

External Impact Assessment VECO DRC V1.0

December 2016



Report by NewForesight Consultancy, commissioned by VECO

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Disclaimer: this publication represents the views of the authors in their independent capacity as project impact assessors. In coming to our assessment of the pilot interventions, impact on various levels, structural change agenda and lessons learned, the authors have based themselves on all information which was available at the time of writing.

In assessing impacts, and the degree to which these can be attributed to VECO's activities, we have relied on both quantitative as well as qualitative information obtained through sources such as stakeholder interviews, farmer organization representatives, community leaders, partner organizations, and policy level actors. Insights on the farmer-level situation have been derived from the farmer survey conducted by VECO in 2016. Where data is uncertain, or where lack of data has made it necessary to rely on proxy indicators to draw conclusions, we have highlighted this. Insights and conclusions have been cross-referenced with VECO DRC.

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1. Executive summary

Based on the findings in this report, we have created an overview of the topics analyzed and evaluated. The outcome of the evaluation is shown below. We use the same color coding throughout the report to present the main findings per section.

Legend: Fully achieved Partially achieved Not achieved N/A

DRC: SCA Rice and Ruzizi Pilot			
Pilot Intervention	Effectiveness	P1: Strengthen capacity to become credible suppliers	
		P2: Organize leaders of cooperatives	
		P3: Access to credit	
		P4: Marketing strategy & negotiation training	
		P5: Proper governance	
		P6: Market organization	
		P7: Strengthen cooperatives for focused advocacy	
		P8: Sustainable increase in rice production	
		P9: Sustainable agricultural practices	
			Relevance of activities (farmer-level)
Structural Change Agenda		SCA1: The rice sector is better organized and more inclusive	
		SCA2: Producers are organized in a specialized and efficient manner to better respond to market requirements, and are united in provincial and national superstructures for focused advocacy	
		SCA3: National policies are more favorable to domestic rice production	

a. DGD indicators

	Indicator	Target	2016
1. Number of market chains (pilot chains) in which family farmers (m/f) foresee in their livelihood in a more sustainable way (SSD – IMM)	Increasing income	Average gross income is USD 300-822 (depending on the FO)	Met (income – avg. Usd 727 – and margins have increased)
	Strengthen position in the chain	-	Partially met (farmers report benefits from FO negotiations; limited org. improvement, and lack of trust).
	Increased resilience	-	Partially met (less rice dependency, only moderate diversification)
	More sustainable use of natural resources	No sustainability initiatives supplied by FO; low concern for environment.	Partially met (some improvements, specifically on resource management, much room for improvement)
	Improved food security		Not measured as part of this assessment
2. The quantity of marketed rice from smallholder farmers (m/f) in local markets is increased with at least 200% (SSD)	Quantity of rice marketed from smallholder farmers	500T South Tivu: 731T North Kivu / Beni: 198T	Partially achieved (data for 2015) (South Kivu: 1298T rice marketed, 178% increase. North Kivu: 803T rice marketed, 405% increase. No data available for other regions).
3. Number of companies ... [not relevant – IMM]	N/A	N/A	N/A
4. Share (in %) of family farmers (m/f) that is organized in economical farmers' organizations to collectively market their (SSD – IMM)	Small-scale farmers who sell their products together through the economical farmers' organization (as fraction of the total number of small-scale farmers in these districts)	Average of 0 to 20%. A few areas up to 70-85%.	Met (clear improvement versus baseline, although large interregional variations remain)
5. Number of new and improved institutional environmental factors that stimulate the inclusion of family farmers (m/f) (SSD – IMM) at the level of: 1/ government: by laws and policy texts 2/ service providers: public and private service provision (BDS)	New, adapted or improved policies, laws or regulations	N/A	Partially met (data for 2015) (agriculture a stated government priority for 2016 fiscal year. However, as a result of political crisis VECO has proven largely unable to influence national policies (e.g. tax reductions)).
	New, adapted or improved services provided by the government and private players	Some credit sources available to FOs	Partially met (data for 2015) (limited progress on infra and road rehabilitation; several ongoing processes to facilitate fertilizer import and reduce administrative procedures).

b. Summary of conclusions

Pilot intervention:

From 2013-2016, the VECO intervention has helped increase both the total quantity of rice sold, and farmer (absolute and marginal) income in the Ruzizi plain. The reasons for this improvement are diverse; VECO has helped mediate to establish supply contracts between Bralima and ADPA, and has helped cooperatives gain market access. Most importantly, there has been an increase in the margin of profit for beneficiaries. This has been aided by improvements in post-harvest produce management, common storage strategies, facilitating bundled purchase of inputs by reducing costs of production, as well as the shift towards selling white rice instead of paddy.

The intervention has also demonstrated that yield gains are achievable through the introduction of best practices or new tools at different levels. At the farm level, this has occurred through training in *Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM)* and *System of Rice Intensification (SRI)* approaches (which in demonstrations raised yields up to 4.5t/ha and 7.4t/ha, respectively), and by paying greater attention to the agricultural calendar. Improvements in quality have also taken place at the processing level, through the introduction of rice hulling machines and modern dryer. This has helped FO members meet the quality and quantity criteria of the domestic rice market in the majority of cases.

As a result of VECO support and mediation between cooperatives and micro financial institutions, farmer organizations now also have more access to credit at more attractive average interest rates. However, the success in this area has been chequered. While ADPA received credit to invest in rice businesses, this intervention has been less successful for COOPABA—whose members had the lowest average income to begin with—and it remains hard for individual farmers to receive credit.

The successful improvement of the business case and appeal of cultivating rice is explicitly noted by farmers themselves, and is also illustrated by the rapid growth in the total area cultivated for rice (an increase of nearly 500% in the case of COOSOPRODA members). The intervention has also been marked by an increase in farmers' ability to grow rice for sale rather than for food security. Farmers also note that the excess income from rice is used to grow other crops, leading to some diversification, although these additional crops do not represent a large fraction of income.

The impact on sustainability and the environment appears to remain rather modest, indicating that much improvement can still be made. In particular, there remains very low concern for biodiversity—although farmers do identify better water management as one clear and present area for improvement. This is mostly a result of their struggles with a lack of water during dry seasons, and because of badly maintained irrigation channels.

On the level of farmer organizations, the VECO intervention has achieved moderate improvements in the management capabilities and organizational checks and balances within the co-ops (with ADPA seeing the largest, though still modest, improvements). Although there is still much room for improvement, the benefits of the VECO intervention in this space stems from greater organizational capability, which in turn translates into cooperative members being seen as more reliable and trustworthy, and also gives members greater access to credit. More importantly, though some members still remain distrustful

because of poor experiences with former cooperatives in the past, many of the co-ops have successfully increased farmer incomes through market negotiations.

In terms of the cooperation's inclusion practices, it appears that gender equality and female participation have only seen a slight increase over the last few years, and still remain rather limited. In interviews and discussion groups, women themselves noted that they are somewhat more involved in their cooperatives' activities, but admit that their involvement in the administration or decision-making process for these bodies remains limited. The image is slightly more optimistic for youth inclusion with many farmers noting that youth are significantly benefiting from their engagement in rice farming. Nonetheless, there is still room for improvement on this count, especially considering that 40% of cooperative members are younger than 30.

Key successes include:

- The VECO intervention has helped improve the business case for farmers through an increase in the total quantity of rice sold, and increases in farmer income.
 - (Through supply contract facilitation; facilitating market access; linking cooperatives to markets; financial support for 'sensitization sessions' which have facilitated bundled purchasing strategy by reducing costs of production; providing access to finance and equipment; and selling white instead of brown rice)
- GAP and training helped FO members meet quality and quantity of domestic rice market.
- VECO has facilitated organizational capability of cooperatives and helped consolidate their legal status. This has facilitated their official recognition as trading actors, and given farmers greater access to credit and more leverage in negotiations.

Key challenges include:

- Yield has increased, but unclear which SRI practices have been adopted and disseminated through farmers.
- The impact on sustainability and the environment appears modest.
- Low improvements to gender equity and female participation
- Variable rates between areas with regards to bundled inputs
- VECO's intervention has been less effective influencing national policies governing domestic rice production (such as tax reductions).
- The domestic market is uncontrolled by cooperatives, and wholesalers are not connected to markets.
- Although credit is now more easily extended to farmer cooperatives, individual farmers did not get credit from the MFIs.
- Plans of action exist for cooperatives but are not followed due to lack of budget

Link with SCA:

In the DRC, we have observed a strong link between the pilot interventions and the structural change agenda for both SCA 1 (*The rice sector is better organized and more inclusive*) and SCA 2 (*Producers are organized in a specialized and efficient manner to better respond to market requirements, and are united in provincial and national superstructures for focused advocacy*). Both are aimed at using the learnings from the pilot interventions to influence the policy-level, thus creating structural change. For SCA1 (*The rice sector is better organized and more inclusive*), the process is proceeding with some problems For

instance, as the requested quantity of rice specified in the Bralima-ADPA contract was not met in time, ADPA has found it difficult to fulfil the demand and meet its contractual obligations. For this, we need to adjust contracts to rice production seasons. The domestic market is also uncontrolled by cooperatives, although the intentions to facilitate this are well established. For SCA2 (*Producers are organized in a specialized and efficient manner to better respond to market requirements, and are united in provincial and national superstructures for focused advocacy*), this is working well. Through this SCA, farmers improved their beneficiary margin and have been able to increase their incomes. SCA3 (*National policies are more favorable to domestic rice production*) had no direct link with the pilots as it is solely aimed at improving the structural environment.

SCA:

VECO has achieved a promising, if incomplete, impact on its structural change agenda. In the first instance, the rice value chain on the whole is better organized and more inclusive (SCA1) Through VECO's financial and strategic support, FOs have achieved greater market access, and farmers selling through cooperatives have seen both their total market share and their incomes rise—with a particularly pronounced boom in the increase of white rice in North Kivu (from 198 to 756 tonnes). A greater number of farmers also bundle their produce for sale on the market, although this rate still varies hugely amongst local areas. In addition, contracts have been established between cooperatives and buyers (most notably Bralima), and infrastructure (roads) have been rehabilitated. Finally, VECO has cooperated with SENASEM in overseeing quality seed multiplication programs and seed nurseries. A key aspect of VECO's intervention here is that, specifically through its cooperation with CORDAID, VECO has promoted positive mutual perceptions amongst value chain actors who used to perceive each other as rivals, thus facilitating a more inclusive approach.

VECO has also made headway in SCA2 (*Producers are organized in a specialized and efficient manner to better respond to market requirements, which are united in provincial and national superstructures for focused advocacy*). It has facilitated the negotiations and links between cooperatives, and has also helped FOs with improving quality and getting greater access to credit and to rice hulling equipment. This has enabled the improvement and diversification of quality, and as an added bonus, has enabled some entrepreneurs to test with using rice husks as fuel in brick firing kilns.

However, VECO's intervention has proven less fruitful in influencing national policies governing domestic rice production (SCA3). This limited success is largely because of the political crisis. As a result, there have been no rice sector tax reductions or breaks, and no increase in government budget available for agriculture. Change at the national level has thus not been achieved as of yet. However, there is potential for future impact, as there are many ongoing processes involving a variety of stakeholders (ELAN, World Bank) which seek to facilitate the import of fertilizers by reducing administrative procedures.

Key lessons learned:

Going forward, VECO should consider adjusting the SCA ambition to the available resources. One problem is that the requested quantity of rice specified in the Bralima-ADPA contract was not met in time, meaning that there should be greater emphasis on adjusting contracts to natural rice production seasons. VECO should also consider initiatives that can help scale the quality and yield improvements achieved through *Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM)* and *System of Rice Intensification (SRI)* trainings, which can help further increase farmers' beneficiary margins. VECO should also take stock of the lessons included in

the final reports of the study by the University of Liege on developing a market research strategy. Finally, VECO may have to (re)assess the degree to which influencing national policies is viable or cost-effective in the short-term, or what options exist for meaningful improvements in this space, in the medium- to long-term. Lastly, support strategies should be critically reviewed to ensure reachable (and relevant) goals.

