

Rural Advisory Services under Contract Farming in rice sector in Tanzania

Rice in Tanzania

- Rice in Tanzania is the second most important cereal after maize and is grown by about 18% of the country's 5.5 million farmers mostly on plots of less than one hectare.
- 48% of total rice production is located in the central corridor of Tanzania (an area approximately the size of Germany) and engages about 250,000 small-holder farmers in this area.
- Rice yields are low (1.5-2.0 t/ha) due to inadequate use of inputs (fertilizers, improved seeds), poor agronomic practices, lack of irrigation infrastructure and inexistent or inappropriate rural advisory services (RAS).
- Further bottlenecks in the rice value chain include low quality of milled rice (due to mixed varieties), lack of entrepreneurial and business management skills amongst millers coupled with low availability of financial services close to farmers, cumbersome lending procedures and inadequate storage facilities.

- Rural Livelihood Development Programme (RLDP) identified improved RAS as having a high potential to increase rice production by up to 25%. It has designed an intervention reaching 12,000 rice farmers in the central corridor.

Role of different actors in RAS

- RLDP supports agro-dealers and lead farmers training through its partners
- Agricultural Seed Agency (ASA) trains agro dealers in seed business management, seed handling techniques, use of inputs and also supplies improved rice seeds to agro-dealer shops and millers. ASA also trains agro dealers, millers and farmers on good agronomic practices (GAP) through farmers field school (FFS) and farmers field days (FFDs).
- Agro-dealers provide RAS through sale of improved rice seed varieties and inputs; advise rice farmers on good agronomic practices and better use of inputs as part of embedded services.
- Village promoters train rice farmers on GAP, also provide technical advice and guidance to farmers.
- Millers mobilize farmers into groups, facilitate GAP training to farmers, provide inputs on credit to farmers, provide extension services and guarantee market for farmer's produce.
- Agriculture research and training centers provide training to promoters and refresher courses to private extension officers on good agronomic practices.
- Local Government Authorities (LGAs) oversee provision and quality of RAS provided by different stakeholders.

How is RAS delivered

- RAS is provided to rice producers by lead farmers (farmer-to-farmer knowledge transfer) under contract farming arrangements.
- Farmers are advised on sustainable rice production (good agronomic practices and better use of inputs) in one on one sessions between lead farmers and farmers and through demonstration plots where farmers attend farmer field schools (FFS). Farmer Field Days are conducted periodically during the farming sessions.
- Agro-dealers provide RAS to farmers at the time when they purchase the inputs and seeds from the agro-shops (received as an offer from the agro-dealers).
- They are advised on good agronomic practices and better use of inputs.

How do farmers benefit from improved RAS

- Farmers have managed to reduce production costs by collectively sourcing inputs on time, credit and technical advice.
- Rice productivity has increased from 3.2 tons/ha to 8 tons/ha under irrigation scheme.
- The quality of rice has improved substantially (farmers no longer want to mix rice varieties and this has led to various brands and grades of rice).
- Rice farmers have managed to secure a good market for their produce reducing market risks encountered before.

Financial sustainability

- Lead farmers are selected in village assembly meetings and trained at farmer training centers.
- Farmers who demonstrate new practices and who are ready to train others are given priority.
- Local Government Authorities always ensure village and ward extension officers get their monthly salary and other allowances to enable them to execute their job.
- After initial RLDP payment for promoters capacity development, rice millers now pay monthly top-up allowances of about \$ 20 to each promoter when they provide RAS to farmers in contract farming.
- Currently farmers do not pay any fee for the provided RAS from promoters and extension officers but in the future the plan is to make them pay directly or indirectly e.g. village savings and lending groups have been formed from which farmers can save and borrow to pay for RAS services (purchase of inputs, seeds, fertilizer, facilitate promoter's costs during RAS provision, etc).


