



IMPACT STUDY OF FERT'S ACTION IN KENYA WITH CEREAL GROWERS ASSOCIATION (CGA) AS PART OF THE TRANSFERT PROGRAM (2015 – 2023)



Study synthesis

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This study was carried out as part of the thesis assignment of Camila Takhedmit, an agricultural engineering master student, in the section MOQUAS within the Tropics and Mediterranean Pole of the Agro Institute, in tandem with Ivy Wanjiky, a young graduate in Soil Science at the University of Nairobi.

Fert is an agri-agency created in 1981, supporting farmer organizations in 9 countries, mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa.

CGA is a Kenyan apex farmer organization created in 1996, offering services to over 250 000 farmers in 28 counties.

1. Introduction

Fert has been operating in Kenya since 2015 through a partnership with Cereal Growers Association (CGA). In particular, it supports this farmer organisation (FO) in setting up services for its members. At the end of 9 years of action, Fert and CGA wanted to appreciate their collaboration and know their impact on CGA members.

An impact study was carried out from April to September 2022 by a pair of French and Kenyan students. It was conducted in Nakuru and Laikipia counties:

- Nakuru County, for its anteriority in action (since 2016), the presence of many groups of small-scale farmers and its central location. In this county, agriculture contributes to 48% of household income.
- Laikipia county, because CGA had no other intervention prior to its partnership with Fert and can thus testify to the dissemination capabilities of the action. In this county, agriculture contributes to 75% of household income.

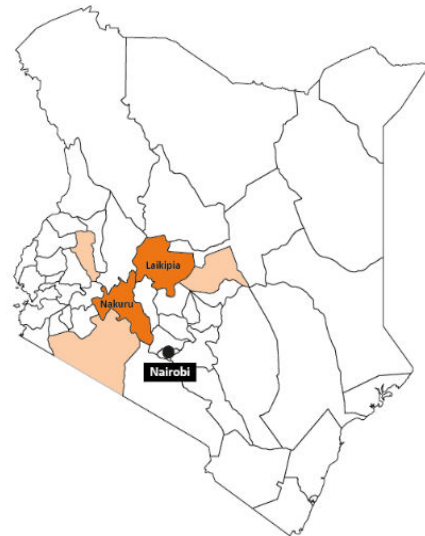


Figure 1 - Map of the two counties of the impact study: Nakuru and Laikipia

The study is based on a comprehensive, systemic and iterative approach and qualitative surveys (42 surveys conducted in Nakuru and 44 in Laikipia). The choice of actors to be investigated and the organization of this study were discussed with the CGA agribusiness coordinators (Acs).

1.1 Fert-CGA partnership, history and strategy

A partnership in 3 phases :



2. Farmer profiles in the two study counties

The differentiating factor of farmers according to CGA is the agricultural area:

- Small scale farmers: less than 50 acres.
- Medium-scale farmers: between 50 and 500 acres.
- Large scale farmers: more than 500 acres.

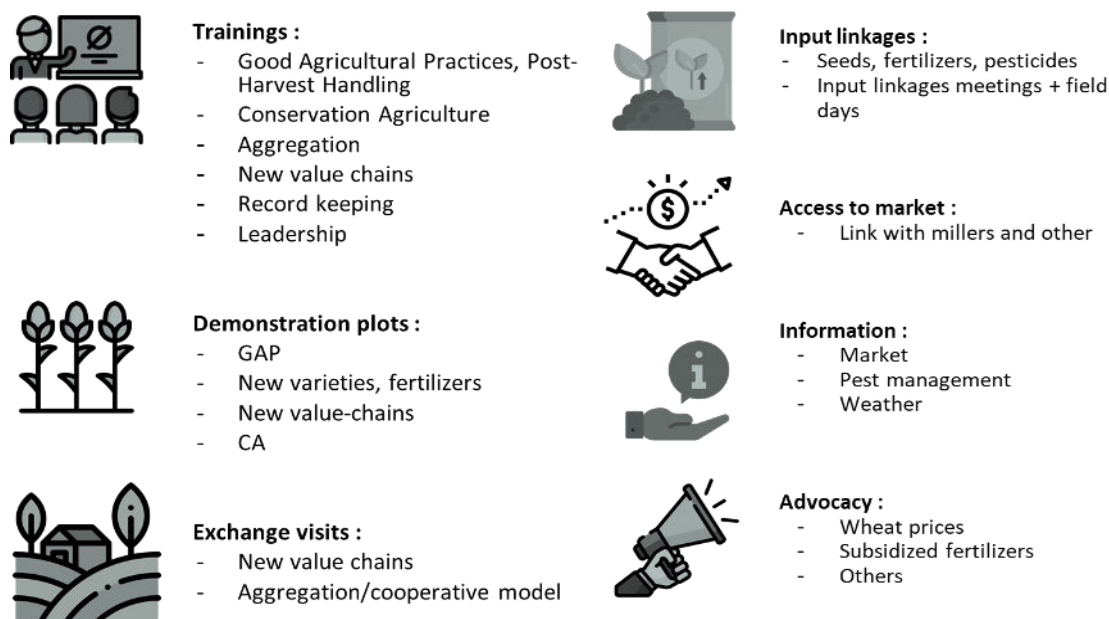
As part of the partnership with Fert, CGA's services are being developed primarily for small farms.

