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External Evaluation of Kenya BDS / EAGA Avocado Program in Kandara Division

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1.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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1.1 Preface

Kenya BDS requested for an external evaluation of avocado Market linkage Program at Kandara division, Maragwa district in March 2006.

The evaluation was carried out by Mathew Macharia (an independent consultant).

All efforts have been made to preserve objectivity and confidentiality. Observations and recommendations including the way forward are presented in the relevant sections here in.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Blue Rhino Consultant has done quite well as far as the creation of awareness within the avocado growing community is concerned. Practically every farmer within the program's area of operation acknowledges the existence of the program. It is also widely accepted that the program has added reasonable value in the avocado farming and continue to play an important role in regulating the Market directly and indirectly. This is a potential that should be harnessed to strengthen the program.

Orchard farmers in phase II and III have sited the following as the grievances facing them; high cost of tree pruning and spraying, high cost of picking as well as disorganized picking schedules, wastage and losses due to delays in fruit collection and delays in payments of sales as well refunds for over-deductions. This points at the fact that the poor perception and farmers discontent is slowly growing and transcending the new phases. This is basically the result of poor recording systems for effective management of operations and poor coordination of the orchard management activities. The immediate way forward here is to fine-tune the coordination of fruit picking, collection and payment activities, supplemented by thorough education to the farmers on the importance of every activity and the need to use professionalism in every aspect despite the relative cost.

The MIS development and the records necessary for the effective management of the program at the program level are clearly missing. Documents such as members' registers, members' attendance registers, cash and banking registers, are not in place, which in itself raises the level of inefficiency. The fruit collection/sales records in place are not effectively utilized and are not maintained by all the GMOS across the board. Similarly, the credit/loan records being used do not capture the roles, responsibilities and liabilities of various parties clearly. Finally the monitoring and evaluation tool, which is mainly the operation plans for each staff is non-existent. Without the individual GMO operation plans which aggregate to the overall area operation plans, the projections will never really be met.

The necessary financial management system is lacking at the program level. Money matters being as sensitive as they always are, need to be treated with utmost care by maintaining clear up to date records that are used for reconciliation purposes at every

stage. By not deliberately developing mechanisms to manage finances and reconciling the same satisfactorily and at short intervals, mistrust has set in.

Although the 'fall-out' of some members to join other exporters is a sign of discontent, the consultant/researcher would like to treat this as a window of opportunity and recommends that the program embrace competition as a healthy business strategy where co-existence thrives to offer the necessary checks and balances. Competition, be it from sun ripe or brokers is a wake up call to the Program managers to polish up their act.

As a consultant, my overall opinion is that Blue Rhino has performed poorly and the commercialization of the program is far from being achieved. The group information management tools need not just be developed but implemented urgently in order to facilitate the necessary reconciliation and decision-making. For Blue Rhino to turn around the situation she has to re-focus on capacity building by either re-training the current personnel afresh or hiring new staff who understand group dynamics and group management better if the program commercialization objective is to be achieved.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Data for the evaluation was collected from April 3rd – April 20th 2006 at the program areas in Kandara division, Thika district and Gatanga division, Thika district. The consultant developed questionnaires and Focus group discussion guides to use as guidelines for evaluation. Not all of the 14 original groups were visited. This is because out of the 14 groups only 8 are still actively participating in the program activities, with the other 6 having disintegrated. 7 of the 8 still in the program were interviewed while representatives of at least 4 of the 6 that have left the program were also interviewed. Focus groups interviewed included the following; Karia-ini, Mithiga, Gitige, Kiria-ini, Waitwa A, Kawendo B, Irigu-ini Mambo, Kaha-ini B, Mithanduku-ini.

The following stakeholders were (among others) interviewed individually;

Blue Rhino- R Mwaniki, F. Mwaura, and all GMOS

EAGA; Mr. Peter Orangi and Mr George Solomon

IDEAL; Mr Samuel Mutuma and Mr Peter Ndambiri

MOA; DEO Mr. JK Ndungu and crops officer, Mr Mwaura

Local councilor: Mr. Samuel Ngugi

Farmers; Over 100 participating, over 50 dropouts and 8 non-participating avocado farmers.

Selection of the farmers to be interviewed was done randomly.

For a detailed view of the evaluation activities and tools applied see Appendix I

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The Avocado commercial Market linkage program involves farmers in Kandara Division, Maragwa District. The program is concentrated in Ngararia and Muruka locations with recent expansion to Kihumbu-ini in Gatanga Division.

Although these areas have been experiencing prolonged dry spells in recent years, the evaluation was carried out during a very rainy season with heavy rains pounding the area making the generally dilapidated roads impassable and general transport a nightmare.

The wet, unpredictable weather condition while generally speaking had the unavoidable effect of slowing down the evaluation exercise did not in any other way affect the data collection exercise or the quality of this evaluation report.

