



Sustainable Food & Agriculture Systems



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IRD partners with vulnerable communities to strengthen their food security, nutrition, and economic resiliency. Our programs operate under a wide range of conditions, but all aim to improve the productivity and efficiency of food production, processing, and marketing systems. When possible, our food and agriculture programs also integrate nutrition, public health, sanitation, and water infrastructure, generating enduring results for communities worldwide.

IMPROVING FARM PRODUCTIVITY AND OFF-FARM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Using participatory farmer field school methodologies, IRD trains farmers in crop and livestock production systems. While the focus is on improving access to extension services, improved seed and inputs, and financing and markets, IRD also provides training in business development and creation of off-farm jobs. In Azerbaijan and Georgia, IRD used USDA Food for Progress grants to train and provide business start-up grants to over 10,000 farmers. The program combined crop and livestock extension with a business-oriented curricula and small grants programs for small to medium enterprise development. Similarly, our USAID-funded AVIPA program allows smallholder farmers to redeem vouchers at rural farm input stores for high-quality production inputs. AVIPA has reached hundreds of thousands of farmers and, as a result, crop production for both local consumption and markets has soared. The Gambia River Basin Cashew Value Chain Enhancement Project is supporting smallholder cashew farmers to form associations that increase access to technical extension and high-quality inputs, improve grading and quality standards, develop local processing businesses, and improve prices.

Another element of IRD's approach is to link research institutions with local government and the private sector in support of smallholder farmers. In Zimbabwe, IRD's USAID-funded REVALUE program brings Africa University, Cornell University, and the Ministry of Agriculture into a partnership to provide extension services to nearly 6,000 farmers on production of groundnuts, sugar beans, sesame, and paprika. REVALUE has helped establish contract mechanisms and sourcing networks between smallholder farmers, rural agro-dealers, national agro-input suppliers, export traders, and banks.

DEVELOPING NUTRITIONALLY FORTIFIED FOOD PRODUCTS

Beginning in Indonesia in 2006, IRD used USDA Food for Education grants to help local food processors develop nutritionally fortified food products for schoolchildren. The fortified noodles were provided to schoolchildren free of charge. Later they were also sold to the public at a very reasonable price, with part of the profit supporting school sanitation programs. This strategy allowed the manufacturer to build demand for the nutritionally superior products. IRD has extended this concept of working with local food processors to manufacture fortified foods to Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Liberia, and Cameroon.

Nutrition education and water sanitation and health (WASH) are important complementary components of IRD's Food for Education programs. In Cambodia and Liberia, IRD has established nutrition education and WASH behavior change communication classes. In Indonesia the

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snack noodle program was coupled to training of children to avoid infections by soil-transmitted parasites. In Cambodia, IRD's child nutrition improvement program links mothers who successfully nourish their children to mothers of malnourished children. The mothers provide peer-to-peer training on proper feeding techniques and encourage exclusive breastfeeding for at least the first six months.

FOOD SECURITY IN DIFFICULT REGIONS

IRD uses US Department of State grants to facilitate integration of refugees and returnees into host communities in conflict-affected regions by helping them establish livestock production, market gardens, and farms. With IRD support, communities develop sustainable, small-scale irrigation and WASH infrastructure, improve land and watershed management, and develop businesses that benefit host communities and provide livelihoods for refugees. In northeast Cameroon, IRD has worked with host communities to help pastoralist refugees from the Central African Republic establish communal farms. The farms have the dual benefit of increasing the year-round availability of food and improving food security for both host and refugee communities.

In Mozambique and Swaziland IRD uses grants from USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance to support programs in areas vulnerable to drought and flooding. These programs help communities improve water management and promote improved water infrastructure for human consumption and hygiene. In Swaziland, IRD encourages farmers to adopt conservation agriculture

techniques, which has led to significant increases in production and income for participating households. IRD also helps women establish market gardens around water-points in towns, thereby improving supplies of nutritious food in local markets while improving women's incomes.

In Mozambique, we have encouraged production of high-value horticulture and field crops in flood recession areas so successfully that these remote districts are now attracting market traders.

LIVELIHOODS SUPPORT FOR WOMEN

With PEPFAR funding, IRD developed an innovative livelihoods support program for women living with HIV/AIDS. Women First! helps Mozambican women from families affected by HIV/AIDS form support groups, trains them in door-to-door retail, and links them to wholesalers in market towns. The women sell small daily necessities typically found in roadside shops. At the same time, they provide education on HIV/AIDS, nutrition, and other health topics. Recently, IRD has begun to link the women's groups to agro-input suppliers—facilitating access to seeds and inputs to grow vegetable and fruit crops to supplement household income and diversify diets. In Ethiopia, IRD is providing women affected by HIV/AIDS in urban and peri-urban areas to form market garden businesses, where they produce fruits and vegetables for sale and home consumption.

LOOKING AHEAD

With the support and collaboration of our donors and partners, IRD will continue to alleviate hunger and improve nutrition among vulnerable populations, provide training and equipment to farmers and businesses, and generate local employment opportunities. Our programs will also continue to strengthen entrepreneurial capacity and farm-to-market linkages for improved delivery of value-added products.

IRD is a nonprofit humanitarian, stabilization, and development organization. Our mission is to reduce the suffering of the world's most vulnerable groups and provide the tools and resources needed to increase their self-sufficiency.