



PAEPARD



 Funding agricultural research
for development:
Lessons from PAEPARD

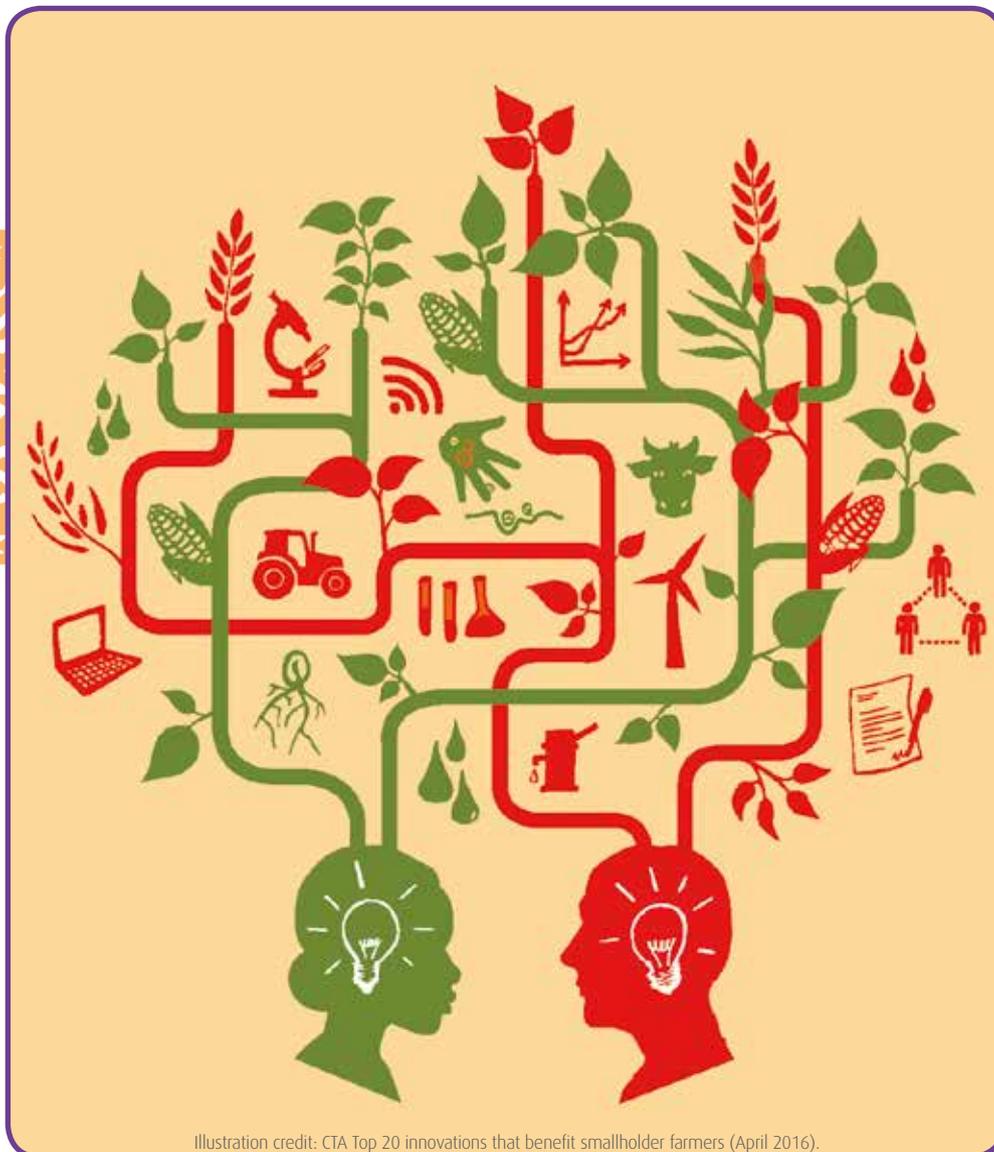


Illustration credit: CTA Top 20 innovations that benefit smallholder farmers (April 2016).