5.0 EVALUATION FINDINGS

5.1.1 Program perception by the original 14 groups.

Out of the original 14 groups, 6 groups (namely Kawendo A, Kaharo, Kahai-ini B, Kimundi, Kariko, Waitwa C) have left the program.

Members of these defunct groups feel the program adds value to participating farmers.

According to Naomi Waithera a former treasurer of Keriko s.h.g, the program disorganization / confusion in the Market linkage coordination is the main reason that led to the disintegration of her group. “ On 31/3/05 Naomi alone delivered 198 pieces of hass and 128 fuete (refer to delivery v(No 104137) which has not been paid to date.”

As a treasurer Naomi found herself in a state of loss trying to explain the reasons why the 2 weeks agreed period between fruit delivery and payment was not being honored. Another issue was the discrepancy between expected payments and actual received. The deductions were not clear. This points at poor understanding of the co-guarantee mechanism and the credit/loan recoveries. Other members of these former groups who were interviewed included; Bernard Karanja (Kahoro g), Laben Maina (Kawendo A), Hellen Munyora (Kawendo A), Vivian Wambui (Kimundi), Paul Kamau (Kahai-ini B) among many others.

Some of the statements made by most of the dropouts were;

“Program was good as it helped us improve the fruit quality”,

“Program saved us from the greedy brokers”.

“Kbds helped us in raising the price of the fruit – even brokers are now offering more than they used to”

“Program has restored faith in the value of the avocado tree since we can now look upon it for the household small financial needs”

“Program frustrates the farmer due to the stringent requirements of sorting /grading”

“Program was good in raising the production and quality of the fruits but uncertainties in picking, collection and payment frustrates the small farmer ”

“Promises made by kbds e.g free spraying/chemical and a donation of ksh 7B to benefit the avocado farmers not honored”

Asked if they are willing to rejoin the program, over 80% of the interviewees responded positively but on condition that the market linkage coordination is streamlined to the level that the farmers can also make their financial commitments with certainty.

An analysis of the data and statements made by the dropouts bring out several concerns.

One is that the initial participants included the normal group of innovators the majority of whom were opportunists looking for easy and quick money. These need to and should actually have been dropped from the program but diplomatically. These are farmers who took statements made by Kbds during the very initial program introductory meetings to literally mean free cash handouts and free services in crop husbandry.

The departure therefore should be taken as an opportunity to strengthen the remaining program participants and re-organise dropouts who were innocent victims of circumstances.

Some of the dropouts openly admit that they were misled by a few disgruntled Members. They are willing to rejoin but with better selection of group members.

Mr. Joseph Nguutha Njuguna who has 54 trees and a former member of Kariko says “Our group died with the death of Mr. Mwaura who was the secretary, the other members cannot be trusted with the farmers money, Group managers should help us form another group but select only those are very honest to join the group”.

This points at poor group formation procedure where possibly the self-selection concept did not work very well, and then the leadership failed the members.

Blue Rhino should work out a program of reconstituting the old groups by way of educating members on the self-selection concept, use of guided democracy in elections and consider mergers like in the case of Waitwa A that has good members who joined from Waitwa C.

Out of the 8 original groups that are still participating in the program, I met with 7 and some of the statements made included the following;

“Kbds saved as from years of exploitation and abuse by brokers who used to offer 50cts and sometimes 10cts for an avocado”.

“The program has made our work worthwhile by connecting us with a reliable market”.

“We may not have gotten the 5/= per fruit as promised but we get more than the 1/= highest ever paid by the brokers”.

“The program has raised the quality of fruits and production as well but the financial frustrations are embarrassing participants”.

“Program is good but the Exporter takes advantage of farmer’s poor knowledge of fruit sizes; Exporter should pay pickers to avoid the wastage due to grading/sorting”.

“Exporter should take farmers seriously by paying them on time”.

Cecilia Nganga says, “The program has made it easier for us to sell the fruits in good time, there is however too much confusion in fruit picking and collection which leads to wastage and great loss to farmers”.

“The Program should offer much higher prices to compensate the improved quality and delays in payments.”

“Our chairman delays the remittance of payments to farmers”.

“The prices are stable compared to the brokers”

“ We believe with time we shall be able to sell our fruits directly to the international market since the quality is now as per Euro gap specifications”.

“We need copies of the contracts signed so as to enforce our rights as provided in the contracts”.

From the analysis, the program has done quite well particularly in terms of crop husbandry, but the market linkage coordination needs improvement.

5.1.2 Perception in Phase II & III

3 groups and 1 from Phase II and III respectively were involved in the focus group discussions with a good number of farmers participating in individual interviews.

The Phase II groups with high concentration in the Muruka/Kiranga zone rate the program highly. “Since the program came, the brokers treat us with respect”.

