

CONTEXT:

After a recent verbal interviews with purchasing managers of hotels, restaurants, farmers and the local consumers from the community, it became evident that farmers cooperation, especially among those having commercial potential is perceived as a mechanism of improving access to agricultural services. As a result, it is concluded that there should be alternatives to the current fruits and vegetables stands scattered all over DARAJANI and MONAKOREKUWE markets. With a more tangible and sustainable marketing approach, technical training, better farm inputs and land – water management tools, the already improved and increased fruits and vegetables production can reach another level which could increase and stabilize the financial sustainability among farmers and the community as a whole. ZEST organized and facilitated several stakeholder’s meetings and invited industry experts and representative from the agriculture & tourism sector, ZEST partners and farmers, and also conducted number of farm visits which predominantly focused on how to improve production and create a sustainable market for the farmers. Some farmers expressed concerns of high farm input prices and income levels, lack of sustainable market, financial problems and uncertainty of government programs. As a result, their concerns have encouraged most farmers to collaborate, partner, form an alliance and seek sustainable marketing advice to help them overcome these fears and be self-reliant.

The aim of the agricultural products marketing strategy is to minimize or eliminate agricultural market access constraints experienced by ZEST networks of agricultural producers and other value chain players in the local market and to lower transaction costs in agricultural marketing. This agricultural marketing strategy is developed to guide the implementation of the agricultural marketing strategies and procedures for the ZEST farmer’s network of partners.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGY OF LOCAL AGRICULTURAL MARKET ACCESS CONSTRAINTS ARE:

- Establish and strengthen commodity groups/associations among farmers and facilitate integration with existing associations
- Guide the establishment of agricultural marketing institutions and cooperatives to support developing agribusiness farmers
- Direct the implementation of an agricultural marketing skills development program that will help farmers better to plan their production and marketing activities in accordance with market needs, as well as to participate effectively in the markets
- Establish and enhance the accessibility of the agricultural marketing information system to all farmers and consumers alike
- Facilitate efficient flow of agricultural products and the possibility of establishing an agricultural marketing assistance fund
- Establishment of agricultural marketing support programs

Quite a number of meetings and consultations occurred between the ZEST project manager and other industry experts, to discuss the issues and come up with a better marketing strategic plan which involves the following:

- Access to agricultural marketing skills is one of the critical tools that are required to move smallholder farmers towards the desired level of commercialization
- Setup a prime location farmer's open air market to serve as a one stop shop that attracts hotels, restaurants, middlemen and local consumers. It will operate 3 to 4 times a week, and can be held at any open space whether indoors or outdoors
- Setup farm front roadside stands, displaying signs of "freshly harvested fruits and vegetables". This will attract the local consumers and other consumers driving by. There are some ZEST networks of farmers currently cashing-in from this marketing strategy. This roadside stands will only operate during the days the farmers market is not
- Strong advertisement through media outlets, community events, door to door visits
- Organize and host community events, and spread the word of the new fruits and vegetables marketing ventures and how important it is for businesses and the local community to support their own "**Locally grown in Zanzibar**" brand
- Clearly display and label fruits and some vegetables products with Zanzibar's own "**LOCALLY GROWN IN ZANZIBAR**" brand to distinguish the locally grown products from the imported. This is very vital, because most consumers tells you that they would love to buy locally grown produce, but there is no way of telling, since there are no labels
- Once a customer relationship is established, offer home delivery service to local consumers and businesses
- Focus on quality control, it will add value to the products and increases profits
- To create a formal ZEST network of farmers association known to the Ministry of Agriculture, it will help gain government support and notoriety within the community
- Establish market agents (could be a member of the association or JTTI graduates) throughout the districts of Zanzibar, to catch-up with the urbanization and rapid population growth of Zanzibar, especially in the South and North, that attracts migrants working in the hospitality industry
- Re-invest profits into the agribusiness and have access to information on long-term prices, thus allowing producers to redirect their production towards more profitable fruits and vegetables
- Counter-seasonal production can mitigate the effects of the decline in prices observed at harvest time. Off season production can take advantage of higher prices
- Establish a system that allows the ZEST network of partner farmers to know prices in real time, which helps producers to better negotiate with middlemen and or direct consumers

- Organize a Supply Chain for Small holder farmers and have agents dedicated to a group of small holder farmers to combine farmer production to meet hotel and restaurant demand. (For example, farmers A, C and E all produce eggplants on 0.5 acres to 1.0 acres of land to supply to a hotel's demands)
- Have a "Locally Grown in Zanzibar" branding, advertising and tourist destination certification – Tourist restaurants and hotels need to be differentiated as ones which support the local community and to what degree
- Advertising, certification and informing the public/tourists of the importance of sustainability and contributing to the local community a key to incentivizing restaurants and hotels to buy local. This "Locally Grown in Zanzibar" initiative will be based on certifying, monitoring and evaluating degrees of local support at hotels and restaurants (i.e. 50%, 75% and 90% purchase of local produce for bronze, silver and gold certification). These certifications will be displayed outside of their restaurants and hotels
- To drive customers to these locations, promotional flyers highlighting sustainable tourism locations should be distributed to all tourists at all ports of entry, such as ferry dock and airport
- Continuous advertising and promotion as well as evaluation of certified destinations would be required as well to expand and maintain integrity of the brand

Conclusion:

Any particular marketing intervention may comprise elements from several categories like;

- ❖ Intended beneficiaries
- ❖ Skills and training
- ❖ Access to agricultural inputs
- ❖ Marketing linkages
- ❖ Credit programs
- ❖ Marketing information
- ❖ Holistic approaches

It is important to build on existing marketing channels, rather than attempt to establish new ones. Existing channels will outlive the project and a sustainable strategy is more likely to be one that enables the farming community to achieve more from what is already there, than try to replace it. At the same time, more facilitative and less interventionist strategies are likely to be more sustainable. Sustainable marketing interventions must give consideration to a number of related issues; building capacity and linkages, whilst also facilitating access to the necessary training, information, inputs and financial services.