

SPECIAL BULLETIN

N°198 July 2012

FERTILIZER

This special intelligence bulletin is devoted to fertilizer. It focuses on West Africa, with viewpoints and information on experience in other regions of Africa.

Crops in West Africa receive an average dose of 7 to 8 kg of fertilizer. This is very low, well below the levels applied in Asian and South American countries.

Everybody recognizes the urgent need to durably boost production, but opinions differ as to how. What subsidy policy should be adopted? How can intensification policies be implemented and financed? What model of intensification should be promoted? How can the private sector be made more effective, and how can the fertilizer market in sub-Saharan Africa be improved? Which innovative systems should be promoted to give farmers better access to fertilizer? Fertilizer is a thorny subject that reveals deep divisions, between the advocates of the "green revolution" in Africa, those in favour of strong public action and those who want to improve the working of the private sector, etc.

Farmers do what they can to organize themselves to obtain good fertilizer at lower cost. States establish fertilizer promotion strategies and intensified production policies that are more or less effective and stable. Partners try to develop new approaches.

This bulletin is made up of different parts: initiatives by farmers' organizations, voucher schemes, training handbooks and manuals, fertilization techniques, country studies and documentation, regional policies, subsidies, fertilizer chains on the global scale, reference websites on this topic.

Naturally this bulletin does not claim to be exhaustive. We invite readers to enrich this work with their comments. Do not hesitate to send us other documents or sources that we will mention in a future issue. Please inform us of other interesting initiatives in this domain that we can bring to the attention of our readers.

This bulletin has drawn widely upon the input and contributions of a great many people (see acknowledgements at the end of the issue). We gratefully thank them for their help.

Enjoy your reading, until next week and the following instalment.

The Inter-réseaux team

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- Policies and actions to stimulate private sector fertilizer marketing in sub-Saharan Africa
- Policy frameworks conducive to enhancing soil fertility in Africa
- Improving Regional Fertilizer Markets in West Africa

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- Fertilizer Tool Kit: promoting efficient and sustainable fertilizer use in Africa

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- The fertilizer market: current status, outlook and outstanding issues
- Volatility of agricultural commodity prices and fertilizers
- Fertilizer market situation: market structure, consumption and trade patterns, and pricing behaviour

Reference websites

- Africa Fertilizer Portal
- International Fertilizer Industry Association (IFA)
- IFDC
- IFDC market information system
- MIR+ (Market inputs regionally plus)
- AMITSA
- ICIS
- MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY (MSU)
- African Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership (AFAP)

Practices and experience

Durably boost production of grain crops: a challenge for UGCPA-BM

Grain de sel n°54-56, Inter-réseaux, december 2011

Farmers' organizations are developing strategies to take action in the face of lower crop yields due to less frequent fallowing. This article published in *Grain de sel* focuses on the experience of UGCPA-BM in Burkina Faso, an organization that has set up a service to supply mineral fertilizers but has also adopted a policy to encourage farmers to use organic amendments, with a view to sustainable fertilization.

<http://www.inter-reseaux.org/revue-grain-de-sel/54-56-les-cereales-au-coeur-de-la/article/accroitre-durablement-la>

Interview with Mahamadou Hassane, secretary-general of FUCOPRI

Inter-réseaux, 22 may 2012

In this interview granted to Inter-réseaux, Mahamadou Hassane presents the activities of FUCOPRI, the only rice-growing farmers' organization (FO) in Niger. He describes, among others, measures to help supply inputs to members, mainly fertilizers, seed and plant protection products. He gives us a practitioner's technical point of view on the organization of this production chain.

<http://www.inter-reseaux.org/ressources-thematiques/article/entretien-avec-mahamadou-hassane>

For more information on FUCOPRI's experience, see also *Dynamiques Paysannes*, no. 25, SOS Faim, July 2011:

http://www.sosfaim.be/pdf/publications/dynamiques_paysannes/dynamiques-paysannes-fucopri-fr.pdf

“Épargne Baoré”: Creation of a group supply scheme for inputs

Engineers without Borders Canada, february 2012

The Coopérative Agricole du Passoré (CAP) in Yako (Burkina Faso) launched a group fertilizer supply scheme, called Épargne Baoré (Baoré Savings), during the 2011-2012 growing season. This scheme offers an alternative to up-front financing of the full cost of agricultural fertilizer; the cooperative proposes to cover 60% of farmers' costs for fertilizer before the season, farmers then reimburse as they can, without fixed payment dates, and pay off the balance when crops are sold at the end of the season. During the 2011-2012 season this scheme supplied 45 tonnes of fertilizer to 426 farmer members of the cooperative.

See the information sheet on this experience (5 pp.) at

http://www.inter-reseaux.org/IMG/pdf/pargne_Baore.pdf

Watch a video presentation at :

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYGsN3obZNq>

Farm inputs supply: four years of experience at FEPAB (2006-2009)

Projet Capitalisation, 2010

This 4-page note outlines the experience of the Fédération des professionnels agricoles du Burkina Faso (FEPAB) with farming inputs supply. In 2006 the federation managed a working capital fund to support farmers. Since 2009 each member group has negotiated directly with local financial institutions. FEPAB members also have access to support for extension services to family farms.

http://biblio.capitalisation-bp.net/SAI/FicheExp_FEPAB_CommandeGroupee.pdf

The fertilizer supply system of the Fédération des Unions de Groupements Paysans du Niger (Mooriben) for the 2010 season

RECA Niger, october 2010, 3 pp.

Input shops are part of the Mooriben integrated services structure that manages input supply and provides extension services to members. This short note describes the Mooriben fertilizer supply system in 2010: expanded coverage of input shops throughout farmers' unions, sources of fertilizer supply for Mooriben, training in fertilizer use for farmers who act as agents and managers of the input shops.

http://www.reca-niger.org/IMG/pdf/RECA_intrants_Note7_engrais_Mooriben_2010.pdf

Cooperative input shops: a solution to the problem of input supply

FCMN, 2008

This document is a bit dated, but constitutes a good introduction to input shops, their roles, and to the approach and results obtained by the Fédération des coopératives maraîchères du Niger.

http://www.inter-reseaux.org/IMG/doc_Article_BI_FCMN_derniere_version.doc

Video document on input shops in Niger

IARBIC, 2010

This 26-minute video presents the role and position of input shops in the supply of farm inputs in Niger.