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Lessons learned

Most agencies supporting agricultural research in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) provide funds for discrete projects over specific periods of time, usually a maximum of three years. Research topics identified for calls for proposals are not always well aligned with users' needs. In particular, research topics may not reflect the priorities of organizations - such as farmer organizations and private agribusinesses, with interests in the research outcomes; they are not generally supported to play a significant role as project partners. The failure to include relevant stakeholders in project decision making, among other factors, impacts the quality of research and severely limits the uptake of research outputs, thereby reducing the potential development impact.

The Platform for an Africa-Europe Partnership in Agricultural Research for Development (PAEPARD) has sought to overcome these shortcomings by mobilizing and supporting multi-stakeholder research consortia to address priority research issues that respond to users' needs.

In implementing this user-led approach, some key lessons have been learned about funding agricultural research for development (ARD):

> **Conventional competitive** funding mechanisms skew participation towards research organizations with more resources and are therefore not conducive to multi-stakeholder partnerships in which the perspectives of all partners are valued.

> **User-led approaches** offer a practical way to identify priority research issues, encourage the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, and build trust in the research and innovation process. PAEPARD experience with the development of a users-led process (ULP), with regional farmer organizations at the centre, shows that building such partnerships is effective, but takes time and requires both financial and human resources.

> **There is a gap** between the research priorities of many funding agencies and research users' needs. Few opportunities exist for demand-led

multi-stakeholder research and advocacy is needed to help address this shortfall.

> **Direct engagement** with donors can help to influence their research priorities to leverage more resources for joint research from multiple sources and thereby increase the likelihood that research outputs are taken up by users.

> **Seed funding** for specific activities during the early stages of partnership development can help research consortia sustain their efforts and greatly increase their chances of obtaining support for larger-scale initiatives.

> **A staggered funding** approach, in which research consortia are supported through mechanisms such as inception workshops and writeshops, results in the development of high quality proposals that have a good chance of being successful.

> **The benefits** of a multi-stakeholder partnership go far beyond the grants captured by the partners, and the momentum of a winning proposal has proved to be more important than the grant amount.

Consortium soybean milk in Benin (Box 5), driven by an NGO and targeting better women's status through improved quality management of their soybean products.



Recent trends in funding for ARD

In recent years, the crucial role of agriculture in stimulating economic growth and reducing poverty has been recognized by SSA governments and investments in the sector have, on average, more than doubled during 2000-2014¹. Spending on agricultural research has also increased, although at a slower rate. Most ARD funding is for short-term projects, which usually last less than three years, leading to a lack of continuity in research efforts and reducing the potential for achieving impact. In addition, the research priorities of donors and development banks are not always clearly aligned with those of national governments. In most programmes, the involvement of the research outcomes' end users is also limited, and sometimes entirely absent. As a result, research outputs frequently do not meet farmer needs and are not adopted at scale.

Some donors, including the European Commission (EC), recognize the need for the active engagement of end users in the identification of research priorities and in the implementation of the research itself. In its approach guide to *Research and Innovation: Food & Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture (2014)*² the EC state that "Important lessons are emerging that impacts are more likely to be achieved when research is linked to extension and innovation, and when it is closely aligned with needs of beneficiaries." However, most funding mechanisms are still not sufficiently flexible to enable an approach that links research and development. For instance, 2016 open call for proposals of the African Union Research Grants considered farmer organizations and industries as ineligible project partners.

PAEPARD, which was set up to strengthen collaboration between African and European researchers and to enhance the involvement of different stakeholders in the research process, has been working to address the gap in funding mechanisms for ARD projects. To achieve its objectives, PAEPARD used a set of complementary interventions, including a brokerage function to support partnership development, capacity strengthening and an information and communication system³.

In this brief, we discuss an additional component of the initiative that sought to directly respond to the funding shortfall, namely, the Competitive Research Fund and the Incentive Fund (CRF-IF).

The CRF-IF was developed to facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships and has evolved over time in response to lessons learned during the implementation of partnership activities. Despite initial challenges, PAEPARD consortia have been successful in obtaining increasing numbers of grants each year, with a total of 34 proposals gaining funding between 2010 and 2017 and the mobilization of 36,709,844 € through responding to open calls. This amount includes funding for consortia facilitated by PAEPARD, as well as a few related partners (e.g. African universities) that have benefitted from technical and financial support during the 12 writeshops organized by PAEPARD between 2012 and 2016. The brief summarizes PAEPARD outcomes so far, highlighting lessons and recommendations that may be useful in guiding future decisions on ARD funding mechanisms.



