



Media and lobby tactics: linking farmers' actions with national policy processes

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Judy Williams (GRENCODA) and Sonja Vermeulen (IIED) have prepared this tool based on the experience of GRENCODA and farmers on the Chambord Lands. The main GRENCODA facilitator at Chambord is Danley Alexis, whose knowledge has contributed greatly to this write-up

1. Introduction

This set of tactics, based on experience in Grenada, introduces a range of lessons and ideas on how to encourage national policy to respond to farmers' needs and aspirations – to the best interests of both local and national livelihoods. The tactics range from fairly technical, time-consuming activities such as mapping and audits, to suggestions for seizing opportunities, particularly with politicians and the media. Grenada is a small country where public opinion counts for a lot – hence many of the tactics aim to stimulate public awareness and debate. But the range of tactics presented here are not relevant only to small island states, or only to farmers' concerns. Peoples' organisations and advocacy and development agencies working with natural resource managers in many settings should find a trove of ideas for action here.

2. Chambord farmers and Grenada's policies on land and agriculture: the story so far

Grenada is a Caribbean island state with a population of about 103,000 and a land area of 344 km². Agriculture and fishing form the backbone of island livelihoods. Though the topography of the island is hilly and rugged, communities are well organised – a long-standing cohesion founded in times of slavery when large-scale agricultural estates were owned by colonists. The relatively small and close-knit population means it easier to bridge local and national concerns and policies than in larger countries.

The 800-acre Chambord estate in northern Grenada was divided up in the 1960s. The government put aside about 25 acres to establish the Rose Hill housing settlement and about 420 acres were sold to a private development company owned by expatriates. The company failed to implement plans for high-cost residences and much of the land remained under small-scale tenancies (0.5 - 6 acres) with over 100 local farmers.

The so-called Chambord Lands include around 125 acres of "good" and 50 acres of "prime" agricultural land – one of the few areas in Grenada where mechanised agriculture is feasible. These farms produce a wide range of food and tree crops, and make a significant contribution to national agricultural production.

These agricultural areas are part of the lands that were sold to the private development company in 1964. In response to appeals and requests from the community, the company and farmers set up a formal tenancy agreement with provisions that:

- No permanent crops were to be planted and cultivation should be restricted to temporary crops only.
- An annual rent of EC\$10 per lot was to be paid.
- No livestock should be kept on the land except in an area which was designated as pasture and for which a fee of EC\$5 per head was to be paid.
- The sale of lots would continue and in the event that notice was served for vacating any portion of the land the tenant or tenants would do so forthwith.

This arrangement worked well for all parties until 1993 when the owners sold the property to a new group of developers. The latter planned to use the property for tourism and commercial development and indicated that they would require the use of some of the lands currently farmed by these small farmers. This new development created a climate of uncertainty among the farmers who were now reluctant to risk financial outlays of any kind. They saw their livelihoods as been threatened and sought the intervention of the government and GRENCODA – an NGO working in the community. The government has not made any significant efforts to redress the problem and, in the absence of a national land use policy, it may not be possible to ensure that the land is retained in agriculture for the good of local livelihoods and national food self-sufficiency.

3. Principles for working with farmers

Any work with farmers needs to be built around principles of commonality and common sense. It takes time to set up trust, build relationships, establish mutual respect and learn how to balance give and take (Box 1). Approaches to ensure the best understanding and outcomes include:

- Plan and review with farmers jointly – and constantly
- Use minutes from previous meetings to revisit what has worked, what has not, and what should be built on
- Use flip charts to keep information public, but be careful not to exclude the unlettered people in the group
- Only make pledges you are prepared to go all out to honour
- Report back and keep farmers informed – on both the glory and the set-backs
- Stick to promised dates for action and feedback