“A long journey starts with a single step, we see our sons achieving the dream of even flying abroad to market the fruits directly in the future”.

“The cost of crop husbandry in terms of pricing and spraying is higher than what we expected, but we are seeing the results in higher yield and fruit quality”.

Members of Waitwa A s.h.g group who are mainly elderly farmers feel that the service providers ignore farmers with few trees. “Exporters should use their own trained ‘pickers’ to harvest and avoid rejects”.

“Exporter should pay service providers from source to avoid quarrels with farmers resulting from delayed payments”.

“Mistrust between farmers and EAGA results from non-payment of fruits delivered and delays in refunding over deductions.

4 self-help groups (Kagika, Kibuu, Kahuma A & Kahuma B) have disintegrated under unclear circumstances. These are groups that left prior to repaying their loans in full.

Poor perception of the program is creeping into the phase II and III areas owing to the problems being experienced in the market linkage coordination”.

Management should ensure proceeds from the sale of fruits are remitted to the farmers within the agreed period or earlier.

New area of Kihumbu-ini group of Mithanduku-ini suffered their 1st set-back on their very 1st day of picking (20/3/06) when 2977 pieces but only 1781 pieces were picked on 27/3/06 – 7 days after picking.

5.1.3 Perception by stakeholders

a.) EAGA

According to the program agronomist a Mr. Peter Orangi, there exists some reasonable mistrust between Blue Rhino and EAGA.

He is also of the opinion that the poor perception is as a result of mismanagement of changes introduced in the program particularly in Sept. 2004. These changes were mainly in the payment of pickers, sprayers and prunners. While the stakeholders thinking was commercialization of the programs farmers felt these changes were meant to raise their costs and exploitation.

The crop husbandry aspect has been done well but group management mechanism seems to be the problem. Production is good and high but there is a lot of side selling (to brokers) thereby reducing the actual deliveries to EAGA.

“Kbds has contributed towards erosion of trust between farmers and EAGA”. Asked to elaborate this, Peter thinks kbds and Blue Rhino promises farmers high prices and free services only for farmers to assume its EAGA who frustrate.

George of EAGA concedes that indeed the fruit quality has improved commendably having moved from 65% good in 2004 to 93% as at March 2006.

EAGA is now skeptical about the success of the program and strongly feels the group dynamics are letting the program down. Farmers misconceived the crop husbandry activities particularly the credit aspect due to poor explanation by the consulting managers.

EAGA feels the initial education to farmers on the role of EAGA was not well explained.

George feels the group management on the ground is now working well but they are passing the buck to EAGA causing considerable mistrust between farmers and EAGA.

George however conceded that EAGA owes some groups some money due to reconciliation problems, but whose payments have now been approved by the Board and are being processed.

Since EAGA is processing farmers payments based on the collections at the farm gate, payment vouchers should reflect details as at time of collection for ease of reconciliation. A copy of the payment vouchers should be delivered to the farmers as advice and evidence that the payment has been credited to their bank accounts.

b). IDEAL

Ideal being the strategic partner in the provision of pruning and spraying services have trained 6 service providers since joining the consortium in May 2005. Ideal is however aware that the 6 service Providers can't adequately service the otherwise wide area (Geographically).

Ideal had projected to train 6 service providers for each location but the farmers took too long to sign service contracts.

Ideal also feels that the farmers are still ignorant on the role played by trained professionals and that's why farmers particularly in Ngararia zone have been relying on 'quarks' who charge 20/= to prune trees using crude tools (Pangas) instead of using a trained professional at 50/= per tree.

Ideal however thinks all is not lost and it's possible to streamline the service provision by training many more service providers who should form an association to regulate themselves. This needs to be supplemented by education to farmers by the GMOS.

Ideal has 2 concerns: The loan recoveries are worrying with only 5 groups having made part payments out of 63 groups that owe ideal money.

Secondly, the security arrangement at the stores is wanting.

Ideal should actually be allowed to take charge of the crop husbandry directly with their personnel taking full charge of the stores and the pruning, grafting and spraying activities.

c.) MOA

MOA officers were instrumental in Marketing of the Program/awareness creation during the pilot phase. Overtime, however and as a result of perceived farmers dissatisfaction, the MOA officers feel the field should just be allowed to operate in a liberal manner with the forces of a free market enterprise left to determine the business partnering.

To quote Mr. J.K Ndungu (DEO) “Brokers take all fruits including what the Exporter rejects, while the Exporter normally takes like 50% of any harvested fruit”.

“The kbds program has been overshadowed by the broker and will be eclipsed unless the market linkage is improved”. “Brokers are a necessary evil” “Brokers came to the aid of farmers during the prolonged dry spell by giving them money prior to maturity and harvesting of fruits”

The program has however added a lot of value to the fruit production by the small-scale farmers.