¹ Beintema, N. and Stads, G.J. 2017. A Comprehensive Overview of Investments and Human Resource Capacity in African Agricultural Research. ASTI Synthesis Report. International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington DC, USA.
² European Commission. 2014. Research & Innovation: Food and Nutrition Security/Sustainable Agriculture. Directorate-General Development and Cooperation - EuropeAid, Brussels. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/guide-approach-paper-ar4d-2014_en_0.pdf
³ See PAEPARD policy briefs no. 2, 3 and 4. Available at: <http://paepard.org/wakka.php?wiki=PublicationsPaepard>

Competition for transparency and research excellence

Initial calls for PAEPARD consortia

At the inception of the PAEPARD project, it was agreed that a competitive process would be used to identify multi-stakeholder ARD consortia. The consortia selected were to be given 'seed funding' (100-300 K€) to enable the formation of strong partnerships in response to a specific funding opportunity agreed at an inception workshop and to develop research proposals in a subsequent writeshop. The rationale for using a competitive process was to ensure that consortia selection was open, transparent and promoted high quality research.

An open call for research proposals was initially launched in December 2010 with a second call in June 2011. Specific topics were not prescribed in the calls in order to allow room for innovative ideas to emerge in the proposals.

However, it was a call requirement that research teams comprised of multiple actors and involved both African and European partners. The proposed research also had to address a defined development problem and show a clear pathway to impact.

The proposals were evaluated by a panel of ARD practitioners, from among PAEPARD partners, with different disciplinary expertise. The calls attracted considerable interest and a combined total of over 150 proposals were received, from which 19 were selected to undergo the support process outlined in Figure 1.

However, certain challenges were identified during the call process. It became apparent that there was a disconnect between the formation of PAEPARD partnerships and available funding opportunities.

One of PAEPARD key tasks was to provide information on forthcoming funding calls to consortia. However, very few opportunities supported a multi-stakeholder partnership approach. In the consortium proposals for PAEPARD seed funding, applicants were asked to indicate the funding opportunity that they were targeting. However, few applicants complied with this request and those who did comply found that the period between the launch of the PAEPARD call and the proposal development writeshop (approximately 12 months) was too long to link to a specific grant call.

Development of the ULP

During the formation of partnerships it also became clear that researchers and other partners sometimes had different expectations of the research objectives and of their roles in the research process, which presented a challenge for effective collaboration.

In particular, research users felt they had limited ownership of the partnerships being formed. Indeed, many proposals were judged by the panel of ARD evaluators to inadequately reflect user needs and it was felt that the proposed research was unlikely to deliver developmental impact.

Consortium on Trichoderma based biofertilizers locally managed in Bukina Faso (Box 3), driven by a small private enterprise (Bioprotect) adapting European technology for small-scale vegetable farmers trained by an NGO. Impact assessment in the field was made by PAEPARD.



investment. This has implications for the competitive call process as organizations with a significant amount of core funding are better able to participate.

To respond to research users' concerns about the partnerships, PAEPARD launched the ULP in 2012⁴, which placed farmer organizations at the centre of defining research priorities and designing a research initiative. This approach involved the provision of direct funding from PAEPARD and other forms of support (such as capacity building for proposal development and improved communication mechanisms) over five years. The ULP led to the development of 14 proposals, of which six received grants enabling consortium members to strengthen their partnerships and allowing them to adjust their research plans to respond to emerging funding opportunities.

Limited engagement by European organizations

Another funding issue was revealed during the 2010 and 2011 call process when it became apparent that the European researchers showed a low level of engagement⁵ and their participation in the inception workshops held in Africa was limited. Researchers' feedback during subsequent multi-stakeholder workshops revealed the main reasons for this:

1. The incentive and reward systems for agricultural researchers in European research institutes and universities is heavily weighted towards demonstrating academic excellence through the publication of papers in high-impact and peer-reviewed journals, and there is a perception among researchers that development-oriented research is not conducive to generating such outputs.