Box 1. Building – or losing – respect over time

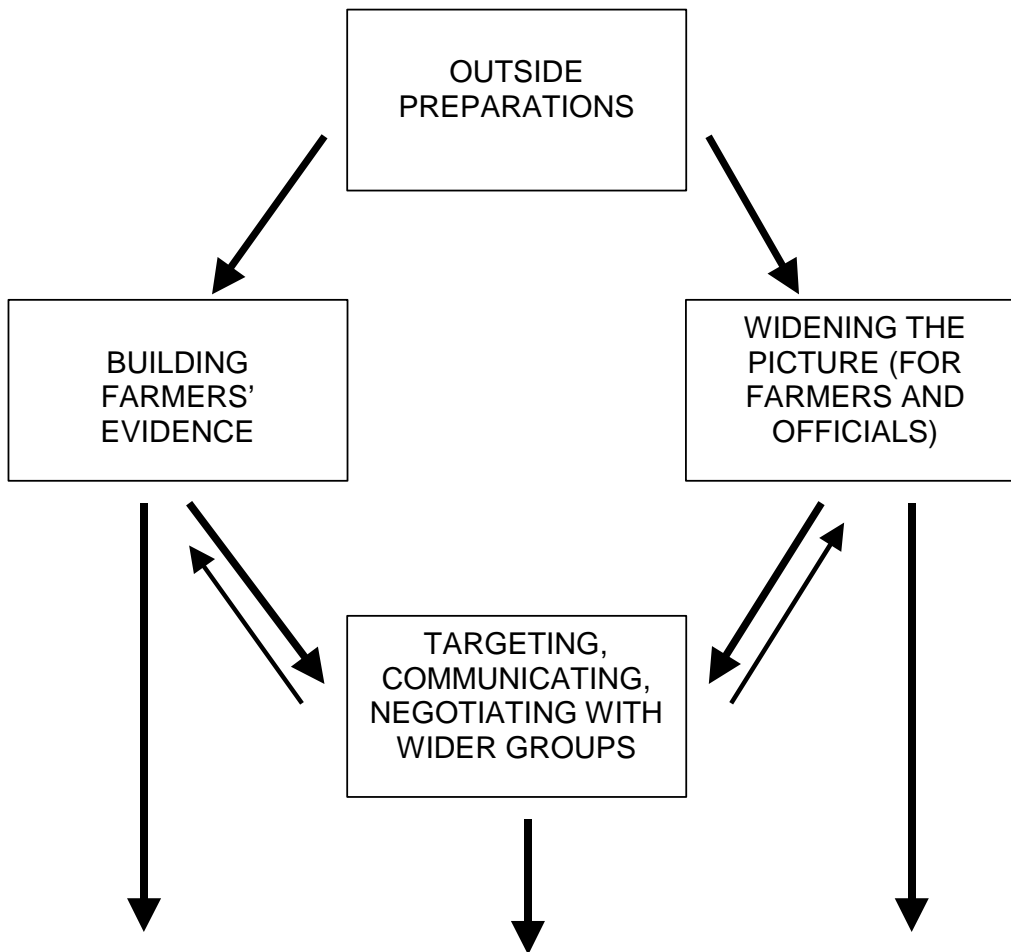
GRENCODA has been working with the Chambord farmers for over ten years. Principles of respect both ways have been established and earned over time. A cornerstone at GRENCODA's end has been sitting, planning and reviewing with farmers. This included meeting on the farms or 'under the tree' and cooking, eating together as weighty matters are decided. Minutes, follow-up on tasks and reporting back have been consistent.

Still, one slip can be literally fatal and erode trust built up over decades. An irate, loud man from River Sallee burst out at a meeting in 2003, "GRENCODA doesn't keep its word!" He was vexed because some 6 – 7 years prior, GRENCODA with the farmers had planned a Crop Competition along with the Ministry of Agriculture. The objective was to stimulate production and use of the land to help ward off those claiming ownership and the big money investors. After 75% of the activity was complete, just before judging, GRENCODA lost the officer responsible, the then Project Manager. He was not replaced until much later. The result: the competition was not finally judged and no promised prizes were handed out. Poor, poor form coming back to haunt GRENCODA years later.

Only the great success of the 2003 tractor service (see Box 3) served to mellow (perhaps for a while) the chagrin of that loud, irate man and others, less loud and irate, who recalled the Crop Competition.

4. Tactics for linking farmers' actions with national policy processes

The set of lessons and ideas for linking farmers' actions with national policy processes is divided here into four related sections: outside preparations, building farmers' evidence, widening the picture, and targeting, communicating and negotiating with wider groups. The diagram below shows one way that these components can be integrated. However, while the diagram suggests a sequential process, real processes are of course simultaneous and interlinked, so that farmers working with a facilitating agency are never working on just one the boxes at a time – even at the preparatory stage.



OUTSIDE PREPARATIONS

- ***Audit existing land use policies and do a land registry search.*** Build up knowledge of relevant policies (not just land policy but pertinent policies on agriculture, forestry, transport, infrastructure, development, credit and so on, at local and national levels). If possible, set up an archive of policy documents with a clear reference system pointing the user to relevant sections within the documents. Keep the archive open for public use if at all feasible, to lend to farmers and other interested parties. Even if you do not have the resources for a thorough policy analysis, you can critique some elements such as how participatory the policy process was. Also research existing information on land title, including its history – in some countries tenure is only partially documented, so gathering as much evidence as possible, including oral evidence, is useful.
- ***Engage early with the media.*** Tempt the media into investigative journalism instead of being happy to sit back and send out press releases, as this will lead to much better coverage and longer-term engagement. Don't take the farmers to the press – bring the press to the farmers. Hold workshops for the media at the site of interest, not at a city venue.

