

AFRICA SOIL HEALTH

Locations	Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda
Dates	04/05/2015 - 31/12/2019

Summary

Poor soil fertility is a key constraint to improving farm productivity and farmer livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa. Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) is recognised as an effective solution to poor crop yields. However, lack of access to information means that smallholder farmers do not adopt better techniques. To combat this, we are working with partners to add value to development communications campaigns that are designed to facilitate adoption and capture learning.

The problem

Poor soil fertility is a key constraint to improving farm productivity and farmer livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa. Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) is a set of management practices which includes the use of fertiliser, organic inputs and improved germ-plasm and is adapted to local conditions and uses sound agronomic principles, and is recognised as an effective solution. New knowledge on ISFM has the potential to change the lives of millions of smallholder farming families in sub-Saharan Africa.

The extent to which small-scale farming families are willing and able to implement these practices though is limited, even if they will improve productivity and increase their profits.

Often, researchers lack the skills to communicate their findings, and the R&D landscape is fragmented leading to lack of validated, actionable and aggregated information. Farmers often lack access to this information, have inadequate incentives to adopt these new techniques and lack both the capacity to implement and the necessary inputs.

What we are doing

This second phase of Africa Soil Health Consortium (ASHC) focuses on generating appropriate, farmer-friendly, development communication approaches to give farming families access to the information they need. We want to add value to the campaigns and capture learning.

ASHC will support development and test materials which will integrate information from different partners, and ensure content is user friendly and well-targeted (taking account of gender differences and local contexts).

To do this, we will work with partners that use different scale-up approaches. One of the key areas of interest for us though, will be how agro-dealers can support information sharing and how youth can be a conduit for information to farming families.

With partners, our project team will collect qualitative and quantitative data to learn lessons on communications and assess adoption rates achieved. The project will continue to develop and expand the web-based resource library of ISFM materials and improve accessibility and usability of resources.

We want to use principles akin to supply chain management, as they provide solutions to overlooked problems, concepts and methods and balance the demand and supply of information for identified audiences. They also act as a framework to produce new solutions that deliver the right information to the right recipients in the right way and at the right time.

The team use the analysis gained to conceptualise how information is generated, collated, integrated, adapted, shared and ultimately used. This approach identifies the range of intermediaries that may share information directly with smallholder farming families. The ASHC team and partners will then gather feedback on the effectiveness of the links along the information supply chain and seek to balance supply and demand of information along it and move towards the production of high quality, action-orientated and farmer-friendly information.

To make actionable content more accessible, we have developed a series of tools and processes that can be used to address bottlenecks and constraints in the information supply chain to benefit smallholder farming families.

Results so far

So far, over 400 different extension support materials have been developed with partners and published on the ASHC website.

1,126,187 farmers have been reached with GAP and ISFM information through ASHC integrated campaigns in four countries (Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda), and at least 220,000 farmers have applied at least one improved technology (Improved seed, Fertiliser, Inoculant).

Thirty partnerships have been developed in target countries to support material development and campaign implementation, whilst eight campaigns have been implemented in four countries using radio, print, SMS, and demo. Papers and manuscripts, three in total, on lessons learnt from campaign implementation have also been developed.

Donors

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