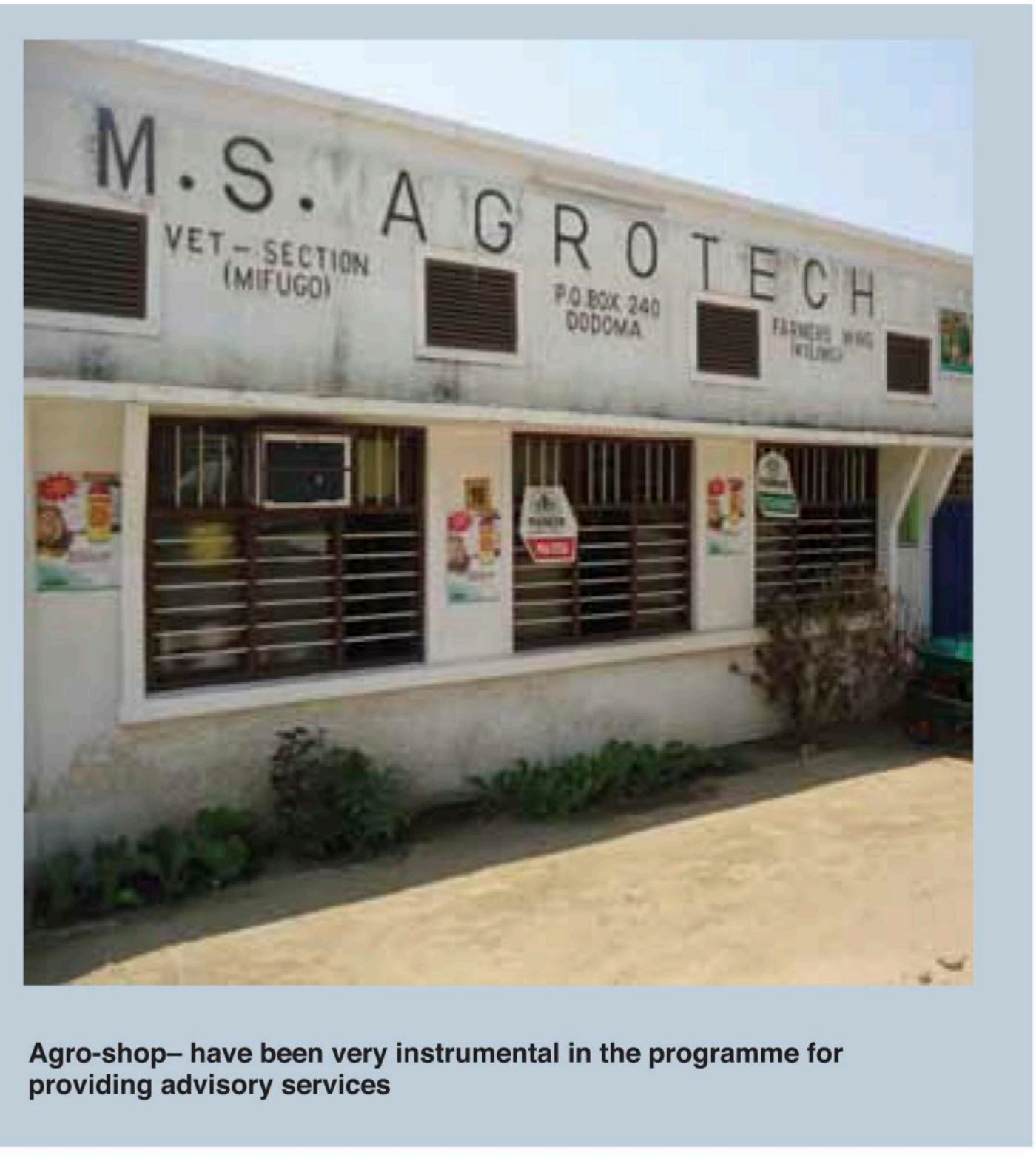
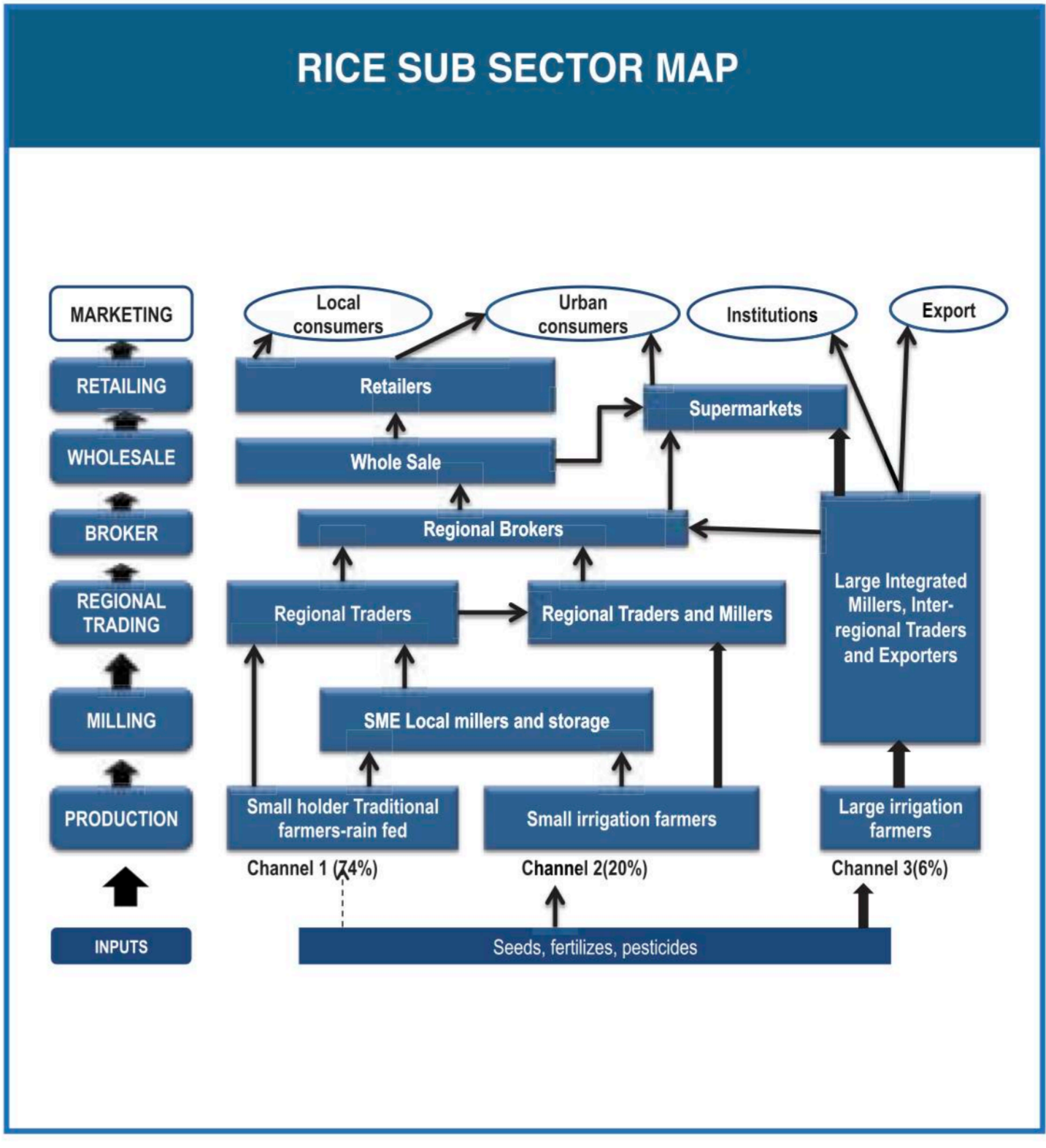
Challenges

