In West Africa, P4P is working closely with partners to develop the capacity of smallholder farmers to produce a protein- and nutrient-rich crop called niébé (cowpeas/black-eyed peas). Through training as well as the provision of equipment and improved seeds, P4P has helped smallholders engage in collective sales and access new markets, opening up opportunities for farmers—especially women—across the region.

Niébé is a variety of cowpea grown by many smallholder farmers, primarily women, throughout West Africa. The drought-resistant bean thrives even in the dry, arid soils of the Sahel and neighboring countries and improves soil quality by fixing nutrients. The crop is also highly nutritious, acting as a common source of protein. Because niébé is often farmed and controlled by women, it provides them with an entry point to earn income within the agricultural sector, while simultaneously improving nutrition and resilience.

Despite the benefits niébé offers, a number of factors have made local purchases of the bean difficult. In Liberia, for example, production has been kept at subsistence levels. “Farmers are not used to growing beans as an independent crop,” says James Legg, P4P country coordinator in Liberia. In Mali, niébé is usually grown alongside other crops in small quantities, keeping production at subsistence levels. Elsewhere in the region, high-quality seeds can be expensive, and acquiring enough land to grow large quantities can be difficult for women, who sometimes struggle to access land. Niébé is also difficult to store properly. Without proper preservation techniques, the bean is prone to infestation, which has deterred many farmers from growing it for sale.

Improving niébé production
In order to help farmers in the region to increase production levels and improve crop quality, P4P and partners provide support to smallholders that reflects production conditions in the country. This support includes training, agricultural inputs and tools specially designed for niébé. In Mali, for example, P4P-supported farmers’ organizations are equipped with triple bags (PICS) specifically designed to extend its shelf life. The benefits of these bags, combined with proper storage techniques, have been clear to many farmers’ organizations, allowing them to aggregate and sell larger quantities when prices are high. The bags were so successful that one farmer’s organization, the Sabati Women’s Association, in Zantiebougou, Mali, decided to buy them directly from the supplier. “The

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women saw how well they worked and wanted to buy the bags themselves,” says P4P regional coordinator Isabelle Mballa.

Learning and innovation has been another important component to assisting smallholders to grow niébé as a commercial crop. In Ghana, WFP partner, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), has worked to establish crop demonstration plots and Farmer Field Schools for each of the 26 P4P farmers’ organizations in the region. These one-acre plots have allowed ADRA and Ghana’s Crops Research Institute (CRI) to identify high-yielding niébé seed varieties to be used as “foundation” seed. WFP plans to distribute these seeds to the 26 organizations—which have a membership of 48 percent women—and will also continue to work closely with government partners to train farmers in best practices.

**Empowering women and improving nutrition**

Across West Africa, more farmers’ organizations are now producing higher quantities of niébé, in some cases allowing for purchases by WFP and other buyers. Five out of seven large P4P-supported farmers’ unions in Burkina Faso are now growing the crop, as are all participating farmers’ organizations in Mali. In Burkina Faso, WFP is planning to purchase 920 metric tons (mt) of niébé through forward purchasing facilities. Farmers’ organizations in the country have also sold niébé to markets beyond WFP.

In Burkina Faso, 96% of participants in cowpea sales to WFP are women. Similarly, among farmers’ organizations now producing niébé in Liberia and Mali, the members are primarily women. This means that much of the money earned goes directly into women’s hands, giving them a stronger voice and raising their status in their households and communities. P4P and its partners are also raising awareness for the added benefits of women controlling their own land. Preliminary monitoring data shows that women’s access to inputs and land has improved in some countries during the course of the pilot.

“Well by giving women the necessary means and specific training to increase production, they were able to increase their revenue and gained autonomy,” Yves Aklamavo P4P country coordinator in Burkina Faso, says.