Since the exporter and the program have more resources than the broker has for carrying out business, in a free competitive environment, the exporter should win.

MOA objective remains the improvement of crop production and quality with the ultimate maximization of benefits to the farmers.

The group cohesion and particularly the self-policing against side selling have not worked due to the poverty status of most of the participating farmers. Brokers exploit this weakness.

5.1.4 Perception by other Local leaders.

According to councilor S. Ngugi “Farmers want to be involved in price determination.”

Peter Njuguna of Ngararia feels that “Flow of information and particularly communication breakdown between the farmers and the exporter can easily lead to the collapse of the program:

While these leaders and many others concede that the program has been of great value to the local farmers, there is a general consensus that the farmers need more education. Farmers need more know how in terms of grafting and spraying and why costs are relatively high. Farmers who operate agro-chemical business are skeptical about the success of the stores activity.

Many farmers who have not joined the program think the ones who are participating are not getting value for their inputs in terms of the time (handwork) and resources.

One non-participating farmer said “I am better off with Kshs. 1,000 from 1000 pieces sold to a broker and paid immediately so that I can pay my ‘pickers’ and other debts to live with the community in harmony than wait for Kshs. 3000 from the exporter not knowing when or whether I’ll be paid in full.

This points to the problems emanating from delays on paying farmers. The delay creates disharmony between the farmers and the farm workers ”.

5.2.0 Blue Rhino Consultant

1. Staffing:

a). M/s Rose Mwaniki

As the overall program manager, Rose Mwaniki has been overseeing the implementation of program activities by the 4 technical officers based at Ngararia.

Reports on the ground indicate that Rose has been instrumental on shaping the program from inception to its current level.

While the 4 technical officers feel that Rose has continuously provided them with adequate support, the farmers particularly in Phase I & II would have preferred increased direct interaction with her.

This indicates that the GMOS have not fully satisfied the farmers in handling/responding to their concerns. It’s evident that the time she dedicates to the field activities is not enough.

It's advisable that she spends more time with the field staff to support them as well as monitor closely the progress being made towards achieving individual and overall program objectives.

The daily reports made by the GMOS may not be adding real value as otherwise they would if they were done monthly with parallel details of year to date projected achievements. Daily and weekly reports are recommended at the local level but to be aggregated monthly and used for proper monitoring and control of the program objectives.

b). Field Coordinator (Mr. Francis Mwaure)

The Coordinator portrays good understanding of areas geographically and fruit farming politics.

Information from the ground indicates he commands good respect among the technical officers and farmers. He has cultivated a reasonably good working relationship with all the program staff.

His role should however be spelt out more clearly to ensure he represents the overall program manager acceptably in the eyes of the farmers.

Unverified talk (rumor) of misuse of grants – meant for the farmers, by the consultant weighs heavily on him particularly in Kawendo/Ngararia zone.

Francis needs training in group dynamics and management.

He does not trust the exporter “Exporter seems to be teaming up with the broker to frustrate the program, otherwise why give area brokers orders to deliver hass before it matures, yet the undersize delivered is not rejected”.

Francis has potential and capacity to lead the technical team but needs more than the 5 or so days (per month) that the lead consultant is doing currently.

c). GMOS (Charity Nyaguthii, Joseph Gatimu and Zipporah Mwathi.

The 3 GMOS positively identify with the avocado farmers and command good respect at group levels.

While all the 3 have good academic backgrounds and a bias in agriculture and horticulture, they evidently would do with some additional training in group management skills and general group dynamics. My assessment is that all the three

have focused clearly on Market linkage coordination (i.e. picking and collection) at the expense of all other important program activities.

Their main task seems to be the fruit collection where they have to physically move with the collecting truck at the expense of all other tasks.

It's advisable that they design methods of getting feedback on the daily collections from the groups without necessarily being there physically. This is possible only if the groups are strengthened to handle their affairs commercially and the collection route is clearly designed with joint efforts between the farmers and the exporter (collector). This will release the GMOS from the messengerial duties that they are doing currently to other meaningful tasks.

Blue Rhino effectiveness

Background information in the groups in Phase I is quite sketchy. All the GMOS are relatively new having been in the program for less than 1 year.

With no clear handing over reports or records showing the past group's business dealings with the program, its really quite difficult to consider any action on the previously dropped or disintegrated groups.

Thinking of reconstituting the old disintegrated groups would be an uphill task with very scanty details of the same. Although efforts to maintain group records are now evident, there is need to standardize the group management records that must be maintained by every GMO as a minimum e.g. maintain a group membership register with standard features like name of farmers, number of trees, specific location ID Number, address etc

The coordination of Orchard Management is rated as fair by most of the stakeholders interviewed. The recording particularly for traceability is good.

