

Shifting Farmers' Informal Cooperation Models to Formal Primary Co-operative Enterprises Based on The Co-operative Principle "Concern for Community"

A Case Study Among Potato Farmers in Wanging'ombe District, Njombe District and Njombe Town Council Njombe, Region

By

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Abstract

From the perspectives of the structure and history of the Tanzanian co-operative movement, the fact that has to be taken into consideration is existence of abundant community rooted informal cooperation societies and activities in many regions besides the formal co-operatives that play vital role at the local and national level.

"Concern for Community", Co-operative Principle adopted Worldwide in 1995 as a statement on Co-operative Identity emphasizes that co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members. Thus, co-operatives should be rooted in communities to respond to their members' and communities' interests. Tanzania has shown its commitment to implement this principle in practice by ratifying Co-operative of Tanzania, 2013.

A field survey study conducted among potato farmers that were involved in the Finnish-Tanzanian project "Seed Potato Development Project (SPDP-Tz)" on "The possibility to form self-initiated co-operatives by the farmers" in Mbeya rural, Njombe, Wanging'ombe, and Rungwe Regions in

the Southern Highlands Zone of Tanzania revealed that the vast majority of the farmers belong to informal cooperation societies and participate in activities taking place in their villages.

As a follow-up of the SPDP-Tz, a study was conducted to investigate the possibility of shifting the village rooted informal cooperation societies to formal primary co-operatives. The study that involved 331 farmers in 6 centres comprising of 27 villages in Wanging'ombe District, Njombe District and Njombe town Council Njombe, Region, Southern Highlands zone of Tanzania reveals farmers keen interest and commitment to the idea of shifting the informal cooperation societies to formal primary co-operatives.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the vital role of the informal cooperation societies and activities and how as formally farmers' means co-operatives of livelihood would contribute to improve diversification. Additionally, the community discussion development includes the challenges of disseminating knowledge to the co-operatives at grassroots level and the possibility of shifting the operation in accordance with the operation societies to formal co-operatives principle, 'Concern for Community'

Key words: informal cooperation societies and activities, formal co-operatives, co-operative principles and values, socio-economic development, community development, poverty alleviation, Southern Highlands, Tanzania.