For future interventions, the following points could be taken into account:

- Farmers' local contribution is crucial for success of objectives and must be integrated from the beginning.
- Ensure that democratic structures, checks and balances, and a strong decision-making team, are present in the cooperatives.
- Consider adjusting the SCA ambition to the available resources.
- Assessing existing infrastructural challenges (especially badly maintained irrigation channels, poor water management).
- A more gender-sensitive approach to interventions.
- A tailored approach to intervention depending on local area specifics.
- Improve the decision-making system, management structures, as well as the mobilization of shares, in cooperatives.
- Reassessing the degree to which influencing national policies is viable or cost-effective in the short-term, and exploring options for meaningful improvements in the medium- to long-term
- Reviewing support strategies to ensure reachable and relevant goals

Innovations:

- The 'System of Rice Intensification' (SRI) package has produced higher rice yields in Ruizizi than the 'Integrated Soil Fertility Management' (ISFM) packet. VECO and cooperatives should discuss wider SRI dissemination strategies to ensure rapid impact on rice production.
 - Barrier to dissemination is irrigation canals. Thus, contexts with more with sophisticated infrastructure more suitable for replicability



2. Introduction

This report by NewForesight is the external impact assessment of the VECO program in the DRC [DGD-funded, 2014-2016], and was commissioned by Vredeseilanden/VECO (hereafter named VECO). NewForesight performed this independent impact assessment from September 2016 to November 2016, looking at the rice strategies and pilots in the DRC in order to assess the regional change strategy to develop the rice-subsector in the DRC. During this period, NewForesight performed similar assessments for West Africa (rice), East Africa (rice), Indonesia (cocoa), Central America (cocoa) and the Andes Region (coffee) – for which separate reports are available.

The report is structured as follows: chapter 3 explains the evaluation method; chapter 4 assesses the effectiveness and relevance of the Ruzizi pilot; and chapter 5 assesses the Structural Change Agenda for DRC.



3. Evaluation method

VECO aims to unlock smallholder potential by creating change across the value chain with a critical mass. Their strategy is to pilot promising interventions across the chain on a small scale (reported in the Chain Intervention Reports - CIR), and identify which lessons learned are to be utilized to influence the institutional environment, in order to create lasting structural change (reported in the Structural Change Agenda Report). We therefore first evaluate the effectiveness and the relevance of the pilot interventions, and then follow this with an evaluation of the structural change agenda, including its link with the pilot interventions.

VECO works with the Theory of Change model (both for pilot interventions and structural change agendas), referred to here as Pathways of Change (PoC), given that there are multiple pathways to achieve the desired impact. We have taken the Pathways of Change as starting point of our analysis – evaluating each pathway separately, before drawing conclusions on the total impact.

VECO focuses its pilot interventions on supporting Farmer Organizations (FOs), rather than individual farmers. For our evaluation we look at the (direct) outcomes at the FO-level, in order to assess the effectiveness of VECO's interventions; followed by the (indirect) impact at the farmer-level, in order to assess the relevance of VECO's interventions.

In order to report a balanced perspective on the obtained impact, we make use of mixed methods evaluation, looking at both quantitative as well as qualitative data. As the data was primarily provided by VECO, we have triangulated the findings with key informant interviews (with FO and community leaders and policy-level partners), and focus groups discussions (with farmers) obtained through field visits in October and November 2016.

For the **pilot interventions** we used the following approach:

1. We requested VECO to define the Pathways of Change (PoCs) for those interventions where it was not yet defined.
2. We extracted the FO's business capacity indicators from VECO's Chain Intervention Reports, and wrote initial hypotheses on the effectiveness of the interventions.
3. We requested VECO to comment on the initial hypotheses, providing insights and pointing us towards additional explanatory data sources.

4. We extracted quantitative (result indicators) and qualitative observations from the Chain Intervention Reports (CIRs), summarizing the observed evidence.
5. We reformulated the hypotheses and made a list of questions for the key informant interviews and focus group discussions in order to triangulate our findings.
6. We visited the pilot interventions and held key informant interviews and focus group discussions.
7. We evaluated all evidence and wrote main conclusions on the effectiveness of each pathway of the pilot intervention.
8. We analyzed farmer survey data (obtained by VECO with capacity building support by NewForesight), in order to assess the relevance of VECO's interventions.
9. We identify comparable data from the VECO 2013 baseline reports, where possible.
10. We evaluated all evidence (including FGD outcomes) and wrote main conclusions on the relevance of VECO's interventions.
11. We reviewed the findings on effectiveness and relevance, concluding the impact assessment of the pilot.

For the **Structural Chain Agendas (SCAs)** we used the following approach:

1. We requested VECO to define the Pathways of Change (PoCs), for those SCAs where it was not yet defined.
2. We reviewed the relevant progress indicators in the Structural Change Agenda Reports (SCARs), defining initial hypothesis on the effectiveness of the SCA.
3. We extracted the relevant qualitative information from the SCAR.
4. We extracted the relevant qualitative information from the Chain Intervention Reports (CIRs).
5. We reformulated our hypotheses on the effectiveness of the SCA and made a list of questions for key informant interviews.
6. We interviewed key informants from partner organizations.
7. We evaluated all evidence and wrote main conclusions on the effectiveness of the SCA activities
8. We evaluated the link between the pilot interventions and the SCA, assessing VECO's ability to create structural change.
9. We reviewed the findings on the effectiveness of the SCA, and the link between the pilots and the SCA, and concluded the impact assessment of the SCA.

A note on causality

Throughout the assessment, NewForesight has continuously tried to identify to which extent the outcomes can be contributed or attributed to VECO's activities. In some cases this was clear as, for example, a partnership was set-up after introduction by VECO. In these situations we explicitly mention the outcomes and impact which can be attributed to VECO's activities. In most cases, however, VECO's activities were only one of the factors possibly causing the observed change. We have tried to assess to our best ability if the outcome could be contributed to VECO's activities in our focus group discussions and key informant interviews. However, it is important to note that this identification strategy does not allow us to infer causality with certainty – it only provides us with a likelihood of causality. If, in the future, VECO would like to obtain more certainty on the attributable impact of its activities, it should define an identification strategy that measures outcomes of a (preferably randomized) control group.

Sources of input for the assessment:

Level of analysis	Source	Date
Farmer livelihoods	Farmer Survey	November 2016
	Baseline reports	2013
	Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	November 2016

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Level of analysis	Source	Date
Farmer Organizations (FOs)	Chain Intervention Framework (CIF)	2014
	Chain Intervention Report (CIR)	2016
	Key informant interviews	November 2016
Policy level	Structural Change Agenda Framework (SCAF)	2014
	Structural Change Agenda Report (SCAR)	2015 (2016 not available)
	Chain Intervention Report (CIR)	2016
	Key informant interviews	November 2016



4. Ruzizi Pilot

a. Pathway of change

There are 9 different ways through which the Ruzizi pilot intervention tries to achieve its outcomes and impact. The different pathways of change are mapped in the figure below. We have performed an assessment of each pathway in order to determine the effectiveness of the activities, i.e. their ability to achieve the intended change.

PATHWAY OF CHANGE RUZIZI RICE

Intervention	Output	Intermediate outcomes	Intermediate outcomes	Ultimate Outcomes
Strengthening partner capacities for collective action				
Strengthening the capacity of rice cooperatives to become credible suppliers to local brewers and sellers.	Business meetings are organized between the Cooperatives (ADPA, COOPA, COOSOPRODA, COOPAMA) and the buyers (Bralima, DATCO, rice counters, etc.)	The rice cooperatives are informed about the quantity and quality requirements of the buyers as well as the future purchasing projections.	Cooperatives develop plans to enter these markets and co-invest in the acquisition of efficient rice processing equipment.	<p>A synergy is established between several cooperatives for the valuation of investments to ensure the supply of paddy.</p> <p>ADPA and COOPABA engage in a joint marketing office.</p> <p>ADPA (on behalf of all cooperatives) is listed on the shortlist of Bralima suppliers for 650 tonnes of rice per year.</p>
	Scope Insight's diagnostics of cooperatives and trainings on cooperative governance of leaders are organized.	Rice cooperatives develop action plans. They set the schedules for holding general meetings. They have a gender strategy.	<p>The members of the cooperatives have begun to take ownership of their cooperatives and develop and implement the strategies for the release of shares in order to build up equity capital.</p> <p>Women participate more in the institutional life of cooperatives.</p>	The co-operatives (ADPA, COOPAMAK, COOSOPRODA, COOPABA) have \$ 45,487 as equity paid-in by their members.

Intervention	Output	Intermediate outcomes	Intermediate outcomes	Ultimate Outcomes
	<p>Meetings, advocacy and follow-up missions are organized to link rice cooperatives to MFIs (microfinancial institutions) and to banks for access to credit.</p>	<p>Rice cooperatives have mastered credit requirements and are committed and prepared to meet these requirements..</p>	<p>The rice cooperatives fulfilled the requirements and submitted two applications for credit.</p> <p>They received \$ 30,000 from Luminosity, and \$ 12,000 from COOPEC Kalundu, and they have repaid the principal and paid the interest in time to gain the confidence of the lenders.</p> <p>These credits earned \$ 41,410, which was allocated as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purchase plot: 4500 \$ - Contribution to crop acquisition: \$ 9500 - Contribution to the construction of a warehouse co-financed with IFDC (24%) and 74% ADPA: \$ 15,000 - Contribution construction Depotco-funded with ADPA (50%) and VECO (50%): \$ 10,000 	<p>The co-operatives became credible partners vis-à-vis microfinancial institutions (MFI) involved, and received a second loan, of \$ 50,000 (Luminosity) and \$ 5174 (COOPEC Kalundu).</p> <p>\$ 15,600 farm credit to members. \$ 1,5500 commercial credit to 4 members.</p> <p>In July 2015 EPD gives a credit of \$ 30,000 to be paid in December 2015;</p> <p>\$ 50,000 is received in December 2015 and reimbursed in May 2016;</p> <p>\$ 60,000 was obtained in April and reimbursed in June 2016.</p>
	<p>The training of managers of rice cooperatives is organized for marketing strategy, the techniques of negotiation of contracts. Exchange on the actualization of existing contracts and promotion of local rice.</p>	<p>Market opportunities are known to cooperatives and the cooperatives have acquired skills to serve these markets.</p>	<p>The cooperatives have developed and implemented a marketing plan for the Bralima market.</p> <p>With the installation of two powerful rice hullers, cooperatives are beginning to develop a marketing plan for the table rice market in</p>	<p>They (the cooperatives) have conquered 25% of the Bralima market.</p>

Intervention	Output	Intermediate outcomes	Intermediate outcomes	Ultimate Outcomes
			Bukavu, through a joint marketing office established in September 2016.	
Supporting an enabling environment and sustainability alliances				
Supporting the structuring and correct governance for strengthening the rice sector in the Ruzizi plain.	An in-depth study is carried out by a doctoral student to understand the sector. The final report is expected in October 2016.	The conclusions of the report will be presented to the stakeholders of the sector at the launching workshop of the new PICA-GL ('Programme Intégré de Croissance Agricole dans les Grands Lacs') project. They serve also as a baseline.	The new program will take account of the recommendations of this study.	The governance of the sector will be strengthened.
	Initial reflections and knowledge exchanges between different players in the sector; support visits by the headquarters are organized, focusing on the potentially appropriate formulas for market organizations (fellowships and others)	A clear medium- and long-term plan is drawn up by the sector actors in the cooperatives.	The actors involved in the reflection exercise commit themselves to mobilizing other stakeholders and considerable resources, so as to properly structure the sector. Pilot interventions are tested with means covering short periods.	A major program has just been adopted between the Congolese government, the provincial governments and the World Bank, which includes the sustainable structuring of the inclusive supply chain for family rice farmers with a view to reducing food dependency (93%) in Kivu, and to anticipate shocks due to the likely decline in rice exports to South Kivu. This program will be coordinated by VECO and will include all stakeholders in the sector.
	Cooperatives are organized and strengthened, for their integration in provincial and national superstructures, in order to facilitate focused advocacy.	The cooperatives at the level of the rice producing villages are structured, and their statutory texts are legalized to achieve judicial and administrative recognition.	Rice cooperatives participate in the reflections and processes of the FOPAC in South-Kivu.	The UCOOPRU union is created by Agri Profocus. VECO will support member cooperatives to gradually integrate an economic dimension.

