

What happened in the past half year?

Farmer engagement:

Establishment of field trials: Within the ASTA program field trials are the foundation in engaging pineapple farmers through hands-on learning, to unlock opportunities for value chain transformation, supported by a new agronomic model. The demonstration fields aim to feature year-round production, higher-density planting, and modern practices emphasizing organic inputs and services. While the first trial field was already established in November 2023 in Redi Doti, Para with the farmer August Tawjoeram, the second and third were established in the last year of 2024. In August 2024, a field trial using the Red Round Ingi Nasi variety was launched in the Matta, Para, followed by a third trial in Moengo, Marowijne in November 2024, featuring Stuger, Ingi Nasi, and Djogo varieties. These trials not only provide pineapple farmers with practical knowledge but also unlock opportunities for increased yields, enhanced incomes, and strengthened community collaboration.

Farmer's workshop: In the last part of 2024 capacity building of pineapple farmers continued not only by hands-on learning trainings through the field trials but also by workshops engaging farmers from Matta, Marowijne, Brownsweeg, Pierre Kondre, and representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Affairs. These sessions focused on capacity building on soil health, artificial flower induction (AFI), digitalization, modern techniques and community-driven initiatives like Bio Factories.

Bio-Factories: Bio Factories, introduced by the project, promote community-led production of organic inputs, empowering women and youth while fostering climate-resilient farming. Practical sessions included making bio-fertilizer from fermented grass, natural insect repellents from locally available aromatic plants, and production of Mountain Micro-organisms (MMs) to enhance soil health. These efforts aim to unlock greater independence and sustainability for farmers, enabling them to reduce input costs, boost yields, and strengthen community collaboration for long-term success.

In total 119 individuals, of which 68% women, were trained in modern organic pineapple farming practices, strengthening community development and sustainable agriculture.



The established field trial in Matta, Para in August 2024.
Source: F. Gamboa



Established field trial in Moengo, Marowijne in November 2024. Source: F. Gamboa



Active participation of farmers during the 'bio-factory' workshop in Matta, Para, in August 2024.
Source: F. Gamboa



Field Agent Jeane Patra sharing her experience with digitalization in Moengo, Marowijne, in November 2024.
Source: A. Moeridjan

Gender Capacity Building in Pineapple Farming: On November 21st, 2024, a gender-focused session led by UNFPA's Astrid Runs highlighted gender inclusion in pineapple cooperatives. As part of a three-day training, it engaged 18 participants (14 women, 4 men) from diverse sectors. Topics included leadership, conflict management, and gender-SDG integration. Case studies addressed barriers like caregiving and the gender pay gap, sparking dialogue on women's leadership and male involvement in equity efforts.

Remarkable is also that the Matta and Moengo trials thrived due to strong participation by women, led by respectively Captain Ms. Wendoline Sabajo and field agent Ms. Jane Patra. This initiative underscores inclusivity's role in building resilient pineapple value chains.



Work session on inclusion of SDGs in the cooperative development plan in November 2024. Source: A. Runs



Strong women participation in the establishment of the field trial in Moengo and Matta in 2024. Source: F. Gamboa

Technical activities and data collection:

Field Trials: The first field trial in Redi Doti provided practical learning experiences and critical data to improve pineapple farming in Suriname. Insights from this trial, particularly the effects of an extended dry season, led to new trial concepts in Matta and Moengo. These trials focus on using locally produced bio-inputs through bio-factories, reducing dependency on imported inputs by up to 30%. Innovative intercropping with crops like banana, ginger, and lemongrass was introduced to improve shade and soil cover, reducing evaporation and enhancing pineapple growth conditions. All the three field trials will contribute to an updated manual for organic pineapple production, benefiting both local farmers and Suriname's broader agricultural development.

Field agents: In July 2024, the project hired three field agents—Jane Patra (Marowijne), Jerry Birambie (Pierre Kondre/Redi-Doti), and Cyrell Sabajo (Matta)—to support pineapple farmers by enhancing data collection efforts. After being trained on working with a digital app called, Farmers Connected, the agents began registering pineapple farms and collecting detailed demographic and plot data. This data is vital for tailoring support to farmers' needs, improving farm management, and driving community development. The digital platform provides real-time insights on crop production, enabling farmers to track activities, plan harvests, and access traceability services. With secure records of sustainable practices, farmers gain access to advanced technology, empowering them to reduce costs, increase productivity, and comply with international standards. Ultimately, this unlocks access to premium markets, leading to higher incomes and stronger, more resilient farming communities.



Joint maintenance of the pineapple trial field in Moengo, Marowijne, in December 2024. Source: H. Goeptar



Status of Ingi Nasi plants at the trial field in Redi Doti, Para, in December 2024. Source: H. Goeptar



Digital data collection by Field Agent Cyrell Sabajo in Matta, Para, in October 2024. Source: H. Goeptar

Linkages and collaboration:

Artificial Flower Induction: In collaboration with firm Ingas and support from the Cooperative Redi Doti and Pierre Kondre farmers, the agronomic team developed and tested equipment for Artificial Flower Induction (AFI). This technique stimulates uniform flowering in pineapples, enabling synchronized harvesting and improved production efficiency. AFI helps farmers manage flowering cycles more effectively, ensuring year-round organic pineapple supply with higher yields and consistent quality. The AFI application has been performed on plots in Redi Doti, Pierre Kondre and Matta.

