




Establishing and strengthening of AFAAS Country Forums

Guidelines



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**Establishing and strengthening of
AFAAS Country Forums**
Guidelines

First edition



African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services

Plot 22A, Nakasero Road, PO Box 25235
Kampala, Uganda

2011

Citation: AFAAS. 2011. *Establishing and strengthening of AFAAS Country Forums: Guidelines*. AFAAS, Kampala, Uganda and FARA, Accra, Ghana.

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ISBN 978-9988-1-0234-0 (print)

ISBN 978-9988-1-1069-7 (pdf)

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Acknowledgements

These *Guidelines for establishing and strengthening AFAAS Country Forums* were developed in a process that involved a large number of people devoted to the cause of strengthening agricultural advisory services in Africa through establishing the AFAAS network throughout the continent.

Throughout the process, the consultant worked hand-in-hand with Max Oluput, technical assistant at the AFAAS secretariat, who provided important and extremely valuable support both in the form of logistical support for the coordination of consultants and AFAAS focal points in the six countries in which the guidelines were tested, and through ‘sparring’ and good discussions over technical aspects of the assignment.

Dan Kisauzi, the management consultant, provided important technical backstopping and supervision in the process.

Without the collaboration with the members of the team – Juliet Sentumbwe, Uganda; Mary Sheto, Tanzania; Monica Mueni, Kenya; Ismail Moumouni, Benin; and David Sam Suale, Sierra Leone – the development and testing of the guidelines would not have been possible. Despite time pressures, they all worked hard to test the guidelines in their countries and provided valuable input during the reflection workshop, where the experiences were shared.

Moreover, a large number of people have been active in the countries. Important Focal Points have been: Mary Kamau, Director for Extension in Kenya and her staff in the Department of Agricultural Extension, who kindly hosted the reflection workshop, and Grace Malindi, Director for Extension in Malawi and her staff in Department of Agricultural Extension Services, who effectively facilitated the my fieldwork testing in Malawi. Several other Focal Points supported the work in the countries – including Adolphus Johnson, Sierra Leone; Cornelia Mankota, Tanzania; and Davo Vodouhe Simplicie, Benin, to mention just a few.

Additionally, Valerie Mbombe Saibu, Cameroon; Samson Lemma, Ethiopia; John Mwaniki, Kenya; Petra-Saghir Abdulsalam, Nigeria; and Angeliqwe Uwimana, Rwanda all participated in the reflection workshop and provided valuable input from the perspectives of the agricultural advisory services in their respective countries.



1. Introduction

The African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS) is the umbrella organisation for agricultural advisory services (AAS) in Africa. Its objective is to create efficient, effective and synergistic linkages and partnerships among AAS of member countries to improve the delivery of these services to farmers. It operates within the framework of Pillar IV of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), which is spearheaded by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA). Hence, FARA is supporting the institutional development of AFAAS.

AFAAS is developing its institution through setting up a secretariat in Kampala, Uganda, and will operate via a network of Country Forums (CFs). The CFs bring together a wide range of actors involved in or benefitting from AAS in the member countries. They provide a mechanism for the diverse actors – including farmers – to exchange information, share lessons, and identify opportunities for providing services to each other and innovating on how to provide advisory services in their domains of work. The role of AFAAS is to facilitate the CFs in the various countries in aligning their AAS strategies and programmes with the AFAAS Strategic Plan.

The present *Guidelines for Establishing and Strengthening AFAAS Country Forums* are intended to provide AAS stakeholders in African countries with advice and ideas to how they can establish their own collaboration networks to improve and strengthen the role of AAS in their countries and how they can link this to the AFAAS continental network as an AFAAS CF.

The guidelines have been developed collaboratively by the AFAAS secretariat and six countries (Benin, Kenya, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda) and have been tested in these countries. This was done through a process of consultation: draft guidelines for awareness creation and mobilisation of stakeholders, institutional assessment, and setting up of a CF with a strategic plan were tested in the countries by consultants in collaboration with national Focal Points. A reflection workshop was then conducted to share the experiences of the testing, and the guidelines were refined in the light of the lessons learned.