Intervention	Output	Intermediate outcomes	Intermediate outcomes	Ultimate Outcomes
Fostering innovation				
Support for the sustainable increase in rice production in the Ruzizi plain	Rice cooperatives are sensitized to aggregate purchases of agricultural inputs for economies of scale	Rice cooperatives collect money to acquire 4 tons of fertilizer and 2 cartons of Rapid Grow. Input sellers are receptive to the sale on credit of agricultural inputs, and their availability in villages.	Rice cooperatives have opened 5 agricultural input shops to bring them closer to rice growers.	198.25 tons of fertilizer are bought in the villages each season for the intensification of rice.
	Rice cooperatives and their members are supported in sustainable agricultural practices for rice production.	The rice cooperatives are committed to install 30 farmer school fields for SRI (System of Rice Intensification) .	The SRI requirements are overseen by 31 farmer members of the rice cooperatives, with an average yield of 7.5 tons / ha in the Champ Ecole Paysan.	30 farmers engage in- and apply SRI techniques in their individual fields; they produce an average of 4.5 tonnes / ha.

Effectiveness of VECO intervention

i. Pathway 1

Activities	Outputs	Immediate Outcome	Intermediate Outcome	Ultimate Outcome
Strengthening the capacity of rice cooperatives to become credible suppliers to local brewers and sellers.	Business meetings are organized between the cooperatives (ADPA, COOPA, COOSOPRODA, COOPAMA) and the buyers (Bralima, DATCO, rice counters, etc.)	The rice cooperatives are informed about the quantity and quality requirements of the buyers as well as the future purchasing projections.	Cooperatives develop plans to enter these markets and co-invest in the acquisition of efficient rice processing equipment.	<p>A synergy is established between several cooperatives for the valuation of investments to ensure the supply of paddy.</p> <p>ADPA and COOPABA engage in a joint marketing office.</p> <p>ADPA (on behalf of all cooperatives) is listed on the shortlist of Bralima suppliers for 650 tonnes of rice per year.</p>

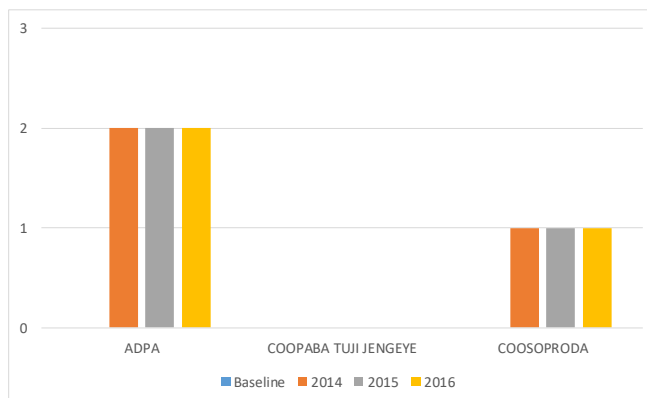
Main findings

VECO mediated numerous meetings, negotiations, and discussions between cooperatives in order to arrive at a draft investment valuation. It also arranged for 3 meetings with the management of Bralima (in Bukavu and Kinshasa) to convince them of the need to buy from cooperatives that already had storage capacities. As a result of this support, a supply contract has been established between Bralima and ADPA (representing other cooperatives). A long term contract will be needed to facilitate cooperatives to plan their rice production according to the Bralima request. This long term contract could influence the boosting of rice production in Ruzizi pilots. The main challenges reported are the adjustment of the contract to the rice production seasons. Other factors out of VECO's control were local procurement policy within Bralima, which is oriented towards large traders with high financial and storage capabilities.

Observed evidence (source: CIR)

Initial analysis of immediate and intermediate outcomes

Row Labels	Baseline	2014	2015	2016
ADPA	0.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
2. To what extent has the FO acquired business management skills?	0.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
COOPABA TUJI JENGEYE	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
2. To what extent has the FO acquired business management skills?	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
COOSOPRODA	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
2. To what extent has the FO acquired business management skills?	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00



For pathway 1, there seems to have been minor improvements in the FO marketing strategies skills for ADPA and COOSOPRODA.

Main conclusions from CIR:

- ADPA has signed three contracts with BRALIMA;
- The cooperatives have sold 731t, 1110t and 1311t of rice in 2014, 2015 and 2016, respectively, showing a steady increase. The number of rice tone which are selling by cooperative is increased;
- 78% of cooperative members are selling all their products through the cooperatives;
- Two rice factory hulling machines, co-financed by the farmer cooperatives and VECO are now fully operational for white rice quality improvement.

Triangulation (source: key informant interviews and FGDs)

The quantity of rice sold increased from 2014 to 2016, a trend which is attributed to VECO's efforts in improving the farmers market. Farmers have found a reliable demand from Bralima, but they require a huge structured domestic market. The rice quality has also improved to meet the market standard. The investment in the improvement of rice quality has been realized with funding shared between VECO and cooperative members. Obtaining market access by the cooperative was also facilitated by VECO.

ii. Pathway 2

Activities	Outputs	Immediate Outcome	Intermediate Outcomes	Ultimate Outcomes
	Scope Insights diagnostics of cooperatives and trainings on cooperative governance	Rice cooperatives develop action plans. They set the schedules for holding general	The members of the cooperatives have begun to take ownership of their cooperative and	The co-operatives (ADPA, COOPAMAK, COOSOPRODA, COOPABA) have \$

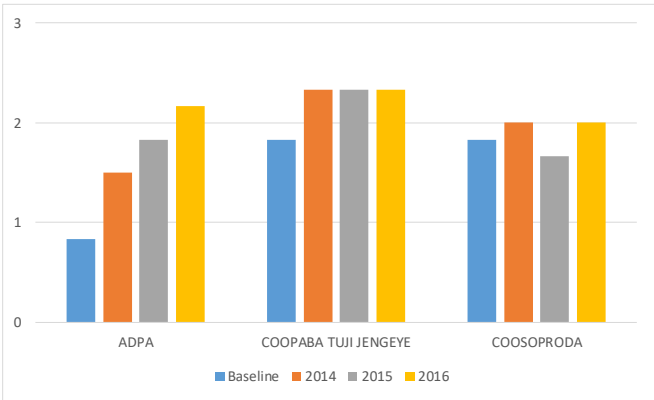
of leaders are organized.	meetings. They have a gender strategy.	develop and implement the strategies for the release of shares in order to build up equity capital. Women participate more in the institutional life of cooperatives.	45,487 as equity paid-in by their members.
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Main findings

The leaders of cooperatives and its members have articulated a vision on the objectives to be achieved in the future by the cooperative (increased marketing, abandonment of individual practices through aggregation of production for bundling, investment decisions, willingness to become viable cooperatives). Following the co-financing approach, there has been a significant reduction in the ‘wait-and-see’ attitude over the last 3 years, which used to be prevalent. The ownership of cooperatives by members is explained by the participation in the social capital and the in-kind contribution. Traceability and systematization of internal accounting to ensure transparency in management are now well established.

Observed evidence (source: CIR)

Row Labels	Baseline	2014	2015	2016
ADPA	0.83	1.50	1.83	2.17
1. To what extent has the FO acquired group management skills?	0.83	1.50	1.83	2.17
COOPABA TUJI JENGEYE	1.83	2.33	2.33	2.33
1. To what extent has the FO acquired group management skills?	1.83	2.33	2.33	2.33
COOSOPRODA	1.83	2.00	1.67	2.00
1. To what extent has the FO acquired group management skills?	1.83	2.00	1.67	2.00



For pathway 2, there has seemed to be a minor improvement overall in the FO’s acquirement of group management skills. These skills appear to be on a medium level. The biggest improvement seems to have been on the level of equal participation opportunities for women and the involvement of the younger generation.

Input from VECO: The observed results are notable. The data that explain this can be found in the cooperatives’ operational documents (operational plans, member registers, minutes and activity

reports). The accounting documents justify the payment of the shares and the contributions present in the cooperatives. The presence of investments acquired by cooperatives is also useful evidence.

Main conclusions from CIR:

- Participatory governance training helped raise the awareness of members who did not previously know the workings of a cooperative. This increased the participation of the members in the cooperatives' activities, and the expansion of the shares in the cooperatives
- The cooperatives understand the importance of the contributions and the shares for their good functioning. As a result, the shift from a non-profit organization to a cooperative has led to a reduction in membership by about 70% on average
- Increased understanding of the different roles played by cooperatives actors
- Increased understanding of the importance of members subscription
- Women participate in the cooperatives' activities, although in general women are doing the cashier service in the cooperative. At the same time, 39% of the cooperative members are women

Triangulation (source: key informant interviews and FGDs)

The structuring of co-operatives and the implementation of a working model can be attributed to VECO's efforts. Awareness of the cooperative spirit has highlighted the past experiences with non-profit organizations and led to the establishment of cooperatives that are economic groups. Challenges to be overcome include the decision-making system and the overlap in management structures, as well as the mobilization of shares, which is still low for some cooperatives.

iii. Pathway 3

Activities	Outputs	Immediate Outcome	Intermediate Outcome	Ultimate Outcome
	Meetings, advocacy and follow-up missions are organized to link rice cooperatives to MFIs (microfinancial institutions) and to banks for access to credit.	Rice cooperatives have mastered credit requirements and are committed and prepared to meet these requirements..	The rice cooperatives fulfilled the requirements and submitted two applications for credit. They received \$ 30,000 from Luminosity, and \$ 12,000 from COOPEC Kalundu, and they have repaid the principal and paid the interest in time to gain the confidence of the lenders. These credits earned \$ 41,410, which was allocated as follows: - Purchase plot: 4500 \$	The co-operatives became credible partners vis-à-vis microfinancial institutions (MFI) involved, and received a second loan, of \$ 50,000 (Luminosity) and \$ 5174 (COOPEC Kalundu). \$ 15,600 farm credit to members. \$ 1,500 commercial credit to 4 members. In July 2015 EPD gives a credit of \$ 30,000 to be paid in December 2015; \$ 50,000 is received in December 2015 and

	- Contribution to crop acquisition: \$ 9500	reimbursed in May 2016;
	- Contribution to the construction of a warehouse co-financed with IFDC (24%) and 74% ADPA: \$ 15,000	\$ 60,000 was obtained in April and reimbursed in June 2016.
	- Contribution construction Depotco-funded with ADPA (50%) and VECO (50%): \$ 10,000	

Main findings

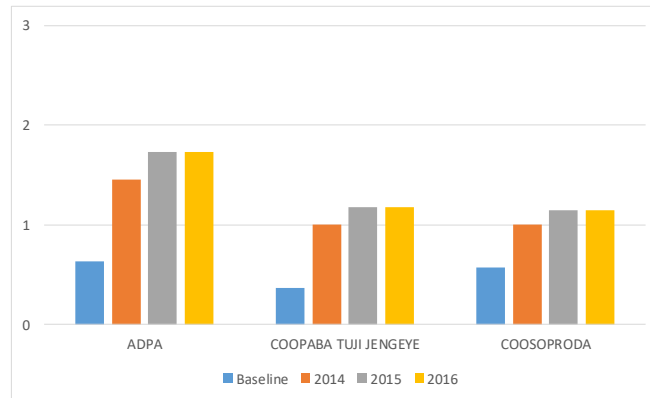
VECO organized business meetings between representatives of different cooperatives and micro finance institutions (MFI), in order to reduce the perception of risk in the granting and management of credit with the cooperatives. VECO’s activities to raise awareness amongst cooperatives of the use and conditions of credits, and the vital importance of repayment, has allowed cooperatives to manage and reimburse credit, and meet repayment deadlines, maintaining and improving trust between cooperatives and microfinance institutions.

