

CSO CASE STUDY 1

Title: Can the poor influence policy? Lessons from the cashew nut revitalization campaign in Kenya coast

Country: Kenya

Author: Elphas Ojiambo

Introduction

Cashew is among the oldest cash crops in Kenya introduced into East Africa by the Portuguese during the Sixteenth Century. During the last 20 years, world cashew production has been varying. Kenyan production declined from 24,000 tonnes (5.9%) of world production in 1969-71 and 16,500 tonnes (4.2%) in 1979-81 to 10,300 tonnes (2.2%) in 1989-1991 and 10,000 tonnes in 2002. Although cashew contributes only 1% of total Kenya agricultural production, it is an important crop because it is grown in an area with few alternative cash crops.

During the peak period of the cashew industry (1980s), it was a major export earner contributing 4% of GDP. However, mismanagement and privatization of the Kenya Cashewnut Limited in 1993 and eventual closure in 1998 had a devastating effect on farmers whose livelihood had for years depended on it.

The cashew campaign sought to draw farmers' interest in the Cashew trees, hitherto neglected. The disinterest had been due to lack of relevant policies, the closure of the factory and the reduced production as a result of powdery mildew infestation.

The type and extent of policy change

The need for an Act of Parliament was deemed necessary for improved development of the cashew. The objective was to work with farmers in order to influence both the agenda setting and formulation of the Cashewnut Policy and Act.

Whereas the campaign managed to draw farmers' interest in proper tree husbandry thus increasing production, little change was evident at the policy level. Neither a cashewnut policy nor Act is in place despite the efforts since 2001.

Some thoughts on explanation of policy change

a) The political context

The political leadership in the coastal region has always bemoaned the collapse of the cashew industry but has done little to change the situation as illustrated by their poor attendance to the national workshops organised by ActionAid. Nonetheless, during the 2002 election, the revitalization of the cashew industry became part of the campaign manifesto for the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), the current ruling party.

Since, there have been significant reforms in the sugar, coffee and tea sub-sectors in Kenya. However, none of these crops is grown in the Kenyan coast. Although the Government identified cashew revitalisation as part of its Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation, there is nothing there to show.

Historically, policy making in Kenya has been non-linear and confined to a few powerful policy actors. This approach resulted in policies which weren't owned nor understood by the people, a scenario that farmers in the cashew sector have had to live with.

Globally, citizen participation in policy making processes has been found critical if any sustainable change has to be realized. The experience gained from citizen participation during both the Poverty Reduction Strategy process (PRSP) and the constitution review provided the necessary ground upon which the campaign was to be based.

The Government of Kenya has also realized the importance of soliciting views from farmers and policy analysis institutions as evidenced during the reforms in the sugar and coffee sectors. The main target is to have a relevant Cabinet Paper developed and an Act for the purposes of regulation or a Sessional paper for development purposes debated in Parliament.

In the neighbouring Tanzania, the cashew sub-sector is a major foreign exchange earner and has benefited tremendously from reforms in the Agricultural sector. Following a visit to Tanzania, a team from Bayer East Africa started a pilot programme with Choice Humanitarian in 2000 in the Kikoneni Kwale district to control powdery mildew. Other collaborating agencies included the Coast Development Authority, the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI-Mtwapa) and the Ministry of Agriculture.

Demonstrations held in 2001 drew the interest of the ActionAid - Malindi programme who sent farmers on an exposure visit. Through this collaborative arrangement, and with support from ActionAid, a spray gang concept was introduced resulting in 5,135 sprayed trees during that year. As a consequence, yields increased from a paltry 5Kgs per tree to an average of 30Kgs per tree evidencing the great potentials of this approach. The positive results provided the necessary evidence to mobilise farmers and sensitize them on the need to tend their cashew trees.

b) International factors

Three broad international factors need to be mentioned here. Firstly, the Bretton Woods institutions have had tremendous influence in policy formulation process in Kenya. The withdrawal of agricultural subsidies during the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) provided the campaign with limited options amid growing poverty. While it was clear that most of the farmers were poor and could not afford the necessary inputs, it would not be possible to have the government provide these inputs.

Secondly, unlike the Coffee sector that has strong international organisations and lobby groups e.g. East African Fine Coffee Association (EAFCA), the cashew sub-sector did not have any that would in one way or the other help in terms of building international pressure. This left the campaign team to rely on national factors.