2. An increasing number of European research organizations have little or no core funding and rely heavily on project funding to support activities. As a result, research staff have less flexibility to take part in activities, such as workshops, that do not cover salary costs. Researchers also have to make judgements about the probability of success when they are involved in preparing grant proposals, as this is a time-consuming activity that requires financial

3. Once a project is under way, organizations with core funding are also in a stronger position to pre-finance research activities and to continue operations if there are delays in the reimbursement of expenses. The same applies to the contribution required by partners to 20% of PAEPARD co-funding; organizations which receive public funding are more able to meet this requirement to provide a contribution than those with limited public funding.

PAEPARD partners have since concluded that the establishment of a drawdown fund by European funding agencies, which European researchers can access to participate effectively in inception workshops and proposal development, would help to improve the engagement of European organizations.

Successful funding outcomes for PAEPARD consortia

PAEPARD supported consortia were successful in winning funding from a total of seven donor agricultural research programmes between 2011 and 2014 (Table 1 on page 6).

In order to successfully meet funding call requirements, in some cases consortia had to re-orient their proposals from their original research priorities, which demonstrated commendable flexibility, but also meant that partnerships had to be re-structured and this often proved to be a challenging process. For example the International Development and Research Center calls for research proposals compel the coordinator to be Canadian.

The benefits of the ULP approach were particularly evident in the way that the consortia were able to address this challenge. The social capital built within the ULP consortia helped them to adapt their research plans to conform with the requirements of targeted calls, whilst maintaining their core objectives. Moreover, the PAEPARD supported writeshops gave the ULP consortia time and space to develop their ideas in the depth required for a strong proposal.

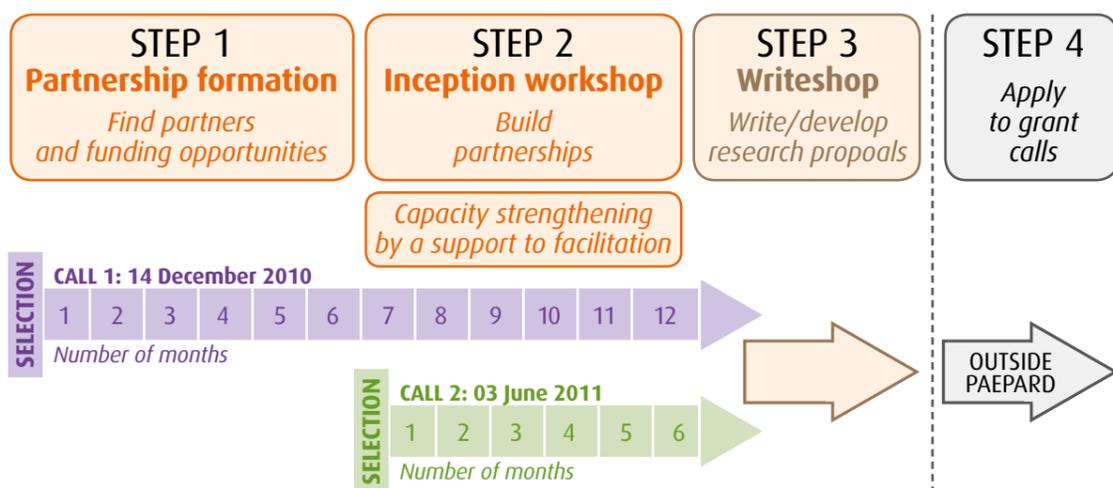


Figure 1 - PAEPARD multi-stakeholder innovation partnership process.

⁴ See the PAEPARD paper on Findings from the sector and multi-stakeholder consultations conducted in the framework of PAEPARD between 2010 and 2012. Available at: http://paepard.org/wakka.php?wiki=PublicationsPaepard/download&file=Rapport_Consultations_multiacteursEN.pdf
⁵ See the PAEPARD paper on Appraising the participation of European partners in the PAEPARD Users-Led Process. Available at: http://paepard.org/wakka.php?wiki=PublicationsPaepard/download&file=Rapport_ULP_European_EngagementEN.pdf



Table 1: Examples of external funding obtained by PAEPARD consortia (2011-2014).