<http://www.capitalisation-bp.net/spip.php?article53>  

Voucher schemes

Voucher schemes for enhanced fertilizer use: lessons learned and policy implications

I. Gregory (IFDC), D. Rohrbach (World Bank), January 2012

This slide show combines two presentations on fertilizer voucher schemes. The first presentation, by IFDC, explains the origins and functioning of fertilizer voucher schemes, and then compares three such schemes (two in Malawi and one in Ghana). The second presentation, from the World Bank, looks at the opportunities and risks of fertilizer voucher schemes.

Watch the slide show (in PDF, 41 slides):

<http://agrilinks.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/Jan%2025%20ASC%20Fertilizer%20Voucher%20Schemes%20.pdf> 

Getting fertilizer into farmers' hands

Grain de sel n°51, Inter-réseaux, September 2010

To facilitate access to subsidized fertilizer for smallholder farmers in Nigeria, IFDC developed a fertilizer voucher programme that relies on a public-private partnership. This initiative has met with resounding success, even if many limitations remain to be addressed. This article in *Grain de sel* highlights this experience.

In English:

<http://www.inter-reseaux.org/revue-grain-de-sel/51-special-issue-nigeria/article/getting-fertiliser-into-farmers> 

In French:

<http://www.inter-reseaux.org/revue-grain-de-sel/51-le-nigeria/article/des-engrais-a-portee-de-main-pour> 

Fertilizer subsidies in Africa: are vouchers the answer?

N. Minot, T. Benson, IFPRI, 2009, 8 pp.

After a phase during which fertilizer markets were deregulated in the 1980s and 1990s, African governments are once again taking in interest in subsidy mechanisms. This information sheet draws up a short history of policies implemented in Africa since the 1970s, and discusses their effectiveness: fertilizer subsidy policies, market development schemes. Could “smart subsidies” be the answer to the dysfunction observed today, via vouchers for instance? The authors examine this possibility, while reiterating that subsidies cannot substitute for a global investment and development plan.

<http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ib60.pdf> 

Handbooks and training manuals

Soil amendment

Training booklets and manuals drawing on farmers' organizations' experience with soil amendment in Burkina Faso

CILSS, November 2011

CILSS offers farmers several documents intended to serve as the basis for training modules on soil amendment. These works are drawn from a programme pooling the experience of farmers' organizations with soil amendment in Burkina Faso. Booklets pertaining to each of the country's agroecological zones (Centre, West and Sahel) have been written in simple French, and six topics on good farming practices for soil amendment have been selected for the elaboration of training modules: use of local materials for the walls of manure pits; vegetal mats to restore degraded soils; open-air composting with straw; sustainable cassava production; using grasses to combat erosion and better nourish animals; stabilization of dunes to slow the silting of fields, pastures and waterways.

<http://www.cilss.bf/spip.php?article186> ■ ■

Statistics

Training manual on fertilizer statistics in Africa

AfricaFertilizer.org, June 2012

Initially intended for the instructors of AfricaFertilizer.org, this training manual on fertilizer statistics in Africa is didactic, illustrated and highly comprehensive. It covers various aspects, with a general overview of the fertilizer market in Africa, the main features that contribute to the proper functioning of fertilizer markets, and the current state of these markets in Africa; definitions, classifications and conversion of fertilizer to nutrients; quantitative and qualitative data (fertilizer production, imports, exports, consumption, fertilizer use, and prices). The last chapter presents case studies to give participants a chance to apply what they have learned in training sessions.

In English:

http://www.inter-reseaux.org/IMG/pdf/AfricaFertilizer-org_-_Training_Manual_on_Fertilizer_Statistics_-_english_June_2012_.pdf 

In French:

http://www.inter-reseaux.org/IMG/pdf/AfricaFertilizer-org_-_manuel_de_formation_sur_les_statistiques_engrais_Juin_2012_.pdf ■ ■

Input shops

Practical handbooks on farm input shops

IARBIC, March 2011

Three practical handbooks on farm input shops are proposed by the project entitled Intensification de l'Agriculture par le Renforcement des Boutiques d'Intrants Coopératives (IARBIC, Intensifying Agriculture by Strengthening Cooperative Input Shops). The first of these presents farm input shops in general (what is a farm input shop, why are they needed, their characteristics, functions and activities). The second handbook deals with the organization and functioning of farm input shops (governance, management, oversight and auditing, etc.) The third handbook is devoted to the management of input shops.

<http://www.reca-niger.org/spip.php?article485> ■ ■

AOPP: setting up farm input shops

AOPP, IFDC, Crop Life Mali, 2008, 61 pp.

Farm input shops are generally started by one or more farmers' organizations that are fully responsible for their management. The shops sell agricultural inputs (seed, fertilizer, plant protection products, small farm tools, veterinary products, services, etc.) The shops function in the same way as those of private distributors, with the major difference that the inputs are sold at cost and that profit is not the main objective. This document is intended as a guide for setting up a farm inputs shop. After exposing the role of farm input shops, the handbook provides information and criteria for the viability, construction and management of an input shop. The book includes several training modules on business management and marketing for input shop managers.

http://www.inter-reseaux.org/IMG/pdf/Demarche_de_mise_en_place_BIA.pdf ■ ■

Farm input banks

Afrique Verte International, May 2011

The training department of Afrique Verte International has published three illustrated handbooks devoted to farm input banks. The first handbook compiles technical data on agro-inputs, in particular plant health and protection products. The second proposes advice on setting up a farm input shop. It explains the role of the shop, describes the different organs that are charged with creating and running the shop, the choice of site, the role of members, etc. Instructions for shop upkeep are also given. The third handbook is devoted to the business management of the shop: basic principles for establishing the cost price and sale price for inputs, operating accounts, management records.

