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FARA
THE
NEXT
CHAPTER

Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa

Introduction

The Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) is the apex continental organisation responsible for coordinating and advocating for agricultural research-for-development. (AR4D). FARA serves the technical arm of the African Union Commission on matters concerning agriculture science, technology and innovation.

It also serves as the entry point for agricultural research initiatives designed to have a continental reach or a sub-continental reach spanning more than one sub-region. Headquartered in Accra, Ghana, FARA has been in existence for 12 years. Over this period FARA has provided a continental forum for stakeholders in AR4D to shape the vision and agenda for this sub-sector and to mobilise themselves to respond to key continent-wide development frameworks, notably the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

FARA has turned a new chapter of its unfolding chronicle, following its adoption of a new strategic plan for the period 2014 to 2018. FARA's new strategic plan is designed to respond to emerging opportunities and challenges facing the continent and its quest to become food secure and improve the welfare of its people. Specifically, through its working together, pulling together and delivering together corporate philosophy, FARA seeks to move from the initial phase of building and structuring of the AR4D architecture to a phase that it works with the SROs, NARS, partners and forum members towards repositioning AR4D as a key driver of Africa's socio-economic transformation agenda, the African Union's Agenda 2063 and CAADP.



THE CAADP'S STRATEGY

CAADP's revised strategy for the next decade articulates a Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africaa strategic framework designed to guide Agriculture Science and Technology visioning and planning. FARA's new programme over the next five years is therefore aligned to this Science Agenda and designed to build on FARA's and African AR4D achievements and lessons over the past decade.

Achievements byFARAand Africa's ARD system for driving the next phase of growth and agricultural transformation The ultimate impact of Africa's AR4D system is improvement in food security, wealth creation and poverty reduction among poor people in Africa.This impact is the outcome of the entire system and not of individual elements of the system. FARA's unique role is to enhance the overall performance of the system by mobilising collective actions among system elements to minimise the pervasive fragmentation and isolation thereby making the whole greater than the sum of the parts. These collective actions range from visioning and planning to programme design, implementation and evaluation. In addition FARA supports the capacity strengthening of system elements enhancecommunications among them and facilitates and enabling implementation environment for scaling up and scaling out best practices and policies to expand the scale of impact.

The most noted achievements registered by FARA over the past decade that position it for the next phase include the following:



1. Strengthened AR4D institutions and architecture

FARA has been instrumental in the establishment of continental organisations for each of the stakeholder groups in the agricultural innovation system including agriculture advisory service, farmers organizations, NGOs, agribusiness and education. The existence of these organisations has improved the inclusiveness of agricultural research planning and implementation thereby providing a strong base for AR4D to become more relevant and subsequently to have greater development impact.

2. Reform of AR4D institutions and Services

FARA has led implementation of theCAADP pillar on research, technology dissemination and adoption (Pillar IV). To this end FARA coordinated the development of the Framework for African Agricultural Productivity (FAAP) which laid out the key elements and guiding principles for the reform of AR4D institutions and services, increasing investment in AR4D and aligning support to AR4D. Thereafter, FARA promoted the adoption and implementation of these principles through CAADP processes. The most notable reforms are concerned with putting farmers at the centre of AR4D processes,

integration of research, extension and education and other actors into the AR4D system; mainstreaming of gender into AR4D and supportingand reliance on a strong evidence base for investment planning.

3. Enhanced capacity for innovation in agriculture

FARA has been instrumental in convening, coordinating and mobilisingcontinent-wide research, extension and education stakeholders to align their actions to common strategies and approaches (collective actions). FARA developed, convened and catalysed severalcontinental initiatives, including the Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Programme (SSA CP), which has validated and institutionalised an innovation systems-based approach known as the Integrated Agricultural Research for Development (IAR4D). IAR4D offers far higher gains in terms of yields, income and resilience than the conventional linear approach. Farmers who adopted the IAR4D approach increased their yields and incomes three times the yields obtainedby farmers who relied on the conventional approach.

FARA's assessment of capacities of national agricultural research institutions (NARIs) in Africa in 2006 revealed

that AR4D institutions had major capacity shortcomings. This led to the development and validation of the programme for Strengthening the Capacity of Agricultural Research and Development in Africa (SCARDA). The SCARDA approach to capacity strengthening is based on holistic institutional analyses. The approach is currently being scaled up by the SROs, the approach is yielding strong research managers and turning out qualified managers who are supporting the change management processes in AR4D institutions.

Other continental programmes include: The Regional Agricultural Information and Learning System (RAILS), which enables stakeholders to receive and process information, making the m 'knowledge-able' and capable of adopting new technologies; the Dissemination of New Agricultural Technologies in Africa (DONATA), which has proved the merit of creating platforms for the interaction of the diverse stakeholders involved in technology adoption; Strengthening Capacity for Safe Biotechnology Management in Sub-Saharan Africa (SABIMA), which has strengthened capacities for biotechnology stewardship and encouraged the transfer of proprietary technologies; and the UniBRAIN initiative, which is breaking down the



barriers between African universities, business and research to release the talent and capacities within these institutions to participate in joint innovations. FARA has been ahead of the curve in strengthening linkages between research and the private sector by bringing business, universities and research together through the UniBRAIN programme.



4. Increased investments for AR4D in Africa
In the context of the Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security (in which African governments undertook to allocate 10 per cent of their national budgets to agricultural development), FARA's advocacy work especially through the Ministerial and Parliamentary dialogues has encouraged governments to invest more in AR4D by demonstrating the merits of investing in this sector and assisting them to integrate the budgets for research, extension and education into their countries' CAADP-aligned agriculture investment

plans. After a period of stagnation in the 1990s, AR4D spending in Africa is now rising with spending reaching US\$1.7 billion per annum in 2009. In addition, FARA has facilitated the engagement of traditional and non-traditional development partners (DPs) with African AR4D stakeholders in setting priorities for DP investment in African AR4D.

