



## C2 REVEALING GOOD PRACTICE

## Growing products to sell

### At a glance

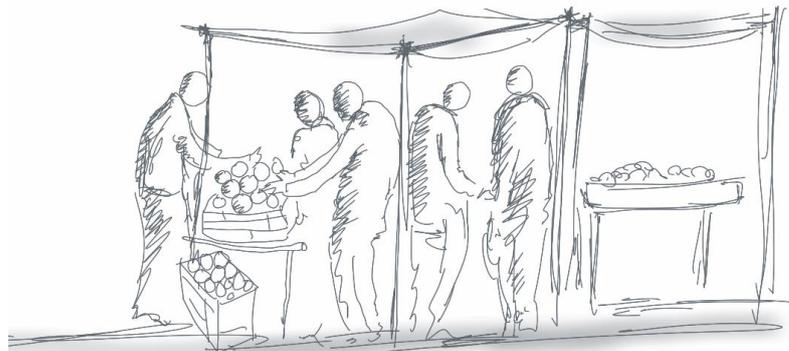
- **Step 1 - Mobilise and organise farmers into groups.** This enables farmers to become much more effective in producing, marketing and selling their produce. Where possible, build on groups that already exist.
- **Step 2 - Identify and understand the market.** Find out as much as possible about the demand for products, costs and sale prices etc.
- **Step 3 - Identify what help or expertise is needed.** Think about the information, training, advice, services and resources that are needed, and try to access them.
- **Step 4: Growing, harvesting and processing products.** Put into practice everything you learnt in Step 3. Consider adding value to products before sale.
- **Step 5 - Marketing and sale.** Bulking products often leads to collective bargaining power and better prices for farmers. However, it may not work in all circumstances.
- **Try to plan for things that could go wrong.**



### Why use this tool?

Traditional small scale agriculture typically helps people to produce enough food to eat, but rarely for sale. Growing food for consumption at home is very important, especially for communities in rural areas. However, on its own, it may not provide sufficient, safe and nutritious food at all times. This is because when farmers only focus on growing enough food to eat, they often cannot produce *sufficient diversified and nutritious food*, and do not have enough *income* to buy additional foods or other basic goods.

This tool provides guidance and advice for farmers who wish to begin producing enough food for both home consumption and to sell. It will help the community to increase production, add value to products, and understand how to access markets. This in turn will lead to more income and better nutrition in communities.





## A brief description

This tool outlines the steps a community can take to grow products that they can sell to earn an income.



## Time taken

The steps in this tool can be taken over several months.



## Keys to success

- We should not assume that the things we grow are the things people want to buy.
- Before deciding what to sell, farmers should find out what is in demand, so that they grow or make products that people want to buy.
- Access to market information makes it easier for farmers to negotiate prices with traders.
- Collective marketing with other farmers and 'bulking' products often increases farmers' confidence and bargaining power when selling goods.
- It is important to understand nutritional needs. Food for consumption, and ensuring all of the family has their full range of nutritional needs met, remains the priority for all to be healthy.
- It is important to grow food in environmentally sustainable ways.
- It is important for farmers to consider changing weather patterns and to plan how to adapt to climate change.
- It is wise to think about what events or circumstances *could* happen that may affect planting, production, harvesting, marketing and selling, and try to plan for them.



## What to do

Listed below are some of the important things to think about, and key questions to ask, as communities begin growing products for the market. Please also see **Tool C2: Starting a Business** which includes a lot of relevant guidance.

### Step 1 - Mobilise and organise farmers into groups

The first step is for farmers to join together to form groups. Often farmers work as individuals, occasionally selling small amounts of surplus produce to the market. However, by organising into groups, farmers can become much more effective in producing, marketing and selling their produce. They gain more bargaining power and have a stronger voice.



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Rather than forming new groups, where possible it is best to build on groups that already exist. Consider what local structures and groups there already are in your community. Existing groups may include farmer field schools, self help groups, women's groups, youth groups, savings and credit groups, farmer cooperatives, village development committees, dairy groups etc.

If there are no groups in the community (or if the existing groups are not suitable), then you will need to help mobilise farmers to create new groups. If new structures are created, try to ensure that there is no conflict with existing structures.

There are different ways in which farmers can be organised into groups. Some communities adopt a simple cooperative model, where farmers are organised into groups of between 10 and 20 individuals.

Alternatively, a more complex structure could be used, with the potential to have greater impact, such as that promoted by Farm Concern International (FCI), a Tearfund partner in Kenya. FCI works with villages of between 100-250 households, and mobilises the whole village into a 'commercial village'. Everyone in the village - including people with disabilities, older people and people living with HIV - is welcome to be part of the commercial village, unless they wish to opt out.

