Mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS in small-scale farming

The AGRODOK-SERIES is a series of low-priced, practical manuals on small-scale and sustainable agriculture in the tropics. AGRODOK booklets are available in English (E), French (F), Portuguese (P) and Spanish (S). Agrodok publications can be ordered from AGROMISA or CTA.

1. Pig keeping in the tropics
2. Soil fertility management
3. Preservation of fruit and vegetables
4. Small-scale chicken production
5. Fruit growing in the tropics
6. Simple construction surveying for rural applications
7. Goat keeping in the tropics
8. Preparation and use of compost
9. The home garden in the tropics
10. Cultivation of soya and other legumes
11. Erosion control in the tropics
12. Preservation of fish and meat
13. Water harvesting and soil moisture retention
14. Dairy cattle husbandry
15. Small-scale freshwater fish farming
16. Agroforestry
17. Cultivation of tomato
18. Protection of stored cereal grains and pulses
19. Propagating and planting trees
20. Back-yard rabbit keeping in the tropics
21. On-farm fish culture
22. Small-scale production of weaning foods
23. Protected cultivation
24. Urban agriculture
25. Granaries
26. Marketing for small-scale producers
27. Establishing and managing water points for village livestock
28. Identification of crop damage
29. Pesticides: compounds, use and hazards
30. Non-chemical crop protection
31. Storage of tropical agricultural products
32. Beekeeping in the tropics
33. Duck keeping in the tropics
34. Hatching eggs by hens or in an incubator
35. Donkeys for transport and tillage
36. Preparation of dairy products
37. Small-scale seed production
38. Starting a cooperative
39. Non-timber forest products
40. Small-scale mushroom cultivation
41. Small-scale mushroom cultivation – 2
42. Bee products
43. Rainwater harvesting for domestic use
44. Ethnoveterinary medicine
45. Mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS in small-scale farming
46. Zoonoses
47. Snail farming
48. The Rural Finance Landscape

© 2008 Agromisa Foundation and CTA
Mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS in small-scale farming

Ard Lengkeek
Marian Koster
Mundie Salm
Foreword

Throughout the tropics small-scale farming communities struggle to deal with the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS.

*Mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS in small-scale farming* is a handbook for agricultural extension officers and those who support them in government, NGOs and international organizations. Much of what is contained in this Agrodok has been dealt with in much greater detail in the many HIV/AIDS related publications available in print and online. Unlike more specialized literature *Mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS* provides a brief, straightforward account of how HIV/AIDS undermines community welfare and the productive capacity of farmers. It suggests some ways in which farming practices can be adapted to mitigate these effects.

The tools and approaches described in this Agrodok will be familiar to many readers. They have been tried and tested in small-scale farming communities throughout the world. Many of the insights and experiences referred to here come from Sub Saharan Africa. They can be used and adapted to encourage community members – irrespective of age, sex, material status or ethnic and religious identity – to work together to define their problems and find solutions using their own local resources.

Many people have contributed their experiences and knowledge to this Agrodok. The authors would especially like to thank Alfred Hama-dziripi of the Southern African Poverty Network, Gaynor Paradza and Carolyne Nombo, the African Women Leaders in Agriculture and the Environment programme at Wageningen University and Research Centre, Caroline Brants, Cees van Rij, Agriterra, The Netherlands, Sammy Carsan of the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), Suzanne Nederlof, Ellen Geerling and Roy Keijzer.

Marilyn Minderhoud Jones, 2008
Contents

1 Introduction 6

2 First the problem 8
  2.1 Social impacts 10
  2.2 The needs of women, children and the elderly 11
  2.3 Health 11
  2.4 Knowledge 12
  2.5 Labour 14

3 Making mitigation possible 15
  3.1 Creating an enabling environment 15
  3.2 Accessing information 18

4 Targeted participation: strengthening communities while accessing information 23
  4.1 Participants 23
  4.2 Objectives 24
  4.3 Workshop approaches 25
  4.4 Workshop structure 26
  4.5 Gender analysis: accessing informants 27
  4.6 Activity Profile 30
  4.7 Access and Control Profile 31
  4.8 Influencing factors 32
  4.9 Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools: addressing the needs of the young 34

