

DRC - Agriculture

Adoption of a law on fundamental principles related to agriculture

On May 3, 2011, the Parliament of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) adopted a law on fundamental principles related to agriculture (formerly called the “Agricultural Code”). The vote occurred after several years of advocacy, negotiation and lobbying by numerous stakeholders as well as farmers and civil society. The “Law on Agriculture” is expected to give judicial protection to Congolese farmers. The CATALIST project joined this effort by contributing financial and technical support through its role as a regional facilitator.

Now, Congolese farmers are ensured judicial protection through this new law, which is awaiting action by the DRC President’s Office for promulgation. As a result, farmers currently using the land will practice improved land management, particularly since this law will fill the long-time deficit, which was often the root of several land conflicts in rural DRC.

Above all, it constitutes the fundamental law for the protection of farmers’ judicial rights regarding management of the Congolese land and the Congolese Government itself, as well as other activity related to agriculture in DRC. The entire national territory is considered government property, unless property has officially been deeded to an individual, organization or company by the government of the DRC.

The government of the DRC owns 80 million hectares of arable land, of which only 10 percent is farmed. Consequently, not enough food is produced to feed the majority of the population, despite the area’s agricultural potential. In addition, land is often unavailable for farmers, because vast areas of uncultivated land have been given by the government to planters and other large, wealthy landowners. This situation is one of the major constraints to food security in DRC.

These issues motivated farmer leaders to mobilize farmers’ organizations and to advocate in favor of Congolese small-scale farmers for three years. The fruit of these efforts, supported by national and international partners, was the adoption of this law by Parliament in May 2011.

The law on fundamental principles related to agriculture aims to create a dynamic around decentralization with provincially elected representatives and farmers’ organizations. Under terms of the new law, incentives for promoting agricultural investment, as well as the level of taxes, energy and land and access to new technologies, quality inputs, seeds and price and market information. It also redefines the conditions of refunding the agricultural sector and promotes actions to increase agricultural development including youth training, increased agricultural research and the establishment of well-organized sectors, from the supply of seeds to marketing and processing.

The CATALIST project, which is triggering agricultural intensification in DRC, advocated for the adoption of this law so that small-scale farmers – the heart of the intensification process – as well as the private sector are encouraged to invest in agriculture.

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