In the FCI model, each member of the commercial village joins a 'commercial production group' (CPG), or these are sometimes called 'production committees'. These usually include around 20-30 people. The government and other stakeholders are invited to be part of these groups throughout the process. As well as being in a CPG, everyone is also part of another group with a specific responsibility. For example:

- Production and Natural Resources Management (NRM) group - responsible for ensuring farmers have access to the necessary resources, inputs, skills and knowledge for sustainable production. Also responsible for ensuring sustainable management of local forest and water supplies. This group will need to coordinate with government bodies where possible, such as environment agencies, the water authority, the forestry commission etc.
- Savings groups - responsible for ensuring savings facilities are available for all. If the community is not yet saving, for example, through savings and credit groups, it will be important to encourage saving at the beginning of this process. See **Tool C2: Savings and credit groups**.
- Marketing and quality group - responsible for identifying markets and looking for ways of increasing the value of any product (see below for more on adding value).
- Village social capital group - responsible for supporting community needs such as health, food and nutrition.
- Social technology - responsible for youth projects and ensuring access to the necessary technology to improve production or value.
- An Executive Committee oversees and manages the whole project. The Executive Team is made up of representatives from each of the groups.

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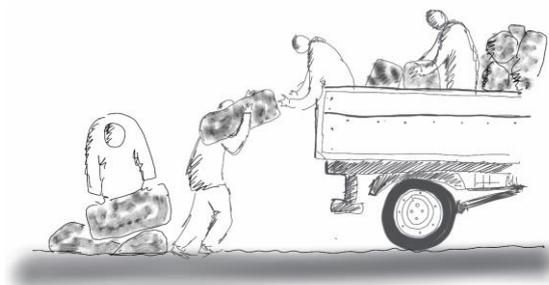
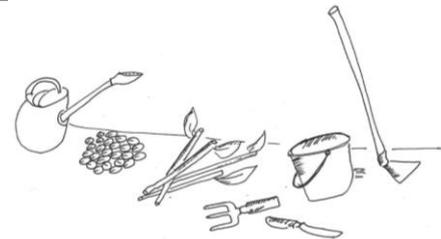
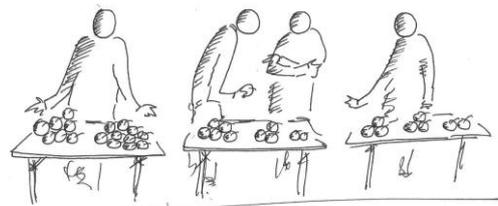
Whichever model a community decides to adopt, the groups or structures need to be truly inclusive - everyone in the community should be able to join a group if they wish. There must be no discrimination.

How can you ensure that men, women, young people, older people, people of different ethnicities and people with disabilities, or other difference, are all included?

## Step 2 - Identify and understand the market

Once group structures have been formed, the farmers need to think about the market for their goods. It is important to ask the following questions when considering the market:

- Which crops or other agricultural products are in demand?
- Which products are drought/flood/pest resistant?
- What is the nutritional value of the products?
- What is the cost of production (tools, seeds, inputs etc), and how does this compare with the likely price of sale?
- Will people want to buy the products that we want to sell? In what quantities?
- Where is the potential market where we hope to sell our products? Is it local, or outside the community?
- Is there already demand for the products, or do we need to create demand? If there is already demand, where do people currently purchase from and can you compete with those prices?
- Who will be buying the goods?
- Do prices stay the same all year round, or do they change? What causes prices to change?
- Can we access markets directly or do we need to go through brokers/middlemen?
- Who else will be involved in the process of buying and selling the goods?
- Where an actual marketplace exists, how will the goods be transported there?
- Where there is no marketplace as such, and markets are more informal, would goods need to be transported, or would traders travel to your location?

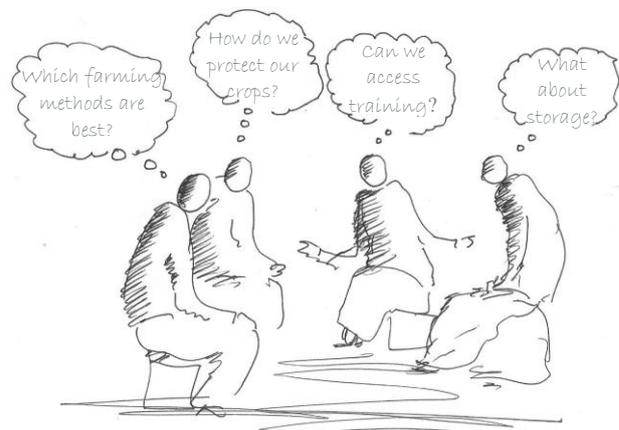


A market survey can help answer some of these questions. This doesn't have to be complicated. See **Tool C2: Starting a business**, and Tearfund (2009) *Footsteps 80 - Micro-enterprise* for more information.