Only ADPA received credit to invest in rice business and rice production for its members. Other cooperatives (COOSOPRODA and COOPABA) did not receive credit for rice business. Only COOSOPRODA acquired a credit for rice production from farmers’ solidarity groups. According to the intervention strategies, ADPA leads the cooperatives in business, and the VECO team empowers it in this capacity, in order for ADPA to become a trailblazer for other cooperatives.

As a result of these activities, farmers' profits have increased from \$3.5 to \$4 per bag (100 kg) among the producers of ADPA and COOSOPRODA. COOPABA however, has had more difficulties at this level. It also remains hard for individual farmers to receive credit (primarily because of the complex repayment system), and bundling has overall not yet been consolidated.

Observed evidence (source: CIR)

Row Labels	Baseline	2014	2015	2016
ADPA	0.64	1.45	1.73	1.73
2. To what extent has the FO acquired business management skills?	1.00	1.71	1.86	1.86
3. To what extent has the FO acquired marketing skills?	0.00	1.00	1.50	1.50
COOPABA TUJI JENGEYE	0.36	1.00	1.18	1.18
2. To what extent has the FO acquired business management skills?	0.57	1.00	1.14	1.14
3. To what extent has the FO acquired marketing skills?	0.00	1.00	1.25	1.25
COOSOPRODA	0.55	1.18	1.18	1.09
2. To what extent has the FO acquired business management skills?	0.43	1.14	1.14	1.29
3. To what extent has the FO acquired marketing skills?	0.75	1.25	1.25	0.75



For pathway 3, there seems to be a minor improvement overall in both acquired business management skills and marketing skills. These skills appear to be on a low level still. There seems to be a large improvement in how the FO has its systems and skills in place to manage credit systems for working capital and operational costs.

Input from VECO: The results speak for themselves. VECO organized business meetings of cooperatives with the MFIs in order to reduce the prevalent perception of risk which used to surround the granting and management of credit to cooperatives. By the simultaneous awareness-raising, amongst the cooperatives themselves, on the use of credit and the importance of repayment, VECO has helped cooperatives to manage and reimburse credit, giving them greater credibility with regards to MFIs and other creditors. Evidence of this can be found through consulting loan contracts and testimonials from MFIs about the rate of repayment. The reimbursement went well as a result of the market availability.

Main conclusions from CIR:

- ADPA has obtained credit to invest in rice production, which raised its available capital to \$50,000.
- The cooperatives are generally doing well in their relationships with MFIs
- Cooperatives have subscribed for the co-financing of some equipment, according to their financial capacity. Two cooperatives have subscribed for the co-financing of hulling machines in rice factories, and three for storage facilities for rice. The subscription was for 50% of the total amount. The ADPA storage also received the support from IFDC (24%).
- The cooperatives have well managed relations with MFIs
- The cooperatives obtained marketing credits from Luminosity and credit for rice production at COOPEC Kalundu
- Farmers' profits increased from \$3.5 to \$4 per bag (100 kg) among the producers of ADPA and COOSOPRODA. COOPABA still has difficulties at this level. Bundling has not yet been consolidated.

Triangulation (source: key informant interviews and FGDs)

Although credit is now more easily extended to Farmer Cooperatives, individual farmers did not get credit from the MFIs. The obtained credit by the cooperatives was to a large extent within VECO's control. Individual credit remains more complicated, as the repayment control is not so easy, but it is critical for farmers to consolidate and expand their investment in rice production.

iv. Pathway 4

Activities	Outputs	Immediate Outcome	Intermediate Outcome	Ultimate Outcome
	The training of managers of rice cooperatives is organized on marketing strategy, the techniques of negotiation of contracts. Exchange on the actualization of existing contracts and promotion of local rice.	Market opportunities are known to cooperatives and the cooperatives have acquired skills to serve these markets.	<p>The cooperatives have developed and implemented a marketing plan for the Bralima market.</p> <p>With the installation of two powerful rice hullers, cooperatives are beginning to develop a marketing plan for the table rice market in Bukavu, through a joint marketing office established in September 2016.</p>	The cooperatives have conquered 25% of the Bralima market.

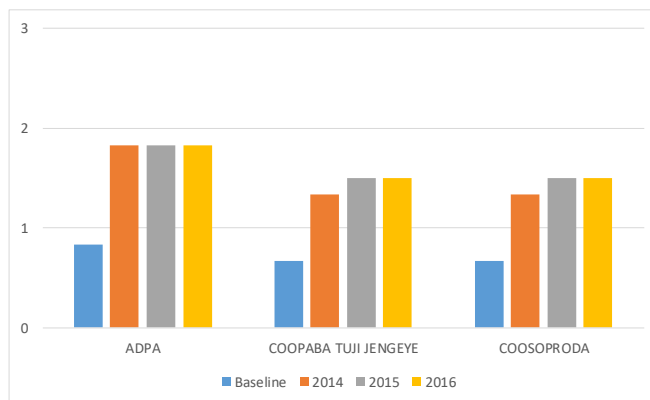
Main findings

Significant progress was made regarding marketing, clearly attributable to VECO's activities, who supported the development of a marketing strategy and business plan. The Bralima target market was entered by cooperatives, after VECO facilitated direct stakeholder meetings. Unfortunately, the demand was not fully served on time. Moreover, the domestic market is still unstructured, as wholesalers are not yet connected to cooperatives.

The quality of the rice has increased because of the new hulling machines, and production increased through the application of good agricultural practices (GAPs), lowering costs. A challenge remains the availability of adapted and improved rice varieties, which can compete with imported rice in the domestic market.

Observed evidence (source: CIR)

Row Labels	Baseline	2014	2015	2016
ADPA	0.83	1.83	1.83	1.83
2. To what extent has the FO acquired business management skills?	0.83	1.83	1.83	1.83
COOPABA TUJI JENGEYE	0.67	1.33	1.50	1.50
2. To what extent has the FO acquired business management skills?	0.67	1.33	1.50	1.50
COOSOPRODA	0.50	1.33	1.33	1.33
2. To what extent has the FO acquired business management skills?	0.50	1.33	1.33	1.33



For pathway 4, there seems to be a good improvement overall in the FOs' acquisition of business management skills. There seems to be a large improvement in how the FO has its systems and skills in place to manage credit systems for working capital and operational costs.

- New potential markets have been identified (Bralima, Lycée Wima Boarding School, SOS Village d'enfants)
- While in 2015, 32.5% of the total demand of Bralima (650t of 2000t) was sourced from cooperatives. For 2016 the signed contract has stipulated a delivery of only 200t.
- Two rice factory hulling machines were established to facilitate the improvement in quality of local rice, in order to make it competitive on the market
- Productivity has been improved through the application of the System of Rice Intensification methodology, which has reduced the costs of production. This should facilitate decisions made in market negotiations.

Input from VECO: Marketing strategies have been developed and are presented in the business plan designed by GEL under the orders of VECO. These strategies have performed well, and have led to a contract for delivery through three years: 450 tons in 2014, 650 tons in 2015 and 200 tons in 2016.. This success is attributed to the fact that the stakeholder meetings facilitated by VECO enabled a direct collaboration of producers with Bralima without intermediaries, allowing the cooperatives to access the market and Bralima to win on the purchase price. In addition, Bralima has made a policy of contributing to the development of the farmers, although this commitment has been made independently of VECO's interventions.

Main conclusions from CIR:

- 3 supply contracts have been signed with Bralima; committing to 1300 tons of white rice sales to Bralima over a period of 3 years (2014-2016).
- There has been an increase in tonnages sold to both types of targeted markets (Bralima and domestic market) between 2014 and 2016.

- The cooperative and the major market suppliers (DATCO, KOTTECHA, Rice Trading Post) have not yet entered into a contract. Talks are still underway to enable them to become clients of the cooperatives.

Triangulation (source: key informant interviews and FGDs)

The marketing strategy primarily emphasized articulating a business plan for targeting the BRALIMA market, and this has worked as well as projected. These results have been attributed to VECO's interventions. Still, farmers urgently need more guidance on strategies to ensure that they can come to dominate the domestic rice market. A business plan for the domestic market must be developed and tested, in order to assess how it can best help to increase the market share of locals producing rice and selling it on the global market.

v. Pathway 5

Activities	Outputs	Immediate Outcome	Intermediate Outcome	Ultimate Outcome
Supporting the structuring and correct governance for strengthening the rice sector in the Ruzizi plain.	An in-depth study is carried out by a doctoral student to understand the sector. The final report is expected in October 2016.	The conclusions of the report will be presented to the stakeholders of the sector at the launching workshop of the new PICA-GL ('Programme Intégré de Croissance Agricole dans les Grands Lacs') project. They also serve as baseline.	The new program will take account of the recommendations of this study.	The governance of the sector will be strengthened.

Main findings

No results are available, because as of the time of writing, the final study report is not yet available for review.

Input from VECO: VECO commissioned the study and supervised the doctorate in collaboration with the University of Liège. Information can be found in the study report, which at the time of writing is not yet available in its final form (only a preliminary version).

Observed evidence (source: CIR)

Business capacity indicators not relevant for this pathway.

Input from VECO: VECO commissioned the study and supervised the doctorate in collaboration with the University of Liège. Information can be found in the study report, which at the time of writing is not yet available in its final form (only a preliminary version).

No information available in the CIR.

Triangulation (source: key informant interviews and FGDs)

Not applicable.

vi. Pathway 6

Activities	Outputs	Immediate Outcome	Intermediate Outcome	Ultimate Outcome
	Initial reflections and knowledge exchanges between different players in the sector; support visits by the headquarters are organized, focusing on the potentially appropriate formulas for market organizations (fellowships and others)	A clear medium- and long-term plan is drawn up by the sector actors in the cooperatives.	The actors involved in the reflection commit themselves to mobilizing other stakeholders and considerable resources, so as to properly structure the sector. Pilot interventions are tested with means covering short periods.	A major program has just been adopted between the Congolese government, the provincial governments and the World Bank, which includes the sustainable structuring of the inclusive supply chain for family rice farmers with a view to reducing food dependency (93%) in Kivu, and to anticipate shocks due to the likely decline in rice exports to South Kivu. This program will be coordinated by VECO and will include all stakeholders in the sector.

Main findings

Many actors were involved in the consultation for developing and structuring the value chain, including Bralima, credit actors (EPD, COOPEC KALUNDU), suppliers of farmer inputs (ADVS), local authorities (for plots to build facilities), all of which have a stake in the development of the Ruzizi plain rice sector.

VECO has supported these different actors to adopt successful approaches to resolve the constraints faced by the rice value chain. Through this success, VECO has been selected as lead organisation of the rice value chain development programme in a new agricultural project (PICA-GL) funded by the World Bank. The collaboration between these actors has been promising, and reflects the potential in the development of the rice value chain through the Ruzizi pilots.

Observed evidence (source: CIR)

- Synergies implemented through cooperatives to collect paddy to supply for processing in the rice factories' hulling machines

- VECO will be the lead partner of the rice chain development programme in the new project PICA-GL, which is implemented by multiple actors (World Bank, provincial government, Agricultural Inspection Services and farmers organizations) in the South Kivu Province
- Farmers groups are transformed from a nonprofit organization (farmer organization) to a profit organization (cooperative).

There are no relevant business capacity indicators for pathway 6.

Main conclusions from CIR:

- Linkage of cooperatives to others key actors in Ruzizi rice sector
- MFIs have moved closer to cooperatives to finance their activities
- Plans of action exist but are not implemented due to lack of budget of the cooperatives

Triangulation (source: key informant interviews and FGDs)

Not all of the commitments by these multiple actors involved in the rice sector can be attributed to VECO's activities alone. However, in the interactions between these actors, VECO has opened an area of meeting and exchange, which has more easily allowed the integration of the needs of each of the different actors involved.

vii. Pathway 7

Activities	Outputs	Immediate Outcome	Intermediate Outcome	Ultimate Outcome
	Cooperatives are organized and strengthened, for their integration in provincial and national superstructures, in order to facilitate focused advocacy.	The cooperatives at the level of the rice producing villages are structured, and their statutory texts are legalized to achieve judicial and administrative recognition.	Rice cooperatives participate in the reflections and processes of the FOPAC in South-Kivu.	The UCOOPRU union is created by Agri Profocus. VECO will support member cooperatives to gradually integrate an economic dimension.