The below diagram presents the profiles and characteristics of the different member categories:

Small-scale farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Average farm size : 2 acres •Diversified farms: maize, beans, sometimes potatoes as main crops. Presence of gardening (tomato, peas, green beans) and arboriculture. •Women are the main actors •Few young people involved in the cereal sector •Mostly organized within groups (SHG, CBO, ...)
Medium and large-scale farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Diversified profiles •Main crops : wheat, barley, canola, sorghum •Most own their own farm machinery •Some offer mechanization services •Registered in CGA as individual members

3. The strategy of the Fert-CGA action

3.1 Diversified services to respond to farmers' needs



Most small-scale farmers only know about technico-economic services, while advocacy services are more known by medium and large-scale farmers.

3.2 A network of actors for last-mile delivery service to farmers

In order to develop a system of local services, the strategy of the action is based on a county coordinator, supported by Farmer Advisors (FA) and chapter leaders, and the mobilization of partners.

- **Chapter leaders at the interface between small, medium and large scale farmers**

CGA is structured into chapters at different levels: (1) county chapter, (2) sub-county chapter, (3) ward chapter. The role of chapter leaders is to represent their peers at local, regional and national levels. They meet to plan activities with the county coordinator or share information about their groups. They contribute in the implementation of services, in particular demonstration plots. They are also responsible for recruiting new members. Ward chapters are only composed of small-scale farmers, while in the county chapter meet small, medium and/or large scale farmers.

Some leaders are identified by the coordinators from proposition by the government's officers, others are elected directly by the groups.

- **Coordinators and Farmer Advisors (FA), technical advisors for small farmers**

In the field, CGA coordinators support producers and groups by relying on the FAs to provide part of the services (training, technical advice, etc.). These are identified by the government's officers or appointed within the groups by the members themselves on the basis of selection criteria decided with the farmers. A FA accompanies between one and ten groups in its area and offers them training independently of their collaboration with CGA. The FA works on a voluntary basis and is compensated by CGA with KES 700 per training. He/she regularly receives CGA training to strengthen his/her skills.

