

Capacity Strengthening, Information Exchange, Learning & Foresight for Agricultural Innovation

SIDE EVENT REPORT

10-11 June, 2007

FARA 4th General Assembly

About the Conveners



**Technical Center for Agricultural & Rural
Cooperation ACP-EU**



Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa



**Network of Universities in east &
southern Africa**

Focus of the side event

- Strategies for strengthening African ST&I
- Highlight the need and actions for strengthening Africa's capacity to build capacity
- Regional information and learning systems
- Engagement of stakeholders especially women and youth for impact

Participation

- ❑ Two day meeting with over 100 participants each day
- ❑ Diversity of participants by gender, disciplines and experiences
- ❑ Group appreciated the networking opportunity provided by FARA and hospitality of the South African Government and People



Revitalizing Africa's Agriculture

- The group discussed and noted that
 1. Africa's agriculture is still very fragile
 2. The vast majority of the continent's people and economies still rely on Agriculture
 3. Aspirations of CAADP to revitalize agriculture needs to be enhanced
 4. Strengthening capacity to develop science, technology and innovation systems (STI) is pivotal for CAADP realization

Critical issues raised (1)

- ❑ Foresight - a view of the future from continental, regional and national levels- destination.
- ❑ Mobilizing Science, technology innovation systems (STIs) for strategic engagement in development processes
- ❑ Development of relevant policy environment to support
 1. Agricultural education and training programs to supply relevant capacities and competencies for innovation
 2. Investment and up-scaling of best bet technologies
 3. Information access and management

Critical issues raised (2)

- ❑ Africa should make future aspirations the focus of today's innovations & investment priorities
- ❑ In-building foresight in innovation systems underpinned by good leadership is critical for success
- ❑ Look at different time horizons
- ❑ Strategically developed innovation systems to deliver best bets hold promise

Critical Issues (1)- Need for robust capacity development interventions

Recognized that:

- ❑ African AET has experienced drastic decline in investments in the last 15-20 years, resulting in;
 - Grossly understaffed NARS with reduced capacity to deliver
 - Aging Staff ~ 60% due to retire in the next 5-10 years
 - Only 18% of NARS scientists are women
- ❑ This human resource crisis undermines the success of Africa's agricultural innovation systems

Critical Issues (2) – Interventions

- ❑ Mobilize Agricultural Education and Training (AET) for strategic, responsive and relevant intervention and action
- ❑ Enhance information exchange and learning
- ❑ Limited resources calls for effective and efficient deployment of capacities and competencies within innovation systems

Success lessons for Africa (1)

1. Bringing AET into the agricultural innovation systems and assigning human capital responsibilities to AET institutions... India
2. Problem oriented research centers linked to Postgraduate programs have been key in the emergence of Brazil as a knowledge-based economy
3. Rebalancing AET to produce acceptable Researcher: Technician : Farmer ratios for ASTI
4. Transforming universities for relevance

Success lessons for Africa (2)

5. Linking training R&D – US Land Grant Universities
6. Strengthening national M.Sc. Programs in disciplines that advance national goals and labor market needs
7. Build local capacity for PhD training programs as was done in Chile
8. Prioritizing capacity building at political level-
Malaysia
9. Long-term and steady investment in AET for agricultural innovation is crucial for success

Positive developments in Africa- Capacity development (1)

- ❑ Regional efforts by networks such as CRESA, ANAFE, CMAAE, BIO-EARN and RUFORUM
- ❑ Reforms underway in African universities to enhance quality and relevance to development
- ❑ Opportunities for networking; North-South, and South-South partnerships

Positive developments in Africa- Capacity development (2)

- FARA's capacity building programmes (SCARDA and BASIC)
 - The SCARDA purpose is "to strengthen the institutional and human capacity of African agricultural research systems to identify, generate and deliver research outputs that meet the needs of poor people"

Positive developments -Strengthening Knowledge Networks (1)

- CTA efforts to enhance information access and management & facilitating learning platforms
- SRO information networks – e.g. ASARECA's RAIN program
- Establishment of national databases and standards for sharing information and learning

Positive developments -Strengthening Knowledge Networks (2)

FARA- RAILS program

- An African platform for information & learning systems that will
 - Help gain access to information and learning
 - Strengthen capacity for information gathering, processing & use
 - Enable transformation of information into knowledge required for agricultural innovation

Key Recommendations

1. **Advocacy.** AU-NEPAD, FARA and all stakeholders to lobby African governments to increase and actualize human capital development
2. **Concerted efforts.** NEPAD, FARA and SRO's should work in tandem to support regional capacity strengthening networks
3. **Competence gaps.** Greater emphasis should be placed on systemic soft competencies as part of capacity building for innovations and impact

Key Recommendations

- 4. Capacity gaps.** African governments and partners should increase investment in AET (technical, under graduate and post graduate)
- 5. Equal opportunities.** Enhance participation of women and youth to accelerate pace of development
- 6. Information access and use.** African governments should embrace agricultural information as a resource and increase investment in ICT/ICM competencies and infrastructure.
- 7. Global knowledge:** NEPAD, FARA, SROs to strengthen publication culture including journal publication

Prime Minister of Malaysia, 2005:

“I do believe that it is necessary to stress that for most countries today, human resource development and human capital formation are either extremely important, absolutely vital, or a matter of life and death. In the case of Malaysia...we think it is a matter of life or death.”