



**5th African Agriculture Science Week and
FARA General Assembly**

Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso – 19-24 July 2010

***African agricultural innovation in a
changing global environment***

General Resolutions and Recommendations

The 5th African Agriculture Science Week and FARA General Assembly were organized at the Ouaga 2000 International Convention Centre in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, from 19 to 24 July 2010 under the theme *African Agricultural Innovation in a Changing Global Environment*.

The specific objectives:

- Highlight advances in agricultural research for development (ARD).
- Review progress and share lessons learnt since the 4th General Assembly in Johannesburg, South Africa.
- Determine the African regional ARD agenda for the next three years.
- Showcase events promoting African agriculture innovations.

The African Agricultural Science Week and General Assembly provided the occasion to increase stakeholders' knowledge of the challenges, opportunities and successes in African ARD. It also promoted a greater awareness of the roles and contributions of different stakeholders and enhanced networking and interaction. Moreover, it brought attention to the key contributions of ARD in Africa, especially in Burkina Faso. Finally, it provided the opportunity to review and endorse FARA's programme for the next three years and to elect new FARA Executive Board members, including a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson.

The theme *African Agricultural Innovation in a Changing Global Environment* was discussed under three sub-themes:

- *Investment in agricultural innovation in the post-financial crisis era*
- *Knowledge centres and networks to cope with the challenges of globalisation and climate change*
- *Resilience of African agricultural trade to domestic and external shocks*

These sub-themes addressed major challenges, including emerging issues, and produced key messages and recommendations for action by FARA's constituents. Several side events were organized by the broad-based stakeholder constituency of FARA. A Market Place and Poster Sessions were also used to showcase ARD results and outputs. The key messages and recommendations are presented below for each sub-theme.

Subtheme 1: Investment in agricultural innovation in the post-financial crisis era

The General Assembly (GA) recognised that although investments in and opportunities for African agricultural research and development (ARD) have increased since 2000, they are unstable and fragile. While total numbers of research staff have increased, qualification levels remain low.

Advocacy for the ARD agenda of development agencies should therefore reflect African needs and priorities and strive to achieve equitable and sustainable partnerships. More quantitative information on

performance of agricultural science and technology is needed to provide insights. In order to accomplish this, platforms to facilitate innovative partnership with Europe are needed. Simultaneously, investments are required to increase capacity to access funding opportunities. FARA and its partners in the sub-regional research organizations (SROs) and the national agricultural research systems (NARS), as well as other stakeholders, will use evidence obtained through ARD on trends and impacts of investments in agricultural research.

The GA further recognised that public-private partnerships (PPPs) are essential in bringing technological innovations to smallholder farmers, and that policies are needed to effectively regulate – but not hinder – access to technologies and transfer agreements. Required action: Improve access to knowledge, business and market information.

The GA further recognised the importance of establishing the Coordinating Council for Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa (CARDESA) and building a regional agricultural policy for Southern Africa. CARDESA needs strong policy coordination, public action and investments towards deeper regional integration of southern African countries. This requires the establishment of a development fund to support investment plans.

Subtheme 2: Knowledge centres and networks to cope with the challenges of globalisation and climate change

The GA recognised that awareness and use of knowledge and know-how of communities has increased. However, accessing and sharing information on the best ways to improve productivity and protect farm investments remains difficult. African ARD systems do not adequately link research, education and outreach to development activities.

Greater investments are therefore needed for all stakeholders to strengthen capacity to utilise tools and platforms and to expand their use beyond the internet. This will involve the actualisation of frameworks, plans and strategies for rural empowerment as well as investment in strengthening ARD and greater accessibility of ARD outputs.