The commercialization aspect has however not come out well. Most of the farmers are still quite ignorant on the rationale of paying slightly more to say, IDEAL trained personnel to prune (at Kshs. 50 per tree).

The success of the commercialization program hinges on proper understanding of the farmers on the roles of the various stakeholders. Secondly this understanding has to be supported by the proper records at the farmer as well as group and GMO level with properly reconciling transaction records.

Poor understanding of the program strategies is manifested by the long delays in signing the chemical spray contracts with IDEAL, which affected spraying schedules and consequently the fruit production and quality. It's possible to achieve the desired understanding by devoting more resources to farmers' education before implementation of any new activity or change in operations. In my own opinion the lead consultant has the capacity to educate the farmers but lacks the necessary "time" resources.

Blue Rhino has evidently not been effective as far as the aspect of Marketing is concerned i.e fruit picking, collection and payment. This is the area where farmers feel strong frustrations. This being the activity that touches on money matters directly, is quite sensitive and any issues need to be resolved urgently.

While many groups complain of outstanding payments held by the exporter in respect of over –deductions in year 2005, clear records of the reconciliations giving the amounts in dispute were not availed to me.

EAGA concedes that they owe "some groups some money" but are not sure of the actual amounts involved: -

Example

The following groups are claiming to be owed the amounts shown below:

Group	Amount
Karia-ini	15,228.70
Gitige	9,600.00
Kawendo B	12,078.00
Mugaa-ini	3,030.00

While George Solomon of EAGA admits the general facts, he is non-committal on the actual amounts owed per group.

The consulting management by way of providing reconciled records should sort this out.

5.2.1 Management Information Systems.

Proper management information systems are seen to have been put in place and are working at the farmers and group level.

These have however not been replicated at the GMOS or Blue Rhino level. The GMOS should be maintaining proper records detailing business transactions with participating farmers.

Documentation particularly at the program level is wanting. It's not possible to readily access details on production and projections, credit and sales/payments.

This is because although the officers have one standardized delivery and repayment record its usage is not standardized.

Although all the officers understand the program expectations, the documented projection tools that are normally useful in appraising the staff performance and progress are missing. Control of the program performance towards achieving the set targets is therefore quite difficult.

As a result, the program officers seem to be working on Marketing what is 'available' as opposed to working towards achieving the annually set targets in terms of groups and individual farmers, no of trees, production, sales, credit etc.

The following is an extraction of the presumed GMOS status as at 30/4/06.

	GMO	NO. OF GRPS	MEMBERSHIP		TREES			PRODUCTION		
			PLANNED	ACT	PLANNED	ACT	VARIANCE	PLANNED	ACTUAL	VARIANCE
1	Charity N.	15	500	398	5,000	4,777	223	94,005	120,000	25,995
2	Gatimu J.	11	500	319	4,197	5,000	803	169,900	129,600	40,000
3	Zipporah M.	23	500	463	6,374	10,000	3,623	193,000	165,547	27,453
	Totals	46	1,500	1,180	15,348	20,000	4,649	456,905	415,147	93,448
	Annual Projections (as at Sept. 2006)		1,500			20,000			6,392,000	
	Variance		320			4,652			5,976,853	

From the above simple extract gotten from the incomplete production projections of the GMOS, It's clear that the crucial area of production is adversely affected by the current method of program implementation.

Trying to explain the very poor production (volume) against other parameters that seem to be moving towards the set targets; all the stakeholders are in agreement that there was some degree of being over-ambitious, prolonged dry-spell, immature trees (that are yet to produce as anticipated) with side selling and grading playing an insignificant role.

What is however clear is that the program can only manage possibly a 20% production level of the projected as at end of Phase III and not more.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Based on the above findings, the analysis of the data collected led to the following conclusions;

That the farmers and the community in general in all the areas covered by Phase II and III reflect reasonable knowledge of the program and respect the little value added by the program in Avocado farming. The program is still enjoying commendable good will within the community.

That the poor perception of the program in Phase I is transcending to Phase II and III but manifested differently. While the poor perception in Phase I can be attributed to misunderstanding of the program objectives by the original participating farmers who expected grants or a “donor-recipient” relationship, in the newer phases, the few farmers who were skeptical could be the result of their bad experience with the Market linkage activities (picking, collection and payments). The remedy here is to “fine-tune” the coordination.

The poor perception is however, not being aggravated by the dropouts deliberately, maliciously, or otherwise.

The relationship between the various program stakeholders is not commercially healthy. As such, therefore the consortium is not operating as a team for the benefit of the avocado farmers. It’s therefore important for Blue Rhino to invest in the reconstruction of trustworthy commercial relationships particularly among the four (4) main players i.e EAGA, IDEAL, Blue Rhino and Farmers.