Donor research programmes	PAEPARD-supported consortia
> CORAF/WECARD West African Agricultural Productivity Research and Development (WAAPRD) , November 2011.	> Europe-Africa partnership for setting a monitoring instrument for family farming in Senegal (extended to several other West African countries including Mali, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin, Niger).
> The Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA RC12 Staples 02) , July 2012.	> Upscaling innovations for quality potato seed production in East and Central Africa, Burundi .
> Institution based grant of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund of the Federal Government of Nigeria , 2014.	> Use of processed cassava product in broiler production, Nigeria poultry feeds research and development (NIPOFERD).
> The Africa-Brazil Innovation Marketplace , November 2014.	> Local seed value chain promotion: farmers led breeding and distribution of green pepper and red pepper varieties, Togo .
> Accelerate Agricultural Technology Transfer to Low Income Countries (AgriTT) , 2014.	> Partnership for enhanced aquaculture innovation in sub-Saharan Africa (PEAISSA), Malawi .
> Sub-Saharan Challenge Programme (SSA CP) , 2014.	> Control of angular leaf spot disease in citrus plants in Ghana .
> The Dutch Food and Business Applied Research Fund (ARF) , 2013 and March 2014. (Box 1)	> Development of quality based potato seed innovations for small-scale farmers in the three provinces surrounding Bujumbura town in Burundi .
	> Systemic approach to overcoming the constraints of production and marketing of indigenous vegetables in Western Kenya, Kenya .



1 The Food & Business Applied Research Fund (ARF)

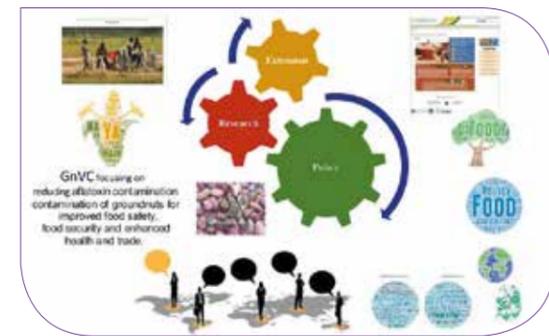
> The Food & Business ARF, supported by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS), is an example of a programme that commissions inter-disciplinary research conducted by multi-actor teams. The ARF aims to promote research that leads to innovations which enhance sustainable food security for the most vulnerable populations in 15 partner countries of the Netherlands development cooperation.

> The programme provided an opportunity for PAEPARD to help build consortia with partners from selected SSA countries (Benin, Burundi, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda and Uganda) and the Netherlands. An initial constraint to this partnership development was that organizations in the Netherlands were not eligible to recover the full costs they incurred in implementing activities. As a result, some organizations decided that they were unable to participate.

> PAEPARD lent its support to the managing organization (NWO-WOTRO) requesting a change in these regulations and DGIS has subsequently modified them to make participation more attractive for organizations that are funded through the project, rather than through institutional mechanisms. So far, ten projects from four PAEPARD supported consortia and two facilitated by PAEPARD have been funded through the ARF, which is a high rate and a very positive label to the PAEPARD approach.

The PAEPARD CRF-IF

Consortium on quality development of the groundnut value chain (GNVC) in Malawi and Zambia (Box 2).



After the funding challenges experienced during the PAEPARD calls in 2010 and 2011, and by the subsequent ULP consortia, PAEPARD decided to modify the way in which it supported demand-led, multi-actor partnerships for agricultural research. Following a recommendation by the PAEPARD mid-term review team, a CRF-IF was established with financing from the EC. The CRF-IF has two components:

- **The CRF** (competitive research fund) component was designed to provide funds for the implementation of three to four research projects, each with a budget of 100-300 K€ over three-years. It was expected that this funding would enable project teams to carry out initial research to leverage additional support from other sources. New proposals for the CRF were sought from the consortia selected in the PAEPARD calls (2010 and 2011) and from ULP research teams.
- **The IF** (incentive fund) component provided smaller amounts of funding (less than 30 K€) to consortia facilitated by PAEPARD to further develop or reorient previously prepared proposals, thereby increasing the chances of success in obtaining external support.

