**Session 2 Working Group Case Scenario**

**From the Micro- to the Macro-Level: Up-Scaling of Organic Cotton Production**

1. **Scenario[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Case Scenario 1 is located in a small least developed country situated in the tropical zone of Africa. The country produces 220,000 tons of cotton annually, representing 45% of the GDP and 80% of the export receipt. In the northern districts, cotton production provides the livelihood for the majority of the local population. Yet agricultural output has been decreasing, partly due to the excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides by most cotton growers. According to a study conducted by the national university, use of chemical fertilizers has decreased soil fertility, leading to decreased income for farmers, and insufficient funds to purchase seeds and fertilizers. Furthermore, the use of pesticides has reportedly caused human health problems and pests have developed resistance to all but the strongest and most expensive ones.

A group of small women farmers in one of the northern districts, who were especially affected by the negative changes in agricultural outputs, decided to break the vicious cycle by switching to organic cotton production. To protect their fields against pests, the women are using a bio-pesticide, which they prepare themselves. They also fertilize the soil organically, helping maintain the soil. This has led to increased cotton yield and restoration of degraded land. Furthermore, the new production technology allows women to be financially self-sufficient, resulting in social, economic and environmental benefits for the local farmers.

1. **Working Group Assignment**

The Minister of Agriculture has learned about the local initiative and expressed her commitment to increase and upscale organic cotton production in the country. As an important step in the process, she has contacted a bi-lateral cooperation agency to assist in developing an initial concept paper outlining possible strategic action for up-scaling the local initiative. The head of the agency agreed to facilitate this work and established an informal working group with national experts and international development partners.

Specific questions to be addressed by the group include the following:

* What ***measures/actions*** could be taken at the macro-, meso- and micro-levels respectively to up-scale organic cotton production nationally in line with green economy considerations?
* Who are the key actors and change agents at each level and what could be there role? What contribution can development cooperation play?
* What are possible impediments and challenges in fostering strategic change?

1. **Additional Information**

In its deliberations, the group may consider the following information:

* The country has a farmers’ association which is skeptical about organic farming.
* Pesticides and fertilizers have been exempted from sales tax to “maintain agricultural production and cotton exports”.
* The price of certified organic cotton is 20% higher on the global markets, than the one of conventional cotton.
* The northern region suffers from water scarcity and has recently witnessed increased drought periods.
* Bilateral and multilateral donors in the country have programmes in place to support micro-credits for local entrepreneurs with a focus on rural electrification.
* Organic cotton production is more labor intensive than current growing practices.
* Transforming a traditional crop to an organic can take about 3 years. Therefore during a transitional period in year 1 and 2 crops will be sold as non-organic.
* Organic certification processes may have a high cost.

1. **Reporting Template**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Macro-Level Action | Meso-Level Action | Micro-Level Action |
| Proposed Action |  |  |  |
| Key Actors |  |  |  |
| Challenges |  |  |  |

1. The case scenario is based on: *Tovignan/Nuppenau. 2004. “Adoption of organic cotton in Benin: does gender play a role?”. Conference on Rural Poverty Reduction through Research for Development and Transformation.* Additional fictitious information has been added for the purpose of the working group exercise. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)