Guide sur les intrants agricoles [Handbook on farm inputs] (PDF, 13 pp.) :

http://www.afriqueverte.org/r2_public/media/fck/File/Documentation/Formation_operateurs/les-intrants-agricoles-op.pdf  

Guide de création d'une banque d'intrants [Handbook on creating an input bank] (16 pp.) :

http://www.afriqueverte.org/r2_public/media/fck/File/Documentation/Formation_operateurs/creer-banque-intrants-op.pdf  

Guide de gestion d'une banque d'intrants [Handbook on managing an input bank] (8 pp.) :

http://www.afriqueverte.org/r2_public/media/fck/File/Documentation/Formation_operateurs/gestion-banque-intrants.pdf  

Agro-dealers

Fertilizer dealer handbook: products, storage and handling

IFDC, October 2005, 51 pp.

This handbook from IFDC is intended for fertilizer vendors. It aims to give dealers information on the chemical and physical characteristics of fertilizers, enabling them to better serve their customers, as well as properly manage and handle their stock. The handbook contains information on plant nutrients, types and sizes of bags, characteristics of storage warehouses, stock management, safety measures, etc.

<http://www.ifdc.org/getdoc/6b830535-29e1-4ec0-abf4-e51e1b25319c/R-15-->

[Fertilizer Dealer Handbook \(1\).aspx](http://www.ifdc.org/getdoc/6b830535-29e1-4ec0-abf4-e51e1b25319c/R-15--Fertilizer_Dealer_Handbook_(1).aspx) 

Practical handbook for agro-dealers

IFDC, RADD, February 2012

This practical handbook is aimed at agro-dealers, the sellers of farm inputs. It is made up of two volumes. The first volume focuses on knowledge of agricultural inputs: the definition of an "input", the services provided by agro-dealers, fertilizer and plant nutrition, pesticides, seed grain, packaging and storage of agricultural inputs. The second volume covers management and planning of trade in agricultural inputs: managing working capital funds, managing stock, sales and marketing, accounting records, drawing up a business plan, etc.

Volume I: Connaissance des intrants agricoles [Knowledge of agricultural inputs] (62 pp.)

<http://www.ifdc-catalist.org/pdfs/Guide-Pratique-Agro-Dealer-1.pdf>  

Volume II: Gestion et planification du commerce des intrants agricoles [Management and planning of trade in agricultural inputs] (78 pp.)

<http://www.ifdc-catalist.org/pdfs/Guide-Pratique-Agro-Dealer-2.pdf>  

Fertilizer Retailing Guide

FAO, IDA, 2002, 47 pp.

A few years ago fertilizer markets were still administered by the public sector in most African countries. This is no longer the case today. Private companies supply retailers, most of whom have little experience in selling fertilizer. This report is designed to serve as a handbook for fertilizer distributors. In addition to general information to round out their knowledge of fertilizer products, the report includes tips for running their business: where does one buy merchandise, how can the products be promoted, what advice should be given to farmers for proper use of fertilizer?

[http://www.fao.org/ag/ags/ags-division/publications/publication/en/?dyna_fef\[uid\]=38799](http://www.fao.org/ag/ags/ags-division/publications/publication/en/?dyna_fef[uid]=38799) 

Education and extension services

Information sheets on deep injection of urea and on fertilizer toxicity

MIR +, 2009-2010

The MIR + project distributes several 2-page information sheets on deep injection of urea, and one on fertilizer toxicity.

Info sheet no. 3 (Oct. 2009): Deep placement of urea: potential for boosting rice production in West Africa?

http://www.inter-reseaux.org/IMG/pdf/MIR_Plus_3.pdf  

Info sheet no. 5 (Dec. 2010): Deep placement of urea: a simple, flexible and effective fertilization technique for irrigated farming, pro-poor and pro-environment

http://www.inter-reseaux.org/IMG/pdf/MIR_Plus_5.pdf  

Info sheet no. 6 (Oct. 2011): Technology for deep urea placement can contribute significantly to achieving self-sufficiency in rice for West Africa

http://www.inter-reseaux.org/IMG/pdf/Information_Bulletin_No6_Nov_2011_French_13_Nov_.pdf  

Info sheet no. 7 (Feb. 2012): Fertilizer toxicity: myth or reality?

http://www.inter-reseaux.org/IMG/pdf/Information_Bulletin_No7_Fertilizer_toxicity_French25_feb.pdf  

Video presentation: Deep placement of urea

IFDC

This 11-minute video film describes the method and benefits of deep placement of urea super pellets for rice growing.

http://www.ifdc.org/Media_Center/Video_Gallery/General_IFDC_and_Staff/Le_Placement_Profond_d_Uree  

Fertilizers and their application: handbook for agricultural extension agents

FAO, 2003, 84 pp.

This brochure is published for agricultural extension agents by FAO, the International Fertilizer Association (IFA) and the World Phosphate Institute (Institut mondial du phosphate, IMPHOS). It explains the usefulness of fertilizers for increasing production and raising farmers' income, and aims to give extension agents the knowledge that they need to in turn inform farmers in the field. The brochure covers the role of nutrients in crop growth, soil mechanics, principles of fertilizer use and techniques for reaching and instructing farmers.

ftp://ftp.fao.org/agl/agll/docs/fertuse_f.pdf  

Country studies and documentation

Multi-country

Fertilizer supply and costs in Africa

Chemonics, IFDC, june 2007, 133 pp.

The Gates Foundation has taken on the objective of improving farm productivity in Africa. This report aims to provide the Foundation's staff with information on the state of fertilizer markets in a number of African countries: Mali, Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique. The document comprises country studies that all follow the same outline: market organization, analysis of supply and demand, analysis of the fertilizer supply chain, market environment, performance. In conclusion the report makes several recommendations. The authors point to several areas of action: establishing a favourable policy and regulatory environment, developing human capital, measures to act on supply and on demand, research and technology transfers, logistics and transport.

http://www.inter-reseaux.org/IMG/pdf/IFDC_ChemonicsFertilizerSupplyandCostsinAfrica_Study_for_BMGF-2.pdf  

Cameroon

North Cameroon: two information sheets from PRASAC

2002, 2 pp.