- Inadequate supply of RAS providers in rice sector (few trained promoters, understaffed and unequipped public extension officers) which leave majority of farmers without services especially those who live in remote areas.
- Weak input distribution system in the country has led to many agro-dealers being located in small towns and at Districts headquarters which makes it difficult for farmers situated in remote areas to access the services offered.
- Due to Tanzania's cultural contexts those who go to buy inputs from agro-dealers are men, this denies a majority of women rice farmers opportunity to access advisory services and other embedded services, this also applies to females who serve as promoters.
- Poor linkage between research institutions, farmers, agriculture training centers and input suppliers as well as poor coordination among RAS key stakeholders like LGAs, input suppliers, research and training centers, agro-dealers, millers and farmers has led into poor and inadequate delivery of RAS in the rice sector, e.g. Low awareness in use of inputs as well as poor agronomic skills of rice farmers.

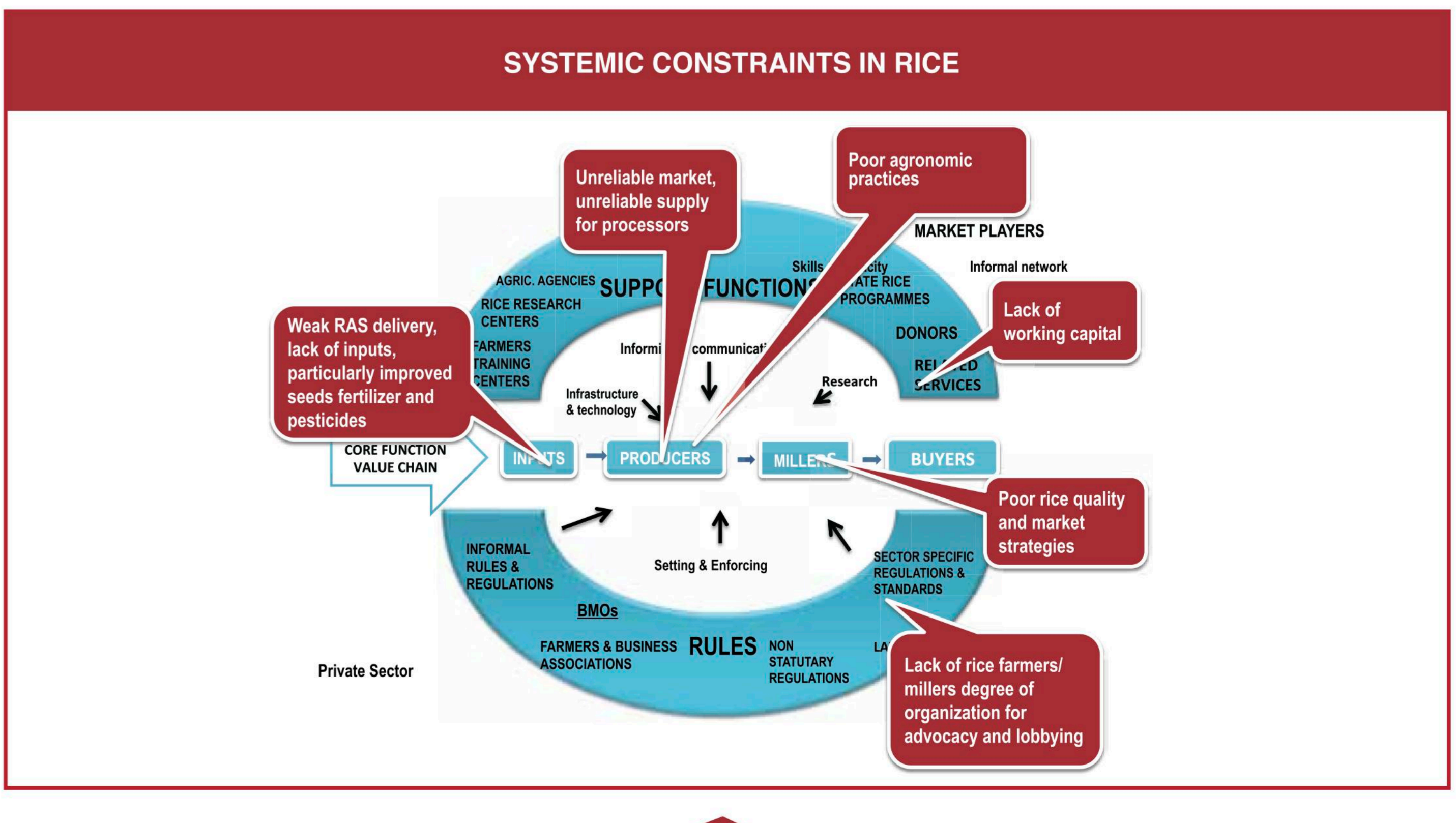
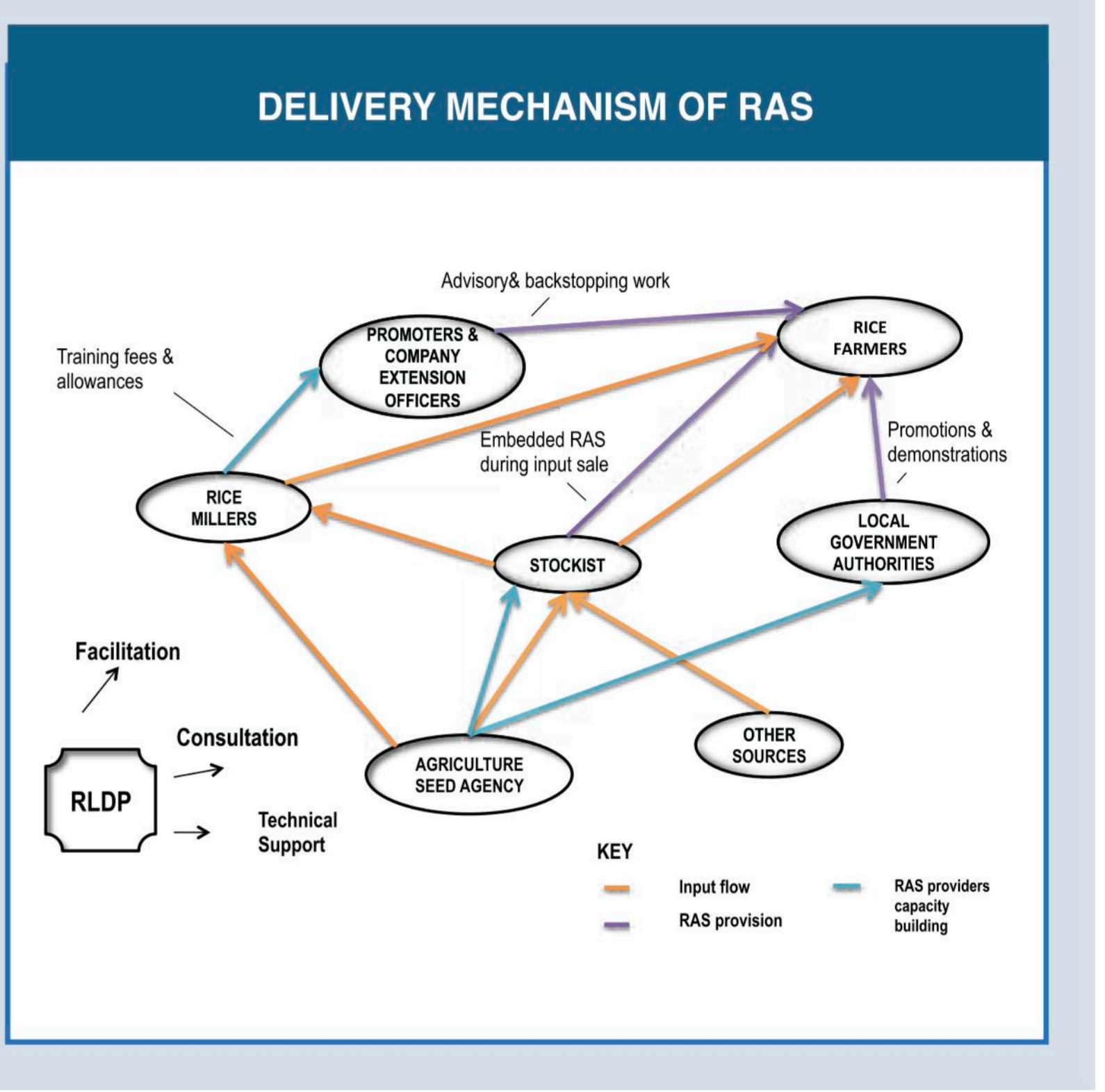
Perspectives

