

Title of meeting	Promoting inclusiveness of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Agricultural Research and Development (ARD)
Responding to Theme 8	Mobilizing civil society for agricultural development
Organizers	FARA and GFAR
Date and Time	10 June, 09:00-14:00
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Introduction

The role of civil society in agricultural research for development has been widely recognized by governments, international institutions and agencies. Resolutions from United Nations conferences in the last decade, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), call for the full integration of civil society in the implementation of agriculture programmes and projects. They call for inclusiveness, transparency and participation of all stakeholders. In turn, the civil society organizations have contributed to national development through interventions in different sectors. These non-state actors have also been accepted at the international level as genuine partners for sustainable development.

Because African agriculture is becoming increasingly unattractive, the children of farmers do not seem to see a future in farming and agriculture. This results in the migration of rural people to urban areas adding to the growing numbers of hungry people.

The active involvement in agricultural research for development by civil society organizations particularly the disadvantaged groups could over time, reverse the trend and make agriculture a viable enterprise for the resource-poor as well as foster social cohesion and environmental conservation.

Civil society organizations such as Non-government organizations (NGOs), farmer's organization (FOs), private sector in agriculture (PSA), are very active at the informal levels of economic activities. For instance, NGOs have been quick to point out implications or impacts of particular policies and or programmes especially on the poor, whether home grown or promoted by external agencies and interests.

Although a number of CSO stakeholder groups exist, the strongest voice being heard are the NGOs. The other groups such as farmer's organization and small-medium enterprises are still weak to provide a coordinated position at different levels i.e. national, subregional or regional. Therefore FARA with the support of GFAR would like to propose capacity strengthening of these two groups while at the same, nurture and mentor the coalition of regional NGO Consortium known as the Sub-Saharan Africa NGO Consortium (SSA NGOC) with a view to provide stronger representation and participation in ARD programs.

FARA and GFAR facilitated a number of CSOs in agriculture consultations such as the 3rd FARA General Assembly and Science Week 2005 in Uganda followed by a regional meeting for CSOs in October 2005 at FARA where all three groups ie NGOs, FOs and PSA developed action plans for implementation. The SSA NGOC East and Southern Africa (ESA region) met in April 2006 in Pretoria, South Africa while the West and Central Africa (WCA) group met at FARA in May 2006 in Accra, Ghana and developed activities in (i) typology/profiling of NGOs in agriculture in order to increase membership of the consortium; (ii) case studies to promote the success stories

of local NGOs in African agriculture; (iii) a code of conduct to guide and assist the leadership and members behaviour; and, (iv) a communications strategy to secure high level visibility and enhance information exchange and learning both within and outside the consortium. The FOs and PSA on the other hand, lack the institutional organization and capacity to strategically move in a similar direction.

This concept note aims to strengthen the success of the SSA NGOC in organizing itself at the regional level. The Consortium is still weak in functional institutional mechanisms that are needed to drive its planned sub-regional and regional activities. Equally, FOs and PSA will be supported to define realistic functional mechanisms and capacity that will be strengthened to facilitate sub-regional and regional programme development and implementation. The FOs have fairly organized sub-regional umbrella organizations, i.e., EAFF in East Africa, ROPA in West Africa, PROPAC in Central Africa and SACAU in Southern Africa. The PSA on the other hand, does not have well known identifiable sub-regional umbrella organizations. However, an African business fora operates through the CAADP/RECs process.

Description of Activities

Based on our early experience in working with the SSANGOC, a twin-tack approach will be used to strategically build a strong and relevant CSO group in African agriculture. Firstly, realistic and lean institutional mechanisms will be determined by CSO groups (FOs, NGOs, PSA) themselves, by examining existing structures and mechanisms and targeting those that are realistically ideal for regional linkages and learning. The parallel sessions of the three groups will mainly focus on *'the mechanism'* for the effective and efficient implementation of planned programs and activities. There is no difficulty in defining doable activities but the *'how'* to implement remains a fundamental challenge.

The SSA NGOC: As earlier indicated, the SSANGOC is relatively well organized but has focused much more strongly on activity planning and implementation than 'informal' functional institutional mechanisms that would be needed for the realization of the planned activities. The result is that very good activities ie (i) typology/profiling of NGOs in agriculture with a view to increase membership of the consortium; (ii) case studies to promote the success stories of local NGOs in African agriculture; (iii) a code of conduct to guide and assist the leadership and members behaviour; and, (iv) a communications strategy to secure high level visibility and enhance information exchange and learning both within and outside the consortium were developed but these were seriously undermined by the lack of strong and functional informal institutional mechanisms. Although the Consortium identified focal points within the membership for the facilitation and coordination of the planned activities, these have not really worked. Thus, key issues that must be resolved for the smooth operation of the SSA NGOC include:

- Practical mechanisms that can be used to facilitate linkages and learning among and between consortium members across Africa?
- How, and what is needed to get these mechanisms functional?
- Resource(s), if any, that are needed to operationalize the mechanisms?
- The level and type of voluntary service that selected members can offer to the consortium?

