



Africa Agriculture Science Week & FARA General Assembly

10-16 June 2007
Johannesburg, South Africa



FARA General Assembly Side Event Report June 10-11, 2007

Name of side event:	Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for agricultural education and improved livelihoods in SSA
Sponsoring organization(s):	Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Vancouver, Canada
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Background/rationale of the side event (*maximum one paragraph*)

Education, training, information, communication for agricultural research and development become increasingly urgent. Open and distance learning (ODL) and Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) are expanding. To enhance collaboration and synergy on the use of Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for agricultural education and improved livelihoods in SSA among several players, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) wishes to identify opportunities for a complementary and catalytic role with the African national agricultural programmes and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA). Towards this objective COL commissioned country case studies with an aim to gain a better understanding of the national institutions, human capacities and capabilities as well as their physical facilities available and potential for Tech-MODE. Partners in Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia contributed to this study. The authors from these countries and other interested national and international partners were invited for further discussion to draw their perception on the issues related to the use of Tech-MODE for agricultural education and improved livelihoods in SSA.

Principle agreements/actions/recommendations

At the Side-Event the partners suggested recommendations for five interrelated issues that they identified as for the consideration of COL, FARA and other interested organisations. Each issue lists a number of recommendations.

Policy:

- Support awareness and advocacy initiatives targeting policy makers at all levels.
- Facilitate the integration of Tech-MODE into the mainstream formal educational system at all levels.
- Facilitate policy formulation and implementation at national level in an integrated manner in the areas of information and communication technologies (ICT), open and distance learning (ODL), and intellectual property rights (IPR) that results in increased and improved access without gender and generation barriers.
- Engage in advocacy dialogue for promoting access to Internet connectivity to various stakeholders especially the marginalized.
- Facilitate policy formulation at institutional and national levels on quality standards for Tech-MODE.

Infrastructure:

- Strengthen the infrastructure to digitize information in knowledge and information institutions.
- Encourage African countries and institutions to develop infrastructures in an integrated manner in ICT, and ODL that results in increased and improved access without gender and generation barriers.

Socio-economy:

- Assist in the use of Tech-MODE to promote access to education and training, competitiveness and quality in agriculture, with due consideration to improving gender equity and family welfare.

Capacity building:

- Support capacity building in Tech-MODE and its components such as development and delivery of learning materials, providing learner support, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and in governance and management of Tech-MODE-based educational programmes.
- Create awareness of the importance of developing collaborative content that is of particular relevance to Africa, and to make it available to all users using flexible copyright licenses such as Creative Commons (<http://creativecommons.org>). Towards developing such open content, strengthen individual and institutional capacity to use free/libre open source software (FLOSS), develop open educational resources (OER) through appropriate Internet platforms such as WikiEducator (<http://www.wikieducator.org>)

Collaboration:

- Integrate and lead multi-community partnerships with an aim to promote life-long learning opportunities for farmers, using Tech-MODE, for improving their livelihoods. Assist in bridging the missing links among all the stakeholder communities: farmers, educators, technologists, researchers, policy makers, marketers, financiers, governmental and non-governmental institutions, and national and international organizations.

Side event linked to which FARA networking support function? (check one)

- Advocacy and resource mobilization**
- Access to knowledge and technologies**
- Regional policies and markets**
- Capacity strengthening**
- Partnerships and strategic alliances**

Where relevant, note who has success stories, &/or useful resource people or institutions related to side-event theme

The motivation and response from NARES partners from the eight countries to the request from COL has been significant. We expect that the final outcome from the case studies will be of interest not only to COL and FARA but also for the African NARES and to global organisations such as GFAR, CGIAR, CTA.