The guidelines are not intended to provide an exact format for the Country Forum. Rather, they provide guidance on how the process can be facilitated to engage AAS stakeholders in a country and establish a CF that can function effectively in bringing actors together to improve and strengthen AAS in the country, as well as linking to other AAS stakeholders in other countries in Africa, and thereby becoming the institutional foundation of AFAAS.



2. AFAAS and FAAP principles

As AFAAS operates within the framework of Pillar IV of the CAADP, it is aligning its strategy and activities with the principles for agricultural research and extension laid out in the Framework for African Agricultural Productivity (FAAP).

The aim of FAAP is to support the CAADP objective of a 6 percent growth rate in agriculture. This will require a growth rate of 4.4 percent in productivity of the sector in Africa. In order for efforts to be successful in achieving this rate of growth, both effective technology generation and effective AAS are crucial. Moreover, experiences throughout Africa show that the effectiveness of these will depend on the relevance and responsiveness of these AAS to the needs of the agricultural sector, farmers and agribusinesses (FARA 2006).

At present, the needs of farmers and agribusinesses are not sufficiently driving the AAS, causing lack of relevance and impact in the sector. Therefore, FAAP provides a framework for change (evolution and reform) of agricultural institutions and services. In order to increase the effectiveness of AAS, these change processes should reflect the following principles.

FAAP guiding principles

1. **Empowerment of end-users:** to ensure meaningful participation of end-users in setting priorities and work programmes for research, extension and training to ensure their relevance.
2. **Planned subsidiarity:** to give responsibility and control over resources for agricultural research, extension and training activities to the lowest appropriate level of aggregation (local, national and subregional).
3. **Pluralism in the delivery:** of agricultural research, extension and training services, so that diverse skills and strengths of a broad range of service providers (eg, universities, NGOs, public and private sectors) can contribute to publicly supported agricultural productivity operations.
4. **Evidence-based approaches to AAS:** with emphasis on data analysis, including economic factors and market orientation in policy development, priority setting and strategic planning for agricultural research, extension and training.
5. **Integration of AAS with research, the private sector, training, capacity building and education programmes:** to respond in a holistic manner to the needs and opportunities for innovation in the sector.
6. **Explicit incorporation of sustainability criteria:** in evaluation of public investments in agricultural productivity and innovation programme (fiscal, economic, social and environmental).
7. **Systematic utilisation of improved management information systems:** in particular for planning, financial management, reporting, and monitoring and evaluation.
8. **Introduction of cost sharing with end-users:** according to their capacity to pay, to increase their stake of efficiency of service provision and to improve financial sustainability.
9. **Integration of gender considerations at all levels:** including farmers and farmer organisations, the private sector, public institutions, researchers and extension staff.

Source: FARA (2006).

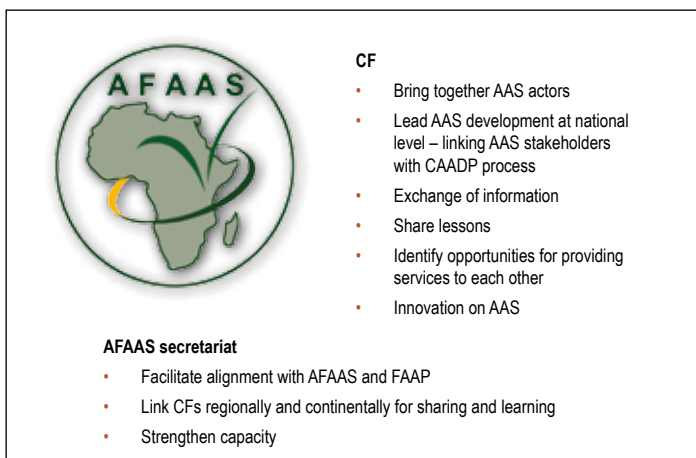
3. Country Forums are the foundation for AFAAS

The foundation for AFAAS is a network of CFs. These bring together a wide range of actors involved in or benefitting from AAS in the member countries. AFAAS is expected to act and function primarily on the basis of demand from the CFs.