Farmer Organizations (FOs): African farmer organizations suffer from weak institutional organization and capacity and are therefore not able to sufficiently influence the agricultural research agenda. FOs are weak in organizational management as well as their ability to retain the interest of its members and therefore sustainability. The existing FARA/GFAR facilitated FO, some of which are members of the regional FOs will be broadened to include representation of

all three SSA sub-regional umbrella FOs, i.e., EAFF, ROPA, PROPAC and SACAU. In the past however, attempts have been made to invite the executives of these umbrella farmer organizations, in particular SACAU, to the October 2005 CSO meeting at FARA without success. Linkages with Northern Africa CSOs in agriculture will be explored initially to foster information exchange and learning. Because farmer groups suffer from weak institutional and managerial capacity, as well as representativeness, etc., some of the key issues to be determined through consultation and planning will include:

- Mechanism(s) required to facilitate regional FO activity planning and implementation.
- Existing linkages/representation at the SRO level.
- The existing capacity ie leadership and managerial skills, group management skills, trade issues, adult education, etc. are needed to strengthen farmer organizations
- The information and knowledge platforms/systems appropriate for FOs.
- Mechanisms needed to attract young people back to farming.
- Level of engagement of FOs in biotechnology and biosafety.
- The role of FOs and how they engage in advocacy in African agriculture

Private Sector in Agriculture (PSA): The private sector in agriculture is comparatively well organized as individual entities and can access resources but their capitalization on research outputs, and collaboration with research in general, is very limited. This is due primarily to the PSAs genuine desire for “quick gains”. Thus, the technology generation process including consultations has not been attractive enough to the local PSA. They remained largely ‘too busy’ to effectively engage with the research sector.

Although FARA/GFAR including the SSA CP is already working with small to medium scale (SMEs) private sector in African agriculture, we are yet to make significant in-roads in this area. The challenge therefore is how to raise the commitment of the existing membership while at the same time, improving on the number and diversity of the existing group. The CIAT/IITA/Rockefeller/Gates Foundations 2006 consultation on a ‘*viable commercial cassava sector for Africa*’, offer an opportunity to embrace another level of highly organized private sector operators in African agriculture into the FARA/GFAR PSA group. The Nigerian Starch Mill (NSM), Ihiala, Nigeria led by Chris Okeke, Cassava Starch Manufacturing (CSM) in South Africa headed by Jim Casey, and Mohammed Enterprises (T) Ltd, in Dar es Salaam managed by N. Subbaiah, as well as the SSA CP private sector stakeholders among others, will be encouraged to join the FARA/GFAR PSA group. The PSA group will discuss:

- Strategies needed to capture and retain the interest of PSA in African agriculture considering the “quick gains” needs and “busy schedules” of this particular stakeholder group.
- Mechanisms to use for sub-regional and regional programs/activities including market information.
- Activities that can be undertaken at the regional level.
- Mechanisms for regional information and learning exchange (eg use of RAILS)
- Existing linkages with FOs and other end user groups
- The role (if any) of the private sector in trade negotiations

Schedule of Activities

This concept note addresses the short to medium term issues of actively involving CSOs in African agricultural research for development. It is recognized that the funding level proposed in the GFAR support through FARA will be able to effectively cover activities for the planning and review. The planning and review meeting will be held as side-event of the African Agriculture

Science Week and General Assembly in Jo'Burg, South Africa 10-16 June 2007. Follow-up will be mainly by e-mail and phone calls, as well as taking advantage of opportunities during other mission travel to destinations where CSO members are located.

Expected Outputs from the Activities

The expected outputs indicated here are for 2007 only and these will be reviewed based on progress from one year to the next.

- Realistic, lean and practical mechanisms for the implementation of the SSA NGOC, FO and PSA planned activities determined
- Outcomes of the on-going SSA NGOC planned activities reported and reviewed and 2007 activities determined
- Regional approach to FO institutional mechanisms and representation at SRO level determined and their capacity strengthening activities for 2007 identified.
- Nurturing of a regional PSA structure and strategic approach determined