Thirdly, the demand for cashew has been growing tremendously world over as a result of the liberalization of cashew marketing. This demand has resulted in increased exports of raw nuts from Kenya to India and the importation of the same from Tanzania. It was necessary that a regulatory framework would straighten this sub-sector. The imposition of a 15% export duty on raw cashew nut in 2002 and the eventual quashing of the same

through the High Court are testament to the undercurrents within the sub-sector. The levy has since been abolished by the Minister for Finance in the 2003/4 Budget.

c) CSOs strategies for policy change

At the regional level, ActionAid developed a campaign strategy to provide the overall campaign direction for the next four years. The strategy, though shared by all campaign team members, was not followed by all. The three strategic campaign objectives based on various constraints affecting the sector included:

- Working towards an enabling cashew nut policy environment. Without a favourable policy and legal regime, developments in the sector could not be sustainable as there would not be an organized body to co-ordinate and regulate its activities.
- To enable farmers, researchers, extension workers, and processors to take a lead role in the development of the sector. This was to be achieved through capacity building of the actors and provision of relevant information.
- To facilitate networking and information sharing among allies. The lack of information amongst stakeholders was highlighted as a major constraint. It was envisaged that through this process, a close working relationship would be developed between the government, the private sector and civil society in order to avoid duplication of activities as well as for synergy purposes.

In line with these objectives ActionAid Kenya played an essential facilitation role at four levels. At the community level, ActionAid mobilised the farmers in its programme areas of Malindi and Mombasa and sensitized them on the need to rehabilitate their trees. At the meso level, ActionAid played a crucial linkage role by linking the farmers with Bayer East Africa (manufacturers of pesticide), Hardy Kenya (suppliers of motorised sprayers) and Kenya Nut Limited (buyers of raw cashew).

Further linkages were made between farmers and Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) and Ministry of Agriculture. Through this collaboration, Government extension officers were trained on good tree husbandry. The collaboration with KARI led to more research into high yielding varieties and the provision of the same to the farmers who wished to replace their old trees.

At the Regional/national level, ActionAid supported three national workshops that were aimed at developing the cashew policy. These workshops, attended by all the stakeholders, discussed the draft policy and gave critical input and benefited a lot from the research that had been done in the sector. The development of the draft policy was also informed by findings from these studies. A multi-stakeholder technical committee was set up by the Ministry of Agriculture during the first national workshop in June 2002 and charged with the responsibility of developing a legal framework to guide the cashew sector. ActionAid Kenya was appointed to be the secretariat of the committee.

The incorporation of Dr. Enoch Mrabu (a former, and successful, managing director of the Kenya Cashew nut Limited) and Mr. Francis K Muniu (from KARI) into the campaign team enabled the campaign to gain greatly from their research experience in the cashew sub-sector. The two presented research papers during the national workshops while ActionAid shared case studies on their successful efforts in cashew rehabilitation in Malindi. The

combination of research and case study presentation were critical in the drafting of the policy.

Through these efforts and in line with the mandate given by the Ministry of Agriculture, a draft policy and Articles and Memorandum of Association for the establishment of the Cashewnut Council were developed, reviewed by a legal expert, and submitted to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development in late September 2002 in time for the second stakeholder workshop held in February 2003. A cabinet paper was drafted by the Ministry, submitted to the Cabinet but nothing has been heard since then.

The missing linkage was at the policy formulation level especially at the Parliamentary level. This contributed to the collapse of the campaign and the absence of a final policy.

d) Nature of research-based evidence

A feasibility study on cashew nut production in the coastal region conducted by Outremere in 1982 suggested a project aimed at improving cashew production in the Coast Province.

In participatory rural appraisals carried out in 1994, Kilifi and Kwale District farmers ranked cashew first among the cash crops while Lamu farmers ranked it second after cotton (Otieno *et al*, 1994; Kega *et al*, 1994; Islam *et al*, 1994). In a priority setting exercise conducted to identify priority areas for research and extension in the coastal region, it was recommended that a diagnostic study be conducted to establish the cause(s) of the decline (Anon,1994). The study conducted in Kilifi and Kwale districts showed that diseases and pests, poor management practices, low producer prices and wildlife were the main causes of decline in cashew nut production in the region (Muniu *et al*, 1995, Muniu, 1997).

A baseline study conducted by F.K Muniu and Enoch Mrabu in 2001 found out that cashew production in Kenya has been declining due to:

- Diseases mainly powdery mildew
- Disorganized marketing environment
- Loss of local processing capacity due to closure of the only processing plant.

The study further noted that there were very few farmer organizations dealing with cashew nuts thus no bargaining power over their crop. There is a need for farmers to form associations that would enable them to air their views on the industry.