The aim of the CF is to provide a mechanism for the diverse actors – including farmers – to exchange information, share lessons, identify opportunities for providing services to each other, and for innovating on how to provide effective advisory services in their domains of work. It is envisioned that the CF will evolve to provide leadership to the overall development of effective AAS in the country. This means, for example, providing a voice for AAS in the CAADP processes, such as providing policy inputs to the development of CAADP Compact development. It is therefore crucial that CF participants represent the stakeholders in a fair and transparent way.

The role of the AFAAS secretariat in relation to the CFs is to help the CFs to align their AAS strategies and programmes with the AFAAS Strategic Plan and to assist in strengthening the capacity of the AAS stakeholders to lead AAS development at country level – for example, by facilitating the engagement of the CF in the CAADP processes. This is to be achieved by linking the CFs both subregionally and continentally.

Figure 1: AFAAS and the role of Country Forums (CFs)





4. Definition of agricultural advisory services

According to the background paper for the establishment of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) (Christoplos 2010), AAS are synonymous with agricultural extension and the term is used for: ‘All the different activities that provide the information and services that are needed and demanded by farmers and other actors in agri-food systems and rural development.’ The term ‘extension’ is, however, often seen as an old fashioned term related to one-way technology transfer. Therefore, the present guidelines use the term ‘agricultural advisory services’ (AAS) throughout.

AAS are here defined as ‘systems that should facilitate the access of farmers, their organisations and other market actors to knowledge, information and technologies; facilitate their interaction with research, education, agribusiness and other relevant institutions; and assist them to develop their own technical, organisational and management skills and practises’.

AAS may include services such as:

- Dissemination of information
- Training and advice for individual farmers, groups of farmers, farmer organisations and other agribusinesses
- Testing and practical adaptation of new technologies on farm
- Development and dissemination of business management tools for farmers and local entrepreneurs
- Facilitation of linkages to market actors (financial and non-financial inputs, market channels, etc.)
- Facilitation of linkages with the public sector and government
- Support to institutions’ building processes (development of informal and formal farmer organisations at different levels)
- Legal and fiscal advice regarding contracts, financing and rights to productive resources.



5. Approach and methods in the establishment of Country Forums

The establishment of a CF is a process that should seek to use the following approaches.

- Aligning to FAAP principles
- Facilitation and capacity building at the centre
- Facilitative process to strengthen existing interests and initiatives in terms of creating networks and links among AAS partners
- Anchoring in the particular countries and partner organisations
- Facilitating the identification of existing structures for networking in the countries
- Change processes for future development and learning in the networks and among the partners through the use of appropriate frameworks and methodologies, such as Outcome Mapping.

It is important that the CFs become lead agents in the change processes by aligning both their establishment and their activities to the FAAP principles. The FAAP principles therefore function as a backbone for the assessment of organisations and platforms that may be involved in the establishment of the CF, as well as for the strategies and activities of the CFs themselves.

Following the principle of subsidiarity, the CFs are autonomous bodies for the country stakeholders and led by the country stakeholders. Therefore, there is no common recipe for exactly how they will be composed, hosted, funded or led. However, as they are linked to AFAAS as network partners they must align to AFAAS objectives and FAAP principles. The most critical issues are that:

- The CF is functional – ie, AAS actors are motivated to collaborate, cross-learn and link to capacity-building opportunities
- The CF represents the stakeholders
- The stakeholders can accept the hosting and leadership arrangements
- Financial sustainability is built into the concept.

AFAAS will not set up CFs as an external agent, but rely on identification of existing networks or relationships of AAS stakeholders that have the basic features to be or become a CF or drive the process of creating a new network. It is crucial for the sustainability of the initiative (ie, AFAAS and CFs) that CFs are sufficiently anchored in the institutions of their countries and that the countries take ownership of them. The stakeholders involved should have genuine interest in this and the nexus of their relationship should be shared added value to their activities.



