



What happened in the past month?

Farmer engagement: In February and March 2023, the project hosted soil fertility training sessions for farmers in Marowijne and from different Indigenous communities, including Matta, Pierre Kondre, Powakka, Cassipora, Redi Doti, Philipusdorp, and Hollandse Kamp. The sessions were led by ASTA's international agronomist, Freddy Gamboa, and attended by a total of 82 farmers, including 48 men (59%) and 34 women (41%). During the training, farmers received manuals and engaged in practical exercises to learn how to make organic fertilizer by collecting Mountain Microorganisms (MMs). The farmers were also introduced to important topics related to gender mainstreaming, intellectual property rights, and free and prior informed consent.



Soil fertility training session in Pierre Kondre on February 28th, 2023. Source: Freddy Gamboa

Technical analyses and data collection: A digital application, CROPIN, is being developed and tested to facilitate data collection and monitoring, as well as to support farmers in implementing new sustainable farming practices. Furthermore, the pineapple project collaborates with Wageningen University (WUR) in the Netherlands, to provide expert advice on the set-up and management of cooperatives in Suriname, on the establishment of a packhouse and on the design of business models for the Pineapple Innovation Hub and the Pineapple Cooperative Company. Moreover, the ASTA team is identifying a Surinamese legal services company to structure, establish and administer the Loan Collateral Facility was released.

Strengthening partnerships: The ASTA project is strengthening its partnership with Trustbank Amanah (TBA) to leverage their financial expertise and resources for the project's success and to support the implementation of the Collateral Support Facility. A partnership with the CARIFORUM Intellectual Property Rights and Innovation (CarlPI) project was initiated to leverage actions on intellectual property protection and brand creation. Potential suppliers of inputs like ethylene, PPE (Personal Protection Equipment's), sprayers, fertilizers, pesticides, and organic matter needed for the pilot program were also visited and potential engagements in project activities are being discussed.

Identification and hiring of project team members:

ASTA's national agronomist, Ms. Hemwatie Goeptar, was introduced to the pineapple farmers community. She is being trained by the international agronomist to strengthen her knowledge on soil health, organoleptic analyses, development of nutrition protocols, and data collection. Mr. Davron Okhunjonov was appointed as ASTA's International Business and Management Specialist, to manage the project on the ground and strengthen the business approach of pineapple farming.



Meeting with LVV minister on March 06th, 2023.

Source: Secretary of the Minister of Agriculture



Collaboration with LVV: The ASTA team, under the supervision of FAO representative Mr. Reuben Robertson, met with the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Parmanand Sewdien, and his directors to discuss the latest updates on the ASTA project and ensure continued support from the Ministry.

FPIC: The project is committed to open and honest communication with Indigenous Organisations such as VIDS, OSIP, IKSUR and KAMPOS, which represent the different communities. In March, Mr. Davron Okhunjonov had a first meeting with Ms. Muriel Fernandes, VIDS chair and three captains to be formally introduced and exchange on the project.



*Meeting with VIDS on March 29th, 2023.
Source: VIDS and project team*

Upcoming activities

Farmer engagement: Communities who participated in the workshops will be visited by the International Business and Management Specialist to get to know each other and by the National Agronomist to follow up on the production of Mountain Microorganisms and the use of organic fertilizer to increase crop yield and quality.

FPIC: The project will be engaging in new discussions with Indigenous Organisations to finalize and sign a Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) agreement, ensuring effective communication and cooperation throughout the duration of the project, as well as the creation of a sustainable conflict resolution mechanism. Once the template has been agreed upon, the project will seek inputs and agreement at the village level to ensure that everyone's needs and perspectives are considered.

Technical analyses and data collection: The Cooperative and Hub design will be finalized in collaboration with farmers during a workshop that will tentatively take place Mid-April. The workshop will provide a space for feedback and improvement and will ensure that the structures meet the pineapple actors' needs while enabling them to produce and sell high-quality pineapples in larger quantities. A legal firm will be hired to support the set-up of the Loan Collateral Facility. A draft of selection criteria for the first 25 farmers that will participate in the project to implement the new business model will be developed and shared with different authorities for feedback. Preparations for the field trials will continue, with organic inputs and equipment being shipped from Costa Rica, seeds being secured and continuous improvement of the experimental design.

Identification and hiring of PMU and support experts: The project is in the process of identifying and hiring a National Business Manager and an Administrative Staff to ensure the project runs smoothly.

Project logistics: The ASTA team is seeking to secure office space to serve as the project's base of operations. Additionally, a project vehicle will be procured to facilitate fieldwork and other project activities, enabling the ASTA team to provide farmers with more timely and efficient support.

The ASTA in Suriname

The Agrifood Systems Transformation Accelerator (ASTA) in Suriname is a 4-year joint program funded by the UN SDG fund and co-led by FAO and UNIDO, with support from UNFPA and ILO. Developed in close collaboration with local pineapple actors and stakeholders, the program aims to transform Suriname into an established producer and exporter of high-quality organic fresh and processed pineapples, using an inclusive and sustainable value chain approach.

Sustainable Pineapple Value Chain Development project

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