**EXERCISE 12. CHOOSING A PRODUCT AND MARKET**

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| *OBJECTIVE*  **After this exercise the participants will be able to:**   * Select one or two agroenterprises from among the set of options identified earlier. | |
| *EQUIPMENT NEEDED*   * Flip chart, marker pens | *EXPECTED OUTPUTS*   * Choice of one or two agroenterprises |
| *TIME*   * 3 hours | *PREPARATION*   * Gather together the information you and the marketing team have collected about the various agroenterprise options in the market surveys (Lesson 7), production (Lesson 8), business services (Lesson 9) and finance (Lesson 10). Pull out the most important and relevant information and summarize it on a series of large sheets – one sheet per type of agroenterprise. |

*This exercise helps the farmers evaluate the information they have gathered about potential products and markets, and choose one or two agroenterprises to work on.*

*This is an important meeting! Make sure that all the important people who need make the decision are there.*

*SUGGESTED PROCEDURE:*

1. Explain the purpose of the meeting – to decide on the agroenterprise that the farmers wish to pursue. Explain that they will have to choose one (or perhaps two) enterprises on the basis of the information they have gathered.
2. Discuss the four fundamental criteria that the farmers should use in making their decision:
   * Is there high **demand** in the market for the product?
   * Can we produce the product given the **land, soil, water, and labor resources** that we have available? Can we continue producing the product in the long-term without degrading these resources?
   * Will we be able to access the **inputs**, the **technical** and **business** support and **financial** resources we need?
   * We will cover all our costs, and make a **profit**?
3. Invite the marketing team to review the agroenterprise options under consideration, using the summaries on the large sheets of paper. Make sure the information is presented in a way that is transparent and is not biased towards the team’s ‘favorite’ option.
4. Discuss whether the options fulfill the criteria. Eliminate those that do not.
5. If more than one option remains, ask the participants to compare their advantages and disadvantages. See the “Questions to Stimulate Discussion” below for some aspects to discuss.
6. Invite the farmers to select the agroenterprise they wish to pursue, after having considered all the evidence and arguments.

*NOTES*

Men and women farmers may have different opinions on these additional criteria, so ask them to discuss them in separate groups and share their responses afterwards. Where the groups agree, there is a good chance of men and women working successfully together in that agroenterprise. Where there are differences, it may be best for men and women to manage their enterprises separately, or to negotiate how best to collaborate.

*QUESTIONS TO STIMULATE DISCUSSION*

* How risky is the strategy?
* Can the product contribute to the farm families’ consumption of a nutritious diet as well as generate income?
* Are there any cultural, religious or ethical objections to producing the product?
* Can the product be produced on land that is not used, or is underused at the moment?
* Is the product favored by any particular government or private-sector policies or regulations?
* Does the product fit well with other farming activities in terms of labor availability?
* Does producing or marketing the product disadvantage women farmers?

These are just some examples of criteria to use. Ask the farmers to come up with their own list of criteria.