6. The steps in the process

The process of engaging with AAS stakeholders in a country and facilitating the emergence of a CF is expected to consist of the following steps:

- Interest expressed from AAS stakeholders in the country to engage with AFAAS
- Sensitising and awareness raising among all stakeholders
- Assessing organisational and institutional status of AAS stakeholders
- Identifying an existing entity to become the CF or setting up a new entity if no appropriate organisation exists
- Facilitating the process of establishing a CF
- Facilitating the CF to develop a strategic plan
- Validating the CF strategic plan with national stakeholders
- Facilitating a CF that has a strategic plan to develop an operational plan.

AFAAS already has a number of member countries in which it has had some engagement. The exact starting point for engaging will depend on the actual interest among the AAS stakeholders in the countries and the stage of development that the relationship has already reached.

Table 1 provides an overview of the steps, actions and outputs in the process of establishing the CF.

Table 1: Overview of steps and actions for establishing a Country Forum

Step	Actions	Outputs
Interest expressed		
Sensitisation and awareness	Identify Focal Points	Focal Points to start leading the process
	Disseminate information on AFAAS	Awareness of AFAAS
	Consult with stakeholders	Confirmation of interest from stakeholders
Assessment of organisational and institutional status	AAS stakeholder analysis	Map of AAS stakeholders
	AAS system analysis	Overview of achievements and challenges in AAS with regard to FAAP principles
	Identify collaboration platform	Possible entry point(s)
Assessment of entry points	Consult and assess according to AFAAS objectives and networking capability	Decision of whether to develop an existing entity into a CF or to create a new entity

Step	Actions	Outputs
Establishment of a CF	National workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expected added value of the CF • Main objectives • Representation of stakeholders • Roles and responsibilities of participants • Hosting arrangement • Legal status of the CF • Leadership options
	Establishment meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership established • Operational guidelines for functions and communication • Plan for charter • Plan for the next steps: strategic planning and operational planning
Facilitate development of strategic plan	Strategic-planning workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision and mission defined • Participating stakeholders defined • Strategic partners defined • Desired outcomes defined • Progress markers defined • Strategy map • Organisational practices defined
	Develop the strategic plan	Strategic plan
	Validation of strategic plan	Strategic plan endorsed

The following sections provide guidance on how to engage and facilitate all the steps in the processes. The guidelines have been developed in the framework of the AFAAS objectives and the FAAP principles. For each step, the guidelines describe the actions to be taken and how the FAAP principles are applied practically in the process.



7. Sensitisation and awareness raising among stakeholders

It is important for the cohesion in the engagement with AFAAS that *all* the AAS stakeholders in the countries are aware of the objectives of AFAAS and have a basic understanding of the FAAP principles for advisory services. When interest has been expressed by a country's AAS stakeholders to engage with AFAAS, AFAAS will, as far as the human resources of the secretariat allow, assist in the sensitisation and awareness raising among all stakeholders. The process will consist of the following actions:

1. Identify country Focal Points
2. Disseminate information on AFAAS objectives and principles
3. Consult with key stakeholders about their interest in and need for a CF.

Methods

- Dissemination of information
- Consultative interviews with stakeholders
- National stakeholder sensitisation workshop.

Focal Points for the country are volunteering professionals in key AAS organisations with strong competencies in advisory services and a keen interest in establishing the attachment to AFAAS through developing a Country Forum.

Country Focal Points

Who are they?

- Volunteering professionals in key national AAS organisations
- Have strong competencies in AAS
- Have and express strong interest in establishing attachment to AFAAS through development of the CF
- Will be appointed by the other stakeholders in the country

What are their roles?

- Lead the establishment of AFAAS CF in the country
- Be the contact points for AFAAS and its Secretariat

The Focal Points will be the contacts for AFAAS and its secretariat in the process and will lead the process of establishing the CF. When the process has been initiated and more Focal Points are present, it could be relevant for the interested stakeholders to appoint an **interim steering committee** to lead the process further towards full establishment of the CF. The interim steering committee will then take over the roles of the Focal Points.



8. Assessment of organisational and institutional status of AAS stakeholders

The institutional assessment provides a brief situation analysis of the AAS in the country. The assessment will identify the stakeholders and collaboration platforms, and also provide the achievements and challenges of AAS provision in the country in relation to the FAAP principles, which will be the starting point for identifying focus areas for the CF and later developing a strategic plan.