Thanks to money earned through cowpea sales, Azeta Sawadogo, from Pella, in northern Burkina Faso, was able to buy a bicycle. This allows her to balance the time between farming and caring for her family. Because the bicycle saves both time and labour, she is now able to go to markets to sell cowpeas and spices, and can quickly return home from working in the fields to prepare meals for her family. Communities are also increasingly taking advantage of the legume’s nutritional benefits. In Liberia, niébé will be used in WFP’s school meals programme. In Mali, efforts are also being undertaken to improve nutrition by educating women about the benefits of consuming the crop.

**Moving forward**

Although great strides have been made to make niébé a viable commercial crop in West Africa, procurement is still limited due to high prices and low production capacities. In Liberia, niébé is still very expensive, and in Ghana it is too costly for WFP to procure from local smallholders. To address some of these challenges, work is ongoing to implement the infrastructure necessary to increase production and improve market access. A recent networking meeting in Liberia brought together actors with a stake in the agricultural sector to identify opportunities and possible synergies among producers and buyers. However, it may take three to four years before farmers produce enough to sell to these markets. In Burkina Faso, WFP plans to construct two 50 mt storage facilities on a cost-sharing basis to improve post-harvest handling, enabling farmers’ organizations to aggregate niébé and sell it collectively.

Other commodities in West African countries have similar benefits. One example is pigeon peas, which are widely purchased and consumed in Sierra Leone. Because of their nutritional benefits, these peas have already been incorporated into WFP’s school feeding programme. After a successful first purchase of 10 mt in 2013, WFP plans to purchase 60 mt of pigeon peas for school meals in 2014.

*Story by Eliza Warren-Shriner, WFP, West Africa.*
P4P Procurement Update

Preliminary procurement figures from the P4P pilot treatment period (September 2008 – December 2013) are now available, showing that WFP has contracted over 430,000 metric tons (mt) of commodities at a value exceeding US$ 167 million. Smallholders have also been successfully connected to sustainable markets, having sold over 200,000 mt of commodities to markets beyond WFP.

WFP procurement

Despite challenges, WFP has successfully increased its contracted quantity using P4P modalities throughout the pilot treatment period. From the beginning of the pilot in September 2008, until its end in December 2013, WFP has issued contracts for 431,542 metric tons (mt) of commodities at a value exceeding US$ 167 million. Of this, 287,041 mt has so far been delivered, putting US$ 117 million more directly into the pockets of smallholder farmers. Some 113,729 mt was contracted in 2013. Deliveries are currently ongoing, with 39% of the quantities contracted in 2013 delivered to date. Purchases through P4P modalities account for 12% of WFP’s local and regional purchases across the 20 pilot countries. This exceeds the 10% minimum target set at the beginning of the pilot.

Markets beyond WFP

A key P4P objective is to develop smallholders’ capacities, to support their engagement with formal markets beyond WFP on a sustainable basis. By providing them with an assured market for their surplus, WFP’s role is to catalyse and incentivize improvements in smallholder agricultural and business practices. To date, P4P-supported smallholders have sold some 200,000 mt of commodities to markets beyond WFP, at a value of at least US$ 50 million. Data collection on sales to other markets is ongoing.

WHERE have we contracted: *

73% in Eastern and Southern Africa
15% in Central America
10% in West Africa
2% in Asia

WHO have we contracted with: *

65% farmers’ organizations (all pilot countries)
22% commodity exchanges (Ethiopia, Malawi, Zambia)
6% small and medium traders and agents such as agro-dealers (Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Zambia)
3% the National Food Reserve Agency (Tanzania)
2% warehouse receipt systems (Uganda and Tanzania)
2% processors (Afghanistan, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Zambia)

HOW have these purchases been contracted: *

48% competitive processes
26% direct contracts
21% forward delivery contracts
5% processed commodities

*Percentage is calculated based on the total amount of commodities that has been contracted by WFP through P4P modalities.

