

MINISTERIAL COMMUNIQUÉ
Issued at FARA's 4th General Assembly
Johannesburg 12th June 2007

Ministerial Communiqué

The 4th FARA General Assembly, with its large, diverse and vigorous participation, provided a fertile source of information and knowledge on the opportunities and problems currently facing African agriculture. Advantage was taken of this fount of knowledge in deliberations at a Ministerial Roundtable meeting which considered the most pressing issues affecting African agriculture in June 2007.

The roundtable was chaired by the Honourable Lulu Xingwana, Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs with the participation of Honourable Ernest A. Debrah, Minister of Food and Agriculture Ghana; Honourable John Karim-Sesay, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Sierra Leone; Honourable Abu Baker Al-Mansour, Secretary General People's Committee of the Authority of Agriculture, Animal health and Marine Resources; Libya; Honourable Paul Smit, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, Namibia; Honourable Olifant Mfa, Assistant Minister of Agriculture, Botswana; Honourable Kibirige-Seibunya Israel, Minister of State for Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (Agriculture), Uganda; Honourable Farba Senghor, Minister of Agriculture, Hydraulic and Food Security, Senegal; Honourable Rugare Mumbo, Minister of Agriculture of Zimbabwe, and Dr Samba Ly, Director General, National Agricultural Research Institute, Niger, representing the Minister of Agricultural Development of Niger,

Following their deliberations, the Ministers issued the following communiqué:

Communiqué issued by African Ministers of Agriculture meeting in Johannesburg on Tuesday 12th June 2007:

We, the Ministers of Agriculture assembled at the Fourth General Assembly of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) which was held in Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg in the Republic of South Africa from 10th to 16th June 2007:

Aware that there have been significant improvements in African agricultural production and productivity and that good progress has been made in complying with the commitments made at the Ministerial Roundtable held on the occasion of the 3rd FARA General Assembly, Uganda on 7th June 2005 which included to:

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- support FARA's stakeholders in the implementation of a comprehensive programme of action, as agreed at its Third General Assembly;
- effect the institutional change and capacity building required for implementing high-impact research, utilising all appropriate advances in science and research methods and paradigms;
- mobilise the financial resources required to reinvigorate national agricultural research institutes including African agricultural universities and colleges, sub-regional and regional organisations and enable the strategic support of their regional and international partners;
- advance the causes of the sub-regional and regional organisations so that they can achieve the benefits of cross-border collaboration and sharing of tasks;
- support agricultural research for development as the best means of achieving the Millennium Development Goals;
- mandate FARA to advocate for the programmes agreed by its stakeholders at their Third General Assembly, to promote partnerships for their implementation and to develop the intellectual and physical framework to open information and learning opportunities so that all its stakeholders can contribute to their fullest extent.

Cognisant that despite this progress Africa is still behind schedule for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, especially MDG 1 (eradicating extreme poverty and hunger) and MDG 7 (ensuring environmental sustainability) by 2015.

Aware that the context of African agricultural research for development has been substantially improved by the approval of the Framework for African Agricultural Productivity (FAAP) by African Heads of State and Government at their meeting in Banjul in 2006.. This establishes guidelines and principles for the implementation of Pillar IV of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), which encompasses agricultural research and technology dissemination and adoption.

Endorse FAAP's call for:

- reforms to agricultural institutions and services,
- increases in scale of agricultural productivity investments, and
- aligned and coordinated financial support.

Advocate for compliance with the FAAP principles of:

1. *Empowerment of end-users to ensure their meaningful participation in setting priorities and work programs for research, extension, and training to ensure their relevance;*

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2. *Planned subsidiarity to give responsibility and control over resources for agricultural research, extension, and training activities at the lowest appropriate level of aggregation (local, national and regional);*
3. *Pluralism in the delivery of agricultural research, extension, and training services so that the diverse skills and strengths of a broad range of service providers (e.g., universities, NGOs, public and the private sectors) can contribute to publicly supported agricultural productivity operations;*
4. *Evidence-based approaches with emphasis on data analysis, including economic factors and market orientation in policy development, priority setting and strategic planning for agricultural research, extension and training;*
5. *Integration of agricultural research with extension services, the private sector, training, capacity building, and education programs to respond in a holistic manner to the needs and opportunities for innovation in the sector;*
6. *Explicit incorporation of sustainability criteria in evaluation of public investments in agricultural productivity and innovation programs (fiscal, economic, social and environmental);*
7. *Systematic utilisation of improved management information systems, in particular for planning, financial management, reporting, and monitoring and evaluation;*
8. *Introduction of cost sharing with end users, according to their capacity to pay, to increase their stake in the efficiency of services provision and to improve financial sustainability;*
9. *Integration of gender considerations at all levels, including farmers and farmer organisations, the private sector, public institutions, researchers and extension staff.*

