



FEED THE FUTURE NAFKA ACTIVITY ENSURES SMALLHOLDER RICE FARMERS AND BUSINESSES HAVE AN ADVOCATE



Rice farmer at his field in Mvomero

Tanzania's smallholder farmers are the engine that doubled rice production from 2001 to 2011 to 1.4 million metric tons and established Tanzanian rice as a valuable brand across East Africa. Imports, however, jeopardized these gains. In 2013, the Government of Tanzania lifted import duties for select companies. Along with an increase in smuggled rice, the ensuing flood of cheaper Asian rice pushed local prices below the break-even points of farmers and cut them off from markets in neighboring countries, who feared a spillover into their own markets. The engine of growth was stalling.

The Rice Council of Tanzania (RCT) emerged from a coalition of investors who knew they had to push back so as not to lose their businesses and to protect the livelihoods of their smallholder suppliers. The Feed the Future NAFKA Activity had initially brought these investors together. When the tide of imports flooded local markets, it helped them organize and find the right means of remedying the situation.

The Rice Council of Tanzania has emerged as a credible advocate and convinced the government to control smuggling and re-impose tariffs.

Playing a supportive role, NAFKA ensured that the RCT was owned and led by its private sector members. Along with USAID's SERA project, NAFKA provided resources so the RCT could advocate for their interests and clearly show how smuggling and unfettered imports hurt their businesses, the lives of smallholders, and future growth of the rice sector. Using petitions of smallholders, position papers, investigations, media campaigns, and a program of constant engagement with officials across ministries and branches of government, the RCT succeeded.



In October 2015, import licenses were eliminated. The revenue authority tracked down smugglers and took better control of informal ports of entry. By the end of the year, nearly all traces of imported rice were gone and most East African countries had again opened their borders to Tanzanian rice.

“The flow of cheap imports is threatening our rice industry. Prices have fallen below our costs of production.”

Because of the credibility of its arguments and its authority in representing Tanzanian businesses, the Rice Council of Tanzania has become a trusted advisor and valued partner in the government’s policymaking and enforcement process. Because of NAFKA’s backseat approach and insistence that businesses lead the council, the RCT will outlast NAFKA and likely any follow-on assistance programs. As such, it will continue to be an invaluable asset, ensuring that public policy is grounded in the issues and challenges of the businesses, small and large alike, that drive growth and competitiveness in the rice value chain.