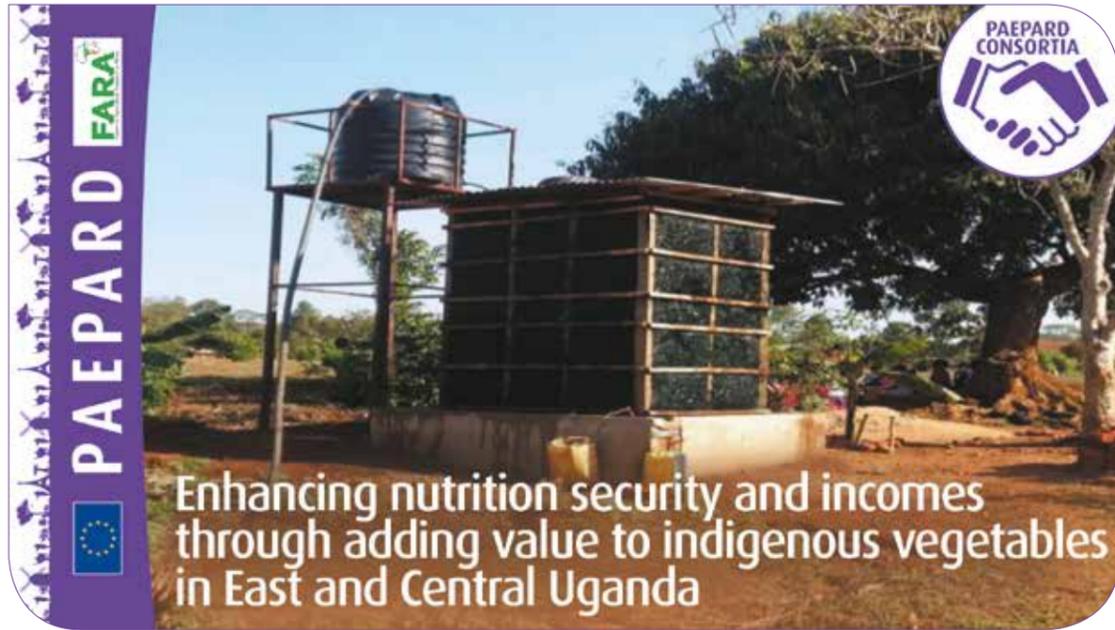
Eligible activities for IF awards included short studies, workshops, meetings, writeshops and exchange visits. PAEPARD stakeholder consultations revealed that access to finance was crucial to multi-actor consortia cohesion during the partnership building stage. In some cases, partners were able to make a small financial contribution from their own resources. However, experience showed that it was important to have access to relatively small additional sources of funding in order to sustain the partnership, especially through engagement in activities such as exchange visits and participation in agricultural fairs. Together with the inception workshops and writeshops, the activities supported through the CRF-IF were effective in assisting consortia to develop strong research proposals.

Development impact of CRF supported projects

In June 2014, the PAEPARD Steering Committee approved four proposals under the first component of the CRF-IF. Three of the successful proposals originated from the consortia selected in the PAEPARD calls and one ULP consortium was approved for funding. The low success rate of the ULP consortia was surprising and may be partly explained by the fact that most ULP partnerships were not as far advanced in their research planning as the consortia established earlier. However, the ULP consortium that successfully secured CRF-IF funds has shown that a demand-led, user-oriented research approach could begin to deliver benefits to rural households in a relatively short-period of time (see Box 2).

2 Minimizing the risk of aflatoxin contamination in groundnuts (ULP consortium)

> In the successful CRF-IF ULP project, the National Association of Smallholder Farmers (NASFAM) in Malawi is collaborating with partner organizations in Zambia, South Africa and the UK to identify ways to minimize the risk of aflatoxin occurrence in groundnuts. The research is being conducted with farmers and agricultural advisory services to enhance the exchange of ideas and support knowledge sharing. Farmers have helped identify the pre- and post-harvest practices being tested to reduce aflatoxin risk and several hundred farmers are directly involved in the research. As a result, many farmers are already beginning to modify their practices, increasing their yields and income at the same time as managing the aflatoxin risk.



