



The 20th International Day of Cooperatives was celebrated on 5 July, 2014, emphasizing the important role which cooperatives play in sustainable development. Cooperatives are powerful tools which can be utilized by smallholder farmers to participate in formal markets.

Because of their ability to organize farmers, P4P has used farmers' organizations as an entry point, supporting smallholders to better access financial services, agricultural inputs, and equipment, and aggregate and market crops. According to FAO, one of the key organizers behind the International Day of Co-operatives: "cooperatives and producer organizations can play a key role in rural development and building a food secure world for all."

P4P has worked to support agricultural cooperatives with capacity development in both agricultural best practices and organizational management and business skills. Throughout the pilot period (2008-2013), P4P has supported farmers' organizations in 20 countries. The size and capacity of P4P-supported FOs varies widely from one country to another and includes a variety of structures, from small grassroots organizations to large farmers' federations. In Rwanda, P4P has collaborated with FAO and IFAD to develop smallholder farmers' cooperatives capacities in storage, marketing, financial management, and institutional strengthening. One smallholder benefitting from this work is a 46-year old mother of four named Murekatete Patricia. Patricia joined a cooperative in 2012, and after receiving training in post-harvest handling and storage, was able to market her maize collectively in order to make over US\$ 1000.

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In Malawi, the Home Grown School Feeding programme sources some of its food from smallholder farming cooperatives. This encourages student enrolment and ensures that schoolchildren have adequate nutrition. It also supports smallholder farmers by providing them with an assured market for their crops. One family benefits doubly from this programme. Through her farmers' organization, Clara Bamusi markets her food to the school feeding programme, increasing her income, and providing part of the meals her daughter receives at school. "The greatest benefit has been the reliable market," says Clara. "With my earnings I bought double the fertilizer and hybrid seed, and because of these inputs I was able to grow and harvest 65 more bags of maize this year compared to last."

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