Two information sheets on the inputs market in North Cameroon are available from the Pôle régional de recherche appliquée au développement des Savanes d'Afrique Centrale (PRASAC).

The first one outlines the organization of the inputs supply chain and the range of suppliers (importers, distributors, retailers, State companies, NGOs and farmers' organizations), describing their place in the chain and their modes of operation.

The second document describes the various crops cultivated in North Cameroon (cotton, maize, rice, onions, vegetables), the inputs used and the supply modes and financing available to farmers.

These information sheets are a bit dated, but they have an attractive format (short and illustrated).

Les fournisseurs d'intrants et leurs stratégies au Nord Cameroun [Input suppliers and their strategies in North Cameroon]

http://www.prasac-cemac.org/images/pdf/EF_FTK_n01_Les_fournisseurs_d_intrants_et_leurs_strategies.pdf

Marché financier et approvisionnement en intrants agricoles au Nord Cameroun [Financing and supply of agricultural inputs in North Cameroon]

[http://www.prasac-](http://www.prasac-cemac.org/images/pdf/EF_FTK_02_Marches_financiers_et_approvisionnement_en_intrants_agricoles_au_nord_cameroun.pdf)

[cemac.org/images/pdf/EF_FTK_02_Marches_financiers_et_approvisionnement_en_intrants_agricoles_au_nord_cameroun.pdf](http://www.prasac-cemac.org/images/pdf/EF_FTK_02_Marches_financiers_et_approvisionnement_en_intrants_agricoles_au_nord_cameroun.pdf)

Ghana

Overview of the agricultural input sector in Ghana

IFPRI, 2010, 44 pp.

There is a cruel lack of data on the agricultural inputs sector in Ghana. Thorough knowledge of this sector is crucial for designing effective ways to support the inputs market and the farm sector as a whole. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and IFDC have joined forces to fill this knowledge gap. Their work is presented in this study, describing the organization of the inputs sector in Ghana, market and supply chain operations. The authors also assess the effectiveness of government subsidies for inputs.

<http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp01024.pdf>

Madagascar

Support for setting up an inputs production and distribution scheme (fertilizers and plant protection products) in PARECAM intervention zones

PARECAM, June 2011, 122 pp.

The Programme d'appui à la résilience aux crises alimentaires à Madagascar (PARECAM), that carried out its action from 2009 to 2011, had as its goals to increase production, enhance farmers' technical knowledge and bolster technical services, and revitalize the political dialogue. It was implemented by CAPFIDA, the FIDA support unit for rural development and action against poverty in Madagascar (<http://www.capfida.mg>). In this report CAPFIDA draws lessons from its experience and the measures taken under the PARECAM scheme. The unit intends to propose a durable distribution system for inputs in each PARECAM intervention zone, linked to a rational implementation framework.

http://www.capfida.mg/site/IMG/pdf/Rapport_Final_Intrants_14_juin_2011.pdf

Mali

Analysing the constraints that hinder improved supply of farm inputs in Mali

APCAM, IFDC, 2006, 24 pp.

Faced with problems in supply inputs to farmers, the Assemblée permanente des Chambres d'Agriculture du Mali (APCAM) held a number of regional workshops throughout the country to hear the voice of local actors. Farmers' representatives, banking institutions and distributors of inputs thus had a chance to formulate proposals to improve the supply of inputs. This report summarizes the findings of these workshops and draws up an action plan based on the ideas put forward by the participants. Reports by region are also available on the APCAM website.

http://www.apcam.org/cam/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=270&Itemid=20

Niger

RECA Info 7

RECA Niger, february 2010, 12 pp.

This issue of the *Reca Info* bulletin is devoted to the topic of fertilizer in Niger. It enables readers to become familiar with the fertilizer supply chain in Niger, the different types of fertilizer and their roles, and the place of phosphorus in soil amendment in Niger.

http://www.reca-niger.org/IMG/pdf/RECA_INFO_7_.pdf  

Nigeria

Nigeria: Aliko Dangote to the rescue of the continent's farmers

Jeune Afrique, september 2011

This news article outlines the plans of Nigerian businessman Aliko Dangote to build the largest fertilizer factory in Africa. The idea is to jumpstart the agricultural economy in Nigeria, and ultimately export fertilizer across the continent.

http://eco.jeuneafrique.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3489&catid=293  

Ethiopia

Seed, fertilizer, and agricultural extension in Ethiopia

IFPRI, 2011, 40 pp.

Ethiopia stands out for the support given to agriculture and the establishment of effective policies. IFPRI publishes here a summary of Ethiopian experience in terms of facilitating access to seed, fertilizer and extension services for smallholders. The directions to be followed could be: opening the market to hybrid maize seed, pursuing the deregulation of the fertilizer market, and setting up innovative programmes.

<http://www.ifpri.org/publication/seed-fertilizer-and-agricultural-extension-ethiopia>  

Incomplete markets and fertilizer use: evidence from Ethiopia

Daniel Zerfu, Donald F. Larson, World Bank, 2011

The economic benefits of fertilizer use can be considerable. And yet, fertilizers are still under-used in Africa. In the case of Ethiopia, the World Bank sought to determine whether market malfunction was at the root of this state of affairs. This investigation shows that there is not a problem of fertilizer availability, but rather of its accessibility, aggravated by a lack of human and financial capital. The World Bank concludes that access to extension services and lower transport costs would be factors to boost use of fertilizer.

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/3721/WPS5235.pdf?sequence=1>  

Kenya

Lesson learning study of the farm inputs promotion project in Kenya (with a special emphasis on public-private partnership for input promotion and possibilities for regional upscaling)

DFID, CPP, 2005, 19 pp.

The sustainable community development project conducted by the SCODP NGO in Kenya in the 1990s was designed to set up an inputs supply system that would be more financially accessible to small farmers. The principle was to offer smaller quantities of inputs for sale, because most farmers could not afford to buy them in bulk. As an outgrowth of this initiative Farm Inputs Promotion (FIP) was implemented, extending the idea of small quantities to improved seed and to herbicides. This study draws up an assessment of the SCODP and FIP experience and the lessons to be learned. Recommendations are made for a possible extension to Tanzania.

www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload/agrotech/1988/Lessonlearning2FIPS.pdf  

Soil amendment

Agroecology: where do we stand?