Twitter message elaborated by the African Indigenous Vegetable consortium and the PAEPARD communication group for the European Development Days 2017 in Brussels.

The three consortia from the PAEPARD calls that were awarded CRF-IF funds have strong multi-actor partnerships and are conducting applied research that, based on preliminary

results, has a high probability of improving the livelihoods of large numbers of rural households (Boxes 3-5). However, in view of the continued separation of research and development funding,



3 Early impacts of a CRF project in Burkina Faso

- > The Bioprotect CRF project in Burkina Faso has developed a compost enriched with *Trichoderma* fungus. The research partners involved are working with NGOs and have so far managed to reach 1,600 farmers with the new technology. The application of the technology has resulted in:
 - An average yield increase of 30% in tomato, onion and Irish potato;
 - An average increase in farmers incomes by 25%;
 - The empowerment of women to establish enterprises based on the sale of the compost in rural communities.

4 Multi-layered impacts of CRF project in Uganda

- > The CRF project targeting improved nutritional security and increased incomes by adding value to indigenous vegetables in Eastern and Central Uganda focuses on innovative processes for extending the shelf life of African fruit and vegetables without degrading their nutritive qualities. It successfully responds to expectations of:
 - Farmers for improved access to local markets for their fresh products;
 - Consumers for access to safe and nutrition rich food at affordable prices;
 - Policy makers in dealing with food standards, public health and business development.

5 Developments in the soybean value chain

- > The PAEPARD consortium in Benin assists groups of women soybean processors to obtain added value from their production through developing safe and nutritious products, such as soy milk and a spicy fermented condiment known as *afitin*. Research funds were won competitively through the PAEPARD CRF and a proposal to the Dutch ARF, which focused on promoting the production and utilization of good quality soybean seed varieties with characteristics suited to specific value added products.
- > In addition, smaller amounts of development funding were received from sources in Benin to support the development of the women's association, including financial support from the 2 SCALE initiative, which targets inclusive business in the agri-food sector, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. In this way, the research can be highly focused on generating solutions to practical problems - such as soy milk shelf life, which was previously only one day - as well as responding to emerging opportunities in the soybean value chain. The development funding helps to ensure that the research findings can be fully utilized by producers.

consortia were advised by PAEPARD to develop a diverse funding portfolio. The idea was for projects to obtain funding from different sources by developing several complementary proposals tailored to the research interests of different donors. This approach has been successfully used by the consortium working in the soybean value chain in Benin (Box 5), and later by non-CRF consortia facilitated but not funded by PAEPARD.

the French President Programme "La France s'engage au Sud" in 2016).

Several consortia who were not successful after one attempt gave up, whereas those persisting and benefiting from advice (mainly during workshops and sometimes from external facilitators) adapted the funding targets to their capacities and often succeeded after 3-4 attempts. This was the case for the Ghana-citrus and the Togo-pepper consortia, receiving funds from FARA (SSA Challenge Programme) and the Africa-Brazil Marketplace programme, respectively.

A real momentum in success was observed, with more efforts, conviction and willingness to partner again after a first granted proposal, whatever the amount, than after a failure, whatever the reason. The leader of the *Trichoderma* consortium in Burkina Faso started with very limited support (from the UN-Environment Programme in 2012) and accumulated year after year subsidies and awards (e.g., 42 000 € from

The national impact of these successes was important for the visibility of the consortium of course, and for the influence it had on policy makers (in Ghana, in particular, the citrus value chain received much more attention from the government).

Consortium on African indigenous fruit and vegetables in Uganda (Box 4), gave more visibility and reliability to the actors (often women) of this informal value chain through Africa, and stimulated intra-Africa exchange of knowledge.



Recommendations as conclusion

PAEPARD has clearly shown that multi-stakeholder partnerships require more time to develop trust between participating stakeholders and access the necessary funds than is normally expected by competitive funding mechanisms.

The establishment of such partnerships usually requires some financial support to allow partners to meet and clarify their objectives, roles and responsibilities. PAEPARD has responded to this need as a brokerage body by introducing the ULP approach and giving support to consortia in the form of capacity strengthening via workshops, writeshops and exchange visits.