- **Individual follow-up for large farmers**

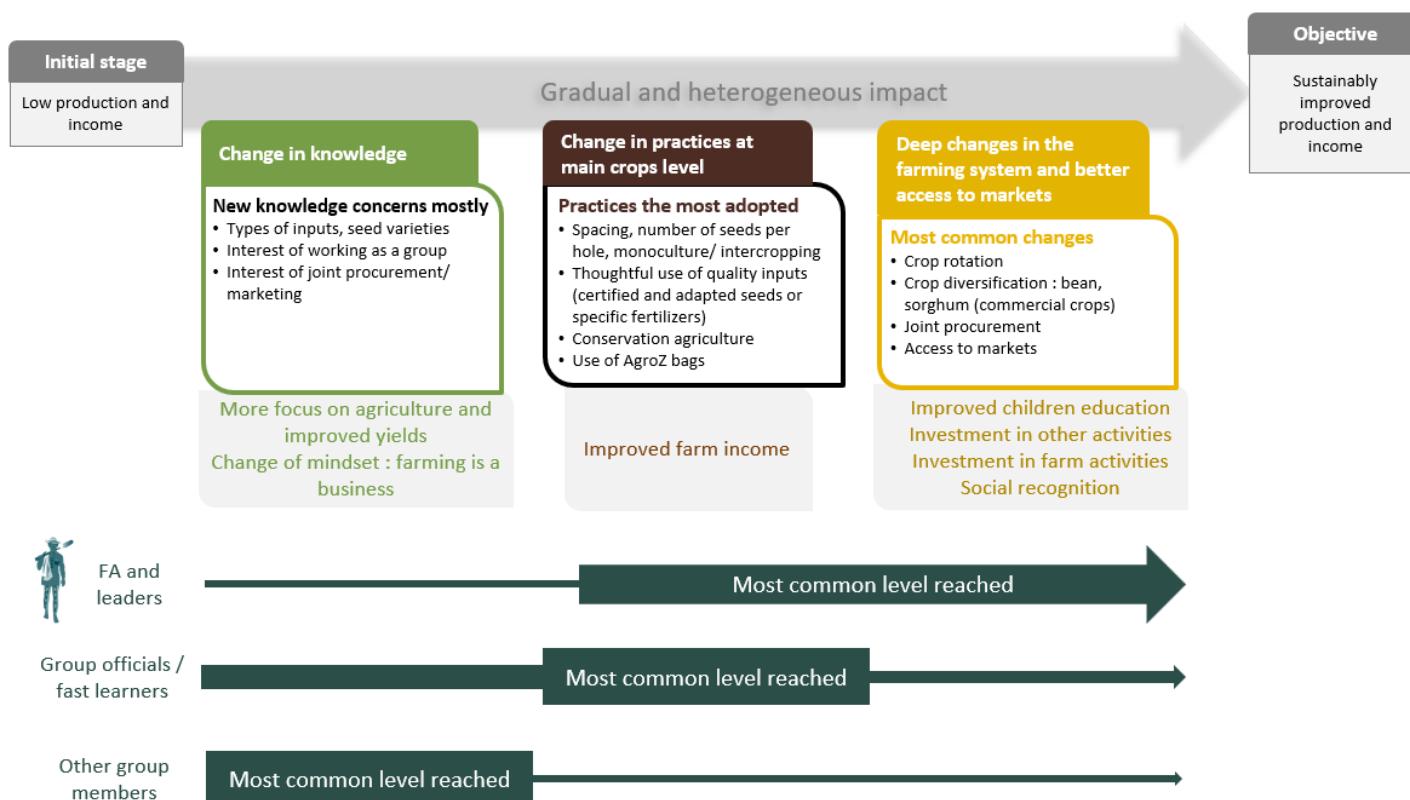
Medium and large-scale farmers are supported individually and directly by the county coordinator. Their interest in terms of services is centered around networking and advocacy.

4. Impact of the Fert-CGA action on small-scale farmers

4.1 Trajectories of change among small-scale farmers

Changes observed among the small-scale farmers supported by CGA are not homogeneous. Although, all the farmers have expressed an evolution in their farming knowledge, the translation into changes in practices is mostly observed with FA, chapter leaders and, in a lesser extent, group officials and/or “fast learners”.

The chart below illustrates the various trajectories of change observed among small-scale farmers.



4.2 All farmers gain knowledge

The vast majority of farmers who work with CGA have gained new knowledge.

Collaboration with CGA allows groups to foster activities, increase members' interactions, and meet members' needs. The new knowledge often leads to a change of mindset that encourages groups to focus on agriculture.

4.3 But an heterogeneous adoption of practices

• Improved practices more widespread among chapter leaders and FA

The transition from new acquired knowledge to real adoption on farms is not systematic: it is mostly observed among FA and chapters leaders and in a lesser extent group leading members.

• An irregular improvement in access to inputs

Through linkages, the strategy allows farmers to access a wider network: they can request a FA to contact the county coordinator or companies directly. During events such as field days, farmers have the opportunity to buy quality inputs and sometimes at a lower cost. On the other hand, joint procurement at group level remains limited due to the high cost of inputs and members' cashflow constraints.