BUILDING FARMERS' EVIDENCE

- ***Demonstrate land use.*** For farmers, real evidence is on the ground, not on paper (Box 2). The Chambord farmers demonstrated the utility of keeping the land in agriculture by keeping it

consistently production – and getting their activities recorded with photography, tape-recording and video, with their own initiative, but also by attracting the attention of the national media (Box 3).

Box 2. Farmers at Chambord discuss how to prove land use

“We want to plant many types of crops because as long as we are doing that they can’t take the land.” Women farmers’ meeting, April 10, 2003

“Once we get the tractor to start ploughing for us the next thing we have to do is get them to give us the land.” Farmers’ meeting, March 27, 2003

Box 3. The tractor: a tool for ploughing and a tool for policy change

As farmers from Chambord discussed the issue of keeping the land in production, they listed the challenges they face in doing so. Land preparation came out as the most critical issue. The Government Farm Machinery Pool is meant to provide a tractor service, but farmers have lost confidence in the service over the last five years. Even if they adhered to the policy and paid the required fees into the Government Treasury in advance, the tractor seldom turned up when due.

Chambord is one of the few areas in Grenada where mechanisation in agriculture is possible because of the flatness of the land. Women farmers are particularly affected when tractor services are not provided, because weeds are harder to manage and control, so they are forced to plant fewer crops.

This issue was discussed at length at one of the meetings. The question was asked by a farmer, “Can GRENCODA take responsibility to ensure we get the service of the tractor this year?” Almost spontaneously the farmers responded, “That is a good idea!” GRENCODA had to be careful not to promise more than could be delivered, so agreed to discuss the matter with the Ministry of Agriculture and report back to the farmers. In the end, GRENCODA was able to help farmers to negotiate the tractor service in a completely new way – described in Box 6.

Before the tractor came to plough at Chambord in 2003, the farmers and GRENCODA raised media interest in the fate of these nationally valuable agricultural lands – so much so that the national TV station sent reporters to cover the story at the time of ploughing. Thus the tractor became a symbol and tactic to demonstrate how the Chambord Lands remain under production. The story generated widespread awareness – and so the tractor became a visual hub in discussions of land use policy in Grenada.

Photo 1. National media come to interview farmers at the Chambord Lands



Photo 2. The government tractor ploughing lands at Chambord



- **Map actual land holdings.** Actual land holdings differ from legal land title. Formal (cadastral) mapping of on-the-ground holdings can help farmers in a number of ways:
 - Identify owners or users of plots
 - Strengthen claims to land
 - Determine soils and hence what to grow
 - Confirm farmers' registration with agricultural extension services

- Underpin planning exercises for development alternatives (see below)
- Confirm measurements of individual and total land areas to work out planting inputs and production outputs

