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At VEDCO we believe in demonstrating to farmers how they can develop themselves as opposed to mere prescriptions.

FAQs about Sustainable agriculture

Does sustainable agriculture mean going back to what our grandparents did or rejecting appropriate technology?



Improving Livelihoods Through Sustainable Agriculture

The world has re-thought the need to protect and preserve the environment after many years of pollution.



PELUM Members visit a Sustainable Agriculture garden.

Sustainable Agriculture (SA) is a form of agriculture that promotes production alongside conservation. SA minimises inputs while optimising per unit output and promotes the use of locally available materials in farming. It builds on indigenous knowledge, is pro-people, looks at the product and all factors affecting the entire food production/value addition chain and includes food security, income and value addition.

The global community has realised the importance of SA and re-thought the need to protect and preserve the environment after many years of pollution. Consequently, several conferences, summits, conventions and declarations on the environment and its constituents have been convened, formulated and ratified. The UN Charter on nature, the Earth Summit, the Stockholm and Copenhagen declarations, the UNCCD, UNCBD, UNCCC, are a few examples of the tangible outputs from such multilateral arrangements. One notable common interest obtaining in all these agreements is the need to live in and or utilise the environment to meet the needs of the present population without compromising the necessities of future generations, and pursue sustainable development. Sustainability affects overall agricultural production, which must increase to meet the increasing food and fibre requirements as the world's human population expands to a projected 9.3 billion people by 2050.

Research conducted by PELUM Uganda on agricultural related policies that support sustainable agriculture reveals that, just like the understanding of Sustainable Agriculture, most of government's policies, plans, programs and strategies are not well harmonised and coordinated to be transformed into concrete action to foster the development of Sustainable Agriculture in Uganda as the best option to national food security, agribusiness and employment.

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Transforming Subsistence Farmers into Semi-Commercial Entities

VECO East Africa (Uganda Program) Transforming Subsistence Farmers into Semi-Commercial Entities through Promoting Access To and Utilization of Improved Technologies to Boost Production

Under the sustainable chain development program, ground nuts and maize have been identified as a key enterprise that would enable the organized family farmers in eastern and north eastern Uganda to improve on their income and food security through access to lucrative markets both locally and regionally. Production related constraints especially limited supply of marketable volumes to boost the supply end of the selected chains emerged as critical areas affecting market linkages, coupled by the prolonged droughts and poorer seeds accessed by farmers.

VECO in 2009 supplied trained oxen kits to the selected 6 farmer associations in Eastern and Northern to improve access to and utilization of improved drought power technologies and seeds to foster increased production of groundnuts, maize and other food staples grown Since 2008, VECO East Africa in partnership with Kumi district farmers Association started promoting marketing of groundnuts in the district. This program is being piloted in 4 sub counties, Ngora, Kobwin, Mukongoro and Atatur. We as farmers have been practicing groundnut growing from time memorial and we needed support in terms of accessing improved seed and improved technologies like ploughs and Oxen. In the past, the Teso region being a hub of groundnut growing was well known for using oxen for ploughing until the region was affected by cattle rustling from our neighbours; the Karamajong and disease outbreaks causing tremendous loss to the farmers.

VECO's intervention to support farmers with improved seed and technologies for easing ploughing was well received and timely. This year, my sub county, Ngora, has received 75 bags of improved groundnut seed and 5 pairs of oxen kits which were given to 10 farmer groups. This intervention is expected to boost production of groundnuts in my sub county and we are hoping for good rains and health.

Local Ox Plough

Advantages

It has a very strong beam; It is very heavy; Have strong frog; Passed over generation.

Disadvantages:

Has one point for adjustment; Has one hitching point; Only pulled by four heavy animals.

Improved Ox Plough (SAIMMCO)

Advantages

Has several points of adjustment for depth and width on the plough; Light weight and can be pulled by two oxen; Has several hitching points.



Local Ox Plough.



Improved Ox Plough.

Disadvantages:

Its beam is made of cast iron; When pulled with heavy bulls on a place with stamps the beam can bend.

