Agriculture in Madagascar has to face tremendous constraints: very low investment capacity, poor infrastructure network, low availability and high prices of inputs, uncontrolled bush fires and deforestation leading to severe erosion, loss of arable land and destruction of downstream infrastructures. As a consequence, yields are low and farmers’ condition very precarious.

Techniques of direct planting on permanent soil cover (DPPSC) can lead to solutions for sustainable and profitable agriculture.

A wide range of cropping systems adapted to various conditions

A wide range of cropping systems was developed with farmers and can now be proposed for extension and the increasing demand from farmers for advises and training on these systems could not be adequately fulfilled.

Extension of Direct Planting on Permanent Soil Cover

- Organised extension of these systems started in 1999, with very limited means
- Over a thousand farmers in each working zone, covering hundreds of hectares

Due to lack of human resources, only the simplest systems (not always the most suitable for each specific situation) were proposed for extension and the increasing demand from farmers for advises and training on these systems could not be adequately fulfilled.

The GSDM and the "Support to diffusion of Agro ecological techniques" Project

In 2000, the GSDM (Groupement Semis Direct Madagascar) was created, associating the main organisations involved in DPPSC in Madagascar:

- TAFa, a NGO conducting applied research on DPPSC;
- FOFIFA, the National Centre for Agricultural Research for Rural Development;
- FIFAMANOR, a public organism for research and rural development;
- ANAE, the national agency for environmental action; and
- FAPITALA, the Centre for experimentation and extension for farmers’ management of the tenay (hillsides).

Other organisations then joined the group and a 5 years project funded by AFD (French Agency for Development), FFEM (French Fund for World Environment) and CIRAD begun in 2003.

This project entitled “Support to diffusion of Agro-ecological techniques in Madagascar” aims at strengthening the GSDM and its activities, especially regarding:

- Coordination of activities: Research, training and extension activities are closely linked in a continuum.
- Training and capacity building.
- Extension.

Conclusions

The grouping of the main organisations involved in DPPSC in a single association should allow better coordination of the activities required in the long process of creation-training-extension.

The priority given to capacity building prior to extension activities, the support of the government, the interest shown by farmers and the overall approach adopted by GSDM should allow large scale diffusion of these systems in various regions in Madagascar.

References