### Step 3 - Identify what help or expertise is needed

- What expertise, training, services and resources will the community need to produce, market and sell their products?
- Do the farmers need access to finance? See **Tool C2: Savings and credit groups**.
- What inputs are needed? Should the farmers buy seeds or harvest, store and plant their own seeds? How much will the inputs cost?
- How do we ensure that the crops are resilient to climate and environmental changes?
- Which methods of farming will protect and not cause harm to the environment? See **Tool C2: Conservation agriculture** for one such approach.
- Are storage facilities needed? How will the products be kept fresh and protected from pests, disease and water damage?
- Do the harvested products need packaging?
- How will the products be transported?
- How can production be increased sustainably, but without needing to increase labour?
- Is there any local training that farmers may be able to access?
- What services exist outside our community? Are there services that the local government provides, or should be providing, that farmers can benefit from?
- If land is in short supply, how do we intensify production for small land areas? How do we maximise land use whilst not degrading it over time?
- How should we reduce and manage our agricultural waste?
- How should we control pests and protect the crops from diseases? What will be the cost of this?
- How will we ensure our crops get enough water? Can we consider rainwater harvesting? See **Tool C2: Rainwater harvesting**.
- How can we ensure the soil is conserved?

These are all questions that may be answered with help from local experts. Could you contact local government agricultural extension workers, local NGOs or commercial providers for support on finding answers to these questions? Ensure the people you ask for support and guidance are trustworthy and will have the community's interests at heart. It is important that they want the farmers to succeed and benefit. Are there nearby villages who have been through this process? Could you learn from their experience? See **Tool C1: Advocacy - communicating with people in power**.



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**Step 4: Growing, harvesting and processing products**

Once organised, and with access to the knowledge, information and resources they need, farmers can begin to produce. Environmentally sustainable agricultural practices should be used. Farmers may wish to add value to their products before selling them. For example, grinding wheat and selling flour may bring a higher return than selling unprocessed wheat. Or peanuts can be sold as they are harvested - with their shells on, or they can be shelled first. Shelled peanuts usually sell at a higher price. Or if they were processed in some way, for example roasted, or made into peanut butter or oil, they may attract an even higher price. Fruit and vegetables can be turned into jams, chutneys or juices. Adding value may also preserve the product, making it last for longer or cheaper to transport.



The following *Reveal* tools will offer further guidance:

- **Tool C2: Conservation Agriculture**
- **Tool C2: Reducing losses after harvest**
- **Tool C2: Processing and preserving fresh produce**

**Step 5 - Marketing and sale**

The community structures or groups that have been mobilised or created can support the successful sale of the products. They may achieve a higher price by bringing crops or products from different farmers together to sell in larger quantities. This is sometimes called 'bulking'. When farmers go to a buyer individually, the buyer will usually set the price. However, when farmers are organised into groups or committees, and bulk their products, they have collective bargaining power, giving them a stronger voice and they often are able to get better prices. The farmers also benefit because they spend less money transporting the products to the market. This is also better for traders as all of the products are in one place and they no longer have to spend time and money travelling from village to village, a cost saving that can be passed on to the farmers. It is important that farmers have access to market prices before they negotiate and agree on the prices, so they know whether they are being offered a fair price. Mobile phones are very useful for gathering this information.



This way of working depends on farmers remaining loyal to the group, and not selling their produce individually. If a farmer is approached by a potential buyer, he or she should bring that price to the community for a joint decision to be made. Such discipline will depend on mutual trust and responsibility between farmers. This process can be made effective by asking farmer groups to agree and sign a set of rules about how they will all behave. The rules can also include consequences for anyone who does not follow them, such as being temporarily excluded from joint sales.

It is important to note that sometimes, bulking will not work. It may result in too much of the same product being on the market at one time, and therefore cause prices to fall. If this happens, staggering when crops are grown, harvested and sold will be more effective. This will help maintain both the demand and the prices.

Bulking and negotiating prices may also prove difficult or impossible where the prices of certain crops are regulated by the government. For example, in certain countries the price of maize is determined by the government and farmers are unable to set their own price. If farmers determine that they will make a financial loss in this case, then they could look at options to sell alternative crops to make a higher income.

### Try to plan for things that could go wrong

This is sometimes called 'contingency planning'. What if stock gets damaged or stolen? Is insurance an option? Could a store of surplus stock be built? What if the crops or the business premises get damaged? Could an agreement be made for alternative shared premises? What other events or circumstances could happen? What will you do if rains come late, or not at all, or the area floods, or an insect or fungal pest attacks many crops? How can these potential challenges be planned for?



### Finding out more

- Farm Concern International - <http://www.farmconcern.org/>
- Tearfund (2009) *Footsteps 80 - Micro-enterprise*  
[https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps\\_71-80/footsteps\\_80/](https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps_71-80/footsteps_80/)
- Tearfund (2017) *Footsteps 103 – Entrepreneurship*  
[https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps\\_101-110/footsteps\\_103/](https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps_101-110/footsteps_103/)

#### Related tools:

- C1 – Advocacy - communicating with people in power [C1: *Influencing decision-makers-1*]
- C2 – Composting [C2: *Climate & environment-1*]
- C2 – Conservation agriculture [C2: *Food & livelihoods-5*]
- C2 – Starting a business [C2: *Food & livelihoods-6*]
- C2 – Developing rural home gardens [C2: *Food & livelihoods-8*]
- C2 – Developing urban home gardens [C2: *Food & livelihoods-9*]
- C2 – Reducing losses after harvest C2: [C2: *Food & livelihoods-10*]
- C2 – Processing and preserving fresh produce C2: [C2: *Food & livelihoods-11*]

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