

# Andreas Hermes Akademie

## International Farmer Empowerment

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Andreas Hermes Akademie (AHA) is the national training institution of the German farming sector. Headquartered in Berlin, its main stakeholders are the German Farmers' Association (DBV) and 12 other sector organisations. Since 1948, AHA has been training farmers in Germany, enabling them to take responsibility within their families, farms, and organisations, as well as within society at large. AHA focuses on strengthening self-effectiveness and an entrepreneurial mindset, as well as enhancing skills in the areas of leadership, governance, strategic thinking, lobbying and advocacy, and communication. We empower individuals, including women and young people, to engage effectively in shaping their future. AHA works in the field of organisational development and change, encouraging them to take ownership of agriculture.

AHA also offers a range of "train-the-trainer" courses, moderators, coaches, organisational advisors, and other facilitators, all with a strong focus on personal development. It brings together stakeholders and initiates dialogue on the development of rural areas in Germany. AHA currently has a core team of 32 staff, 14 of whom work internationally.

## AHA is international

Since 2015, AHA has been involved in strengthening farmers' organisations in Africa and India with financial support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Ministry for Food and Agriculture (BMEL). AHA's work is based on the understanding that member-based farmers' organisations are key to integrating farmers' voices into politics and society, while also being best placed to provide farmers with services that they really need. One primary focus of AHA's work at international level therefore lies in professionalising farmers' organisations, developing their capacity in order to form the basis and act as key players for equitable, resilient agri-food systems. A systemic approach enables AHA to target farmers' organisations at national level, while reinforcing global and

regional networks. Training multipliers, such as entrepreneurship trainers, moderators or organisational development advisors in partner countries and organisations, also forms part of our sustainability strategy.

AHA integrates established principles for development cooperation with our unique experience of the farming sector. Our value-based approach and evolving methodologies enable us to collaborate with partners and clients on an equal footing. We customise training courses, coaching and advice to meet client needs and strive to adjust the duration of our cooperation accordingly. Positive feedback from partners underscores the effectiveness of being adaptive, demand-driven, and goal-oriented. Prioritising pragmatism, we emphasise individual and organisational empowerment, foster international networks, and champion innovation. AHA's international team of multipliers consists of approximately 40 experienced trainers and organisational advisors from Europe, Africa, and South Asia, many with agricultural and entrepreneurial backgrounds suited to addressing partners' unique needs.

## Uniqueness

1. We **understand the system of organised farmers**. Our expertise encompasses a nuanced understanding of the actors operating within this complex framework.
2. Thanks to our organisation's history and owners, we are deeply **rooted in the agricultural private sector**, fostering a humanistic, strong, and vocal civil society.
3. Trainers in our **sector-based pool** put themselves in the shoes of our partners and clients. Most of our trainers originate from the agricultural sector or are farmers themselves.
4. **Our partners are in the driver's seat**. When accompanying organisations in their development, our partners shape their own strategy and direction.
5. **People-centred approaches**. People drive change - in their business, their organisations, in the whole system. We strengthen them to be self-effective.
6. We create an **impact from local to global level** by working on various levels and strengthening the system of farmer organisations as a whole.

# Our Expertise and Experience

At AHA, we use our broad experience to directly empower our partners. Building on a rich set of tools, we are continuously expanding our repertoire of methods, ensuring that each interaction fosters a sense of ownership and facilitates sustainable growth. While we offer standardised tools like b|u|s (see below), we also embrace flexibility, tailoring our strategies to suit our partners' unique contexts.

## Systemic Organisational Development

The systemic approach to organisational development is based on the assumption that wisdom lies within the existing system. Its actors harbour knowledge, experience, and a profound sense of what is important to them and what needs to change. Where the latter is covered by layers of complexity, emotions or pressures, advisors help to identify root causes, freeing up energy and developing solutions according to the partners' needs and capabilities. In so doing, AHA accompanies them on *their* journey. This includes individual capacity development to strengthen those who sit in the driver's seat.

*UNFFE, the Uganda National Farmers' Federation, identified the need to build a youth association. AHA supported this project from the outset, assisting development of individual and team capacity and with OD workshops at national and district level. Now, UNYFA reaches over 35,000 members in 80 sub-organisations and is an active voice and service provider for young people in Uganda.*

Depending on the needs identified to best serve members' interests in a sustainable fashion, AHA's work may concentrate on topics like governance and leadership, vision and strategy, business models and service delivery, capacity development, networks, and exchange formats. Wherever possible, we support creation of internal capacity-building resources (trainers, facilitators, moderators etc.) for long-term sustainability.