Main findings

There have been more observed changes to the structure of FOs. Cooperatives are generally well structured. With the help of VECO, many cooperatives have obtained the documents (specifically the National Registration for Trading and Credit, - *Registre de Commerce et de credit Mobilier/RCCM*) to attain official recognition by the government as trading actors.

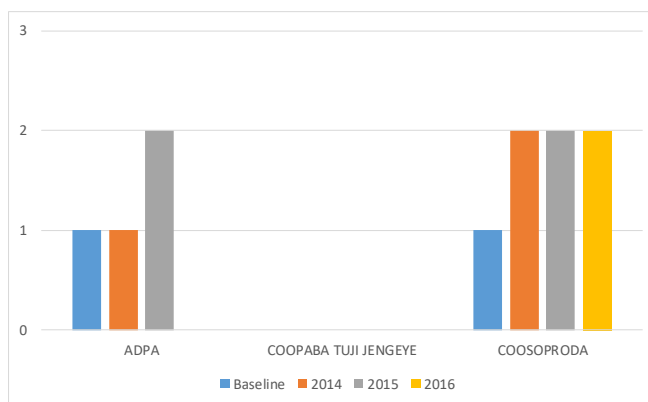
Cooperatives are also well connected with each other, facilitating coordination and communication of market opportunities amongst themselves. In this context, ADPA serves as an umbrella organization for other co-ops signing contracts with Bralima, in order to facilitate the contract management process for all parties.

UCOOPRU (Union des Cooperatives des Producteurs du Riz de la plaine de la Ruzizi) is also assisting the growth in the economic area of cooperatives in the Ruzizi pilots. However, the impact of UCOOPRU's activities is not clearly identified. It is far from clear to what extent the outputs have been achieved: in most cases, the

strengthening and integration of cooperatives in provincial and national superstructures for focused advocacy has not yet proven effective. This union exists thanks to the initiative of other organizations, in particular the AGRI PROFOCUS and the National Service of the Cooperatives, which organized the constituent assembly.

Observed evidence (source: CIR)

Row Labels	Baseline	2014	2015	2016
ADPA	1.00	1.00	2.00	#DIV/0!
5. To what extent does the FO builds up and maintains external relations?	1.00	1.00	2.00	#DIV/0!
COOPABA TUJI JENGEYE	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
5. To what extent does the FO builds up and maintains external relations?	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
COOSOPRODA	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
5. To what extent does the FO builds up and maintains external relations?	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00



For pathway 7, results differ strongly per FO. Medium improvement seems to have been achieved for ADPA and COOSOPRODA.

Input from VECO: VECO works for obtaining the authorization to operate from the Rural Development Inspectorate, Commercial and Tax Identification Register, and legalized status for the cooperatives. With regards to facilitating integration in provincial or national superstructures for advocacy, such a union is currently already in place, in the form of FOPAC-SK. However, this body interacts only indirectly with the member cooperatives.

Main conclusions from CIR:

- There is a continued need for support in order to establish a joint marketing office
- There is a continued need for strengthening the capacity of members of the joint marketing office
- There has been a joint declaration of cooperatives to supply rice to processing centers

Triangulation (source: key informant interviews and FGDs)

VECO has played a significant role in helping cooperatives consolidate their legal status, through obtaining the necessary legal documents to facilitate official recognition as trading actors. The cooperative union (UCOOPRU) still has much to accomplish, however. Specifically, improved advocacy will be required to ensure a well consolidated value chain. Those advocacies should lead to a reduction or even elimination of taxes on certain inputs in the rice sectors.

viii. Pathway 8

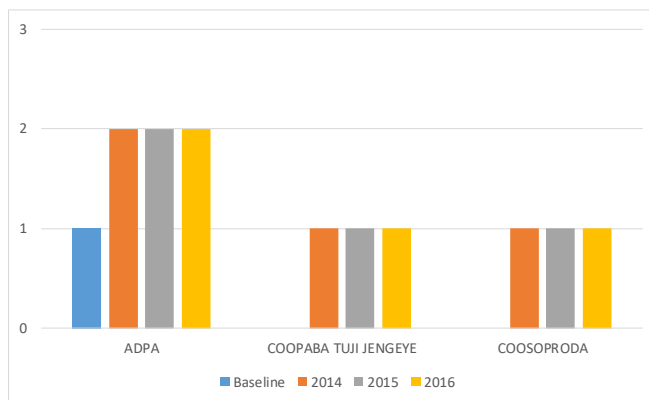
Activities	Outputs	Immediate Outcome	Intermediate Outcome	Ultimate Outcome
Support for the sustainable increase in rice production in the Ruzizi plain	Rice cooperatives are sensitized to aggregate purchases of agricultural inputs for economies of scale	Rice cooperatives collect money to acquire 4 tons of fertilizer and 2 cartons of Rapid Grow. Input sellers are receptive to the sale on credit of agricultural inputs, and their availability in villages.	Rice cooperatives have opened 5 agricultural input shops to bring them closer to rice growers.	198.25 tons of fertilizer are bought in the villages each season for the intensification of rice.

Main findings

The link between input suppliers is on the rise. Fertilizers are being sold to farmers on credit by ADVS and COOPASA. Farmers pay back the funds after the harvesting period. The use of fertilizers is not the result of VECO efforts, but instead derives from the CATALIST II project, led by IFDC, as well as many farmers’ need to improve the on-farm yield. However, farmers are purchasing fertilizers through bundling—a purchasing strategy which is attributed to VECO’s financial support for ‘sensitization sessions’. This helps farmers to meet the high cost of some inputs. The scaling up of inputs purchasing helps improve the beneficiary margin.

Observed evidence (source: CIR)

Row Labels	Baseline	2014	2015	2016
ADPA	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
2. To what extent has the FO acquired business management skills?	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
COOPABA TUJI JENGEYE	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
2. To what extent has the FO acquired business management skills?	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
COOSOPRODA	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
2. To what extent has the FO acquired business management skills?	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00



For pathway 8, there has seem to be a minor improvement overall in the FO’s acquirement of business management skills – business development services are more attractable currently than in the baseline

year, but this aspect has not improved since the first the first assessment year. These skills appear to be on a low level.

Input from VECO: Thanks to the financial support of VECO, FO organized the sensitization for the grouped purchases of inputs. This involves wholesale purchase of inputs for cooperatives. These inputs are provided on credit, and farmers pay after the harvesting period.

Main conclusions from CIR:

- Raising co-operatives' awareness of grouped purchases of inputs
- Up to 4800kg of fertilizer is ordered by the members
- Four fertilizers trading posts have been established

Triangulation (source: key informant interviews and FGDs)

VECO has played three key roles to facilitate the purchase of inputs through bundling: the role of mediator in a social dialogue; the role of analyst in ongoing research, and the role of facilitator in improving services delivery. One remaining challenge is to understand how input suppliers could respond to support farmers in case of a bad season, when they might not be able to reimburse the providers for the inputs.

ix. Pathway 9

Activities	Outputs	Immediate Outcome	Intermediate Outcome	Ultimate Outcome
	Rice cooperatives and their members are supported in sustainable agricultural practices for rice production.	The rice cooperatives are committed to installing 30 farmer school fields for SRI (System of Rice Intensification) .	The SRI requirements are overseen by 31 farmer members of the rice cooperatives, with an average yield of 7.5 tons / ha in the CEP (Champ Ecole Paysan).	30 farmers engage in- and apply SRI techniques in their individual fields; they produce an average of 4.5 tonnes per hectare.

Main findings

Applying an Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) package has proven a *sine qua non* condition for cooperative memberships. Nowadays, ISFM increase rice yield, to 4,5t/ha. ‘System of Rice Intensification’ (SRI) has been tested with 204 farmers in 30 demonstration fields, and a high yield was registered (7,4t/ha). Pilot farmers have been sufficiently interested by this result of the SRI methodology, and many will adopt and disseminate SRI. Since SRI appears to give better yields than ISFM, VECO and the cooperatives should discuss dissemination strategies for SRI, to ensure a rapid impact on rice production in Ruzizi.

Observed evidence (source: CIR)

The SRI package is the best way to quickly improve the rice productivity in the Ruzizi pilots, as this package is both more effective than the ISFM, and better at preserving the environmental resources.

There are no relevant business capacity indicators for pathway 9.

Main conclusions from CIR:

- Yield per hectare has increased due to System of Rice Intensification (SRI) from 3,5 to 7,4t/ha at the farmer field school. However, it is unclear which SRI practices are adopted and disseminated through farmers.
- SRI results are still at the farmer field school level only.
- 204 farmers have been trained on SRI package in a farmer field school.

Triangulation (source: key informant interviews and FGDs)

VECO has been investing in the introduction of SRI packages. VECO supervised the first SRI demonstration field, provided all training material needed in the farmer field school, and has monitored the outcomes. Disseminating the SRI package is a greater opportunity, but can face the problem of limited irrigation canals. Actions should be undertaken to implement a sustainable management plan of such irrigation canals.

b. Relevance of VECO intervention

In this section we evaluate the relevance of VECO's interventions by looking at the farmer-level impact. We investigate whether the VECO interventions at the FO-level have also created notable differences (positive or negative) on the farmer impact level. This is done in two ways: by reviewing the results of the focus group discussions, and by comparing the farmer survey (2016) with baseline data (2013). It must be noted that comparison is difficult at times, as indicators differ significantly over time.

Main conclusion of focus group discussions (FGD) with farmers

- Yield improvements can be obtained at the production level through the use of SRI or ISFM, by respecting the agricultural calendar, and at the rice hulling level, through the use of improved hulling machines
- Rice quality improved through the use of a modern dryer and a rice factory/hulling machine
- Income increased because of the market strategies and the selling of white rice instead of paddy. This has led to a change in construction material for farm houses (for example, straw housing has changed to metal sheet housing)
- There has been an increase in undertaking agriculture (rice production) for business and not only for food security.
- There have been improvements in harvested product management, and greater harvest security through common storage strategies.
- There has been an increase in the total cultivated area (for example, in 2010 COOSOPRODA members grew rice on plots which together covered roughly 100 ha, but now they are at 500 ha).
- Beneficiary margin increased by controlling and in some cases reducing the cost of production through the common, bundled purchase of inputs.
- The interest rate for credit for agriculture (at 2%) is currently more attractive than the interest rate for business credit (3%).
- Rice hulling costs have been reduced because of the presence of a hulling factory.
- The use of weighing scales is well established, instead of estimating quantities with bags.

Lessons Learned

- The common purchase of input facilitates the reduction of the costs of production, and indirectly increases the beneficiary margin of farmers at the production level in a value chain.
- When responding to the real needs of farmers, their local contribution is very important for the success of objectives. Farmers commit to success when they understand that their contribution is also lost if the results are not obtained.
- Farmers have learned that perfect quality is the base for successful marketing.
- The well-established democracy principles in the cooperatives lead to a clear system of checks and balances, and a resilient decision making team. As a corollary, cooperative members are perceived as more reliable and trustworthy.