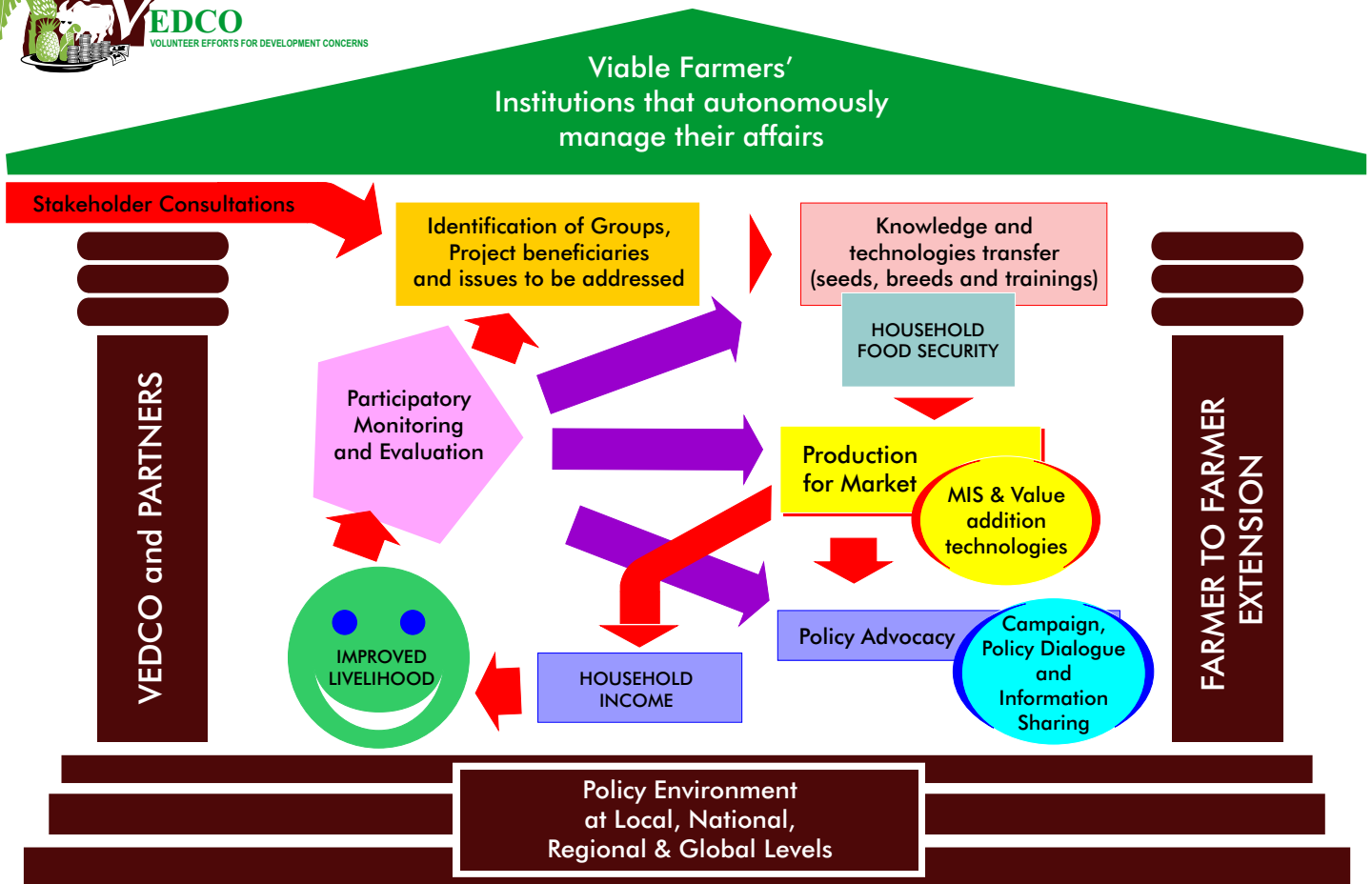
Under the input revolving scheme, we as farmers have agreed to payback in cash or kind worth the value of the inputs received so that other farmers within the sub county can also benefit as we move towards undertaking farming as a business.

Improving Livelihoods Through SA

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Furthermore, the government's commitment to promote Sustainable Agriculture is not reflected in the agricultural sector budgetary allocation. For instance, the government recognises the importance of sustainable Land Management but the Development Strategy and Investment Plan for Agriculture (DSIP), the government road map for agricultural development proposes allocating only 3.8% of the ideal DSIP budget to this area, while only 0.8% percent of current MTEF related budget is allocated to the same.

Therefore, in order to promote Sustainable Agriculture for improved livelihoods of Ugandans, there is need to harmonise perceptions and understanding of the concept by all sector players; formulate a Sustainable Agriculture specific policy or strengthen/harmonise the existing related policy; strengthen the implementation and monitoring of government policies, programs and plans that promote Sustainable Agriculture; and review/strengthen national legislation in support of sustainable agriculture. The civil society has to play its role as the watchdog for government as well as conduct more research on Sustainable Agriculture to inform their advocacy initiatives geared towards promoting Sustainable Agriculture. This makes the practice environmentally sound, socially just and easily adaptable by anyone.



VEDCO's Approach To Improving Livelihoods

At VEDCO we believe in demonstrating to farmers how they can develop themselves as opposed to mere prescriptions.

Though VEDCO's approaches to poverty among small holder farmers in Uganda change; the ideology that Agriculture has great potential to improve livelihoods has remained the same. One of such approaches that VEDCO has engaged in for the last 6 years is "The Sustainable Rural Livelihoods approach". (see diagram)

In this approach, VEDCO promotes policy environment at local, national, regional and Global level. Policy environment is key for the attainment of improved livelihoods.

Interventions by VEDCO and her partners in development on one side are together with Interventions of the farmer to farmer extension (provided by the farmers themselves) on the other side support each other in bits to achieve totality.

This approach represents the longtime vision of VEDCO.