Intelligence Report, Inter-réseaux, september 2011, 8 pp.

As industrial agriculture models have reached their limits, it is high time to invest seriously in models that are more sustainable, environmentally, economically and socially. Agroecology is today widely recognized as a forward-looking solution to meet the challenge of nine billion mouths to feed in the world in 2050, without sacrificing the planet's natural resources. But how? This summary bulletin from Inter-réseaux aims to frame the main food issues facing the world today, to present the multiple facets of the concept of agroecology, and to explain the leading principles and techniques that are currently being proven to work. It also questions agroecology with respect to the many virtues accorded to it in the literature, while enumerating the main hurdles that will have to be surmounted to enable a broader dissemination of this approach.

In French: http://www.inter-reseaux.org/IMG/pdf/BDS2_Agroecologie.pdf 

In English: http://www.inter-reseaux.org/IMG/pdf/BDS2_Agroecologie_ENG_-2.pdf 

Sustainable land management: directives and good practices for sub-Saharan Africa

TerrAfrica, FAO, 2011, 252 pp.

This dense and very complete report aims to inform readers of cutting-edge research, and pursues an ambitious goal: to help create a framework for investments related to sustainable land management practices (SLM). The report is made up of two sections. The first introduces the general principles of SLM, and important issues to take into account when transposing good practices to a larger scale. The second section presents 12 SLM technology groups and a module on SLM approaches, illustrated by specific case studies.

http://knowledgebase.terrafrica.org/fileadmin/user_upload/terrafrica/docs/topic_page/SLM_in_Practice_French.pdf 

West Africa can feed its population by restoring soil fertility

P. Jouve, Grain de sel n°54-56, Inter-réseaux, december 2011

In this article published in *Grain de sel*, Philippe Jouve underscores that grain production in West Africa could be more than doubled if farmers were given the technical and financial means to use both chemical and organic fertilizers. Producers know this. Scientists have proven it. It is hard to see why it is not the top priority of governments.

<http://www.inter-reseaux.org/revue-grain-de-sel/54-56-les-cereales-au-coeur-de-la/article/l-afrique-de-l-ouest-peut-nourrir> 

Soil fertility: changing the paradigm through collective action

AGRA director, CTA website, september 2009

In this article the director of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) argues in favour of investment to support adoption of healthy land management practices by smallholders. He would like to see fertilizer supply systems improved and agro-dealers strengthened. In the author's view judicious recourse to subsidies offers ways to give farmers better access to inputs.

<http://knowledge.cta.int/fr/Dossiers/S-T-et-defis-agricoles/La-protection-des-sols/Articles-de-fond/Fertilite-des-sols-changement-de-paradigme-par-l-action-collective> 

Subsidies

Fertilizer subsidies in sub-Saharan Africa

FAO, july 2012, 73 pp.

Subsidies for fertilizers can help revive depressed fertilizer markets. FAO thinks that they do not offer a viable long-term solution, however, because they do not address root causes, and are costly for States. This report analyses the role played by fertilizer subsidies in sub-Saharan Africa since the late 1990s. It focuses on the most recent measures, called "smart subsidies", such as voucher schemes. The effectiveness of these tools depends largely on the ways in which they are implemented. The study concludes with a set of recommendations for decision-makers, in support of fertilizer promotion measures that effectively contribute to achieving food security for these countries.

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/ap077e/ap077e.pdf> 

Smart fertilizer subsidies in Sub-Saharan Africa: New wine or just new bottles?

N. Minot, IFPRI, July 2009, 19 slides

N. Minot, researcher with IFPRI, evaluates the merits of voucher schemes to subsidize fertilizers in sub-Saharan Africa. After exposing the arguments in favour of fertilizer subsidies, he looks at experience with subsidies in the 1970s and 1980s. This presentation draws attention to the current renewed interest in subsidies, and with examples from Malawi, Tanzania, Ghana and Kenya the author clarifies the advantages and the limitations of voucher schemes.

www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/20090724Minotppt.pdf 

The Use of Input Subsidies in Developing Countries

S. Wiggins, ODI, J. Brooks, OCDE, 2010, 22 pp.

More and more countries have chosen to subsidize inputs, to stimulate their agriculture and reduce their food insecurity. This report tends to moderate the enthusiasm for this option. Temporary targeted subsidies linked to market conditions, the so-called "smart subsidies", can be beneficial when markets are severely deficient, but are not sufficient in themselves. Investment in rural development is necessary to revive the sector over the long-term.

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/50/35/46340359.pdf> 

The New Generation of African Fertilizer Subsidies: Panacea or Pandora's Box?

V. Kelly, E. Crawford, J. Ricker-Gilbert, MSU, May 2011, 4 pp.

This study analyses the impacts of fertilizer subsidies, at the farm level and the State level, in Malawi, Mali, Senegal and Zambia. For purposes of comparison the case of Kenya, that has not subsidized fertilizer, is also examined. One point to be retained is that despite their lack of long-term efficacy, subsidies are not likely to disappear because they are popular. For this reason a compromise solution must be found. "Smart subsidies" can be an alternative option.

http://www.aec.msu.edu/fs2/number_87.pdf 

Fertilizer Demand in Sub-Saharan Africa: Realizing the Potential

V. Kelly, MSU, 2005

Schemes promoting fertilizer have a cross-sectoral impact on a country's development. Valerie Kelly, of the University of Michigan, remarks that it is not enough to increase just the use of fertilizer to achieve sustainable agricultural development. More broadly, a favourable environment must be created for farmers, by limiting the volatility of farm commodity prices, and lowering the cost of fertilizer. Another key aspect is strengthening farmers' capacity to use fertilizer properly.

<http://www.aec.msu.edu/fs2/polsyn/number77.pdf> 

Alternative Approaches for Promoting Fertilizer Use in Africa, with Emphasis on the Role of Subsidies.

