



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/stronger-farmer-supplier-networks-build-better-opportunities-women-kenya>

Stronger Farmer-to-Supplier Networks Build Better Opportunities for Women in Kenya



David Snyder/ICRW

Members of the Moubita Matendo Women's Group buy farm inputs like seed and minerals from Peter Joseph Alukutsa (right), owner of the FAFES Agro-dealership near Kisumu, Kenya. By saving money directly into Alukutsa's business account, the group has money

A Feed the Future project in Kenya is working to address the production constraints and underlying gender inequalities women farmers face both on the farm and in their households.

Launched in two western Kenyan counties in 2012, the project is implemented by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and strives to provide women farmers with the knowledge, decision-making and leadership skills, agricultural inputs and technology to farm more effectively, ultimately increasing local food security.

ICRW and partner agency AGMARK, a Kenya-based nonprofit that specializes in helping smallholder farmers access information on better agricultural practices and farm inputs like seeds and fertilizers, joined efforts to train 24 agro-dealers to use their shops as information and service hubs for men and women farmers. The IGE-Tech project also collaborated with local and global private sector companies that sell agricultural inputs to agro-dealers, including Panna Seed Company, DuPont Pioneer, Syngenta and Kenya Seed, in order to better link small-scale farmers to the agricultural value chain.

Strengthening the links between agribusinesses and smallholder farmers has proved valuable at many levels. The companies built agro-dealers' capacity to inform and train their own customers by working with them individually, rather than through an intermediary like a village agent. By working with agro-dealers directly, these companies received consumer feedback on their products more quickly. For instance, agro-dealers who heard directly from the farmers could report complaints like poor seed germination to the companies immediately so that they could respond proactively.

The closer interaction with input supply companies also benefited the agro-dealers in many ways, most concretely in pricing. The agro-dealers were able to save on transportation costs, which can be as high as 30-40 percent of a product's costs, because they could procure their inventory directly from the input supply companies rather than wholesalers. The agro-dealers were then able to pass these savings on to smallholder farmers by reducing their pricing.

The input supply companies also worked directly with farmers by offering trainings, goods and services, like free seeds and technical information. The companies also assisted farmers in identifying marketing channels and supporting the establishment of project demonstration plots and field days to showcase new agricultural products and technologies. These

activities helped companies build relationships with the direct end-users of their products.

By facilitating better trust and communication across Kenya's agricultural value chain, Feed the Future and ICRW are supporting win-win solutions for both the private sector and vulnerable farming communities. Results thus far from the project include higher sales, wider market penetration for agricultural products and better pricing for consumers. Demo plots and field days are also important venues for women farmers to connect directly with suppliers on strategies for improved production, as women's access to better agricultural technologies is a critical consideration for improved food security.