• Group marketing still difficult to implement

Regarding marketing, despite CGA's connections with partners and sensitization about aggregation, all farmers surveyed market individually. Among the limiting factors, it is worth noting the lack of proximity of storage infrastructures or the difficulty of producing products that meet the quality requirements of buyers.

4.4 The special case of chapter leaders and FA

The chapters leaders and FA, as "direct beneficiaries" of CGA services, reflect a significant impact:

- **Easier adoption of new farming practices**

FA and chapter leaders show a sustainable increase in production and income, while most non-official members of the groups do not change their practices. Due to their leading position, they benefit from direct advice from the coordinator and the various partners.

- **Access to a larger network of stakeholders in the agricultural sector**

FA and chapter leaders are particularly exposed to CGA's partners. They are directly involved in certain activities (training, exchange visits, linkage meetings). The FA enrich their network, both with their peers and with various actors in the agricultural sector. This exposure makes it easier to access services and discover new organizations to collaborate with. Particularly mentioned in Nakuru, the FA are in direct contact with private companies thanks to CGA, which allows them to increase their income.

5. Impact of the Fert-CGA action on medium and large scale farmers

For medium and large farmers, in addition to access to knowledge and the adoption of new practices, the main impact of the action on these farmers is the improvement of their network. This exposure to other actors improves access and prices of inputs, and in some cases market access – CGA being a guarantee of trustworthiness for buyers.

Despite a small number of surveys, this study shows a strong heterogeneity within this category of farmers. There is a gap between the motivations of medium-scale farms and those of large farms to join CGA. Overall, large-scale farmers are more interested in advocacy services. Their main interest is in the marketing of wheat. Medium-scale farmers are more interested in linkages for access to inputs and markets.

Testimonial from a large-scale farmer:

"CGA brought us together, which is very important because we can now talk to the government."

6. FACTORS INFLUENCING IMPACT

The impact observed is influenced by a set of factors internal to the organization and the structuring of CGA but also external, coming from the environment around the action.

6.1 Internal factors

<p>The insufficient frequency of accompaniment by the field staff</p>	<p>The current organization of the action does not allow continuous proximity advisory given the number of supported groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FA and chapter leaders need more time and resources, it is almost impossible for them to train and regularly visit all the groups that are currently accompanied. - County coordinators have to respond to many simultaneous solicitations and duties, so they don't visit groups as often as the group would like or need
<p>Service delivery</p>	<p>Demonstration plots and <i>field days</i> contribute to a better adoption of practices: farmers who participate in these events have direct contact with local agricultural officers of the Ministry and private companies. Farmers appreciate these interactions that animate the territory and give them the feeling of being considered.</p> <p>The trainings are not always well assimilated, they are more akin to awareness, which does not alone enable the change of practices. In both counties, smallholder farmers are in constant demand for training and want it to be more frequent.</p> <p>There is little investment in demonstration plots.</p> <p>Advice is more focused on technical aspects and not enough on economic (cashflow issues, ...)</p>
<p>Understanding of CGA Structure and functioning</p>	<p>Laikipia county seems to have more committed and motivated chapter leaders. This can be explained both by the novelty of the action but also by the development strategy. In Nakuru, the establishment of chapters has been somehow hasty and set as an objective and many chapter leaders do not seem to understand their role. The absence of the chairman and vice-chairman of the county chapter hinders the motivation of other members. Core groups are unfamiliar with representation services, including chapter leaders. FA would like more clarification on CGA services for group members so that they understand how a FO works.</p> <p>At the global CGA level, farmers have access to services for free and without paying membership, almost only the CGA-Fert action tries to condition the delivery of services to groups paying their registration.</p>
<p>Group dynamics</p>	<p>Changes depend on group dynamics (alignments or conflicts). Leadership training has had some influence. Some CGA leaders, who are also officials of their group, report having a better ability to manage conflict.</p>
<p>Trust between actors</p>	<p>Expectations are high from farmers' groups towards county coordinators. One FA mentioned that the failure of a harvest undermined his credibility in the eyes of farmers.</p> <p>There is also a lack of trust among members towards buyers that strongly inhibits joint activities.</p> <p>Several interviewees highlighted CGA's unmet promises regarding market access.</p>