E. Crawford, T. Jayne, V. Kelly, MSU, 2005

This document assesses fertilizer promotion schemes for managing soil fertility in Africa, from financial, economic, social and political viewpoints. The authors pay particular attention to cases of fertilizer subsidies, the circumstances in which they should be implemented, and the forms that ensure they will be effective. One essential point is to adopt a systematic approach. Increased fertilizer use has not only an impact on soils, but socioeconomic consequences as well.

<http://www.aec.msu.edu/fs2/polsyn/number76.pdf> 

Agricultural production revival in Malawi : success and limits

FARM, March 2011, 46 pp.

Malawi launched a system to subsidize inputs via vouchers in 2005. In this report FARM takes a look at the successes and limitation of this experience. Under this mechanism beneficiaries were properly targeted, and the inputs supply system reinforced, but the measure turned out to be costly. It produced results: Production of maize, the staple food in Malawi, was doubled. The Malawi government is aware, however, that this mechanism alone cannot suffice, and is effective only in the short term. Food insecurity was not resolved by this measure, because no action was taken to facilitate access to food. In 2009 Malawi proposed a massive investment plan for agriculture to durably stimulate production.

http://www.fondation-farm.org/IMG/pdf/FARM_Douillet_2011_03_Malawi_light.pdf 

Reclaiming Policy Space: Lessons from Malawi's 2005/2006 Fertilizer Subsidy Programme

Future Agricultures, 2007

Following the example of the agricultural inputs subsidy scheme pursued in Malawi, this report underscores that the outcomes of agricultural development are to a large extent dependent on the political context. Technical and/or economic arguments are of little importance: it is ultimately the configuration of political interests that strongly determines policy orientations in the field.

Read the full study (32 pp.):

http://www.future-agricultures.org/publications/research-and-analysis/doc_download/911-reclaiming-policy-space-lessons-from-malawis-20052006-fertiliser-subsidy-programme 

Read the Policy Brief (4 pp.):

http://www.future-agricultures.org/publications/research-and-analysis/doc_download/233-reclaiming-policy-space-lessons-from-malawis-fertiliser-subsidy-programme 

Promoting Fertilizer Use in Africa: Current Issues and Empirical Evidence from Malawi, Zambia, and Kenya.

I. Minde, T.S. Jayne, E. Crawford, J. Ariga, J. Govereh, MSU, October 2008, 4 pp.

This summary outlines the features that contribute to the success of fertilizer promotion schemes, particularly subsidies, drawing on lessons based on experience in Malawi, Zambia and Kenya. While "smart subsidies" are attractive, at first view, as a method to rapidly boost farm production and reduce rural poverty, their effectiveness depends on the way in which they are implemented. Targeting the populations and zones that are to receive subsidies, and strengthening fertilizer distribution systems, are elements that contribute to success.

<http://www.aec.msu.edu/fs2/polsyn/number83.pdf> 

Policy

Across the continent

African 2006 summit on fertilizer

In June 2006 the heads of state and of government of the African Union met in Abuja for a special summit devoted to fertilizer. The final declaration issued at the summit meeting recognizes that intensification requires a considerable effort to increase the use of fertilizers on the continent. The Conference declared fertilizer to be a "strategic product without borders" and pledged to raise average consumption from 8 kg to 50 kg of nutrients per hectare by 2015 (going from 16 to 100 kg of fertilizer per hectare, on average).

For all the documents related to this meeting, in particular the 15 background papers and the final "Abuja Declaration on Fertilizer", see:

www.inter-reseaux.org/ressources-thematiques/article/africa-fertilizer-summit-9-13-june 

Abuja Declaration on Fertilizer for the African Green Revolution: Regional and national progress report

NEPAD, 2011

This 4-page note discusses the progress made towards achieving the goals of the Abuja declaration, five years after the African summit on fertilizer. In spite of higher fertilizer consumption in certain countries, the objective of 50 kg of nutrients per hectare is far from being attained.

<http://www.nepad-caadp.net/pdf/Progress%20on%20Abuja%20Declaration%20July%202011%20%282%29.pdf>

 On the same topic see:

The Africa Fertilizer Summit: How Much Progress Has Been Made in the Last Five Years

Nepad, 2011

http://issuu.com/ifdcinfo/docs/afs_new 

Read the full report:

Seventh Progress Report January-December 2010: Implementation of the Abuja Declaration on Fertilizer for an African Green Revolution

NEPAD, June 2011, 69 pp.

http://www.inter-reseaux.org/IMG/pdf/Seventh_Progress_Report_Abuja_Declaration_FINAL_June_2011.pdf



Communique from AU-NEPAD on a concrete proposal to G20 for enhancing agriculture supply by African small farmers

NEPAD, september 2011

NEPAD submitted a proposal to the G20 to improve access to fertilizer for small farmers in Africa via an innovative financing mechanism based on fertilizer consumption in the G20 countries. The G20 countries account for over 80% of global agricultural production, and over 80% of agricultural exports in the world. Through a very low tax on fertilizer consumption in the G20 countries, it would be possible to subsidize a large share of fertilizer consumption in sub-Saharan Africa. Such a programme could double fertilizer consumption in Africa in 10 years.

<http://www.nepad.org/fr/foodsecurity/news/2476/communique-au-nepad-concrete-proposal-g20-enhancing-agriculture-supply-small-> 

Across the region

Regional strategy to promote fertilizer in West Africa

ECOWAS, UEMOA, 9-13 june 2006, 77 pp.

The regional strategy to promote fertilizer in West Africa was drawn up by ECOWAS, in collaboration with WAEMU and with support from IFDC, in the framework of the African Summit on Fertilizer. This strategy aims to find solutions to remove the main constraints hindering the fertilizer market in West Africa, in order to sustainably augment farm productivity through better soil fertility management and greater use of chemical fertilizers, in keeping with good environmental practices. The regional strategy is based on three pillars, each embodied in an action programme: i) creating a better business environment for the fertilizer market (harmonized regional regulatory and fiscal framework, voucher system based on the private sector); ii) stimulating solvent demand for fertilizer (reinforced farmers' organizations, incentives for banks, research); iii) stimulating fertilizer supply (feasibility studies for the development of local production units, regional maritime shipping company for transport).

http://www.hubrural.org/IMG/pdf/ced_uem_strateg_promo_engrai-0406.pdf  

Methodological note on the ECOWAP task force on inputs financing instruments

Hub Rural, 2011, 8 pp.