- Rice millers engage fully and effectively in RAS provision to farmers, by permanently employing private extension officers.
- Rice millers and agro-dealers establish their own associations that will provide an important platform for discussing and addressing RAS issues in the country.
- Rice millers, agro dealers, input suppliers, and LGAs forge a strong business relation that will lead to a coordinated, effective and vibrant RAS provision system in the country.
- Village promoters to become professional RAS providers in their respective villages, thus rewarded to what they do either by fees or any other incentives.
- Districts Agricultural Development Programmes (DADPs) capacitate and increase involvement of public extension officers and provide chances for remote farmers to learn through rice demo plot programmes
- Central Government capacitates rice research stations, zonal irrigation centers and rice training centers; establishes networking between rice stakeholders.

- Under the current sub sector strategy, RLDP's vision is to contribute to sustainable reduction of poverty in the central corridor of Tanzania.
- RAS specific objectives include addressing the supply of improved seeds and their use; addressing poor agronomic practices of smallholder farmers; encouraging the use of private extension services, improving flow of information to and from farmers on production techniques, processing and marketing aspects.

Magaza Mboje (right) and her husband Mika Paul of Iyumbu village in Singida Rural District testifying how the lead farmer support coupled with extension officers backstopping, rice demonstration plots insight and input credit from the miller have increased rice productivity. She realized a yield of 4.5 tons from her only 0.4 hectare of land.



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