



FARA 4th General Assembly Side Event Report June 10-11, 2007

Name of side event:	Agricultural Biodiversity Initiative for Africa (ABIA)
Sponsoring organization(s):	FARA & Bioversity International
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Background/rationale of the side event

Agricultural biodiversity (ABD) is fundamental to agricultural development and human welfare (food security, nutrition, human health and environmental health). This side event was organized to discuss major shortcomings in ABD management in Africa. The situation in Africa is characterized by: (i) weak knowledge base on the importance of ABD including its value to society and potential for development; (ii) emphasis on plants and the neglect of other domains; (iii) over-emphasis on conservation for future use at expense of USE and management for present and future challenges; (iv) gene banks often perceived as independent organ in the maintenance of agricultural biodiversity with little or no link with other organs of agricultural research and communities; (v) policy dimension often under-developed and unconnected with field operations. Due to financial and policy limitations, efforts in ABD management and use at both country and regional levels have generally been inadequate and uncoordinated, This weakness not only constrained the optimization of the benefits of genetic resources, it also contributed to the loss of valuable genetic resources in Africa. Despite this situation, agricultural biodiversity concerns do not significantly appear in country and regional strategic plans and priority actions.

The Agricultural Biodiversity Initiative for Africa (ABIA) is therefore proposed as a PLATFORM to generate visibility, resources and collaborative engagement in support of agricultural biodiversity management, conservation and use in Africa. It will galvanize countries and institutions to work together on agricultural biodiversity issues; support existing regional and sub-regional ABD initiatives of the Sub-regional organizations; networks and other CGIAR initiatives. It will also promote the mainstreaming ABD in agricultural productivity programs in line with the principles and guidelines of the Framework of African Agricultural Productivity (FAAP).

Key FARA value-added roles in ABIA will include:

- Advocacy - to raise ABD visibility at high levels of policy and governance (AU-NEPAD/SROs/RECs/Countries);
- Provide 'Platform' for interaction and collaboration among stakeholders;
- Facilitate involvement and engagement of African stakeholders in global treaties and processes in relation to genetic resources for food and agriculture;
- Support capacity strengthening and information / learning platforms; and
- Resource mobilization in support of ABD.

Principle agreements / actions / recommendations

Participants at the side event made the following recommendations:

1. FARA should establish an initiative - '**Agricultural Biodiversity Initiative for Africa**' (ABIA), with the active involvement and support of the SROs, NARS and other partners within and outside Africa. The establishment of ABIA should be CAADP and FAAP compliant
2. FARA, through ABIA, would support the SROs and where appropriate national programs, to develop ABD research and development programmes that will promote the USE of these resources for development in Africa.

3. ABIA would enable active advocacy to influence political and policy decisions in relation to ABD.
4. It will strengthen African countries capacity for engaging in international and global treaties and conventions in relation to agricultural biodiversity resources; promote training and capacity strengthening of scientists, political and policy decision makers, mainstream agricultural biodiversity, through Universities and colleges.
5. Support country efforts in developing programmes on ABD conservation and use.
6. ABIA would go beyond plants, and will include other components of agricultural biodiversity, such as animal genetic resources, microbes and pollinators.
7. Bioersity International would provide technical backstopping to FARA in the development of this initiative.
8. ABIA would seek partnership with international organizations such as FAO, the Global Crop Diversity Trust, the CGIAR, and other Advanced Research Institutions, in the development of this initiative.

Participants recommend the ABIA initiative to the FARA General Assembly 2007 for endorsement and request that FARA be mandated, in partnership with Bioersity International, to further develop the initiative with active involvement of relevant stakeholders.

Actions / Next steps:

1. Constituting a Focus Group of experts and stakeholders, to develop a conceptual framework and implementation plan for ABIA. **(Action: FARA and Bioersity)**
2. Plan towards the organization of a conference on Agricultural Biodiversity in Africa, probably as part of preparations towards celebration of the UN International Year of Biodiversity, scheduled for the year 2010. **(Action: FARA and Bioersity)**

Side event linked to which FARA networking support function?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advocacy and resource mobilization <input type="checkbox"/> Access to knowledge and technologies <input type="checkbox"/> Regional policies and markets <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Capacity strengthening <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partnerships and strategic alliances
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Where relevant, note who has success stories, and/or useful resource people or institutions related to side-event theme

Institutions related to the side event are: NARS, ASARECA, CORAF/WECARD, SADC-FANR, FANRPAN, Northern African countries through AARINENA, CGIAR Alliance, Farmer Organizations, ARIs and NGOs working on biodiversity.

Facilitation: FARA & Bioersity International

Technical support: CGIAR Alliance, ARIs, NARS.