5. Increased regional coherence and coordination for AR4D in Africa
Several platforms for coherence on issues concerning agricultural policy and capacity strengthening and knowledge sharing have been established. The African Food and Agriculture Policy Platform (AFAPP) aims to influence food and agricultural transformation in Africa through evidence-based policies. The Joint Capacity Development group for Africa's Agriculture (CD JAG) aims to provide a platform for spearheading institutional change in AR4D in Africa and the e-Capacities platform (www.fara.ecapacities.com) provides decision support to countries for developing capacity development action plans for human capital formation. FARA has been designated, along with the CGIAR, as the co-lead institution for the work stream on technology innovation platforms within the G8's New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition. It is also committed to working with Grow Africa and the African Financing Partnership (AFP), as well as to assisting governments and private sector entities to develop CAADP investment programmes to secure funding from the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP).

6. Increased African leadership and ownership for effective implementation of African development Agendas

FARA has represented the interests of its constituents in the development of Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa. The political endorsement of this Agenda is now nearing completion. This Agenda is due to be presented to, and adopted by, the July 2014 Summit of the African Heads of State and Government.

The Science Agenda is aimed at aligning all AR4D actors (for example, National Agricultural Research Systems; sub regional agricultural research organisations and advanced research institutions) around a common framework and reference. It will be the de facto descriptor of the science that Africa requires to deliver the aspirations of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) and constitutes the agriculture section of the African Union's Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA).



FARA's new strategic orientation and programmes for delivering the Science Agenda
African agriculture is changing with increasing speed and there are prospects for even greater change arising from new science and innovation. To remain relevant, FARA is adapting to the changed circumstances in which it functions and is capitalizing on lessons learned in implementing its mandate. FARA's new strategic direction is predicated on its past successes, its invaluable comparative advantage and the social capital it has accumulated among its different stakeholder interest groups. The new strategy reflects FARA's stakeholder demands and is derived from and aligned to the Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa, which is in turn designed to support the realization of CAADP's vision (see figure below). As the leading AR4D institution in Africa, FARA's new strategic orientation is organized around three result areas or strategic priorities namely:

1. Visioning Africa's agricultural transformation to ensure that African AR4D actors are aware of and respond to anticipated changes, e.g. climate change, population growth, economic growth and urbanization, thereby shaping the kind of agriculture Africa will have in the future. This strategic priority tracks emerging opportunities and risks and facilitates anticipation and proactive planning; provides foresight guidance to agricultural research and innovations; promotes the Science Agenda; and brokers strategic alliances and empowers partnerships.
2. Integrated systemic capacities for change to improve the responsiveness and relevance of African institutions so

they are able to implement the transformation vision. This entails strengthening human and institutional capacities, and ensuring that the capacities are adequately integrated for example, research, extension, education, production and agribusiness business. This strategic priority ensures the integration of capacities of actors in the knowledge system; promotes linkages between research, education and business for agricultural innovation; facilitates the responsiveness and relevance of African institutions; strengthens and sustains capacity pools; and strengthens human, organizational and institutional capacities for agricultural innovation.

3. Conducive enabling environment for implementation of the actions necessary to realize the transformation. This entails mobilizing collective actions on policy analysis and



advocacy for the generation and effective deployment of science, technology, innovation and the associated institutional reforms. This strategic priority facilitates policy analysis and advocacy or overarching priority and emerging issues; advocates for and communicates FAAP principles in the implementation of CAADP; catalyzes and connects African policy and economic institutions, systems and processes to deliver evidence-based policy support to the CAADP process; promotes evidence-based advocacy for increased investments in AR4D; and enhances knowledge management and access to knowledge and innovation.

These three strategic priorities are reinforced by the following cross-cutting result areas: gender and youth, climate change, environmental management, biotechnology and nutrition.

In implementing its strategy, FARA mobilizes stakeholders around a portfolio of continent-wide programmes jointly developed with the stakeholders to address specific challenges or opportunities. Currently, FARA is coordinating four such programmes namely UniBRAIN, RAILS, DONATA and AFAPP. Going forward with the new strategic orientation, FARA is embarking on the following new continent-wide programmes in the context of the Science Agenda;

- Adaptation for future Demands (AFDA)
- Regional Mobility for Capacity strengthening (ReMoCaSt)
- Africa Human Capital in Science, Technology and Agri-preneurship for Food Security Framework (AHC-STAFF)

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- Programme for Agricultural Intensification in Africa (PAINT)
- African Special Programme on the Environment and Agricultural Research (African SPEAR)
- The African Food and Agriculture Policy Platform (AFAPP)



FARA's comparative advantage and emerging opportunities

FARA's comparative advantage in performing the functions required to deliver on the result areas enumerated above derives from: (i) its mandate conferred by its constituents and the African Union Commission to mobilize AR4D stakeholders and collective actions for achieving CAADP goals; and (ii) the experience, social capital and networks that it has cultivated over the past decade and especially over the last five years.

FARA is working towards taking advantage of the

following opportunities to further strengthen the ARD system so as to enhance its development outcomes. The opportunities include: (i) Globalisation and the associated challenge of improving competitiveness of African agriculture; (ii) the increased attention to regional integration; (iii) the sustained economic growth on the continent which has increased the domestic resources available for investment in agriculture and AR4D, and (iv) Increased investments in African AR4D from African governments, the CGIAR, the World Bank and other multi-lateral Financial Institutions, global initiatives such as USA's Feed the Future, the G8 New alliance for Food and Nutritional Security, the Australian Food Security Centre; and the EU's envisaged programme on agricultural intensification IntensAfrica.





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