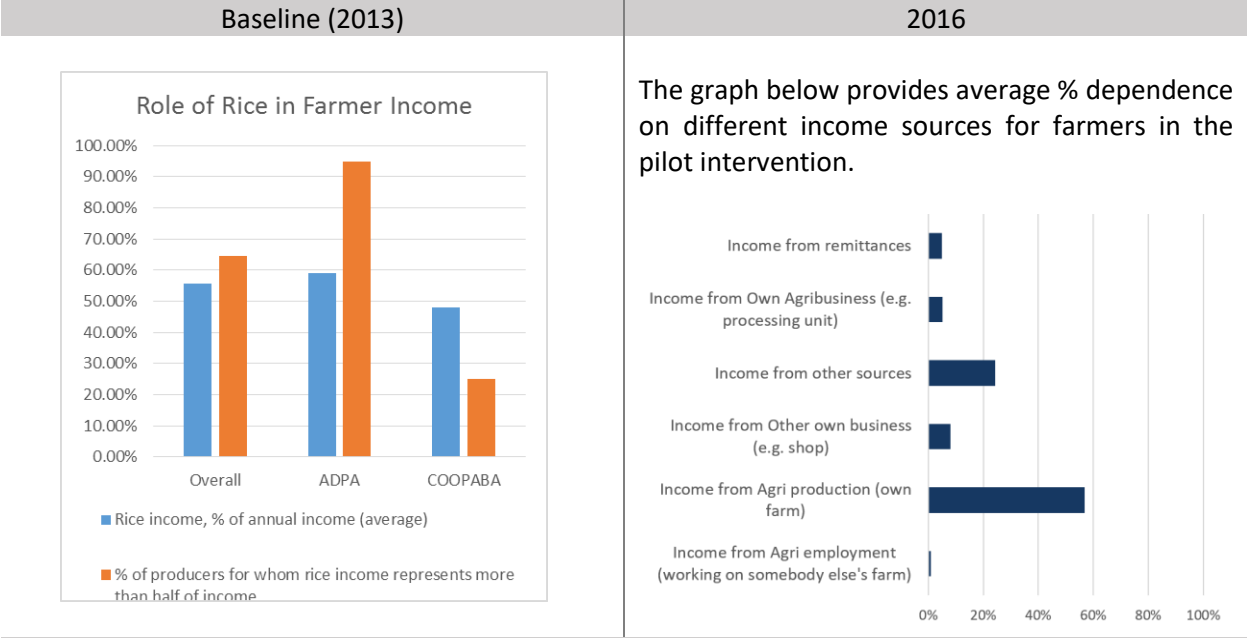
Comparison of baseline and 2016 farmer survey

1a. Income											
Baseline (2013)	2016										
<p>Overall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On average smallholders earn \$776.75 gross on rice production; • Average farms size: 0.25-6 ha; 40% devoted to rice; average rice yield: 2.35t/ha <p>ADPA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On average smallholders earn \$822 gross on rice production; • Average farms size: 0.75-6 ha; 35% devoted to rice; average rice yield: 3t/ha <p>COOPABA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On average, smallholders earn \$300 gross income; • Average farm size is 0.25 to 2.86ha; 45% is devoted to rice; average rice yield: 2.75t/ha. 	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Selling price (per ton)</td> <td>\$401</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Simplified Gross Margin</td> <td>\$279</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Direct costs (per ton)</td> <td>\$300</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Retrun on Investment</td> <td>36%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Simplified Gross Margin</td> <td>24%</td> </tr> </table>	Selling price (per ton)	\$401	Simplified Gross Margin	\$279	Direct costs (per ton)	\$300	Retrun on Investment	36%	Simplified Gross Margin	24%
Selling price (per ton)	\$401										
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Retrun on Investment	36%										
Simplified Gross Margin	24%										

Discussion

- Farmer income has increased steadily throughout the 3 past years;
- During the FGD farmers mentioned that the total area under rice cultivation has been increased due to the identified potential market for it;
- Farmers have reported improved productivity, from 2,5t/ha to 4t/ha;
- There has been an improvement in beneficiary margins, due to their ability to sell through the cooperatives, and to sell white rice as well as rice paddy.

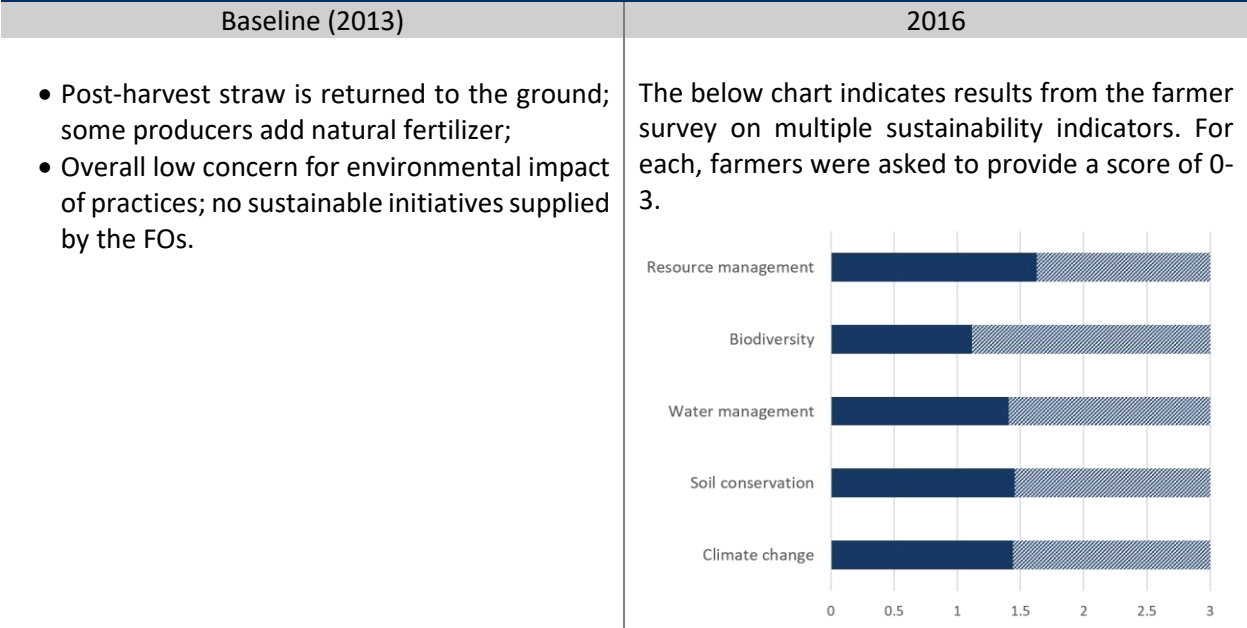
1b. Resilience (diversity of income sources)



Discussion

- Direct comparison is difficult because of differences in data; however on the whole there appears to have been no reduction (perhaps even an increase) in the dependency on rice for overall farmer income;
- From the data, it is unclear if there have been more pronounced improvements for subsets of the farmer population;
- Nonetheless, during the FGD farmers claimed that income has diversified. The excess income from rice is used to grow others crops and livestock, increasing resilience.

1c. More sustainable use of natural resources



Discussion

- *Note: These are averages of a larger set of questions, where “landscape management” has no data*
- From a baseline of very low concern for the environment, there appear to have been moderate improvements across the board, specifically for resource management, although there is still little concern for biodiversity;
- In general, sustainability scores are relatively low in the 2016 data, indicating that much improvement can still be made in terms of the adoption of more sustainable farming practices.
- During the FGD, farmers said they have developed plans for water management. One main problem they face is a lack of water as a result of bad maintenance of irrigation canals or dry seasons.

1d. Diversity of crops and livestock

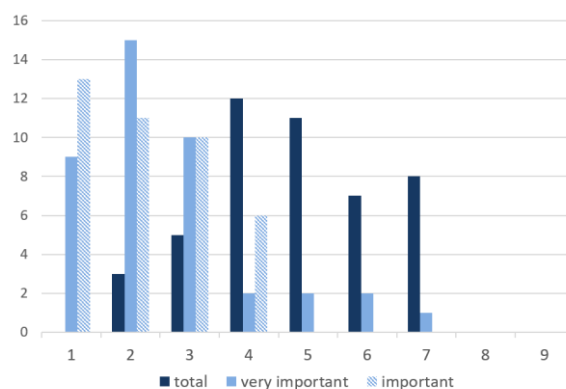
Baseline (2013)

- The baseline did not include data on the diversity of income sources on the farm;

2016

The chart below indicates the number of farmers surveyed on Ruzizi who receive 1-7 different sources of on-farm income.

In the survey, farmers were given a choice of indicating the importance of each source of income. As the below chart shows, the majority of farmers had 5 or more crops or livestock on their farms. In addition, a high number of respondents indicated having 3 or more sources of income that were very important for farmer livelihoods.



Discussion

- Direct comparison is not possible due to lack of data points for the baseline.
- However, the 2016 information suggests farmers tend a diverse range of crops, though within that range there are relatively limited crops (3-4) which rank as (very) important to them;
- Farmers grow up to 3 crops for cash and their substance. They have also livestock. This is not a concern, and indeed indicates a medium resilience as the additional crops grown do not represent a large fraction of income.
- During the FGD farmers reported that they have enough land for diversity of crops and livestock.

2. Increased status of FOs

Baseline (2013)

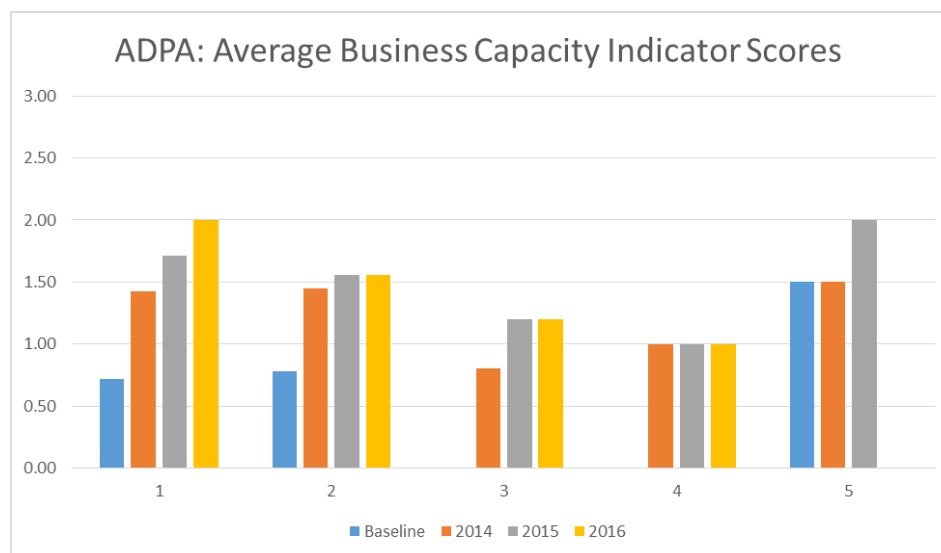
2016

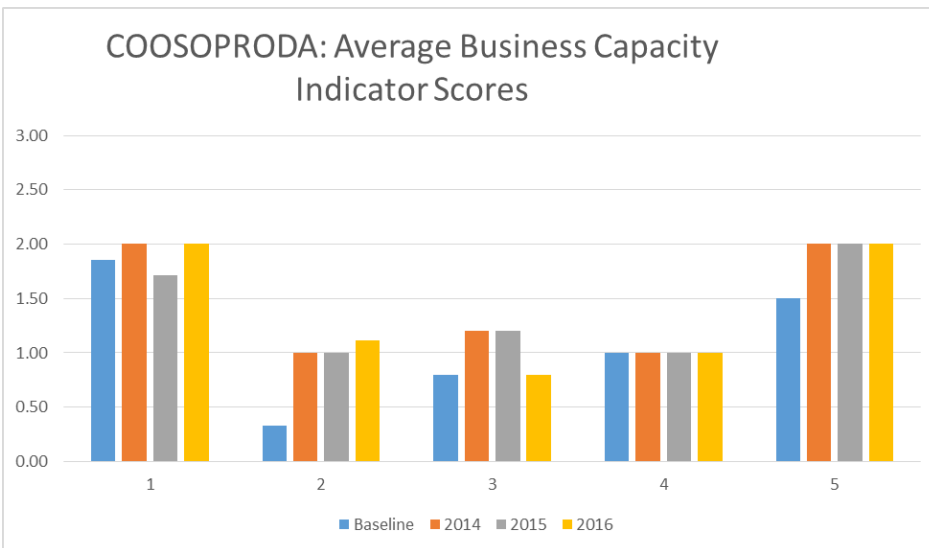
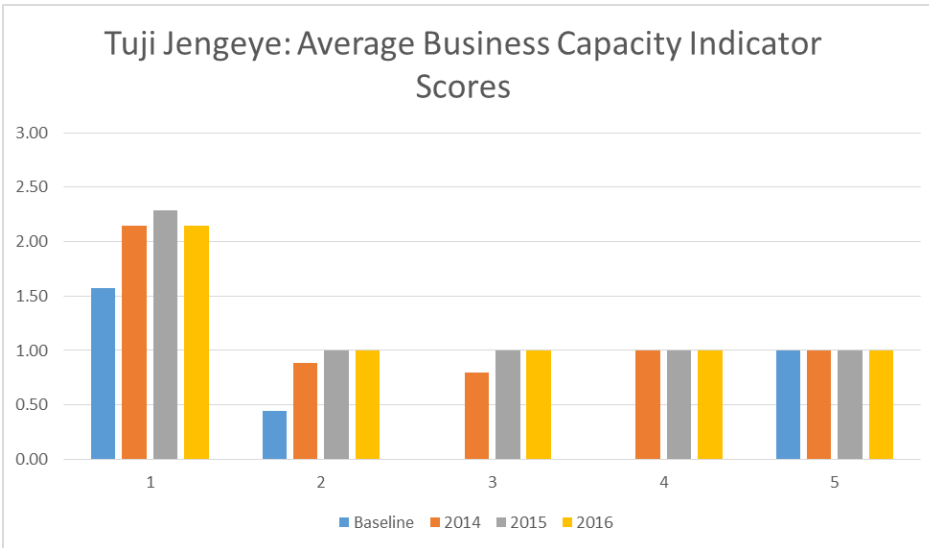
From the baseline, the following information has been gathered:

- The vast majority of COOPABA farmers are not organized, and sell their rice individually to passing traders for inordinate prices;
- The other three sales organizations are grouped; since 2010, ADPA has delivered to Bralima directly and through intermediaries, to traders and local markets; the local market offers an attractive price compared to Bralima (\$1/kg compared to Bralima's \$0.86/kg).
- Warehouses and COOPA-RUZIZI COOSOPRODA promote grouped sales for their members; members of COOPA also received \$28,800 credit for production with an interest of 3% per month; as well as a marketing credit of \$3,500.

