



Organisational solutions for pre-processing and processing

Problem

Many farmers, especially organic, would like to pre-process harvested crops before delivering it to their customer or to the cooperative. If they deliver raw grains, possibly polluted by weeds, the price is low and the cooperative can charge them cleaning fees.

But pre-processing equipment, such as sorter or dehuller, can be expensive and difficult to amortise especially for small businesses.

Furthermore, some skills are needed for the design and the installation of such machineries. The same difficulties exist for farmers wishing to process their produce themselves.

These issues may lead farmers to expose themselves to significant financial investments and increased working time that need to be mitigated.

Applicability box

Theme

Minor cereals pre-processing and processing

Reference conditions

Having local agroecological grains that are clean and safe (well cleaned and stored in good conditions).

Application time

Any time after harvesting

Required time

From months to years, depending on the level of knowledge on pre-processing techniques

Period of impact

For pre-processing, directly after harvest and pre-processing, while for processors some months are needed (minimum 1 month, which is the commonly considered resting time for a new harvest before processing)

Equipment

Low tech or commercial tools: grain transportation machines, sorter, dehuller (for hulled grains), mill (stone)

Best in

Organic and short or mid-tier value chains

Solution

Two collective organisation examples are given from the Cerr-Occ living lab (Occitania, France)

1) a mobile grain cleaning unit, for which some farmers have organised themselves to collectively buy and use a mobile grain sorting unit.

2) a processing unit, including cleaning/sorting and dehulling unit and stone mill, entirely owned by a cooperative. A number of farmers have come together to form a cooperative called SCIC Graines Equitables, which focuses on the production of certified organic cereals, pulses and processing products such flour, pasta and aperitive seeds.

Practical recommendation

No matter what is the collective organisation considered, it is important to be supported by specialists. The project must technically meet the expectations of the community, while remaining within investment levels that will generate added value in the medium term.

The collective aspect is also very important, often requiring external leadership and the establishment of clear, shared collective rules.

Finally, we recommend that you take the necessary time and do not hesitate to call on competent advisors to design and manufacture the structure that most meets the expectations of the group.

Benefits

The initial motivation for this collective purchase and organisation is to enable organic farmers to add value to their produce through on-farm cleaning, while limiting investment costs.

The equipment purchased is a rotary drum sorter, which costs the CUMA (French acronym for “cooperative for the use of agricultural equipment”) €100,000. Around thirty different sized screens are available to the farmers, allowing them to adapt to a wide range of crops.

Farmers have to pay €110 per hour to use it. With a grain flow of 3 to 5 tonnes per hour, the cost is between €22 and €37 per tonne, which is cheaper than a commercial facility (current price in commercial facilities range between 40 and 75€). Also, as the clean unit is mobile, there is very low transportation costs, limited to the unit transportation that pays for itself as soon as 3.5 tonnes of grain are sorted.

The cooperative’s new sorting and storage facility is also a competitive tool for sorting agroecological seeds. Meaning that the farmers can increase agroecological practices such as intercropping and the different mixtures are separated on arrival. They benefit from low costs seeds and a valorisation above organic market standard prices.



Credit : "Dorez-trieur-TRIBIO" : Lafranceagricole



Credit : "trieur dorez" : Entraid



Credit : "stockage-laure-2" : SCIC Graines Equitables

Further information

Weblinks

SCIC Graines Équitables homepage: <https://graines-equitables.fr>

About this practice abstract and DIVINFOOD

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The overall goal of DIVINFOOD (a multi-actor, participatory project) is to facilitate the use and increase the value of Neglected and Underutilised Crops (NUCs) in food chains to foster healthier diets and more sustainable food systems.

Project website: www.divinfood.eu

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