That the MIS set by the program need to be reviewed urgently since as it is currently, it can’t be relied on for the effective management of the operations. The system is particularly wanting at the program level. The lines of authority and accountability are also not very clear. This is very pronounced in the stores activity where storekeepers do not know their real employer or whom they are answerable to.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS / WAY FORWARD.

In my own personal opinion and based on the aforesaid findings and conclusions, I wish to recommend the following strategies in revitalization of the program so as to put it back on course.

Blue Rhino consultant should reorganize her entire staff force in the field in the line of equipping all of them with improved group management skills.

This should include the application of standardized management information tools like group attendance registers, Members registers, banking and loans register to be maintained and reconciled at the program management level (by each technical officer). In reviewing the MIS records the loan application documents need to be redone creating provision for each potential beneficiary /Loanee to apply individually while all the other group members approve and sign as guarantors.

This will not only control default but will strengthen the group cohesion as each member realizes the importance of teamwork and “policing” one another.

All program officers should also prepare and operate individual annual work plans/budgets or projections, which act as control tools as well as their daily performance guidelines.

Individual and overall program objectives/targets will never be met unless all officers are managing the program activities with the help of clear projections that are constantly monitored and reviewed accordingly.

The Management team should prepare and strategize to do business competitively amidst other players (i.e. Sun Ripe, Brokers etc.) To emerge victorious, the management should immediately embark on a record reconciliation exercise that should clearly reconcile farmers, program and exporter records with the ultimate goal of sorting out the current discrepancies in production/ sales records. This has to be done as a priority and to the satisfaction of all parties.

The consulting manager should further redefine the roles of the staff and provide each with a job description with clear responsibilities and lines of authority.

The Market linkage coordination should be reviewed to include the following features.

Redesign and map out clear fruit collection routes with centers, which should be well understood and accessible by the fruit collectors and farmers. The collection centers should be strategically located and as few as possible to reduce logistical problems and time wastage.

Finally I recommend an immediate financial management audit of all the groups that have dropped from the program and all groups that are over 6 months old in the program.

8.0 APPENDIX

(i) Case Studies

6.1 Case Study 1

Name: Naomi Waithera

M/s Naomi is a former member of the program. Naomi has 95 avocado trees She was among the very 1st farmers who joined the program after the launch in 1993.

She was a member of Kariko Shg based in Ng'araria center.

Upon joining the program Naomi together with other farmers underwent a 6 months training on crop husbandry and group management. Asked why she was interested in the program in the 1st place Naomi says she was attracted by the high fruit prices promised at the time of outreach, free spray provided to the 'original' farmers, the good training offered and influence from friends.

Naomi was elected the Kariko shg treasurer.

Problems for Naomi and her group started immediately they started harvesting under the program schedule.

Naomi enumerated the following reasons for the collapse of her group and drop from the program

- 1) As the group treasurer she would spend her own money to perform group activities. The many meetings were also wasting too much of her time.*
- 2) On her very 1st fruit picking Naomi lost 181 fruits when EAGA failed to collect after picking. She also quotes a different occasion when she delivered 81 units but which were never paid*
- 3) Her worst experience was the delivery of 198 'hass' and 128 Fuete avocado on 31.3.05 which has not been paid to-date. She still holds a receipt for part of this delivery ie r/no 104137 and vehicle reg given as KAL 505Z*
- 4) As the treasurer Naomi found herself unable to advise her fellow farmers when payments received from EAGA differed with farmers records eg on 25th.4.05 she went to the bank to collect ksh 9700 only to find EAGA had remitted sh 7500 only.*

- 5) *According to her the 2 weeks waiting between the fruit delivery and payment to farmers was never honoured. This made many farmers to prefer the sh1 and sh 2 paid by the brokers in cash. Brokers are the farmers' sons and relatives who also give them financial support for other purposes.*
- 6) *She is offended by the program requirement that avocado grafting could only be sourced from one preferred farmer who was exploiting them*

N/B

Naomi says prior to joining EAGA she was dealing with KHE who treated her with respect and never frustrated her by failing to collect fruits or non-payment. She is not ready to rejoin the program unless the collection & payment system is streamlined.

6.2 Case Study 2

Case of Waitwa A shg

Waitwa s h group is among the original groups that were formed and joined the program in 1993. The group started with a membership of 30. 5 members have so far left the group but others have joined making a current membership of 29. The tree population per farmer range between 2 and 56. Although the group meets weekly, the attendance is quite poor averaging below 50%.