Defaults

Of the 431,542 mt contracted throughout the pilot period, 66% has currently been delivered, with 76,586 mt confirmed as defaulted and the remainder under delivery. Four major categories of defaults have emerged: factors related to the local environment, such as climatic conditions and volatility of market price; factors related to suppliers’ capacity, such as side selling, miscalculation of marketing costs and insufficient access to credit; factors related to crop quality, such as high moisture levels or damaged grains; and factors related to WFP’s procurement and logistics processes, such as delays in arranging transport, signing contracts or supplying bags. Thanks in part to efforts in capacity development by P4P and partners, defaults related to quality have reduced considerably since the beginning of the pilot. They were highest in 2010, accounting for 24% of total defaults, and decreased to 6% in 2012. The reasons for defaults on WFP contracts with P4P-supported farmers are as follows (% of total confirmed defaults):

- 63% related to suppliers’ capacity (some 40% of which was due to side selling)
- 17% related to the local environment
- 16% related to crop quality
- 4% related to WFP’s procurement and logistics process

Commodities procured

Though maize still accounts for 72% of all WFP contracts procured through P4P modalities, commodities have become increasingly diversified since the start of the pilot. Now purchases increasingly include pulses, such as beans, cowpeas and pigeon peas; other cereals, such as wheat, sorghum and millet; as well as processed commodities such as fortified maize meal, high energy biscuits and cassava flour. P4P has promoted WFP’s efforts to procure pulses, which account for 12% of total contracts with P4P-supported farmers. This is a component of P4P’s objective to promote the inclusion of women farmers, as pulses are often grown by women in traditional settings.

P4P has supported the development of local processing capacity to produce fortified and blended foods in countries where processors have the potential to become market competitive. For example, P4P has done this by developing local capacity to process high energy biscuits, supplementary feeding products and fortified milled flour, linking the processors to smallholder farmers who supply the staple commodities.

Final P4P pilot figures are currently being reconciled. A final report including full delivery information will be available in the third quarter of 2014.
Call for a post-pilot phase in Latin America

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) works with P4P in Latin America, providing technical cooperation, innovation and specialized knowledge to improve smallholder agriculture. In this blog, Miguel Garcia, Head of Agribusiness and Commercialization at IICA, shares his hopes for the future scale-up of P4P in the region.

IICA was founded in 1942, with a commitment to making agriculture more productive, inclusive and sustainable, improving the lives of rural dwellers in the Americas. We work with P4P under an umbrella collaboration on a regional and national level in Latin America, coupling our capacity development work with WFP’s purchasing power to provide smallholders with an incentive to improve their production.

A post-pilot phase for sustainable agri-foods systems

Through my role as a member of the P4P Technical Review Panel (TRP), I have seen the progress made by P4P. The pilot project has successfully increased the agricultural potential of smallholder farmers not only in Latin America, but around the world. However, as the pilot treatment period comes to a close, it is vital that we make use of the learning gained through the pilot to look to the future. I believe that the specific context of Latin America requires a continuation and scale up of P4P activities, in order to help develop sustainable agri-foods systems that offer alternatives to smallholder farmers.

A post-pilot phase is required to continue facilitating peace and development, environmental stability and food security. Persistent income and equality gaps have led to the prevalence of poverty and malnourishment across Latin America, primarily affecting smallholder farmers. These smallholders are also subjected to the pressure of drug dealers and human traffickers, creating increased tension for their lives and livelihoods. Because peace and development are linked to economic stability, continued support for these at-risk populations is a necessity in order to foster the continued growth of the region and prevent potential conflict.

This scaling up of P4P practices would also facilitate the promotion of farming techniques such as zero tillage as well as the conservation of biodiversity and genetic resources, in order to enable smallholders to produce better yields while preserving our natural resources. If we continue empowering smallholders to produce larger quantities of high quality crops, the high agricultural potential of the Americas can become an important contributor to worldwide food security as food needs steadily increase.

