



Snapshot: Changing the Terms of Maize Trade: Scales & Kilograms – Not Bags

When SOBA completed an initial poultry sector analysis, we learned that a lack of trust in the maize supply chain significantly hampered market performance. Purposeful misinformation regarding the amount of maize bought and sold was a common issue. Buyers (poultry companies) had fears that they were being cheated by aggregators (maize traders and farmers), who were similarly distrustful of their buyers.

Towards shifting trade norms, SOBA introduced weighing scales and standardised measurements and as a basis of trade. The aim was to boost trust through a more transparent and better functioning marketplace – that would ultimately encourage farmers to produce and to trade more maize.

Pilot

SOBA introduced scales with twenty-three aggregators and poultry companies. Following six months and a first trade season, we reviewed results:

Key Findings:

- Before this intervention, 95% of market actors were not using scales.
- All bags were taken as 75kg by all actors across the supply chain, without any standard measurement.
- Buyers (poultry companies) were paying Le150,000 per bag. However, bags varied widely in volume. During an event to demonstrate scales, for example, a bag of maize weighed 78kg.
- Poultry companies agreed to start buying by the kilogram, using scales to deduce price. At the time, they committed to Le 2,500 per kg.
- Both aggregators and poultry companies are satisfied with the outcome of the use of scales so far, and are fully committed to their ongoing use as a method of standardisation.
- 63% of the poultry farmers interviewed started using a weighting scale in early 2017 to better manage the quantities of maize sourced from aggregators.
- 80% of those believe that their maize sourcing practices have improved through the use of the weighting scale, which they also use to monitor their own stock and plan sourcing based on daily feed requirements.
- However, aggregators are not trading en masse with farmers utilizing scales and kg basis – often to the disadvantage of the farmer. SOBA plans activity for July-August aimed at diffusing the innovation more widely among farmers.

“There has been more confidence and trust between buying relationships...[the use of scales] is more profitable and helps us to attain the volume bought”

Bai Bureh, Leecon Poultry

“With scales, we can be able to know the exact quantity of maize we are supplying”

Ahmed Alaska Bangura, Mile 91



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Sierra Leone Opportunities for Business Action (SOBA) is a private sector development programme that uses a market systems approach to facilitate pro-poor economic growth in Sierra Leone. The programme collaborates with private sector businesses in three primary areas: (1) agriculture, (2) renewable energy, (3) professional services and entrepreneurship markets, to trial and to scale innovative and inclusive business practices that reduce poverty and improve economic opportunities for poor women and men. SOBA is funded by UK Aid and implemented by Adam Smith International.