6.2.1 Group leadership

- 1) *This group is made up of farmers who are quite aged and appear to have limited capacity to really grasp the crop husbandry requirements well nor the physical strength to even move the fruit crates from their farms to the collection center.*
- 2) *The members have continuously relied on the GMOS to make all the planning ie when to prune, spray, pick, collect, etc. Thus when the exporter pulled out of the spraying and picking management, the group's management was left helpless. The group is facing spraying and picking problems because of disagreements with the service providers over payment rates.*
- 3) *Farmers took too long to accept the change of the chemical service providers and only signed the contract with IDEAL recently. This can be attributed to poor leadership and members age limitations. As a result the fruit quality and quantity is very poor.*
- 4) *Group leaders maintain very scanty group records ie minutes book, reg certificate, delivery and payment book which is not updated.*
- 5) *Group co-guarantee mechanism is non-existent.*

- 6) *Fruit collectors have not been very official at their work eg on 18th March 2006 they issued the farmers with a 'flier'(extraction from an exercise book) instead of the official delivery note*
- 7) *Group secretary who is allegedly their link with kbds has not been attending meetings*

6.2.2 Farmer's recommendations.

- I. That the exporter uses his own 'trained' pickers and pay them directly to ensure they pick the right fruit sizes*
- II. Exporter to streamline the collection and payment schedule to avoid delays that affect the farmer adversely.*
- III. KBDS to discuss and agree with farmers early in advance on introduction of new players like IDEAL.*

Conclusion

The groups perception appears to indicate that they would prefer being micro-managed. Group's future looks bleak because of the members' poor perception.

6.3 Case Study 3

Case of Kawendo Bsh group

Kawendo s h group is also among the original groups that joined the program in 1993. The group started with a membership of 25, which has grown to 30. Group holds weekly meetings that are well attended ie over 65% attendance.

6.3.1 Sample group records

- i. Members register*
- ii. Group constitution*
- iii. Minutes book*
- iv. Cash book*
- v. Delivery and payment record book*
- vi. Communication file etc*

6.3.2 Group leadership

- ✓ The group leadership is clearly very strong and well organized.*
- ✓ Group maintains individual members records in ledger formats. These reconcile to another general ledger that has the total group deliveries payments, loans, and deductions and farmers payments.*
- ✓ The group co-guarantee mechanism is working very well. The group is able to recover any payments made to exporter or other service providers on behalf of their members.*

- ✓ *Group has a working constitution which is applied in maintaining discipline eg Used to expel 3 members who were not adhering to the constitution*

6.3.3 Grievances

- *Sprayer's not careful and ethical requiring very keen supervision by the farmer.*
- *Delays in harvest resulting to theft by brokers from the farms*
- *Delays in collection resulting to losses which is not compensated*
- *Delays in payments and refund of over-deductions e.g an over-deduction of Ksh 12078 done last year is still outstanding with no clear advice on when payment will be effected.*

6.3.4 Recommendations

- ❖ *Manage program change more efficiently in future eg introduction of IDEAL affected the spraying schedule resulting to poor fruit quality.*
- ❖ *Provide crates for harvesting in advance to facilitate efficient collection and protect the fruits from bruise in movement*
- ❖ *Consider providing a spray pump loan to the group for better spray management*
- ❖ *Exporter to consider giving the group their own 'order' for better management of their collections and delivery.*
- ❖ *Consider reviewing fruit prices in line with improved quality.*

Conclusion

This is an ideal group with a very promising future. Group should be supported and used as a model with the leaders acting as 'TOT' for other group leaders.

Group should be used for piloting commercialization of the program activities including spraying, fruit picking, collection and delivery.

(ii) Evaluation work-plan

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SERVICES PROGRAMME(KENYA BDS)
KENYA BDS/EAGA AVOCADO MARKET LINKAGES PROGRAM IN KANDARA DIVISION,
MARAGWA DISTRICT.

DATE	ACTIVITY	STRATEGY	OUTPUT	WHEN	COMMENTS
29.3.06	TOR/Briefing. Develop w/plan & tools	Discussion with BDS Country Director/Specialist	TOR/Contract doc	29.03.06	
3.04.06	Overview of program progress	Interview BDS, EAGA mgt team and consultant-Blue Rhino	Reviewed evaluation work- plan, methodology & instruments	3.04.06	
5-19.04.06	Research and data collection	1.Interview farmers 2.Attend group meetings & collections 3.Interview GMOS 4.Interview MOA officers 5.Interview EAGA	Raw data	20.04.05	
24- 25.04.06	Data Analysis	Summarizing data from the field Use of designed analysis tool	Draft report of findings	25.04.06	
27.04.06	Report presentation	Discussions with BDS Mgt	Final report	27.04.06	
28.04.06	Report	Final report submission	Final report	28.04.06	

APPENDIX I

(iii) Evaluation Methodology

Collection of data to facilitate evaluation to be done in April 3rd – 28th 2006 at the program sites – Kawendo / Nga’raria, Kiranga /Naaro & Kihumbuini of Maragwa, Thika district.

