

What happened in the past quarter?

Farmer engagement: In October 2023, farmers joined in-field workshops during the establishment of the field trial in Redi-Doti, Para. The in-field workshops covered topics like land preparation, soil fertility management and seed collection and planting. Beside the field trial establishment in November 2023, the liquid activation of the Mountain Microorganism (MM) fertilizer, made in February 2023, took place in both districts Para and Marowijne. Farmers get instruction on how to use the fertilizer on pineapples and other crops. In total 52 farmers participated in the workshops in October and November 2023, from which 62 % women. In the months October and November 2024, the team continued interviewing farmers in Marowijne and Para to create baseline data on pineapple farming that will assist team to select pilot farmers and introduce advanced production model for higher yields and year-round production Empowering farmers with knowledge and resources through such initiatives can positively transform their lives by promoting sustainable and economically viable agricultural practices. This not only improves crop yields but also contributes to increased income and food security for the village communities.



In field farmer training in Para, Redi Doti, during the field trial launch in October 2023. Source: Freddy Gamboa.



Farmer training in Moengo, Marowijne on producing of MM fertilizer in November 2023. Source: H.Goeptar

Gender capacity building:

In December 2023, the UNFPA, conducted the first Gender Capacity Building training sessions in five locations, including Moengo, Redi Doti, Pierre Kondre (Kumbasi), Matta, and Pikin Poika. The trainings are led by Ms. Jacintha Dundas and the topics to cover during these sessions was on Gender, Leadership, and Business Skills, aiming to empower women and young people in these communities to actively participate in the pineapple production chain. Leadership training sessions have already taken place in Moengo, Redi Doti and Pikin Poika, involving a total of 75 participants (58 women and 17 men).



Certificate presentation for leadership participation in the village of Redi Doti in Para in December 2023. Source: J. Dundas.



Group sessions during leadership training in Moengo, Marowijne in December 2023. Source: J. Dundas

In November, an online seminar titled *Gender-sensitive value chains in action: The Agrifood Systems Transformation Accelerator (ASTA) Initiative of FAO and UNIDO to address gender challenges in the Pineapple Value Chain in Suriname* was organized within the FAO Technical Network on Sustainable Food Value Chains - Development & Finance (SFVC D&F) to bring visibility on the project's activities, with focus on gender inclusion, at international level. During the seminar captain Wendoline Sabajo of the village Matta in Para to share her knowledge and experience on the ASTA project in supporting the establishment of a more inclusive and sustainable pineapple value chain, where women have equal access to resources, information, and markets.

Technical activities and data collection:

In October 2023, preparations were made to establish the field trial plot in Para, Redi Doti. This includes activities such as land preparation (three weeks before planting), bringing in tools and inputs required (including chicken manure, fertilizers, and seeds). The trial farmer, Mr. August Tawjoeram and the international agronomist Mr. Freddy Gambo, started the operations in Redi Doti from October 29th to 31st, 2023. Equipment like a subsoiler were used to prevent the soil from compaction, a bedder to make planting beds, and the furrow plough to make drainage. Sorting and grading of seeds, chicken manure application, planting and lime application were also part of the process. Two weeks later, the national agronomist Ms. Hemwatie Goeptar took over, using organic fertilizers and pesticides to keep the pineapples healthy. The national agronomist provides regular support to the plot to apply foliar fertilizers and to supervise plant growth. In the trial plot of Redi Doti the two varieties Ingi Nasi and Stuger are demonstrated. The field trial in Redi Doti serves as a hands-on learning experience, generating valuable data and insights that can inform best practices in pineapple farming, leading to a manual for organic pineapple production and benefiting both the local community and broader agricultural development efforts.



Field trial establishment including sorting, grading, land preparation, organic matter application, planting and liming in Para, Redi Doti, during 29th October to 31st October 2023. Source: Freddy Gamboa.

International missions: In November 2023, Mr. David Neven, and Ms. Rana Fakhoury, the lead technical officers of FAO and UNIDO visited Suriname. The outcome of this mission was securing vital support and participation from Ministers BIBIS and LVV in setting up and start of operations of the Hub. Its proposed structure has been approved, propelling the establishment process forward, and initiating registration. Productive meetings were conducted with financial entities and initiatives like NOFA, the Guarantee Fund, TBA and NOB to have a right mechanism for a feasible loan collateral facility to aid the Hub. Additionally, insightful field visits to trial plots and processing plants have enabled discussions on contract farming and processing to better inform and support stakeholders in the pineapple value chain.

In December 2023 a second mission took place carried out by Ms. Margherita Bavagnoli, International Value Chain Finance expert for ASTA FAO, with the purpose of exploring linkages with suppliers, buyers, and financial institutions. The International Value Chain Finance expert met with the input suppliers, potential buyers of organic pineapples, farmers cooperatives and financial institutions. Ms. Bavagnoli's visits were joined by the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Joanna Kazana who came to Suriname to dive into the Surinamese farming landscape, connect with UN beneficiaries, and gather firsthand feedback on the incredible progress being made in enhancing the productivity of local pineapple varieties.



Meeting with the Minister of BIBIS and LVV in November 2023, during international mission of LTO's of FAO and UNIDO. Source: J.Ho and D.Okunjonov



Field trial plot visit in December 2023 during international missions of Ms. Margherita Bavagnoli and Ms. Joanna Kazana. Source: United Nations Suriname

In this period, the ASTA team meet with several development projects and organizations like COLEAD, FairFood, to discuss vocational training, traceability platform and support services, market insights, networks and alliances, and access to finance. During the visit of Ms. Bavagnoli, team met with three potential input suppliers to discuss supply of organic fertilizers for the pilot phase with the 25 farmers. During his mission Mr. Gamboa also held a workshop for 62 government officials, farmers, bank employees, and other stakeholders on good agricultures in pineapples, sharing information of neighbor countries and the approach of ASTA in improving the pineapple production.

Supported by LVV, agriculture students had the opportunity to visit a trial pineapple plot in Redi Doti, enhancing their practical knowledge. During visit, the project's agronomist Ms. Goeptar explained pineapple planting processes, soil improvement techniques and good agricultural practices. Session also allowed the students to engage actively, posing various questions and deepening their understanding of good agricultural practices.

The project team has held multiple meetings with the VIDS and KAMPOS to provide updates on current activities and to discuss future actions. Presently, the project is active in four villages in Para and all Marowijne. Given the keen interest from indigenous farmers in collaborating with the project, both VIDS and the ASTA team have decided to have a joint meeting in January-February with delegates from interested villages in the Para region. These meeting aims to increase understanding of the project, developments in the pineapple sector, and to agree on forthcoming steps.

Upcoming activities

- Establishment of the Innovation Hub
- Establishment of the pineapple farmer's cooperative.
- Selection of 25 pilot farmers.
- Continuation of trainings on business skills and gender for women, youth, traditional leaders, and farmers by UNFPA.
- Establishment of a two field trials in Para, Matta and in Marowijne, Moengo.

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.

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Workshop on good agriculture practices in pineapple production conducted by Mr. Gamboa. Source: D.Okhunjonov.



Visit of students to the trial plot to learn advanced production model in November 2023. Source: H,Goeptar



Discussion with VIDS board about next steps in November 2023. Source: D.Okhunjonov

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