Moving forward after P4P

Further efforts to enable farmers to add value to their crops will pave the way for the creation of quality markets in which smallholders can earn higher profits. In order to accomplish this, smallholders require continued support to prevent losses through capacity development such as training on post-harvest handling and links to resources for the storage and processing of crops. It is imperative not only that quality markets be created, but that they be transparent and efficient, and that we facilitate the linkages between these markets and the farmers that we support.

As we move forward with the post-pilot phase, it is crucial that our endeavours be based upon regional, national and local culture, recognizing that each context has unique challenges, strengths and needs. Plus, a long-term regional agenda is essential for smallholder-friendly practices to be successfully and sustainably fostered in Latin America. In order for our work to transcend political cycles, it must continue for at least 15 years.

Miguel Garcia recently presented his experience and vision at P4P’s fifth Annual Consultation in Rome, Italy. Download his presentation and watch his presentation starting from 01:30:41 in this video.

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Ownership key to engaging smallholders

On a national level, we must continue working with governments to ensure that the political environment is conducive for smallholders. The post-pilot phase must be owned by the national government itself, making it part of poverty reduction and social welfare programmes in order to enable social integration. This ownership will allow the post-pilot to take full advantage of the many mechanisms already in place, such as those which work with animal and plant health.

The scaling up of smallholder support requires not only government ownership, but also the empowerment of smallholders, allowing the farmers and their organizations to appropriate the post-pilot programming as necessary for their needs, and ensuring that they recognize it as their own. Enabling this ownership by both parties is necessary for the creation of a long-term, sustainable framework with which to support smallholder farmers, and in order to create sustainable agri-food systems which will ultimately contribute to environmental sustainability and global food security.

Blog post by Miguel Garcia, Head of Agribusiness and Commercialization, IICA.

(Note: These views are the author’s and do not necessarily reflect those of WFP.)

Read more:
A previously published blog by Miguel Garcia:
A recipe for success...

Spotlight on P4P in Tanzania

In Tanzania, P4P-supported Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs) have been successfully linked to sustainable markets such as the National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA). Although SACCOs have sold over 5,000 metric tons of quality crops to markets beyond WFP, challenges remain to further encourage buyers to purchase from smallholders. Read the P4P in Tanzania fact sheet to learn more.

In Tanzania, P4P activities cover 14 districts in 10 regions, and reach nearly 19,000 smallholder farmers — 41 percent of whom are women. In order to reach farmers, WFP engages with Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs), which provide credit and savings accounts to registered smallholders. As of December 2013, WFP supported 28 SACCOs. In order to improve collective marketing and reduce post-harvest losses, WFP has engaged in capacity development, as well as investments to rehabilitate storage facilities, linking them to an emerging warehouse receipt system (WRS). Between 2009 and 2013, WFP signed contracts with 24 of the 28 P4P-supported SACCOs for more than 12,500 mt of maize and pulses valued at US$ 4.8 million. An agreement between WFP and Tanzania’s National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA) has now provided smallholder farmers from 17 P4P-supported farmers’ organizations (FOs) with a potentially sustainable market for their crops.

Click here to read the 2-pager on P4P in Tanzania.
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P4P NEWS

Women farmers key to zero hunger
Click here to read a blog by Elisabeth Rasmusson, Assistant Executive Director for partnership and governance services at WFP. This blog refers to P4P when discussing WFP’s role in empowering women and the potential impact this work can have on world hunger.

P4P Annual Consultation Report
Click here to read the full report from P4P’s fifth Annual Consultation held this January in Rome.

Empowering women to eliminate hunger in Malawi
Click here to read an article from the Ottawa Citizen on WFP’s work in Malawi, including P4P and school feeding. The article highlights the important role that women smallholder farmers play in eliminating hunger.

P4P lectures at Texas A&M University
Click here to watch P4P global coordinator Ken Davies speak about P4P’s work at the Conflict and Development lecture series at Texas A&M University.