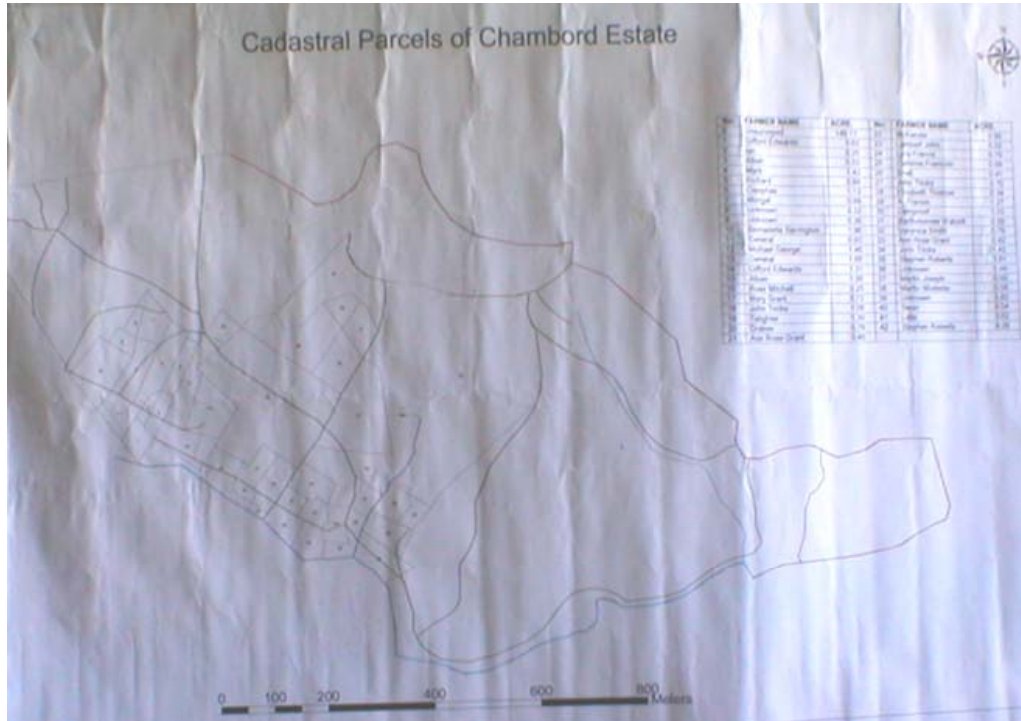


Photo 3. Professional cadastral map of the Chambord Lands

- **Encourage and support farmers in keeping records.** Help farmers develop the habit and a simple system for recording their farm activities. The key record-keeping activity is to quantify outputs and inputs in amounts and money terms. This can be done using a logbook, or a simple questionnaire technique (Box 4). The questionnaire relies on memory, so it can help a lot to encourage farmers to get into the habit of writing down particular costs or sale prices on a scrap of paper at the time and saving the scraps of paper in a box at home. Of course, more complicated record-keeping is useful – for example recording labour inputs and so on – but this level of detail is too much for many busy and unlettered farmers.

Box 4. Chambord farmers' one-page questionnaire on income and expenditure 2003-2004

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

Did you receive tractor service last year? Yes () No ()

What crops did you plant?

Corn () Sorrell () Peas () Melon () Potato () Cassava ()

What was your expense for the year?

Tractor	\$	Seeds	\$	
Plants	\$	Debushing	\$	
Fertiliser	\$	Others	\$	Total \$

What was your income from crops?

Corn	\$	Melon	\$	
Sorrell	\$	Potato	\$	
Peas	\$	Cassava	\$	Total \$
Others	\$			

How do you compare this year to other years?

Do you require the services of the tractor this year? Yes () No ()

Hours () Acres ()

Any comments you would like to make about the work GRENCODA is doing with the farmers of Chambord?

It may seem overly rigid to encourage record-keeping among farmers. But there are many good reasons that will help farmers in their cause of defending land rights and maximising benefits:

- To see whether spending more than getting
- As basis for effective marketing strategies (Box 5)
- To understand role in national economy
- To promote farming as a livelihood for younger people
- To defend keeping land in agriculture rather than other uses

Box 5. The advantage of farm records in marketing

Not all the crops grown at Chambord can compete in national markets, especially as the lands are far from the capital city and hotels on the southern end of Grenada. But farmers have been able to identify certain a lucrative marketing niche for certain seasonal crops, such as garden peas, which are in very high demand at Christmas. GRENCODA has helped farmers negotiate supply contracts with a few of the big hotels. One of the hotels' worries is whether the farmers can guarantee regular supplies of sufficient quantity and quality during the season. Keeping farm records is a good way of estimating just how much production will be – and whether the hotels' demands can be satisfied.

- **Articulate farmers' development alternatives.** Use the formal map of the area map and farmer discussions to prepare arguments for sustainable and equitable land use (see below on improving farmers' awareness of their role in the national economy). Consider ways of combining agriculture with other development options such as tourism. Discuss in detail with farmers what this might mean in terms of practical land allocation. Ask questions such as:
 - Where are the best soil types for different agricultural uses?
 - What is the irrigation potential in different areas?
 - What does road access mean for any division between agricultural and other uses?
 - What opportunities and constraints are provided by land ownership and tenancies in different areas?

