naturels, en Avant!

<http://agripol.faso-dev.net>

Une initiative de projet agripol en collaboration avec: CIPF, CIRB, UNFPA, FUGCOM, HOPPA, Ministère de l'Agriculture (Dir. Économie Rurale), Réseau de veille sur la commercialisation des céréales, réseau Burkina-ric

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