



► ILO EIIP Brief Ring Road Project Bamenda

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Implementing activities to support the employability of young people through the EIIP Approach and to create jobs for young people within the framework of the support Programme for the transport sector - phase III: construction of national road no. 11 - Ring Road in the Northwest Region.'

News brief on the implementation of Employment Intensive investment programme (EIIP) in Bamenda Northwest Region of Cameroon.

Key points

- The International Labour Office and the Government of the Republic of Cameroon signed a cooperation agreement for the implementation of activities to support the employability of young people through the EIIP Approach and to create jobs for young people within the framework of the support Programme for the transport sector - phase III: construction of national road no. 11 - Ring Road in the Northwest Region
- This news brief is to inform on one of the activities we just completed and how we expect the activity to impact our forth coming plans

Update on activities

Estimates show that, in the North West Region, each year farmers lose between 25-40% of the stored agricultural product. This percentage is even higher for perishable crops such as vegetables, fruits, and roots and tubers. This is due in part to lack of appropriate farm and village level storage facilities and even due to inadequate knowledge on transformation. It is within this context that the International Labour Organization in collaboration with the Regional Delegation of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER) decided to build the capacities of youth and female agricultural cooperatives/Common Initiative Groups (CIGs)/Economic Interest Groups (EIGs) on processing techniques of some major food staples produced along the ring road. Mindful of the production pool, the Regional Delegation of Agriculture provided to us the list of cooperatives and CIGs to be trained while Regional Delegation of Small and Medium Size Enterprises, Social Economy, and Handicraft (MINPMEESA) provided the economic interest groups to be trained.

Each training session concerned 10 CIGs/Cooperatives and 02 economic interest groups. Each of the CIG/Cooperative was represented by 3 members each, while the economic interest groups were represented by 1 member. This made a total of 32 participants per session and a grand total of 120 CIG/COOP members and 8 Economic Interest Groups.

The objectives of the sessions were among others:

- Equip participants with knowledge to reduce post-harvest losses in cereals (maize, rice, wheat).
- Introduce effective crop preservation techniques to extend the shelf life of cereals.
- Crop transformation methods, adding value to harvested cereals and marketing.
- Discuss the social and economic impact of developing transformation units, with a focus on empowering rural communities.



Project Coordinator in blue and Consultant in white facilitating in one of the sessions

Focus of this brief

The focus is to adopt processing as a best option to combat post-harvest losses. Defining post-harvest losses, as the reduction in quantity and quality of agricultural produce from the time of harvest until it reaches the consumer. These losses can occur at various stages, including harvesting, handling, storage, processing, and transportation. In the context of cereals, tubers, pulses and spices, post-harvest losses include the physical loss of grains due to spillage, spoilage, and damage, as well as the deterioration of quality due to improper handling and storage.



Group picture of the participants of the training

Participants were made to realise the importance of packaging and branding among which are: protection and preservation, attracting customers, conveying information, enhancing brand recognition, differentiation in the Market, emotional connection, promoting sustainability, and influencing perceived value.

It does not only end at transformation, but farmers were also made to understand that they need to know how to effectively market these products and some ways through which farmers can market their products are:

- **Good Packaging Design:** Using attractive and functional packaging to catch the eye and communicate the product's value.
- **Content Marketing:** Creating and sharing valuable content (recipes, blogs, videos) to engage and educate consumers.
- **Social Media Marketing:** Utilizing platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok to connect with consumers, showcase products, and build a community.
- **Influencer Partnerships:** Collaborating with influencers or food bloggers to reach their audience and gain credibility.
- **Promotions and Discounts:** Offering limited-time deals, coupons, or special offers to incentivize.
- **In-Store Sampling:** Providing free samples in stores to allow consumers to try the product before purchasing.

An interactive session was held where each group present presented the product they have been trying to process and the eventual challenges faced. The facilitators provide some practical guidance on how best they would have handled the issues raised. Despite this, the greatest challenge of most of the farmers was how to transform the products while still maintaining the nutritional value of the products. Responding to this, the Consultant stressed much on the drying process and presented to the participants pictures of some good drying methods that can be adopted by the participants.

Testimony

Fru, representative from a CIG "We have been transforming cayenne pepper for the past two years now and I want to thank the ILO for this eye opening session. Our greatest problem was our packaging. We were using open bottles, and this uses to make the pepper get moist faster and many of our customers have been complaining. We saw here the importance of using air tight sealing for the product and this is greatly going to help us. Our branding too on the product was not too good so we have also learned how to make it look better using colours and more appealing words. We are going back quite motivated and will be appreciative to receive some materials that can help us dry our products without using the sun".



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