VEDCO shall not be with these farmers forever but we are building strong farmer institutions to autonomously manage their affairs. At VEDCO we believe in demonstrating to farmers how they can develop themselves as opposed to mere prescriptions.

In this approach, what ultimately matters to VEDCO is that farmers attain household food security in quantity and quality, farm for money, be part of decision and policy making and be able to monitor and assess their own performance and performance of others.

The approach has a beginning but evolves in cycles one after the other, taking on new issues as problems are analyzed and a farmer smiles as change takes seat and poverty takes leave in his/ her household.

About VEDCO

Volunteer Efforts, for Development Concerns (VEDCO) a national Local Non Government Organization was found in 1986 in response to the war effects in Central Uganda. The organization has since steadily grown in terms of geographical coverage, resource envelope, staffing and outreach.

Today the organization has directly touched lives of 30,315 small holder farmers spread in the districts of Luweero, Wakiso, Mukono, Nakasongola, Nakaseke, Kamuli, Amuria, Lira, Apac, Moyo and Pader.

FAQs about Sustainable agriculture



Q Does sustainable agriculture employ a more modern approach to farming?

A Sustainable agriculture does not mean a return to either the low yields or poor farmers that characterized the past. Rather, sustainability builds on current agricultural achievements, adopting an approach that can maintain high yields and farm profits without undermining the resources on which agriculture depends. Making agriculture sustainable does not mean standing by watching pests devour crops. It means approaching pest control in a completely different way using high quality soil, crop rotation, and beneficial insects. We undervalue our scientists and agriculturalists if we accept today's productive but highly polluting agriculture as the best that this country can do. We need to set agriculture the challenge of developing a highly productive but environmentally sound agriculture and then give farmers and scientists the resources to meet that challenge.

Q Is sustainable agriculture scientific?

A Sustainable agriculture is firmly based in science. It uses knowledge of the interactions between crops, pests, and pest predators to avoid the need for costly technological fixes like pesticides and fertilizers. Such knowledge rests on research in a number of scientific disciplines. Rather than chemists developing pesticides, sustainable agriculture needs more soil scientists unlocking the mysteries of healthy soil. Rather than molecular biologists making crops tolerant to herbicides, sustainable agriculture needs more weed ecologists looking for new ways to cultivate and use crops to control weeds.

Q What are the three legs of sustainability?

A Imagine a 3-legged stool. What happens if one of the legs breaks or goes missing? The whole stool falls over. The 3-legged stool has become a metaphor for the need to consider the economic, environmental, and social impacts of agriculture. If our agricultural system has unacceptable impacts in any one of these spheres, it can't support producers and contribute to the community over the long term.

A sustainable agriculture must provide a fair and reasonably secure living for farm families; minimize harm to the natural environment; maintain basic natural resources such as healthy soil, clean water, and clean air; and should support viable rural communities and fair treatment of all people involved in the food system, from farm workers to consumers.

Q Does sustainable agriculture mean going back to what our grandparents did or rejecting appropriate technology?

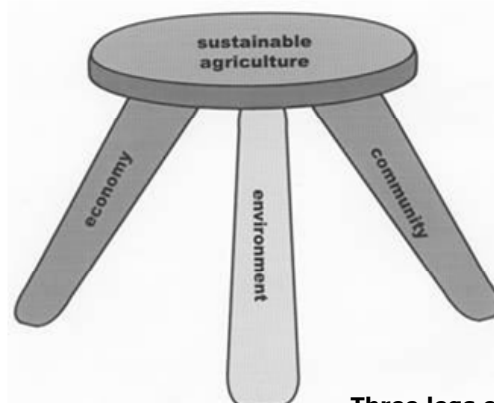
A Sustainable agriculture seeks to combine some of the wisdom of past practices, like crop rotation and green manure crops, with careful use of current technology, including equipment that leaves residue on the surface, organic pest-resistant crop varieties, and the vast array of information technologies now available

Q Does adoption of sustainable agriculture inevitably involve losing money?

A Sustainable agriculture can be as profitable in the short run as conventional or less sustainable alternatives.

Q How can I develop sustainable farming?

A Avoid use of chemicals: For instance you can plant beans and peas to give nutrients to land; use organic fertilizers, such as death plants, manure of livestock instead of chemical fertilizers. Use practices like -Crop rotation, fallowing, and mixed farming on your farms.



Three legs of Sustainability.

About PELUM Uganda

PELUM Uganda is a network of non governmental organizations in Uganda that have chosen to work together to improve the livelihoods of their partners in rural communities. PELUM Uganda builds the capacity of its members so that they are better able to provide relevant and quality services to partners in the community through participatory and gender-responsive training, research and networking. PELUM Uganda promotes food security, natural resources management and use of indigenous knowledge. The network also facilitates experimental learning through exposure visits, topical dialogue and debate at national and regional level. This is in a bid to enhance members' awareness on trends and factors influencing their environment.

Next Issue

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Under The Theme:

Enhancing Farmer Entrepreneurship in Uganda:
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