WIDENING THE PICTURE (FOR FARMERS AND OFFICIALS)

- **Improve farmers' awareness of their role in the national economy.** Over time, introduce farmers to national and international debates so that they are able to develop arguments on what alternative local development routes would bring the country both in food security and economic benefits. Pass on resonant national information to farmers, such as in Grenada the fact sheet on the Food Import Bill prepared by Ministry of Trade.
- **Integrate farmers' issues with national programmes.** Assist farmers to find out and capitalise on the ways that their own practices contribute to national policies and programmes. Farmers in Chambord are keenly aware that access to land is a basic requirement for the success of national government policy such as the Grenada Rural Enterprise Project (GREP) to reduce poverty in rural Grenada. The crops produced at Chambord are by and large those promoted by Government's Food Security Programme. Several farmers in Chambord volunteered to participate in the Food Security Programme as a strategy to reinforce the point that they have good, nationally important, agricultural land for food production.
- **Build relationships between farmers and agricultural technical staff.** Encourage and facilitate extension officers to work at the local level – work with them rather than against them. Help farmers to register so that they are eligible for the full complement of extension services, such as machinery loans, advice on crops and livestock, free seedlings, tractor service, livestock dipping, or whatever else is on offer. Help them find out their rights and to press for good service provision.
- **Record and share experience from similar situations.** Provide relevant examples from elsewhere – to learn from and to debate. For Chambord farmers, one pertinent example was Mount Hartman, where 30 farmers were evicted from agricultural land so that the property could be used for a hotel and golf course. GRENCODA did a simple tracer study to quantify the economic and social impact of government's decision to evict the farmers, and shared this with Chambord farmers among others.

- **Link food production to food consumption.** Farmers, officials and consumers all benefit from greater awareness of the chains that link production, processing, retail and consumption of food: what the geographical links are, where profits go, how food changes along the chain. Key issues in Grenada include food sovereignty and self-sufficiency (especially in times when international transport is curtailed, such as after the September 2001 attacks in the US), food dumping from wealthy countries (e.g. cheap battery-farmed chickens) and health issues related to the decline of fresh food in people's diets. Slogans resonate, are catchy and easy to remember – they also generate pride in community and country. An effective slogan in Grenada is “Eat what you grow. Grow what you eat!”

TARGETING, COMMUNICATING, NEGOTIATING WITH WIDER GROUPS

- **Help farmers prepare for key meetings and develop negotiation skills.** Important meetings and negotiations need preparation. Practical considerations such as where the meeting is held make a difference – for example, farmers will usually feel more comfortable meeting an official on their own home territory rather than going to an office in the city. Additionally, a group session beforehand to prepare aims and approaches builds confidence and strategy. Key questions to cover in this kind of preparatory group session are:
 - What is the group's reason for attending the meeting?
 - Who among the group is going to attend the meeting?
 - What issues will be raised?
 - What questions will be asked, and who will ask them? (allocating critical strategic questions among attendees is an effective tactic)

Box 6. Negotiating tractor use with the agricultural extension service

The way that the Chambord farmers approached the technical service to access the tractor was completely new for both sides. The Chambord farmers were organised as a group, rather than applying for the tractor service individually, had pooled their money, and had arranged with GRENCODA to act as a financial holding body and go-between. Owing to their previous negative experience over the years of paying the technical service in advance for tractor service which they never got, the farmers' best case scenario was to reserve payment until the tractor had ploughed all farmers' fields. But to prepare for the negotiation with the technical service they had to consider some of the turns of events that could upset this best scenario, e.g. what would happen if the tractor ran out of fuel half way through and the driver did not have the ready cash to refill the tank? Should they continue to withhold payment in this case, or pay up for the fuel to keep going?

Practice and training in negotiation skills also help. Once again, preparation for specific negotiations is essential. Take into account the following:

- There's no point going into a negotiation with such a hard position that you come out with nothing.
 - Work out the best and worst case outcomes – and from there the minimum acceptable outcome.
 - Imagine various scenarios that could arise out of the negotiation and what middle ground would be permissible for each of these (Box 6).
- **Utilise political processes tactically.** Opportunities might arise at local or national level. GRENCODA brought up Chambord as an election issue, calling each candidate of the constituency to state their position regarding the Chambord Lands (Box 7).

Box 7. Meeting with four parliamentarians

The four major political parties had candidates vying for elected office in the constituency in which the Chambord Lands are situated. GRENCODA invited each party to send their candidate to a meeting at a local venue. Each was given the opportunity to put forward their plans for the constituency. Community members and farmers asked questions relating to the use of the Chambord Lands. Attendees expressed dissatisfaction at the absence of the current Member of Parliament. He was not re-elected to the position.

- ***Use media to spread the message and stimulate public debate.*** Getting the media on board early (see Box 3) opens many channels for publicity at national levels, via press releases, talk shows on radio, documentaries and so on. It's important to be vigilant about how to record farmers' views without compromising them. If possible, let farmers have editorial inputs during the production process, rather than being only the objects of interviews and footage. In Grenada, television is both widely watched and widely condoned – many farmers who refuse to have their voices recorded onto tape are happy to appear on TV.