5 Exploring resources 37
  5.1 Good nutrition 37
  5.2 Effective drug therapy depends on balanced nutrition 39
  5.3 Medicinal plants 40
  5.4 Access to medicinal plants 41

6 Utilizing resources 43
6.1 Maintaining agro-biodiversity 43
6.2 Choosing for trees 45
6.3 Advantages of agroforestry 45
6.4 Working with conservation tillage 48

7 Building cooperation 50
7.1 Seed Fairs 50
7.2 Community gardens 52
7.3 Making choices: the Seasonal Calendar 54
7.4 Monitoring results 55
7.5 Labour sharing 56
7.6 Savings and credit 59

8 Livestock 61
8.1 Livestock in HIV/AIDS mitigating strategies 62
8.2 Dealing with poultry 63

9 On-farm and off-farm activities for cash 64
9.1 Conclusion 68

Further reading 70

Useful addresses 72

Abbreviations 74

Glossary 75
1 Introduction

HIV/AIDS is not like other chronic diseases. It carries a heavy social stigma. Sufferers – many of whom are in the prime of life – find themselves excluded from community life and families living with HIV/AIDS find it increasingly difficult to keep their farms and gardens productive. Extension workers trying to manage the effects of the disease in small-scale farming communities find their work complicated by negative attitudes to and ignorance about the pandemic.

Those living with or supporting family members afflicted by HIV/AIDS need urgent help. They need to know how to make the best use of the human and physical resources they have left. And they have to do this in an extremely difficult emotional environment. Struggling to deal with the personal dimensions of the tragedy, they find they have lost essential livelihoods resources. There is less able-bodied labour, reciprocity between neighbours and relatives has weakened or broken down completely and agricultural officers and research staff – overwhelmed by the demands being placed on their limited resources – are unable to give them the support they need.

Extension officers working with those living with HIV/AIDS are also under professional and emotional strain. Many agricultural research and extension workers see years of work going to waste as a result of the pandemic. Agricultural officers themselves become sick and are unable to carry out planned activities. Programmes and project plans break down when extension officers die and the farmers who depended on their services are left stranded. This can be clearly seen in a report published recently by the Ghanaian Ministry of Food and Agriculture and FAO on the impact of HIV/AIDS on the work of extension officers in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. HIV/AIDS disrupts research and experimentation and valuable sources of knowledge are lost when contact farmers and farmers managing demonstration plots fall ill and cannot carry on. And at the financial level, HIV/AIDS
threatens group savings and credit schemes because – when members become sick – they cannot work to repay their loans.

There is no simple blue-print solution to the ravages of HIV/AIDS. Re-building the capacity of families and communities in the tropics to farm, garden and preserve their livestock is a complex and difficult task. It means taking careful account of a changing resource base and identifying how land, water and agricultural inputs can best be used to maintain health and ensure a livelihood for those living with the disease.

Full community participation is needed to adapt agricultural practices to meet the challenge of HIV/AIDS. It is in everyone’s interest to try and change the attitudes, customs and legislation that hinder cooperation and make it difficult for women, the elderly and young people to establish new working relationships, take on new tasks and effectively influence decision making.

This is where this Agrodok fits in. It is designed for extension workers who have the rural networks, knowledge of local conditions and links to farmers’ organizations that enable them to get the information, trust and community support needed to mitigate the effects of HIV/AIDS in small-scale farming communities.

The Agrodok begins by providing examples of participatory tools that can be used to document community members’ needs and identify local resources and skills. It discusses the difficulties extension officers can expect to encounter in getting communities to cooperate and work together. It goes on to focus attention on some of the innovations, research and farmers’ experimentation that can enable rural communities to react strongly and effectively to the challenge of HIV/AIDS. More detailed information on the topics raised in this Agrodok can be found in the “Further Readings”.

Introduction