As a result, although only a few suitable competitive funding calls were issued between 2010 and 2017, PAEPARD consortia have been successful in obtaining more and more grants per year, with 34 funded proposals out of a total of 88 submissions during this period.

The total funds mobilized through applications responding to open calls amount to 36,709,844€. This includes the consortia facilitated by PAEPARD and a few related partners as well (African universities).

The CRF projects supported by PAEPARD are already generating research outputs that are benefitting rural households demonstrating that user-led multi-stakeholder partnerships can deliver developmental impact. Nevertheless, certain challenges remain, including:

- A mismatch between the priorities of many funding agencies and those of research users;
- The prevalence of short-term projects rather than long-term programmes, and inadequate resource provisions for multi-stakeholder partnerships;
- The limited time between the launching of calls and the submission deadline, which does not allow a sufficient period for preparing solid proposals;
- The difficulty in engaging European partners in ARD initiatives in Africa, mainly due to funding constraints and a lack of alignment in incentive structures.

PAEPARD has engaged with national and international agencies that fund agricultural research to make a case for greater use of multi-stakeholder demand-led approaches⁶.

Unfortunately, the number of research programmes that fully embrace these approaches remains limited, but this may change as evidence of the benefits they bring increases.

PAEPARD will therefore continue to advocate for wider adoption of the multi-stakeholder approach and the positive results arising from all the consortia will be documented and used as evidence to support the argument. Meanwhile, based on the experience of PAEPARD consortia, **the following recommendations are made:**

1. Before an ARD programme is launched, funding agencies should engage in a **consultation process** with a wide range of stakeholders to establish shared research priorities. Face-to-face meetings may be combined with an online consultation to make the process as inclusive as possible.

2. Funding agencies should consider the use of **open funds** rather than time-restricted calls for proposals. Multi-stakeholder partnerships should be encouraged and research users should be fully engaged in the development of ARD proposals.

3. A staggered process should be used to allow partnerships to be consolidated and research ideas confirmed. An initial expression of interest may serve to identify consortia that meet agreed criteria. Resources may then be allocated to enable consortia to develop a concept note and, if the concept note is assessed favourably, to prepare a proposal.

4. Inception workshops and writeshops are an effective means of supporting consortia to develop strong proposals during a staggered funding process. Although these carry costs, there is a net benefit through the preparation of high quality proposals that are likely to achieve success.

5. European funding agencies should allocate **sufficient resources to allow researchers from Europe** to participate effectively in the proposal development process for Africa-Europe ARD partnerships.



⁶ See the 2017 publication on PAEPARD communication: *The journey from an information platform to a knowledge management system.* Available at: <http://paepard.org/wakka.php?wiki=PublicationsPaepard/download&file=RapportCommunicationEN.pdf>



PAEPARD supported Africa-Europe partnerships invested resources and capacities (informal, local and often women's markets) in innovation where public research seldom does. (See photo for leafy vegetables in Benin).

Photo credit: GlobalHort.



PAEPARD



The Platform for Africa-Europe Partnership in Agricultural Research for Development (**PAEPARD**) is a 8-year project sponsored by the European Commission (80%) and partners' own contribution (20%).

It is coordinated by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (**FARA**) since December 2009, and extended until end of 2017.

It aims at building joint African-European multi-stakeholder partnerships in agricultural research for development (**ARD**) contributing to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. On the European side, the partners are **AGRINATURA** (The European Alliance on Agriculture Knowledge for Development, coordinating the European partners), **COLEACP** (representing the private sector), **CSA** (representing the NGOs), **ICRA**, specialized in capacity building in ARD, and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (**CTA**). On the African side and in addition to FARA, the partners are the Pan-African Farmers Organization (**PAFO**), the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (**RUFORUM**) based in Kampala, and the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (**FANRPAN**) based in Pretoria. PAFO involves its members that are the Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (**EAFF**) based in Nairobi, the Réseaux des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs d'Afrique de l'Ouest (**ROPPA**) based in Ouagadougou, and the Plate-forme Régionale des Organisations Paysannes d'Afrique Centrale (**PROPAC**) based in Yaoundé. The Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (**SACAU**) is an associate partner of **PAEPARD**.



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