

CropLife Madagascar Trains Spray Service Providers

Inspired by the Spray Service Provider (SSP) project in Zambia, CropLife Madagascar launched its own project in 2011 called Paysans Specialistes en Applications Phytosanitaires (PSAP), known in English as Professional Farmers in Phytosanitary Applications. The activities are part of an Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD) project for rice farmers. So far, almost 300 farmers covering 3,000 hectares have made use of the SSP services available.

The project's main objective is to establish a network of SSPs for the safe and effective application of pesticides. An SSP is a lead farmer who receives specialised training in the application of pesticides and then hires out his services to fellow farmers to spray their lands. Establishing an SSP network attempts to prevent untrained farmers from handling pesticides, only allowing those who are properly trained and certified to do so. The advantages of SSPs include better application of pesticides, avoiding over- or under-application, less risk to people and the environment, better management of empty containers and less accumulation of obsolete pesticides.

Organisers decided to start the project in Madagascar's Ambatondrazaka region, the primary region for rice production. CropLife Madagascar hired a project manager and financed the overall cost of the project. The BV Lac Project, funded by CIRAD, provided offices, computers, training materials and vehicles as well as financed after-training monitoring activities. The local government participated in the training on pest identification and control and monitored activities.

The programme interviewed candidates for the training program to select the best potential SSPs. Of 45 applicants, 28 farmers were selected and trained in the responsible use and application of pesticides. A master trainer for CropLife Madagascar facilitated the training. All of the participants successfully completed their final examination and received personal protection equipment from CropLife Madagascar, along with a badge proving their abilities to spray pesticides for the year 2011.

The trained SSPs sold their services to other farmers for approximately 3,200 MGA (US\$1.50) per day. It takes approximately two hours to spray one hectare. The main crops sprayed were rice, maize and vegetables and the primary pesticides used were insecticides (all pyrethroids), seed treatment (Gaucho T45 WS type), herbicides (mainly 2,4-D and pendimethaline) and fungicides (carbendazim).

Although no data is available on the impact of the project, CropLife Madagascar and BV Lac are satisfied with the results based on feedback received from the field. Farmers indicated that they would like to make use of the spraying services again in the future.

Trained SSPs benefit from the additional income from spraying fellow farmers' fields on an almost daily basis. The 300 farmers who opted for the service will likely continue to hire the SSPs, who in turn will be able to rely on this extra income.

Another positive benefit is the increased capacity of technicians working for farmers' cooperatives. While not counted as official SSPs, the technicians who attended the SSP training are now better able to supervise cooperative members.

One of the project's main challenges was to convince partner organizations to train farmers instead of only technicians, which often happens in other projects. The partner organizations were not sure that farmers could be trained to become SSPs. However, the group that was trained turned out to be very serious and dedicated to the work. They wear their badges with pride and still contact CropLife Madagascar if they have questions about everyday problems in the field.

A refresher course for active SSPs is planned for the near future. CropLife Madagascar is looking for opportunities to train a second group of SSPs in the same region and to start activities in other parts of the country.



Protective clothing for sprayers provided by CropLife Madagascar



Group of sprayers trained by CropLife Madagascar



Group of sprayers trained by CropLife Madagascar



Sprayers need to own their own spraying equipment



Preparations to go into the field



Practical training session