

Title of meeting	Innovative pathways to commercializing agricultural research results in Africa
Responding to Theme 10	Capturing indigenous knowledge for development while respecting IPR rights, ethical & moral integrity and biosafety
Organizers	AATF
Date and Time	11 June, 08:30-12:30
Contact person	Nancy Muchiri

Background

In most fields of human endeavour, including agriculture, progress comes from innovations derived from the application of knowledge of how to do things better. The use of innovative agricultural technologies is paramount for reviving agricultural development in Africa and is recognized as a pathway to economic development for the continent. For the past 20 years, the introduction of DNA-based technologies in agriculture has led to the development of crops possessing traits that were not available before and to a surge in productivity. Indeed, since 1996, biotechnology-derived crops have been commercially planted and their adoption has been increasing steadily year after year in both the developed and the developing world.

Agricultural research is one of the key factors contributing to agricultural innovations because it creates new products and processes for greater performance in agriculture. However, these products and processes can only contribute to farm productivity if they are taken up by farmers. Impact of new technologies in farmers' fields has often been difficult to achieve due to low uptake of technologies, particularly when technology deployment is solely left to extension agencies and other public sector approaches. Increasingly, the private sector has been involved in developing and delivering new technologies to farmers in the form of seeds and other farm inputs, and has been recording greater success than the public sector. The implication of this new paradigm is that research results from both private and public institutions are increasingly being protected by patents and other forms of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs), making it difficult, but not impossible, to share technological innovations around the world.

To realise the full potential of new technologies in Africa where the bulk of agricultural production is in the hands of smallholder farmers, there are pertinent aspects of the technology transfer continuum that would benefit from greater understanding and a concerted effort by players in the agricultural development field: the management of IPRs, regulatory compliance, technology acceptance, strategic public/private partnerships, the facilitation of market access for farmers' surpluses, and the domestication of new technologies for Africa are some critical factors towards successful technology adoption by smallholder farmers.

Because a critical mass of human resources and infrastructure for new technology development and deployment may not be optimum in Africa in the immediate future, it is essential that creative approaches are sought to enable access to technologies and to the necessary research and development capacity and expertise. Public-private partnerships for technology access, product development and deployment organized into agricultural innovation platforms designed to convert technologies into products that are deployed to smallholder farmers hold great potential for increasing farm productivity in Africa. Indeed, these innovation platforms constitute opportunities for bringing together a range of expertise spanning the entire technology/product value chain, including research and development, product manufacturing and commercialization, product

use by smallholder farmers, and market access by farmers, and may involve participants spread around the world.

The African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) has a mandate to access and deliver proprietary agricultural technologies for sustainable use by African smallholder, and in particular resource-poor farmers, through innovative partnerships and effective technology/product stewardship along the entire food value chain. It negotiates access to IPR for agricultural technologies and assembles public-private partnerships for the purpose of using such technologies to create products that are then deployed to smallholder farmers. AATF has obtained licenses to technologies from private and public sector institutions and sub-licensed them to relevant institutions in Africa, and is facilitating the conversion of these technologies to products for use by smallholder farmers.

AATF invites you to a side event on *“Innovative Pathways to Commercializing Agricultural Research Results in Africa”* and *“Identification and Prioritization of Intractable Biotic and Abiotic Constraints of African Agriculture”* on **11th June 2007 from 8.30 am to 12.30 pm** during the General Assembly meeting of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) in Sandton City, Johannesburg, South Africa. The session will be addressed by experts who will share their experience in the process of bringing technological innovations to smallholder African farmers. The meeting will also be an opportunity to brainstorm on hitherto intractable biotic and abiotic challenges of African agriculture that may need greater research attention in the next 20 years.

Tentative Programme

**“Innovative Pathways to Commercializing
Agricultural Research Results in Africa”
and
“Identification and Prioritization of
Intractable Constraints to African Agriculture”**

Chair: Dr. Josue DIONE, UNECA

11th June 2007 - 8.30 am to 12.30pm
Sandton Convention Centre, Sandton City, Johannesburg

Time	Item	Discussant/Presenter
08h30 - 09h00	Registration	
09h00 - 09h10	Setting the scene: Agricultural Innovation Platforms for Technology Delivery	Mpoko Bokanga (AATF)
09h10 – 09h20	Discussion	
09h20 -09h30	Managing IPR in Technology Development and Delivery	Robert Lettington (Bioversity)
09h30 – 09h40	Discussion	
09h40 – 09h50	Strategies for Effective and Efficient Regulatory Compliance	Willy De Greef (IBRS)
09h50 – 10h00	Discussion	
10h00 -10h15	Coffee break	

10h15 – 10h25	Managing Public Acceptance of New Technologies in African Agriculture	Adrienne Massey
10h25 – 10h35	Discussion	
10h35 – 10h45	The role of small private seed companies in the dissemination of new agricultural technologies in Africa	Ed Mabaya, Danie Jordan (SODP, Market Matters, inc.)
10h45 – 10h55	Discussion	
10h55 – 11h30	Wrap up	Chair: Josue Dione (UNECA)
11h30 – 12h20	Panel discussion: Identification and Prioritization of Intractable Biotic and Abiotic Constraints of African Agriculture – NRC/Gates study	Alice Pell (Cornell U.) Jonathan Gressel (Weizmann I.)
12h20 – 12h30	Wrap up and Closing	Chair: Josue Dione (UNECA)