Evaluation consultant will develop and use questionnaires, surveys and focus group discussions for guidance. Random sampling will be used in selection of interviewees.

- (1) Focus group discussions with all the original 14 groups.
- (2) Individual interviews with:
 - a. Former group members (drop-outs)
 - b. Current participating group members
 - c. Potential members – Fruit growers
 - d. Group Mgt officers, agronomist, MOA staff, EAGA field staff & local leaders.
- (3) Participation & observation in group meetings
- (4) Discussions with Blue Rhino consult & Gmos on evaluation findings & future agenda for improving program implementation.
- (5) Analysis of all Avocado Program docs including financial statement and administrative reports.
- (6) Use of case studies to highlight the project challenges and successes.

APPENDIX II

(iv.) Terms of Evaluation

1. Current client retention problem and underlying factors.
2. Lessons Learned.
3. Implication of Major findings for the future of the project.

Specific Objectives.

1. Achievement of project objectives.
2. Adherence to implementation procedures.
 - a) Current relationship between Blue Rhino, groups and the exporter plus Other stake – holders (min of agric.)
 - b) Program mgt –DOCS and records plus overall information flow.
3. Project geography
 - a) Risk to program sustainability.
 - b) Impact on performance.
4. Short-term impact of the program. Achievement of initial expectations.
5. BDS/ Consultant / Group management relationship with EAGA and farmers.
6. Program Perceptions by clients and the greater community.
 - a) Identification of factors that determine participation and exclusion Mechanisms.
 - b) Delivery mechanisms.
 - i. Group Collection and financial mgt.
 - ii. Members & non- members suggestions for strengthening the program relationship.
7. Financial challenges:
 - i. Informal groups ability to meet members financial needs – commercial perspective.
 - ii. Produce Payouts – challenges faced
 - Accuracy of payment calculation and other records.
8. Impact of Value – added services (training) on the behavior of individuals and social – economic status of the members.
 - a) Group meetings – Consider number of groups formed.
 - b) Commitment in group activities – participation
 - c) Group cohesion – other social economic activities
9. Farmer’s perception of management consultants and Exporter.
 - Respect for all stake holders

APPENDIX III

(v) Questionnaire & Guides

Questionnaire I –BDS/CONSULT

1. At time of taking over how many members were in the program?
2. Of the original members how many have dropped?
3. Why have they been leaving the program?
4. Where do the farmers not participating in the EAGA program sell their produce? List with reasons
5. What are some of the other challenges facing the program?
6. What would you recommend be done to improve the program?

APPENDIX IV

Questionnaire 2 - For current participating members

(A) Group Discussion and interview guidelines.

- a) Name
 - b) Age
 - c) Marital Status
 - d) Number of dependents
 - e) Education Level
-

(B) Group level

- 1) How long have you been in the program?

- 2) What is your status in the group?

- 3) How often does your group meet-weekly/monthly/other

- 4) How far is the group meeting venue from your farm or home?

- 5) How many trees do you have?

- 6) What attracted you to this program? List.

- 7) What do you like about the program?

- 8) What don't you like about the program?

- 9) Name 2 other main challenges at the group level. Has the program made it easier or beneficial to grow fruits and sell or more difficult?

- 10) What could the program do to be more helpful to you?

- 11) Why do members leave the program? List.

- 12) What would you recommend for the program to be more useful to farmers. List

APPENDIX V

Questionnaire 3: Group Dropouts.

A) Background

- a. Name
 - b. Age
 - c. Marital status
 - d. Number of dependants
 - e. Educational level
-

B) Group level

- 1) How long did you stay in the program?
- 2) How many trees do you have?
- 3) What attracted you to the program? List
- 4) What didn't you like about the program? List
- 5) What changes would you recommend in the program to make it better for farmers? List
- 6) What would make you consider rejoining the program?

APPENDIX VI

Questionnaire 4: Group management Service providers

A) Background

- a) Name
 - b) Education
 - c) Professional skills
 - d) Length of service in program
-

B) Farmers

- a) What role do you play in the group management? List
- b) How often do you meet each group? Weekly/monthly/other
- c) What challenges do you face in group formation and management? List
- d) What is your opinion of the relationship;
- e) Between farmers and EAGA
- f) Between Farmers and the management consult
- g) Between yourself and EAGA, & Other stakeholders
- h) What don't you like about the program?
- i) Why do clients leave the program? List
- j) What do you think can be done to make the clients remain in the program?

APPENDIX VII

GROUP MEETING DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Group membership
 - i.Start
 - ii.Now

2. Frequency of meetings; Weekly/monthly/other

3. When was the group formed?

4. How many trees does your group have?

5. Frequency of elections?

6. Other group activities e.g. merry-go-round

7. What are the main problems that you have faced? List

8. What changes would you recommend to improve the program? List