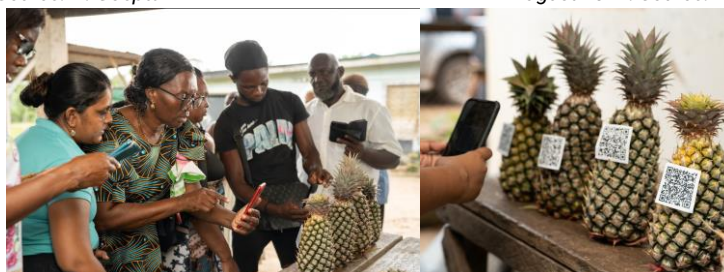
Digital Platform: In November 2024, under the FAO Elevate program the digital platform for pineapple farmers in Suriname was launched. Mr. Calvin Bodden, Regional Director of Dimitra, introduced the Farmers Connected app, emphasizing digitalization and data collection for pineapple farmers. A key workshop demonstrated how scanning QR codes on pineapples could trace and share the story of organic produce from Suriname's Amazon region. This technology enhances the product's storytelling, allowing consumers to connect with the sustainable farming practices behind each pineapple. This technology helps farmers gain access to new consumers who value traceable, organic produce, opening doors to premium niche markets and better prices. By sharing their journey, farmers can strengthen their market competitiveness, build trust, and unlock opportunities for increased income and long-term growth.



Locally manufactured AFI equipment in Paramaribo, Suriname in August 2024. Source: H. Goeptar



First AFI application by members of Agro-Cooperative Redi Doti and Pierre in Para, in August 2024. Source: H. Goeptar



Farmers in Moengo, Marowijne scan a QR code to understand the story of organic pineapples in November 2024. Source: A. Moeridjan

Stakeholder engagement:

Establishment of the Horticulture Innovation HUB: The Horticulture Innovation HUB was officially established in September 2024 as part of the ASTA Pineapple Project. The HUB was created to promote knowledge exchange and strengthen the pineapple value chain and was founded in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries (LVV), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation Suriname (BIBIS), and the private sector. The HUB serves as a one-stop-shop for producers, providing access to inputs, services, financing, and technical support. As a non-profit foundation, it is governed by a board consisting of stakeholders from across the value chain. The first board members emphasize a strong commitment to promoting female leadership. The board is led by Ms. Maitrie Jagroep from LVV as Chair, Ms. Elizabeth Bradley from BIBIS as Secretary, and Ms. Wendoline Sabajo, a pineapple farmer and village captain of Matta, as Treasurer.

Stakeholder engagement in field activities: Workshops held in the Para district and field trial preparations in Marowijne were carried out in close collaboration with the Ministry of LVV. The trial in Moengo itself was a joint effort between the Ministry of Agriculture, which provided the plot, and the Ministry of Regional Affairs and Platform Agro Cooperatives Marowijne, came in with manpower.

ILO's train the trainers program: In November 2024, ILO realized within the ASTA project an important training of trainers to strengthen capacities and support cooperatives of Suriname. The training was facilitated by Paskal Vandebussche and 20 participants of Ministry's (Labour, Agriculture, Economic Affairs, Regional Development), representatives of the Cooperative Council and Foundation for Productive Units, representatives of VIDS and Kampos and Marron network, ASTA Joint UN Program, constituents. The desire is that the new trainers and their entities will integrate the lessons learned in their training programs and activities. The end goal is to strengthen and enhance the capacity of cooperatives to enable them to grow both in their social and economic goals to support farmers and their communities.

International mission: In December 2024, Mr. David Neven, Senior Economist at FAO and Lead Technical Officer (LTO) of the project, visited Suriname to meet with the project team and discuss the progress of the Hub and cooperative. During the visit, he participated in meetings with various stakeholders and visited pineapple trial plots, where he explained a new business model based on loans for inputs and contract production for the cooperative.



First Hub Board meeting held in October 2024, in Paramaribo, Suriname. Source: H. Goeptar



Mr. David Neven meeting with Trust bank Amanah explaining the HUB business model, in December 2024, in Paramaribo, Suriname. Source: S. Girdhari

Upcoming activities

- The first pineapples through the AFI application.
- Establishment of the Pineapple Farmer Cooperative.
- Establishment of loan collateral facility.
- Trainings by ILO focusing on Cooperative Management
- Trainings by UNIDO focusing on Loan Mechanism.
- Identification of the first pilot farmers who will join the loan scheme.

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.

Horticulture Innovation Hub

The Horticulture Innovation HUB, established in September 2024 as non-for-profit foundation as multi stakeholder platform driving force in Suriname's sustainable and innovative horticulture sector.

Our goal is to empower farmers, agripreneurs, and researchers to develop impactful solutions that enhance productivity, profitability, and climate resilience.

Sustainable Pineapple Value Chain Development Project

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