



## Jobs and social stability for the youth of Niger

During the first years, the network's activities benefited a lot from Oxfam Novib's main programme *Accompagnement à la Promotion de l'Entrepreneuriat Agricole* (APEA). Led by a consortium of farmer organisations, APEA created a vibrant dynamic between the farmer organisations and with other stakeholders in the agriculture sector. They all really enjoyed the multi-stakeholder approach and the collaboration around common goals. In the same spirit AgriProFocus linked to the other Dutch members and their

partners in Niger. SNV and Agriterra piloted support to farmer organisations. WUR CDI conducted value-chain action research on onions, an important product in the regional market. The 2010 research paper *Peeling the Onion* inspired the federations of onion producers to undertake collective action such as improving storage and onion seed quality.

In 2012, the Niger network organised the first *Semaine de l'Entrepreneuriat Agricole* (SEMEA) which attracted

10,000 visitors and became an annual event. From 2013, the network went through a few years where funding for its activities was limited. The hosting role passed to Partners for Innovation, while Rakiatou Gazibo remained coordinator. "It was difficult, but we were able to rely on the commitment of local members. And in due course we gained the trust of the regional Dutch embassy in Mali. They asked us to co-organise the Dutch trade mission to Niger in 2016 and also to monitor the business deals made in the country."

The Niger network started in 2009 and has seen its ups and downs in the past 11 years. The 70 organisations that attended the kick-start workshop identified the following hot issues: strengthening farmer organisations, value chain development, market access, food sovereignty, access to finance and policy engagement. Oxfam Novib took on the lead of the network and appointed Rakiatou Gazibo as coordinator. Since then, AgriProFocus has organised many workshops related to the issues that were identified, facilitating collaboration, co-creation and co-funding.

**"WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO RELY ON THE COMMITMENT OF LOCAL ORGANISATIONS AND THE TRUST OF THE DUTCH EMBASSY"**

– Rakiatou Gazibo, AgriProFocus Niger coordinator

### Dutch Sahel policy an upturn

Since 2016, AgriProFocus has co-organised the yearly *Foire sur le Financement de l'Agriculture au Niger* (Finagri Niger). The Finagri was new and transformative as it engaged bankers and farmers in a business dialogue, and has now been endorsed by the

high commissioner of *Nigériens nourissent Nigériens* (3N) and the FISAN, the government mechanism for agri-food sector finance.

In 2017, things took a positive turn when the Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Coopera-

tion, Sigrid Kaag, introduced a new Dutch policy for the Sahel region. The presence of AgriProFocus in Niger became an asset for her Ministry, who requested AgriProFocus to co-organise workshops to identify opportunities for promoting entrepreneurship and private-sector development in value chains. The Niger team facilitated a fact-finding mission for the Ministry and welcomed the Minister at a lunch meeting with female entrepreneurs. Another assignment was coordinated with AgriProFocus teams from Benin and Mali, namely the organisation of a regional SME trade mission to the *Salon International de l'Agriculture et des Ressources Animales d'Abidjan*, the SARA expo in Cote d'Ivoire.

### Combining business with fun

A domestic highlight in 2018 was the campaign *Je mange local et toi?* which promoted local food consumption through pop-up markets, with 60 exhibitors showcasing food from Niger.

The pop-up markets drew 350 visitors, including several national ministers and the high commissioner for the 3N initiative. Combining business with fun, a competition for best food item was run, and first prize was shared between two female entrepreneurs. The most important result of this campaign is the trajectory for certifying local food items, an innovation in Niger. AgriProFocus and the high commissioner of the 3N initiative jointly launched the SME certification guide at the *Salon de l'Agriculture, de l'Hydraulique, de l'Environnement et de l'Elevage du Niger*, the SAHEL-Niger 2020 expo.

Meanwhile, AgriProFocus in Niger is now participating in a new flagship programme *Les Jeunes Entrepreneurs et s'Emploient au Niger* (JEEN) with SNV, Oxfam Novib, Government and UNCDF. The aim of JEEN is to improve the entrepreneurship, employability and economic opportunities of 3,750 young people in the Tahoua and Zinder

regions. The JEEN Zinder team manager Ali Tayabou and business finance expert Malam Abdou Nahiou are both familiar with AgriProFocus. Malam: "I worked in microfinance before. The meetings and fairs that this network organises have benefitted our customers and partners a lot! Also, I personally discovered the diversity of our agri-food sector." Ali adds: "AgriProFocus and its members have contributed content to the studies on youth employment, and have also been active and constructive in the exchanges on social media and online platform created for JEEN. They have already helped us connect to key players in the Zinder region." ♦

### THE CAMPAIGN *JE MANGE LOCAL ET TOI?* PROMOTES LOCAL FOOD CONSUMPTION THROUGH POP-UP MARKETS



NETWORK LAUNCH

ACTIVE DUTCH MEMBERS

(INTER)NATIONAL PARTNERS

TOP NETWORK THEMES

130 NETWORK ACTIVITIES

AGRI-PROFESSIONALS REGISTERED ONLINE

2009 (network host: Oxfam Novib and later Partners for Innovation)

Agriterra, Both Ends, ETC, ILEIA, Oxfam Novib, Partners for Innovation, RVO, SNV, WUR and the NL Embassy

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Agri-finance, Agri-business clusters, Entrepreneurship, Gender and Local products and markets

with an outreach of 36,800 participants

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