ECOWAS is expected to soon set up a task force to activate the support instrument for intensification that is included in the West African agricultural policy (ECOWAP). This methodological note from the Rural Hub specifies the scope of this task force. The objectives and content of the ECOWAP regional agricultural investment programme for intensifying plant production are listed. The composition of the task force, its aims and the expected outcomes of its work are also given.

<http://www.inter-reseaux.org/ressources-thematiques/article/note-methodologique-sur-la-task>  

Technical and financial feasibility study for regional agricultural policy instruments to support sustainable intensification of agriculture in West Africa

P. Baris, N. Gergely, april 2010, 85 pp.

This reference study focuses on regional agricultural policy instruments to support sustainable intensification of agriculture in West Africa. After establishing an assessment of the current status of fertilizer use in the region (very low application rates, supply for the most part provided by importers, fluctuating prices, multiple constraints on use), this report proposes several possible types of action: joint intervention by ECOWAS and States, adaptable by country, with different segments (subsidies for fertilizers and innovative small equipment, reinforcement of the distribution network, fund to guarantee inputs loans); and exclusively Community measures (VAT exoneration, 0% customs tariffs, regional quality standards for fertilizers).

http://www.reca-niger.org/IMG/pdf/Rapport_intensification_instrument_politique_2010.pdf  

Benin

Two articles on cotton production in Benin

A.M. Nounagnon, 2012

Cotton production in Benin was hit by a crisis during the 2011-2012 season. As fertilizer prices rocketed, farmers asked the government to grant them subsidies to cover the price of inputs. These measures were enacted. But high-level officials in the Ministry for Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries accused the Association Interprofessionnelle du Coton (AIC) of mismanaging these subsidies. AIC was thus divested of management of the 2012-2013 cotton crop campaign, and inputs supply was entrusted to the Société Nationale pour la Promotion Agricole (SONAPRA), which must now act quickly because the start of the season is rapidly approaching.

“Polémique au Bénin autour de la subvention de l’État sur le prix de l’engrais” [Controversy in Benin over State subsidy of fertilizer]

<http://www.inter-reseaux.org/ressources-thematiques/article/polemique-au-benin-autour-de-la>

“De graves perturbations dans le processus d’approvisionnement des producteurs en intrants” [Serious disruption of inputs supply to producers]

<http://www.inter-reseaux.org/ressources-thematiques/article/de-graves-perturbations-dans-le>

Mali

Supply and financing issues for agricultural inputs in Mali

Republic of Mali, may 2007

What policy measures should be envisaged for better access to farm inputs? The government of Mali seeks to resolve this issue to surmount problems of productivity in agriculture. In the document the government assesses the current status of inputs supply and financing in the country, identifies the constraints that hinder the functioning of these markets, and draws the necessary conclusions. In the government’s view, “the resolution of constraints related to supply and financing of inputs has been fully treated by the Fundamental Law on Agriculture”. At the time of writing the government’s priority is thus to enforce the fundamental legislation on agriculture enacted in 2006 to establish a concerted policy for agricultural development.

http://www.apcam.org/cam/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=271&Itemid=20

Studies

Policies and actions to stimulate private sector fertilizer marketing in sub-Saharan Africa

FAO, 2007, 96 pp.

This reference document summarizes the lessons to be drawn from fertilizer market reforms conducted in sub-Saharan Africa over the course of the last two decades. It identifies the areas of consensus concerning policies and actions that can improve the fertilizer market and increase use of fertilizers, and also highlights issues on which there is debate. Measures are proposed to boost fertilizer consumption and bring improvements to the fertilizer market. Special attention is given to the question of subsidies to cover the cost of fertilizer: the authors underscore that few expert studies are supportive of the renewed interest for subsidies in the region.

<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/010/a1136e/a1136e.pdf>

Policy frameworks conducive to enhancing soil fertility in Africa

Futures Agricultures, july 2008, 9 pp.

It would be heretical to bolster farm production in Africa without considering the soil, the underlying support of crops. In the words of the philanthropist Howard Buffet, Africa needs a “brown revolution” to enhance soil fertility. The question of policy frameworks to be set up to move in this direction was raised at the Future Agricultures Consortium in 2008. The summary of this discussion emphasized the need for an approach that takes specific local agroecological and socioeconomic characteristics into account: soil fertility, availability of organic inputs, access to mineral inputs, market outlets, value of crops. The discussion also questioned the use of chemical fertilizers: do they contribute to integrated soil fertility management? What policy measures, if any, can ensure that use of chemical fertilizers will benefit first and foremost family farmers, and not agribusiness?

www.future-agricultures.org/pdf%20files/fr_soilfert.pdf

Improving Regional Fertilizer Markets in West Africa

IFPRI, mars 2012, 4 pp.

IFPRI proposes in this note an analysis of fertilizer makers in the ECOWAS Member States. This document assesses the organization of these markets and provides pointers to understand the malfunctioning currently observed. Reiterating the need to improve yields to address the food crisis, IFPRI is in favour of reinforcing the fertilizer market on the regional scale. The organization recommends in effect the creation of a common market in the ECOWAS zone, and better information dissemination to farmers on these inputs and their use.