Analysis of FO business capacity indicators shows varying improvement for the FOs across business capacity categories. A more detailed analysis can be found in the previous section; however, below a summary is presented. The 5 categories are:

1. To what extent has the FO acquired group management skills?
2. To what extent has the FO acquired business management skills?
3. To what extent has the FO acquired marketing skills?
4. To what extent does the FO promote sustainable production and natural resource management skills to its members?
5. To what extent does the FO build up and maintain external relations?





Discussion

- A detailed analysis of impact at the FO level can be found in the previous section. In summary, it appears that rather limited improvement was achieved across all business capacity indicators for all FOs.
- During the FGD, farmers said that some shares are being released by certain members, because of their poor experience of former cooperatives, which failed in the past
- During the FGD farmers reported that they have increased incomes through market negotiations by cooperatives.

3a. Women's status and empowerment

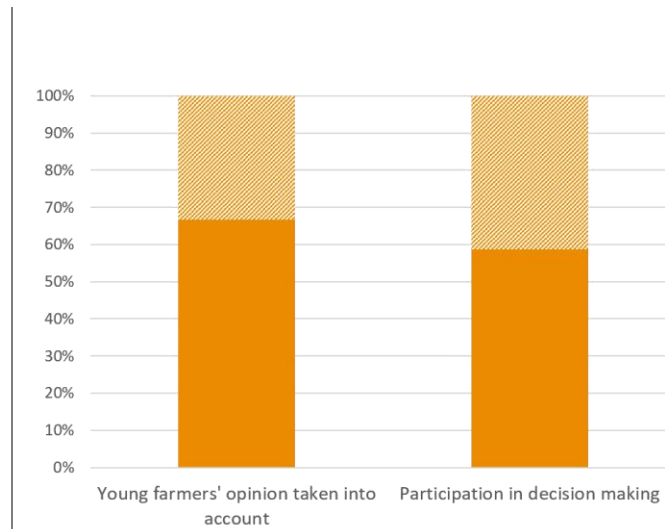
Baseline (2013)	2016									
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cooperative is open to anyone who meets the conditions for membership, without distinction made on the basis of gender; 	<p>In the below chart, scores have been normalized for 2 questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are women as farmers and their opinion equally respected/taken into account than men (within the FO)? (Score 0-2) How do women participate in decision making within the FO? (0-4) <p>In both cases, an average score of all respondents has been taken and shown as a percentage out of 100% (so a score of 1 on the first question would show as 50%)</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Normalized Scores for 2016</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Question</th> <th>Score (0-4)</th> <th>Percentage (0-100%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Women's opinion taken into account</td> <td>~1.34</td> <td>~67%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Participation in decision making</td> <td>~2.56</td> <td>~64%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Question	Score (0-4)	Percentage (0-100%)	Women's opinion taken into account	~1.34	~67%	Participation in decision making	~2.56	~64%
Question	Score (0-4)	Percentage (0-100%)								
Women's opinion taken into account	~1.34	~67%								
Participation in decision making	~2.56	~64%								

Discussion

- While it is very challenging to compare against the baseline due to very limited data, it nonetheless appears that, in the baseline, farmers expressed a willingness to include women in the cooperative. In 2016, women tend to have an average role in FO decision-making and inclusion in decision-making
- No baseline farmer data is available, but the FGD reveals that gender equality was not well established in 2013. The CIF indicate that the female participation score is 37% (in 2014), and 39% in 2016
- During the FGD, women report that they are now more integrated into cooperatives' activities, and specifically play a role in cashier services. However, their representation in the board of directors is still low, and they are not decision makers

3b. Youth status and empowerment

Baseline (2013)	2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No information was present in the baseline documentation on the role of youth. 	<p>In the below chart, scores have been normalized for 2 questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are young farmers and their opinion equally respected/taken into account as older ones (within the FO)? (Score 0-2) How do young farmers participate in decision making within the FO? (0-4) <p>In both cases, an average score of all respondents has been taken and shown as a percentage out of 100% (so a score of 1 on the first question would show as 50%)</p>



Discussion

- While it is not possible to compare against the baseline, respondents in 2016 indicated that youth had a reasonable (if limited) degree of influence in FOs in terms of their opinions being taken into account, though their overall participation in decision-making activities remains even more limited
- No baseline farmer data, but the FGD reveal that youth were not engaging well in the rice sector before 2014. The CIF indicates that 40% of cooperative members are not older than 30 years.
- During the FGD farmers report youth engagement is good, and it seems youth are really benefiting from engaging in the farming of rice



5. Structural Change Agenda

a. Background

The following information provides a high-level overview of the current landscape in the rice production and trade in the DRC:

International trade:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imported rice consumption is high. Imports from Asia are cheap and of higher quality than local production • Annually 140 000 tonnes of Pakistani rice is imported for a value of nearly 50 million euros (this constitutes more than 30% of the expenditure of the DRC for the import of foodstuffs)
Production:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture accounted for 43% of GDP in 2009, involving some 57% of the workforce • Production labor is intensive, farm inputs are expensive or scarce, there is limited access to credit, and only recently has there been some limited mechanization • High production cost compared to imports • FO are weak and (largely) inexperienced in business

Value chain:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic market unstructured and uncoordinated • Wholesale prices are nearly triple world prices in some places (Kinshasa) • Processing is expensive (poor technology, hulling machines), poor quality • Marketing is difficult due to poor quality compared to imports, low working capital, poor processing infrastructures
Policy and government:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient commitment from the DRC government to support the sector, which is reflected in the absence of concrete measures to encourage the development of supporting value chains

Link to pilots:

- Pilot in Ruzizi

For more information see the VECO SCAF DRC and VECO SCAR DRC

b. Pathway of change

Theory of Change

The sub-SCAs are:

1. SCA1: The rice sector is better organized and more inclusive
2. SCA2: Producers are organized in a specialized and efficient manner to better respond to market requirements, and are united in provincial and national superstructures for focused advocacy
3. SCA3: National policies are more favorable to domestic rice production

B1: Pathway 1: The rice sector is better organized and more inclusive

- 2014: 731 t of white rice sale by cooperatives in South Kivu province;
- 2015: 1110 t of white rice and 188t of paddy rice sale by cooperatives in South Kivu province;
- 2016: 1311 t of white rice sale by cooperatives in South Kivu province;
- Percentage of farmers who are selling their rice through cooperatives is 78%;
- Supply contract signed between ADPA and Bralima for 650t in 2015. Additional contract given for a surplus of 200t in 2016;
- Multi-actors meetings held by provincial government on rice sector in Uvira, Bukavu, Kalemie.

Main conclusions:

- Rice sale quantity increase along years (from 2014 to 2016);
- Percentage of farmers who are selling their harvested rice through cooperative increase (from 0% to 78% of members);
- Some environmental factors improved to influence market accessibility.

B2: Pathway 2: Producers are organized in a specialized and efficient manner to better respond to market requirements, and are united in provincial and national superstructures for focused advocacy

- In 2014, only \$11,320 was obtained for credit from COOPEC Kalundu;
- In 2015, \$50,000 was obtained ;
- In 2016, \$60,000 was obtained and another \$17,000 was added recently, bringing the total amount for the year to \$77,000

- A number of diverse agricultural credit suppliers (COOPEC Kalundu, Luminosity) are interested in rice sector. Procredit has also recently shown interest in the cooperatives. They have committed to provide loans from 2017 onwards. They are currently opening an office in Bukavu. Two rice hulling machines have been put in place to meet market requirements.

Main conclusions:

- Some observed increases in the total amount outstanding, and the number of actors willing to extend credit to farmers
- The credit amount increased from 2014 to 2016
- The number of credit suppliers increased (in 2014, only COOPEC Kalundu; in 2015-16 COOPEC Kalundu and Luminosity). The agricultural credit suppliers' diversity can help avoid a monopoly and reduce the interest rate.

B3: Pathway 3: National policies are more favorable to domestic rice production

- Meetings held by the government for a rice project implementation with the World Bank;
- Ongoing procedures for subsidizing fertilizers;
- Free taxes claim ongoing for rice inputs production.
- Agreement between FO Network (FOPAC) and the provincial ministry of agriculture for a participatory planning of actions.

Main conclusion

- The changes for this SCA pathway are still ongoing.

c. Observed changes in outcomes at SCA level

Main conclusion SCA1: *The rice sector is better organized and more inclusive*

VECO aimed to improve farmer's income in the rice value chain. As part of this, VECO has made a number of contributions, mainly in terms of financial and strategic empowerment to facilitate market access. Scaling the successful results to the policy level still remains on the agenda.

Main conclusion SCA2: *Producers are organized in a specialized and efficient manner to better respond to market requirements, and are united in provincial and national superstructures for focused advocacy*

VECO has made an effort to structure the agribusiness through farmers' organizations. It has successfully linked a representative cooperative (ADPA) to the Bralima market. The improvement in rice quality was realized through equipment and training, and VECO played an essential role in providing access to finance, and to rice hulling equipment. Farmers integrated VECO's vision for their real needs, and contributed to the access to, and implementation of, the processing package.

Main conclusion SCA3: *National policies are more favorable to domestic rice production*

Obtaining rice sector tax reductions or breaks is one goal which has not been achieved. In general, this SCA has been less successful due to the political crisis. In spite of these developments, there are many processes on-going to influence policies on domestic rice production, many involving others partners (ELAN, WORLD BANK).