## Making farmers' voices heard

Engagement in lobbying and advocacy (L&A) is crucial for farmers so that they can influence policies and regulations that directly impact agricultural practices, market access and the overall farming sector. Through their organisations, farmers voice their concerns, promote agricultural interests, and seek support on vital issues such as fair pricing, access to resources, sustainable farming methods and government subsidies. Ultimately, they are shaping the environment to enhance their livelihoods and the agricultural sector. We are strengthening farmers' organisations in their efforts to successfully lobby for members' interests by offering standardised training (i.e. four three-day modules for leaders) or expert coaching.

*Strengthening ROPSA-B in the course of our cooperation has enabled it to successfully develop, publish, and present many position papers on agricultural policy at national level in Burkina Faso. They have undertaken numerous initiatives, which have led government and parliamentarians to address key challenges. This testifies to the intensive interaction and committed participation of ROPSA-B members in L&A.*

## Exchange Platforms for peer-to-peer Learning in the Organised Farming Sector

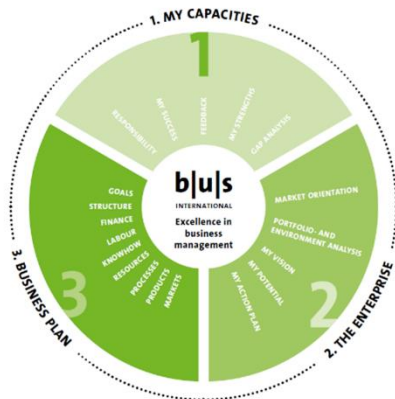
The most effective learning takes place between peers. Online exchange platforms seamlessly link farmers' organisations from sub-national to global at minimum cost, empowering them to share knowledge and effortlessly foster partnerships. These platforms utilise lean management and can cover a wide array of topics, e.g. strategic approaches in L&A, climate adaptation, women in agribusiness, member management, as well as agricultural trade. Participants define content according to their needs. Direct exchange promotes a resilient peer-to-peer network capable of having a wider impact on agri-food systems in Africa.

*With support by BMEL, SACAU, the apex farmers' organisation of the southern region of Africa has set up a platform to facilitate discussions between its members' leaders and technicians on FO-related, strategic topics. In addition, a community of practice to share knowledge about climate-smart agriculture has been up and running since 2022.*

*PAFO, the Pan-African Farmers' Organisation, runs a virtual exchange platform for its regional and national member organisations. AHA has trained a group of 15 FO-internal moderators to facilitate the meetings, where FOs share their experiences on self-selected topics, and learn from successes and failures of their peers.*

## b|u|s – Farmer Entrepreneurship Training

b|u|s Farmer Entrepreneurship Training is specifically designed to empower farmers to foster self-sufficiency. It is designed to ignite entrepreneurial spirit and encourage farmers to take charge of their economic development. This comprehensive training caters to a diverse range of participants, regardless of their level of literacy, age or farm size, aiming to develop their personal capabilities and enabling them to shape their own destinies.



In past years, AHA has trained individuals, including extension officers, farmers, teachers at agricultural colleges and consultants to become b|u|s trainers in Africa and Asia. The most promising approach has proven to be integrating trainers into farmers' organisations, providing training as an internal service for farmers. The benefit: capacity remains in the organisation. b|u|s consists of three modules of three days each and materials are available in a wide range of local languages.

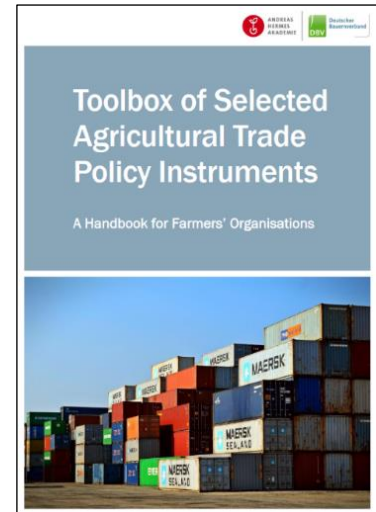
*b|u|s training has demonstrated a significant positive impact, with the programme effectively strengthening farming as a business. 80% of participants in a survey in Burkina Faso have witnessed an income growth, with half of them reporting growth rates exceeding 200 percent over a 3 years' period. Since 2006, b|u|s has successfully captivated over 20,000 participants.*



## Agricultural Trade Toolbox for Selected Policy Instruments

In many countries, national farmers' organisations only play a marginal role in the development of governments' agricultural trade policy strategies. Yet, as producers and consumers, their members are the main stakeholders in both a positive and negative sense. How can they influence effectively how the government defines trade policies?