Required action consists of several points:

- Support community-led integration of agricultural practices, extension, research and policies.
- Support inclusive technology innovation.
- Target partnerships between communities, researchers and NGOs on adaptation strategies.
- Develop a programme for scaling up and out of the integrated agricultural research for development (IAR4D) concept along the CAADP Pillar IV framework.
- Intensify human capital development for ARD through regional capacity strengthening initiatives to maximise resource use, rationalisation and benefits.
- Promote agri-business growth by catalysing innovation incubation and functional linkages between universities and industry.

The GA further recognised that Africa-wide competitions help to motivate women and young scientists and bring out the best talent, and in so doing serve to identify skill gaps. More opportunities for women scientists and young professionals are needed. FARA, CTA, RUFORUM, ANAFE, AGRA and other partners must continue to recognise, reward and involve outstanding women and young scientists in Africa.

Agricultural advisory services are critical to achieving the CAADP agenda. The African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS), which provides a framework for linking actors these services, requires resources to mobilise and influence policies to foster effective agricultural advisory services. Support to AFAAS to develop its capacity to facilitate agricultural innovation is therefore crucial.

Misconceptions, limited understanding, poor attitudes and cultural issues concerning gender issues persist. An enabling policy environment for gender mainstreaming therefore needs to be created, including policy audit and reform on gender to improve balanced gender performance.

Climate change presents yet another important threat to Africa's agricultural prosperity. Fortunately, collaboration among agriculture scientists and climate scientists is improving and informing climate change policies. A redoubling of efforts to produce technologies and accurate weather forecasts is needed to help farmers cope with climate change. Researchers must produce and present evidence to national and regional policy makers on the place of agriculture in climate change policies. One example of this is to build on AfricaAdapt's initiative to set up a knowledge platform on climate change that can inform and harmonise policies and identify research issues.

Recognising that because crop pest outbreaks are increasing, the GA expressed support for a preventive culture. This includes mapping and building capacity of players in crop pest outbreak prevention and response.

Finally, the GA recognised that developing livestock and fish value chains is of paramount importance to food and nutrition security. The balance between the impact and benefits of increased production and the environmental implications must be articulated. A coherent strategy for scaling out successful country interventions across sub-regions is therefore needed.

Subtheme 3: Resilience of African agricultural trade to domestic and external shocks

The GA recognised that Africa has the potential to meet both its food and fuel needs from biomass, and that there will never be agricultural improvement in Africa without energy. What is needed is 'energy farming' where households have access to the resources they require. FARA has a leading role to play in promoting links between various stakeholders and networks in the domains of agriculture, forestry, bioenergy and food.

The importance of sanitary and phyto-sanitary (SPS) certification on food safety and on animal and plant health was also addressed. SPS approaches across countries and sub-regions should be harmonised. Similarly, intra-regional and international trade should be supported to ensure the supply of safe food and improve resilience to shocks. Action along these lines will address the agendas of both CAADP Pillars II and IV.

The GA also stressed the urgency of building social capital to achieve sustainable intensification through farmer field schools and involvement of women. Sustained commitment, strategic relationships, and closer attention to social, cultural and economic factors are all needed to effect change in mindsets and to sharpen focus on foresight. Stakeholders will need to take advantage of opportunities, engaging the private sector in the value chain and engaging regional and global institutions to support medium- to long-term strategic planning.

General statement

The GA accorded overall recognition of the networking support provided by FARA initiatives and projects (AfricaAdapt, ABBPP, SABIMA, DONATA, RAILS, PAEPARD, SCARDA, SSA CP) as well as to the response demonstrated by international initiatives to African priorities and alignment to CAADP and Pillar IV. We need a mindset change:

- Africa needs a more balanced perspective of its strengths and weaknesses.
- Alone, agricultural R&D will not achieve much – it needs to be part of the wider development framework.
- Africa needs to shift from short-term, urgent responses to long-term foresight.
- Spotting and taking advantage of opportunities is required.
- There is need for sincerity about commitment to research across the value chain.

The FARA General Assembly's firm consensus:

African-led agricultural innovations are poised to move the continent from laggard to lion in food production and economic development.