The baseline and case studies proved essential in the process due to their linkage with the practical events obtaining in the communities. As explained above, Dr. Mrabu and Mr. Muniu made reference not only on the studies they conducted but also other studies.

Campaign Challenges

- Slow attitudinal change on the part of the farmers as a number of the cashew trees are still left in the bush.
- Poverty resulting into a dependency syndrome by farmers who expect everything to be done for them – from weeding to harvesting.

- Limited interest by local political leadership pushing for the relevant policy at Parliamentary level.
- Poor investment environment that has encouraged the export and importation of raw nuts to and from India and Tanzania respectively.

Conclusions and lessons learned

Whereas significant changes have been realized in term of scaling up production, little has been seen at the policy front. Although tremendous efforts were put at increasing production, a similar level of strength was not put at the policy level. ActionAid and other collaborators have not been successful in lobbying Parliamentarians on the need for this policy.

The contributory factors to the failure can be seen in the poverty afflicting the vast majority of the farmers, limited capacity of ActionAid and other members of the campaign to build the necessary force to push the policy agenda at the national level. Other factors include lack of support from the political leadership and failure by the stakeholders to act in unison. The campaign was seen as an ActionAid campaign making the actors always to wait for direction from ActionAid.

The following lessons emerge from the campaign:

- Policy change processes require consistency, commitment, time and resources
- For the poor to change policy there has to be space and enough information to enable them to adequately raise the issue to the policy makers. They too must own the process of policy influencing.
- Key impediment to the ability of the poor to influence policy is their inability to meet their basic needs. Because of their poverty, an initiative that will enable them to have food on the table at the end of the day become top priority rather than participating in long term outcome processes.
- Political leadership is important in policy change but politicians in Kenya and the Coast in particular do not act on issues that are dear to the poor despite being fully aware of the situation.

Building a formidable force for policy influencing is essential ingredient to any successful policy advocacy. In situations where the farmers are poor and having members of parliament who care less about their plight, it becomes very difficult for the poor to influence policy. Space must be created for them to influence policy consistently.

Sources of documentation

The case study is based on first hand experience and the following campaign reports:

- Cashew nut campaign strategy 2001-2004
- Cashew nut Campaign 2001-2003: A synopsis
- ActionAid Kenya Coast Region: Policy Research Unit 2003 Annual Report

All these reports were written by the authors and therefore require no permission.

Anon. (1994). Research and extension priorities in 3 districts of Coast Province. Internal Report No. RRP/05.94, RRC Mtwapa.

F.K Muniu and E Mrabu (2001) Cashew nut Baseline Study (unpublished)

F.K. Muniu, V.M. Kega, T.L. Munga, P. Kiuru, E. Wekesa, L.O. Otieno, D. Kamuya, F. Mutua, F. Kitele and G. Mwoga (1995). Diagnostic study on cashew nut production and marketing in Kilifi and Kwale Districts. Internal Report No.008. RRC Mtwapa.

F.K. Muniu.(1997). Diagnostic study on cashew nut production and marketing in Coastal Kenya.

Islam A.S., Gacheru E.N., Mburu P.M. (1994). Farming system survey I Hindi, Lamu district. Internal Report No. RRC/003.94, RRC, Mtwapa

Kega V.M., Jamoza J.E. Muniu F.K., Dzilambe K.K. 1994. Report of a farming system survey in Milalani sub-location, Kwale District, Internal Report No. RRC/ 003.94

Oltremare. (1982). Feasibility study cashewnut production in coastal region of Kenya. Ministry of Agriculture, Nairobi.

Otieno L.O., Kamau G.M., Njunie M, Blokland A., Kikvi B.M., Chege P. (1994). Diagnostic study using PRA techniques of Roka Location, Bahari Division

Basic information about the author

Elphas Ojiambo is a former Policy Research and Advocacy Co-ordinator, ActionAid Kenya Coast Region (1999-2004). He was at the forefront of the Cashewnut revitalization campaign bringing together the various actors. In 2002 he won an international six week learning fellowship on Citizen Participation in Human Rights Advocacy organized by the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex. During this fellowship he wrote a paper titled 'Battling for Corporate Accountability: Lessons from the Titanium Mining Campaign in Kwale, Kenya'. The paper is available at <http://www.ids.ac.uk/particip/networks/learnfellow/hradvoc.html>. He has written a number of articles in the Kenyan and East African media. He holds a Master of Philosophy Degree in Economics from the University of Ghana and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics and Sociology from Moi University, Kenya.