



engineers without borders
ingénieurs sans frontières
Canada



Photos: Rosanne Chabot & Duncan McNicholl

Farms as Businesses

2,050 Farmers positively impacted.

10 Partner farmer organisations.

8 EWB volunteers working with our partners.

Engineers Without Borders is working to shift farmers in Burkina Faso from farming for daily survival, to farming as a lasting source of income by promoting leadership and innovation within farmer unions and federations.

Farming for Survival

Issa Ouédraogo is a vegetable farmer in rural Burkina Faso. Although he works hard cultivating his land,

Most farmers do not have the opportunity to gain the skills necessary to take a business approach to agriculture

Issa is often unable to harvest enough high quality crops to earn an income and support his growing family. Business has the power to change this. Yet, Issa lacks the technical knowledge and business training to shift from farming for survival to farming as a lasting source of income.

Issa's challenges are not unusual in Burkina Faso. Most farmers, like Issa, do not have the opportunity to gain the skills necessary to take a business approach to agriculture, and as a result, are unable to earn enough income to improve their lives.

Supporting Leadership and Innovation

Engineers Without Borders works with farmer organisations in Burkina Faso, including farmer unions and federations, to help rural families begin to farm as a business. EWB is working with the highest potential services offered by farmer organisations in Burkina Faso – called Family Farm Management – that allows farmers to gain the planning, analysis and monitoring skills to earn a profit from their crops.

Yet despite its importance the Family Farm Management program, our volunteers have recognized that it has not evolved as fast as needed to meet the changing needs of Burkina Faso's farmers.

Building leadership and facilitation capabilities

For the Family Farm Management program to be successful, field staff implementing the services must remain responsive to individual farmer challenges. To address this, our volunteers are working alongside union and federation field staff to improve their coaching, presentation, and decision-making capabilities.

In 2008, EWB began working with field staff Adama Sidibé in from Boucle du Mouhoun, to improve his facilitation, project management and budgeting skills. Although he had little experience implementing the Family Farm Management service



Alexandre Kouraogo stands proudly amongst his banana crop.
PHOTO: Rosanne Chabot

prior to EWB's arrival, now Sidibé is one of the program's leaders in the region.

Improving effectiveness and innovation

Burkina Faso's farmers have diverse and varying levels of business and education experience – changing the effectiveness of the Family Farm Management service with each new farmer group. Recognizing this, we are helping our partner organisations to better analyze this experience, and respond with tailored services through the Family Farm Management program.

While we are adapting current services to meet specific farmer needs – such as access to credit, markets or inputs – we are also helping the organisations to test innovative new programs relevant to the needs of their farmers. For many farmers, like Issa Ouédraogo, improving innovation within the Farming Farm Management program has ensured that they have access to the services necessary to meet their needs.

The Way Forward

Over the next three years, in Burkina Faso we will further improve the Family Farm Management program, while also exploring five new innovations such as a Burkina Faso-wide Family Farm Management program guide for all the major actors in the agricultural sector – including the national government. We also aspire to scale-up responses that are improving farmer's ability to earn a prosperous living from their farms, like our training program with field staff like staff like Adama Sidibé.

With proven impact on our partner and thus on many families, like that of Issa Ouédraogo, EWB is now looking to the future where we envision farmers are able to farm for prosperity, and not just daily survival.

We are also helping organisations to test innovative new programs relevant to the needs of their farmers.



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