Observed evidence from indicators (source: SCAR)

SCAR result indicators:

SCA	2014 (baseline)	2016 (target)	Comments	Result
SCA1: The rice sector is better organized and more inclusive				
1.1. The share of the local rice market held by small scale farmers in local markets was increased by at least 200% (SSD)	2014: · In South Kivu: 731 T was sold by cooperatives · In North Kivu: Beni: white rice 198 t and 15 t of Bapere seed 13.8 T sold by cooperatives		2015: · 1 110 T of rice and 188 T of paddy sold by cooperatives of South Kivu; · 756 T white rice, 47 paddy t and 35.2 t of seed in North Kivu	Achieved
1.2. Share (%) of small farmers and peasants organized economically to bundle their produce on the market (SSD - IMM)	2014: · 4 cooperatives in South Kivu and 21 rice farmers groups in North Kivu. · The % varies depending on the production area at Rwenzori 70 to 85%, Beni Mbau 26-30% and 11% Bapere		2015: · South Kivu: 78% of cooperative members have collectively sold their products on the market. Some co-ops do not manage to bundle. · North Kivu: the situation varies according to production areas: Rwenzori to 90%, Beni Mbau 30 to 40%.	Achieved
1.3. New and updated factors in institutional environment which can stimulate inclusiveness of small farmholders (SSD - IMM) at: 1. Government level: through laws & policy documents 2. Service provider level: public and private services (BDS)	2014: · In South Kivu, a contract between Bralima and ADPA · In North Kivu, a contract Brasimba-LOFEPACO · Opening up the Bapere sector by rehabilitating the Butembo-Manguredjipa road under the agricultural campaign funded by the Congolese government · Opening up the Rwenzori sector by rehabilitating the axis Mwenda-Lume-Kasindi by WHH (eg AAA)		2015: · In South Kivu Agri-ProFocus prompted the creation of a collective of rice cooperatives (UCOOPRU). · Coopeckalundu gave solidarity credits to farmers, 650t A contract signed in Bralima. · The provincial government has held several meetings on: · The rice sector in Uvira Bukavu; Kalemie with the World Bank. · In North Kivu, the NGO WHH continued rehabilitation of other roads in the Rwenzori area. SENASEM and INERA / YANGAMBI technically based seed multipliers and testing of new varieties	Achieved
SCA2: Producers are organized in a specialized and efficient manner to better respond to market requirements, which are united in provincial and national superstructures for focused advocacy				
2.1. Number and nature of credit sources granted for the processing and marketing: from 0 to 8	2014: · In North Kivu, LOFEPACO received a credit of \$ 42,800 Buffer Fund and other CECAFEP to honor its commitments with		2015: · In South Kivu, ADPA received two marketing credits of \$ 50,000. \$ 80,000 was given immediately after the repayment of the first loan of \$ 30,000 to Luminosity to supply rice to	Achieved

	<p>Brasimba (including warehouse receipt to support rice farmers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · In South Kivu, the ADPA obtained commercial credit of \$ 10,000 to the Coopec Kalundu and Coosoproda \$ 1,320 as production credit. · Luminosity expressed interest to finance campaigns rice, following a recent visit but it could not yet be translated into real actions. 		<p>the Bralima. And Coopec-Kalundu provided \$ 12,000 credit through the members of ADPA as group lending.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Coopec-Kalundu gave a credit of \$ 5,174 to Coosoproda in two solidarity groups as credit campaign. · In North Kivu, 3 types of appropriations: the normal credit (with CECAFEP, Buffer Fund and Mutual Solidarity / MUSO), the warehouse receipt credit, and inputs credits (mainly used). For regular credits there are about 17, but different sizes.. 	
2.2. loan repayment rate: 100%	<p>2014:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 100% for LOFEPACO 		<p>2015:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · South Kivu: 100% refund for the credit of \$ 30,000 Luminosity with interest; it reinforced the confidence such that it led to the granting of second credit worth \$ 50,000. · North Kivu: 100% 	Achieved
2.3. Diversification of quality of products marketed	<p>2014:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Efficient huller of ZACCARIA mark installed by LOFEPACO to Lubiriha with ability to separate the whole grain from the broken rice and rice husks · Production of parboiled rice by cooperatives accompanied by APADER to Mwenda · Collaboration with Humura Investments Ltd to conduct research on the use of rice husks in the form of briquettes 		<p>2015:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · South Kivu: Two powerful shellers separator with whole rice and broken rice commissioned in Brazil following a 50% cofounding scheme with Cordaid funds for two cooperatives (COOPABA and ADPA). · Now some entrepreneurs are testing to see if they can use rice husks as fuel in brick firing kilns. · North Kivu: Paddy rice, white rice, rice seed, rice bran 	Achieved
SCA3: National policies are more favorable to domestic rice production				
3.1. Number and nature of measures taken by the State to encourage and protect farming in general and local rice in particular: at least 3	<p>2014:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Rehabilitation of Butembo-Manguredjipa road, under the crop is likely to have positive effects on the marketing of rice produced in the area Bapere 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Agriculture and environment are two of the priorities the government of the DRC program for the 2016 fiscal year, according to political statements · In November the cost of state services involved in the export of agricultural products has been limited 	Partially Achieved

	· The province South Kivu held several meetings in preparation for a major project with the World Bank, which will start by the year 2016.		to 0.25% of the FOB value, by the Minister of Finance.	
3.2. Exemption of import duties on inputs of the rice sector:	2014: · [0]		2015: · Steps Underway by Elan from the provincial governor to facilitate importers of fertilizers reducing administrative procedures, which will allow importers to save time.	not Achieved
3.3. Increased budgets of state services:	2014: · Agriculture Budget <4%		2015: · Agriculture Budget <4%	not Achieved

Support Strategies:

Support Strategy	• Summary of activities	Achieved
NURTURING THE DEBATE & AGENDA SETTING		
Organization, with partners, to launch a program workshop in North and South Kivu to highlight the strategic changes and refocusing the approach for cooperatives as actors in the sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The workshop brought together stakeholders and actors in the rice sector, who have received explanations of the new approach, the various challenges identified and what the defined roles are for each actor to promote the sector 	Achieved
Participation in the CARG (Conseil Agricole Rural de Gestion), the formulation of local development plans in the Decentralised Territorial Entities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These meetings provide opportunities for exchange with authorities on the major constraints in the sector, of communication on the approach, the fundamental options of the program, the positioning of the speakers according to defined priorities, and shared responsibilities. 	Achieved
Elaboration of terms of reference of the sub-coordination on land matters of the Far North Kivu (a consultation platform initiated by the provincial government) and commitment to the work group "land security and promising agricultural sectors"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempting to turn what was designed by UN Habitat / Province to inform the authorities in a space of dialogue and political consultation on security of tenure. 	Not tested as it is not in Ruzizi pilots
Facilitating a workshop on the future of farmers' organizations after emergence of specialized cooperatives. What kind of relationship? What roles?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The workshop was an opportunity to redefine the roles of farmer organizations in a changing world, the choices made by the FO as a complementary role to specialized cooperatives 	Achieved

A value chain analysis, undertaken with the support of Christ Vansteenkiste (headquarters rice specialist), offers strategic choices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A short clear plan, medium and long term is the result, which was discussed and concretized with cooperative partners (see next line). 	Achieved
Workshop with cooperative partners in the Ruzizi plain strategic choices to make for greater inclusiveness in the market with better quality rice produced by two new hullers ordered from Brazil.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Plan is available and was presented to the mission of the World Bank 	Achieved
Develop a system of access to inputs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaders of cooperatives, sellers of inputs and these traders met for a retreat to develop a sustainable system of access to inputs. The IMF agreed to give credit to input dealers and farmers, if cooperatives agree to produce for a trader. The production contract will serve as collateral, and traders expressed willingness to buy local. However, production is still insufficient to meet their demand. 	Achieved
BUILDING EVIDENCE		
Developing a market research strategy in South Kivu with a doctoral student at the University of Liège and a request for funding from Cordaid to fund this study (alongside other activities).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The objective of the study is to quantify the market needs. The final reports are expected for the end of 2016. 	Not tested, no information available
Study on the rice distribution system in the city of Beni, Butembo and the area (identification of different markets' "nature and scope").	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This study was conducted in supermarkets, boarding schools and convents, involving storekeepers and women vendors of rice in retail markets. In these studies, we have identified various potential markets, and evaluated the potential demand and the requirements of these different markets. 	Not tested as it is not in the Ruzizi pilots
EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION (MARKET WHAT WE DO)		
Creating a dedicated website for VECO-R.D.Congo: www.vecordcongo.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication Platform in French on the work in agricultural value chains (feature articles) 	Achieved
Creating a own Facebook page to VECO-R.D.Congo: www.facebook.com/VECORDCongo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication Platform in French on the work in agricultural value chains (condensed and visualized information), with almost 600 fans 	Achieved
Sharing the study report on the rice distribution system with partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that partners are aware of the market size 	not tested
Interviews broadcast on the occasion of the Day of Rice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inquiry of the authorities regarding the non-implementation of the national strategy for the development of rice. 	not tested
EXPANDING AND USING OR NETWORK		

First reflection with FOPAC South Kivu and North Kivu on the structure of the rice sector within the provincial federation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The thinking revolved around how the industry must focus on the provincial level from the base to form a force and give the benefit to producers 	Achieved
Organizational audit of existing cooperatives in South Kivu.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The aim is to develop a specific support plan for each cooperative. 	not tested
LEARNING & KNOWLEDGE SHARING		
Organization of monitoring missions and assessment followed on field activities of discussion meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The field missions are moments of exchange and training on the job, sharing the challenges faced during the implementation of activities and reflections on adjustments to make. 	Achieved
Organization of quarterly consultations with the PA rice partners to share experiences in the implementation of the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VECO organizes exchange meetings with all implementing partners on the progress of activities, successes and constraints that require advocacy. 	Achieved
3 meetings to harmonize approaches with IFDC in the context of synergy and complementarity in the rice sector. Development of a joint plan for IFDC-VECO collaboration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing of activities, identifying the links of synergy and complementarity, division of roles, and developing a collaborative plan. 	Not tested as this was only done in North Kivu
Collaboration with SENASEM in overseeing quality seed multiplication activities and seed formation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SENASEM provides training for technicians and seed multipliers, guides the selection of seeds according to each agro-ecological environments, supervises seed fields, and tests and certifies seeds 	Not tested as this was only done in North Kivu
VECO presentation of experiences and cooperative partners in the Ruzizi plain in a national conference on the rice sector organized by Eucord in Kinshasa.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involves private sector players and representatives of the authorities involved. The conference report was shared. 	Not tested
Organization of farmers' field schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After a brief information session, agronomists and cooperative members were selected, and participatory demonstrations of SRI were made in the field from a member of the Agri-Coopec. The technology is based on transplanting very young seedlings, weeding every 10-15 days, water control and fertilizer application and substantive coverage. A follow-up meeting with other members of Cooperatives is organized by the agricultural cooperative to evaluate and compare the results with the traditional method. 	Achieved
Cooperatives were transformed into viable businesses managed democratically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing a 3-day training on cooperative governance for 23 participants (Board of Presidents, members of the CC and the executive team). These leaders are trained on their roles and responsibilities as well 	Achieved

	<p>as the delimitation of powers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -240 members of 8 cooperatives are trained in leadership -8 workshops to develop a gender policy <p>Young men have expressed their apprehension towards women before training, and understood that they must treat women on equal terms.</p>	
Strengthen the capacity of cooperatives in marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The advisory support activities in the cooperatives have led to increased knowledge about the following topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Negotiation Contract and research market -Planning Of the Management cooperative activities and control activities -Constructions Of Business Model Canvas (BMC) -Development of strategic and operational plan -An introduction to the development of the business plan, a Marketing Plan, and a Financial Plan 	Partially Achieved
The rice market of the plain is organized according to the needs of consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A study by a doctoral student at the University of Liège is ready and will be shared in 2016 	Not tested, no information available
OTHER		

Evidence from partners (Source: key informant interviews)

CORDAID has provided some support to VECO, in order to strengthen VECO’s presence in South Kivu, and to support the players in the rice value chain in that area. This support has helped to develop a positive perception of the different actors who generally perceived each other as rivals instead of allies. The project therefore helped bring diverse actors together (land chiefs, producers, transporters, processors, commission agents, consumers, etc.), and enabled them to converge around a cross-border vision on the trading of agricultural produce between Burundi and the DRC. VECO has thus stimulated a new inclusive approach in the RUZIZI pilots.

Both VECO and CORDAID emphasize an inclusive approach to market-oriented agriculture. These two important elements in the CORDAID approach have been achieved on the one hand through the involvement of all stakeholders in the chain, and on the other hand by linking with large consumers (breweries, large distributors of table rice). Above all, this has been done through production based on consumer criteria. Simultaneously, VECO is developing skills in the organization of the agricultural sector for greater inclusivity and to move towards a structured market. It is important to strengthen the capacities of farmers' organizations and other actors in this new inclusive approach. Support for all these

actors without exclusion is important, including the private sector, because it is an important segment of the chain.