In a series of workshops involving Regional Farmers Organisations (RFOs) in West, East and Southern Africa and their respective national member organisations, AHA has reinforced both factual knowledge on trade policies and organisations' ability to engage on different levels in a coordinated approach.



With input from its partners, AHA has published a comprehensive toolbox that provides information about types of policy instruments and their positive and negative effects. It also shows how FOs can play a role in policy processes.

Agricultural trade policies hold great significance for food system transformation, as they shape not only the accessibility and affordability of food, but also influence production practices and market dynamics. By fostering an enabling environment for fair trade and equitable distribution, well-designed agricultural trade policies can drive sustainable agricultural practices, enhance food security, and promote socio-economic development within communities.

The advantage of coordinated approaches and clearly defined roles is a key ability when addressing future questions around food systems, but also climate change, agroecology, trade etc.

*The toolbox on agricultural trade policies is a key resource prepared especially to share knowledge with regional and national farmers' organisations. This publication provides twelve key instruments aimed at enhancing knowledge and understanding of trade policies, fostering technical and strategic skills at both regional and national level.*

## Young Leaders Incubation Programme

Farmers' organisations worldwide share common challenges, including the lack of young agripreneurs stepping up as future leaders in farming and within these organisations. The Young Leaders Incubation Programme (YLIP) aims to empower young agripreneurs, fostering their self-effectiveness as they pave the way for the future of the agricultural sector. It seeks to support a fresh breed of leaders to be the driving force behind a new era of leadership in their businesses, within farmers' organisations and across the agricultural sector.

*With the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU) YLIP is a success. Together, regional and national farmers' organisations are now harnessing the future potential of around 80 young leaders, who have already taken to the stage on several occasions to voice issues affecting young farmers.*

Over three months, SACAU and AHA host two major in-person workshops in Southern Africa, complemented by online sessions. The workshops focus on boosting participants' self-awareness, expanding their perspectives and improving their entrepreneurial skills. These comprise training feedback, moderation, communication strategies and refining attitudes, thereby enhancing their ability to connect with others. Self-moderated online sessions cover a wide range of topics and feature engaging keynote speakers from the African agricultural sector. Course graduates form a network that expands far beyond their cohort to continuously shape the agricultural sector and the food systems in which they are actively participating.

## Train-the-Trainers – capabilities directly linked to our partners

At AHA, our "Train-the-Trainers" programmes stand out as a beacon of excellence, cultivating a cadre of highly skilled trainers deeply rooted in the partner country's context or seamlessly integrated within our partner organisations. Drawing upon years of experience, we have honed a methodology that not only imparts expertise, but also instils a people-centred ethos at its core. Our trainers possess the

technical know-how, as well as a nuanced understanding of the cultural, social and economic dynamics of the communities and organisations that they serve. Armed with this approach, we are empowering trainers not just to disseminate knowledge but to become catalysts for sustainable change, creating an impact that resonates long after the training has come to an end. Recognising that our partners are key players in shaping food and agricultural systems, we emphasise the pivotal role that they play in effecting change. We approach capacity building with the understanding that empowering our partners at individual, team and organisational level is crucial for strengthening these systems.

*To date, AHA has conducted 19 "Training the Trainer" sessions and enabled around 450 people in Africa and Asia to become successful trainers and facilitators over the past two decades,*

Our commitment to neutrality ensures that our interventions remain impartial, allowing us to support and amplify our partners' capabilities in a manner that fosters genuine, sustainable transformation.

## Partnerships and Geographical Outreach

Thanks to financial support from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), as well as the Federal Ministry for Food and Agriculture (BMEL), we are active across the African continent, in India and worldwide. AHA is also part of a consortium of partners, who manage and moderate an agricultural policy dialogue between Germany and the African Union, funded by the BMEL. Moreover, AHA is a member of the AgriCord alliance, a Brussels-based network of agri-agencies that focus on strengthening member-based farmers' organisations. AHA also receives support from the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK) through the International Climate Initiative (IKI), from the Landwirtschaftliche Rentenbank, Germany's development bank for agribusiness and rural areas, as well as from a range of other funding partners.

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