Aware that Africa must position itself to respond to the impacts of:

- climate change that will have most serious impact on the African continent and in particular on the rural poor including increasingly uncertain and more extreme weather events, the loss of water resources, and in the spread of human, livestock and crop diseases;
- physical and institutional constraints on intra-African trade in agricultural raw materials and processed products;
- the need for a well structured policy and approach to the production of biofuels that is consistent with assuring the food and nutrition security in our nations;
- the diversion of food grains to the production of biofuels in major non-African grain producers which is driving up world grain prices and

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reducing stocks from which Africa has traditionally sourced food imports and food aid;

- rising prices of oil and other commodities that will raise the cost of manufacturing agricultural inputs, agro-processing and farm power;
- the failure to conclude the Doha round of negotiation of the World Trade Organisation and the persistence of subsidies and import tariffs that are impeding Africa's opportunities for adding value to agricultural raw materials; and,
- the threat of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), Rift Valley Fever and other zoonotic diseases.

Compliment the Commission of the African Union Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (AU-DREA) and its agencies such as the Inter African Bureau for Animal Resource (AU-IBAR), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in East and Central Africa (ASARECA), the Conseil Ouest et Centre Africain pour la Recherche et le Développement Agricoles / The West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF/WECARD), and the North African members of Association of Agricultural Research Institutes in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA), Southern African Development Community Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Directorate (SADC-FANR) for the increasing unity of purpose and action that they are displaying.

Reconfirm the conviction:

- that vigorous agricultural research is essential to producing the scientific, technical, economic, policy and socio-cultural changes that are required for raising rural incomes, improving food security, reducing natural resource degradation and loss of biodiversity, and increasing Africa's contribution to world trade;
- that strong national agricultural research systems are the foundations for national agricultural development and cohesive sub-regional and regional programmes;
- that the extent of the demands on agricultural research are such that all research providers should be engaged and encouraged to contribute to maximising the impact of the total investment from all sources in agricultural research from their collaborative advantages based on principles of subsidiarity and participatory decision making;

Reaffirm our commitment to equitable and sustainable agricultural development and pledge ourselves to fostering an enabling environment for agricultural research to be carried out and to achieve impact through advancing

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agricultural development in improving livelihoods of the majority of Africans who are smallholders and pastoralists.

Congratulate FARA's Secretariat staff, under the outstanding leadership of Dr. Monty Jones, for the remarkable contribution that it has made to advance the implementation of CAADP Pillar IV since 2005 and urges them to maintain the same spirit and energy in addressing the challenges they will face in the years leading to the 5th General Assembly.

Plan of Action

We commit ourselves to:

- promoting the effectiveness of national agricultural research systems (NARS) and our sub-regional and regional agricultural research organisations;
- ensuring that our agricultural development, research and teaching and training institutions comply with the FAAP principles;
- fulfilling our governments' commitment to invest 10% of our national budgets in agriculture;
- to underpin this investment with the financial resources required to reinvigorate national agricultural research institutes, including, agricultural universities and colleges and technical institutes;
- ensuring the out-scaling and up-scaling of agricultural research products
- to support the sub-regional and regional organisations that belong to our national agricultural research systems; and,
- to reinvigorating tertiary agricultural education to produce technicians, graduates and postgraduates who are equipped with both international standards of disciplinary expertise and with the systems skills necessary for successful participation in advanced agricultural innovation systems capable of addressing the opportunities and problems outlined above.

We hereby mandate FARA to advocate for the programmes agreed by its stakeholders at their Fourth General Assembly, to promote networking amongst its African and non-African stakeholders in accordance with its new Strategic Plan as shall be amended and agreed by the decision of FARA's General Assembly.