

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY ON IMITATORS OF THE ZANATANY SYSTEM

The Zanatany rice system was co-developed by AKF Madagascar (OSDRM) and Malagasy rice smallholder farmers in response to the very high attrition rate observed with SRI.

To date, through the SPEEDRICE project funded by Innocent Foundation, AKF has trained more than 19,570 smallholder rice farmers and the adoption rate of the various principles of the Zanatany is increasing steadily. The trainings were carried out through the community-based saving groups (CBSGs), as they constitute excellent audiences of structured and mobilized farmers.

Soon, it appeared that outside the CBSGs, a growing and quite considerable category of farmers appeared due to the project: the imitators. Imitators are like the adopters, smallholder rice farmers, but unlike them, they are not directly involved in or trained by the project. Through observation, word of mouth, or other means, they have been impressed by the advantages of the Zanatany and have decided to imitate their peer adopters.

The objectives of the study are to (1) identify who those imitators are, (2) point out the benefits (qualitative and quantitative) that they report and that incentivizes them to imitate, (3) quantify the measurable benefits of the imitation, (4) understand the reason why these imitators do not join the CBSGs.

The methodology proposed for this study is data collection through participative interviews first through key informants (chiefs of fokontany, model farmers or others), then among imitating households. To do so, a detailed sampling plan and data collection plan have been elaborated, involving Analamanga, Itasy, and Sofia regions. In addition, a detailed quality assurance plan for the data quality was also designed with defined methodological limitations. Out of a total of 196 imitating households identified (there may be many more), 120 have been surveyed, representing 61% of the total. The 39% remaining were either absent the day of the survey in their area or simply declined to be interviewed.

It appears that 100% of the identified imitators do not know the name of SPEEDRICE project and only 15% know AKF and the fact that the organization has trained farmers in financial literacy and in agriculture. Yet, 84% of them know the Zanatany system, referred by them as *3vary tomboko* or *"ketsa akotry"*, and can list the principles and practices. It appears that the two main channels of information about the Zanatany system have been (1) direct observation in the field (69.1%), (2) discussions with adopters (32.5%).

The identified benefits from Zanatany adoption/imitation have been classified in three categories: (1) economic benefits, (2) agronomic benefits, (3) social benefits.

Economic benefits

- a. Reduction in costs: 87.5% of the interviewed farmers have declared that the Zanatany has allowed them to significantly reduce their labor. Transplanting being avoided, the cultivation calendar is advanced while much less paid labor needs to be hired.
- b. Reduction in seeds needed: 81% of the imitators interviewed have declared that the Zanatany required much less seeds than any other system they know or have practiced. Most of them report a reduction of seed use by about 90%.
- c. Reduction in rice purchases for the household at peak price during lean season as households are more food secure and resilience.
- d. Increased yield, reported by 100% of the interviewed imitators.

Agronomic benefits

- e. Reduction in labor required: the Zanatany allows farmers to save in labor days spent and in paid labor hired.

- f. Resilience to climate extremes: 60% of the households interviewed claim that the Zanatany system allows their rice to better withstand droughts or floods and declare that this is a determining factor in their imitation.
- g. Adaptability to the different topographies: imitating farmers declare that the Zanatany, unlike the other rice systems practices is indistinctively adapted to all their topographies: Tanety, baiboho, heniheny, lohasaha, and Sakamaina.
- h. Improved resistance to pests and diseases: imitators cite a much better resistance to pests and diseases as another determining factor of imitation.

Social benefits

- i. More time available for the family: interviewed imitators have declared that the labor time saved with the Zanatany allowed them to invest more time for their family and children education, particularly among women-led households.

Overall, 72% of the imitators have declared that they were satisfied with the Zanatany, thanks to their higher yields.

The reasons for imitators not being members of CBSGs are (1) not knowing about the existence of the SPEEDRICE project, and therefore about CBSGs and financial literacy, (2) considering the involvement in a CBSG as a waste of time, (3) fear of financial litigation and debts.