6.2 External factors

Climate	Climate change and the harsh drought affecting Kenya and especially Laikipia County, have led to a decline in production and therefore low cash flow. Agricultural activities are strongly influenced by increased insecurity and damage caused by wild animals. Farmers in vulnerable areas seem to be the most willing to adopt new practices. Large farms are at the forefront of conservation agriculture adoption. Their capital and the support they receive facilitate this adoption.
Access to land	Access to land, particularly for land lease prevents investment in some agricultural practices or crops that are long-term (pigeon pea, liming, ...). It is common for the owner not to want to renew a lease, especially when he realizes that it is possible to produce a lot (as a result of the new practices of the farmer).
The presence of other projects in the action regions	<p>The accompaniment and work of other organizations and even other projects within CGA promote or overshadow action, depending on their objectives and approach. Indeed, they work with the same groups, and the FA can stand for several projects. This makes it difficult to measure the specific impact of CGA-Fert intervention in this environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In Nakuru, the FTMA project, partly founded by input companies, promotes the entrepreneurship of FA (FSC). For this reason, FSCs focus their activities on the sale of products/services to the detriment of advice for groups. While this project enriches CGA's service offering, it also sometimes creates interferences with the approach brought with Fert. - In Laikipia, the agroecology pilot-action also implemented by CGA-Fert brings a new dimension to the service offer. In addition to diversifying it by providing services that take into account the entirety of the farm, the action strengthens CGA's presence and support for farmers.
Cost and access to inputs and services.	<p>High input costs and unavailability limit the adoption of practices. With drought, some seeds are very difficult to find.</p> <p>Groups would like to have access to subsidized soil testing services because they are too expensive individually. Many farmers would like to have access to mechanization services that are lacking in the territory as well as services to assist them in harvesting and pumping water.</p>
Availability of infrastructure and equipment	Among smallholder farmers, the lack of infrastructure such as storage equipment, irrigation and limited mechanization hinder opportunities for change in practices.
Access to information	<p>Regarding inputs, members want to be informed and advised on new developments.</p> <p>There is also a demand for information on markets</p>

In summary,

After 9 years of collaboration, what is the impact of Fert's action with CGA on the individual and collective trajectories of farmers in two counties?

A gap between leaders/FA and group members

The Fert-CGA intervention relies for a great part on leaders and FA. They benefit from trainings, direct advice and a high position in their community. Their farming system, practices and incomes show significant improvement. However, in general, few concrete changes are observed among members, the main one being the acquisition of new knowledge.

The strategy is sustainable if local accompaniment is strengthened

Structuration through chapters and FA facilitate the implementation of the action and services to farmers. These services help contribute in changes in knowledge for all respondents. Impact and changes could be greater if farmers could be accompanied more closely.

CGA's positioning, by wanting to reach as many farmers as possible, does not lead to clear results. Reducing the number of accompanied groups could be one of the solutions.

A strategy that stands out from other projects

The Fert-CGA action is distinguished by the development of technical and economic services taking into account the entire farm. Agroecology intervention tries to instil a real change of mindset at the same time as new practices among small-scale farmers.

CGA should further articulate its strategy to enable Fert to better support it

It seems that the collaboration with Fert has brought to CGA a new way of seeing itself as a FO. In particular, CGA wishes to seize the structuration to improve its commitment as a representative of the farmers. But it does not express itself clearly on what it wants to do and embody. An open discussion with CGA to think about the next step is necessary.

- Are CGA's perspectives compatible with Fert approach?
- What is Fert's strategy for its intervention in Kenya?
- What lessons can be drawn from this partnership for the future?

Summary of the final thesis presented by Camila Takhedmit

[Takhedmit, Camila, (2022). Impact study of the TransFert program in Kenya: what avenues for improvement for the support to farmer organizations by international solidarity organizations in the agricultural development sector? Final thesis, diploma in Sustainable Agricultural and Food Systems Engineering for the South, MOQUAS specialty, *Tropics and Mediterranean Pole of the Agro Institute*. 171p]

