

Big, Sweet Tomatoes - Food Security and Productive Sanitation Systems Side Event, WWW 2009

Co-organised by: Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Centre Régional pour l'Eau Potable et l'Assainissement à faible coût (CREPA)

Productive sanitation systems (PSS) can play a key role in reducing hunger and meeting food security demands, especially for small-holder farmers lacking access to fertilisers in hardship contexts of poor soil and scarce rainfall. PSS places increased crop yields in the driver's seat rather than trying to create a demand for sanitation installations. The testing of PSS and urine as a fertiliser in Niger and other countries points towards a new way of motivating communities to develop and improve sanitation services. The focus of the Session highlights problems encountered and successes of the approach, supported by pictures and a film of oversized vegetables and smiling farmers thinking of their families' improved livelihoods and that of future generations'.

The testing during twelve months in rural Aguié Province, Niger, is done in co-operation between PPILDA, an IFAD-funded livelihoods project, IFAD-HQs, SEI and CREPA. Urine fertiliser application to tomatoes, peppers, cabbage and carrots showed higher yields, more attractive looking produce and a blindfolded taste test indicates superior results from urine fertilisation.

Aguié farmers can spend approximately USD 40/year on fertilisers. Safe excreta-base fertiliser produced by a family amounts to approximately USD 80/year. Thus, human excreta are a neglected resource in need of recognition. "Poor people are now calculating the value of urine and faeces and everybody is demanding toilet installations" was said.

During the Session it was made clear that there are several prerequisites for successful testing of PSS. Agricultural extension workers are key to reaching farmers, an enabling environment is necessary, capacity development and institutional issues have to be dealt with, and attitudes, especially among intellectuals, have to be overcome.

In addition to scientific evidence as an output of the project, there are tools for calculating the value of the production, local business opportunities, policy promotion at different levels, capacity development, institutional engagement and a communication platform.

In concluding the session, there are three questions to this win-win approach, namely: how to mainstream the results? how to deal with logistics? and how to overcome mindset obstacles?

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