<http://www.ifpri.org/publication/improving-regional-fertilizer-markets-west-africa> 

Read the full report (84 pp.):

<http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp01084.pdf> 

Toolkit

Fertilizer Tool Kit: promoting efficient and sustainable fertilizer use in Africa

M. Morris, V. A. Kelly, R. J. Kopicki, D. Byerlee, World Bank, 2007

This report and toolkit are designed to provide decision-making aids to stakeholders engaged in the promotion of fertilizer in agriculture. They are intended first and foremost for decision-makers in the public sector and to partners in development action. Following a statement on the crucial role of fertilizer in farm productivity and soil fertility, these documents review the history of the promotion of fertilizers in Africa. The reasons for the low use of fertilizer in Africa are explained, and “good practices” to encourage demand and improve fertilizer supply are highlighted. The authors also invite readers to rethink the role of subsidies. The report emphasizes, among others, that input subsidies are not a miracle solution to the problem of underuse of fertilizer in Africa. An integrated and cross-sectoral approach is necessary. The report outlines the fundamental principles and general structure of this approach intended to effectively stimulate the fertilizer market.

Read the report (162 pp.):

http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2007/03/15/000310607_20070315153201/Rendered/PDF/390370AFR0Fer101OFFICIAL0USE0ONLY1.pdf 

See the toolkit:

<http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/fertilizeruse/index.html> 

The global fertilizer chain

The fertilizer market: current status, outlook and outstanding issues

Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fishing (France), 2010, 94 pp.

This study focuses on the fertilizer chain and its various subchains (nitrogen, phosphate and potassium) on the world scale. It shows the distribution of natural resources (current status and trends), introduces the main global players in the fertilizer market, describes the impact of environmental issues on the fertilizer market, and analyses fertilizer prices.

Read the **full study**:

http://agriculture.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/prospect-engrais_mineraux_0906_ssp_rapport_final.pdf 

Read an **excerpt on global production chains** (on the RECA Niger website):

<http://www.reca-niger.org/spip.php?article216> 

Read an **excerpt on global fertilizer price trends** (on the RECA Niger website):

<http://www.reca-niger.org/spip.php?article215> 

Read the **analytical note** (4 pp.) “The mineral fertilizer market: current status, outlook and paths for action”:

http://agriculture.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/Analyse-15_Le_marche_des_engrais_mineraux.pdf 

See **seminar communications** related to the study:

<http://agriculture.gouv.fr/marche-des-engrais-mineraux-etat,13172> 

Volatility of agricultural commodity prices and fertilizers

Ministry of Agriculture (France), Centre d'études et de prospective, *Veille Prospective & Evaluation*, April 2012

A 4-page document from Rabobank describes how the volatility of agricultural prices has an impact on the volatility of fertilizer prices, and hence on the fertilizer production and stockpiling strategy of actors in the supply chain. Unstable fertilizer prices are detrimental first of all to farmers, who in the end assume the most risk in the chain, if they are unable to procure fertilizer at the right time in their production cycle. Strategies put in place by the fertilizer supply chain to reduce this volatility are very similar to those recommended by the G20 meeting devoted to agriculture in 2011: greater transparency and cooperation on production and stockpiles between actors in the fertilizer chain, use of remote detection tools to better anticipate planted land area and the subsequent needs for fertilizer, futures markets for fertilizers to share risks among actors.

<http://veilleagri.hautefort.com/archive/2012/05/10/volatilite-des-prix-agricoles-et-des-engrais.html> 

Fertilizer market situation: market structure, consumption and trade patterns, and pricing behaviour

IFPRI, 2011, 76 pp.

This study sketches a picture of the world fertilizer market: production, consumption, trade, prices, concentration in the fertilizer industry at global and national levels. Special attention is given to sub-Saharan Africa (the smallest producer and consumer of fertilizer), Latin America (a region that produces little but consumes a lot of fertilizer) and southern Asia (a large-scale producer and consumer). IFPRI also looks at the relationship between fertilizer prices and market concentration: prices appear to be higher in markets with little competition. Indeed, the report points out to what extent the fertilizer sector is a concentrated market, with high levels of trade: five countries control one-half of the production capacity for the main fertilizers.

<http://www.ifpri.org/publication/fertilizer-market-situation> 

Reference websites

Africa Fertilizer Portal

In 2009 IFDC took the initiative of developing the AfricaFertilizer.org portal (AFO). The objective of AFO is to provide a broad spectrum of information on soil fertility and fertilizers in Africa. The portal, available in French and in English, posts a great amount of statistical data on fertilizer (production, exports and imports, production capacity, world prices, national retail prices, total consumption, application by type of crop, etc.), as well as publications, maps and a company directory.

<http://www.africafertilizer.org/>

International Fertilizer Industry Association (IFA)

IFA represents the fertilizer industry at the global level. Its website publishes many statistics, as well as documentation (in English, and somewhat biased).

<http://www.fertilizer.org/> 

IFDC

IFDC is an international organization with long experience and confirmed expertise in the area of fertilizer. The IFDC website offers free access to many documents and video presentations.

<http://www.ifdc.org/> 

Of particular interest is the page devoted to the **Mainstreaming Pro-Poor Fertilizer Access and Innovative Practices in West Africa** project:

http://ifdc.org/getdoc/b511194c-bba7-47f3-892c-035ee44b42ee/Mainstreaming_Pro-Poor_Fertilizer_Access_and_Innov 

IFDC market information system

IFDC supports several market information initiatives pertaining to fertilizer in Africa: the continent-wide Africa Fertilizer portal (see above); the MIR+ project in West Africa; AMITSA in East Africa; and mFarms in Ghana.

http://www.inter-reseaux.org/IMG/pdf/MIS_for_ACM_2012.pdf 

MIR+ (Market inputs regionally plus): all the past quarterly newsletters published by the project are available.

http://ifdc.org/getdoc/00fc6290-fe8d-4dcb-b48f-c1ce27266eb7/MIR_Plus 

AMITSA

<http://www.amitsa.org/> 

ICIS

The ICIS site publishes extensive statistical data on fertilizer. It also presents an interactive map of world trade in fertilizer.

<http://www.icis.com/fertilizers/> 

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY (MSU)

The MSU site includes a page listing all the MSU publications on inputs, by country (multi-country summaries, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Senegal, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Zambia).

<http://www.aec.msu.edu/fs2/inputs/index.htm> 

African Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership (AFAP)

The AFAP programme aims to make fertilizer more readily available to small farmers and to foster the development of a competitive and sustainable fertilizer market.

<http://www.afap-partnership.org/Default.aspx> 

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