



MOROCCO

MCC Learning from

“Fruit Tree Productivity Project Final Evaluation Report”

Mathematica Policy Research, June 2020

MCC has identified the following lessons based on the Morocco Fruit Tree Productivity Project final evaluation reports.

CATALYST FUND REPORT

Appropriate leadership and a well-formed business plan are necessary prerequisites for a farmer cooperative to manage a profitable business: GIEs struggled with their ability to provide a convincing value to farmers to sell their olives to the GIEs (upstream), they struggled to access markets in which to consistently sell their olive oil (downstream), both of which were exacerbated by struggles with working capital and debt servicing.

Don't expect smallholder farmers to provide “patient capital” to agro-processing ventures: The farmer members of the cooperatives were largely unable and unwilling to sell their olives to GIEs. Primarily, this was because the GIEs did not have working capital to pay for olives until olive oil was produced and sold, in some cases many months after farmers delivered their olives.

Developing cooperatives requires significant time and behavior change on the part of member farmers, perhaps more so in the case of second-order cooperatives: It is critical to program sufficient time and on-the-ground engagement to provide farmers with the necessary information, build trust across stakeholders, and troubleshoot other behavioral and sociocultural barriers to successful operation of such a demanding financial and operational venture.

IRRIGATION REPORT

Delivery of high quality of infrastructure doesn't happen on its own. The evaluation found that irrigation infrastructure was of high quality and that MCC's due diligence and oversight model had positive effects on the standards of other infrastructure projects in the country. This highlights the importance of MCC's continued investment in active oversight and partnering with governments to improve quality assurance.

Climate change, seasonality and the particularities of microclimates make attribution difficult: In agriculture interventions without adequate comparison groups, it's hard to understand the attributable impacts of program investments, as was the case with this evaluation, where significant drought in follow up years further complicated the ability to understand the program's impact. MCC is addressing this lessons by investing in measurement innovations such as piloting remote sensing for measuring land use and agricultural production.

Well-functioning institutions are essential to the long-term success of irrigation projects: Although the Project introduced elements of formal legal structures to the traditional WUAs, these structures have not endured, as farmers have continued to rely on traditional associations. This transition highlights the importance of existing institutions as a backstop for long-term sustainability in irrigation projects.