The assessment includes three main actions:

1. Conducting an AAS stakeholder analysis
2. Conducting an AAS system analysis
3. Identifying a collaboration platform that can serve as an entry point for CF establishment.

Methods

- Review of key documents
- Consultation with a wide range of interested stakeholders/persons in the country (questionnaire)

The methods will be a combination of desk review of key documents, such as policy and strategic documents from the different stakeholders, consultations and eventually questionnaires.¹

8.1 Stakeholder analysis

Stakeholders in AAS comprise *all* who have an interest in AAS, not just AAS providers. For example, those directly involved, such as providers of the AAS along the different value-chain services, and the direct or potential users or clients. There are also farmer organisations, agribusiness companies and ministries of agriculture that have an interest in AAS, along with government policy makers do and the private sector.

Who are the stakeholders in AAS?

- AAS providers and agencies²
- Ministries of agriculture (and related ministries)
- Farmer organisations and commodity associations

1. It should be noted that the questionnaire can be used alone, but experience shows that getting responses from such assessments is mixed and the rates of responses are often very low.

2. According to the definition of AAS in section 3, this is a diverse group of agencies and individual providers.

- Civil society groups
- Private agribusiness firms that provide AAS
- Agricultural research institutions
- Agricultural extension education institutions
- End-users (farmers, pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and agribusinesses)
- Professional associations
- Mass-media organisations involved in the dissemination of agricultural information
- Microfinance institutions and banks
- Development partners
- Policy makers.

The stakeholder analysis should identify the main actors in each group of stakeholders and describe their roles, responsibilities and interests with respect to AAS.

Not all the stakeholders have the same interest in AAS and some of the interests may even be conflicting. Many of the actors are competitors on the AAS market and the analysis should therefore also identify collaboration platforms among the groups of stakeholders that can represent the particular group and give the group a voice in the CF. One or more of these collaboration platforms may have the potential to evolve into a CF or driver of the establishment of the CF.

Table 2 is an example matrix for analysing the stakeholders in AAS. Group the stakeholders according to the list above and list the key actors, ie, the organisations and institutions representing the different groups of stakeholders. Then describe the key actors' roles and responsibilities in AAS and list eventual collaboration platforms among the actors.

Table 2: AAS stakeholder analysis

Stakeholder group	Key actors	Role and responsibility	Collaboration platform

Note: Add as many rows as necessary.

8.2 AAS system analysis

The system analysis should assess how the overall system of AAS provision in the country relates to the FAAP principles. This will later be a valuable background for the CF to establish its strategic plan for collaboration and developing AAS in the country aligned to the FAAP principles.

Methods

- Review of key documents
- Consultation with main actors
- Survey of the AAS stakeholders (questionnaire).

Table 3 lists the questions that can be asked in order to assess the compliance of the AAS system with the nine FAAP principles.

Table 3: Assessment of AAS system

FAAP principle	Related questions
Empowerment of end-users	Are there mechanisms for end-users to influence the services? What are these mechanisms?
Subsidiarity	At which level are the decisions on planning of services made?
Pluralism in the delivery of AAS	Do the policies and practises enable pluralistic delivery of AAS?
Evidence-based approaches to AAS	Are there mechanisms for collecting evidence and lessons learned concerning the used approaches and feeding this into further development of these – eg, monitoring and evaluation systems for learning?
Integration of AAS with research, the private sector, training, capacity building, and education programmes	What are the mechanisms for integrating AAS with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research • Private sector • Training/capacity building/education?
Explicit incorporation of sustainability criteria	What are the sustainability issues related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional sustainability • Financial sustainability • Human capacity?
Systematic utilisation of improved management information systems	Are any improved management information systems being used?
Introduction of cost sharing with end-users	Are any of the AAS providers using user payment or cost sharing with the end-users?
Integration of gender considerations at all levels	Are there policies for gender consideration in the AAS – in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeting users • Recruitment of staff • Content of services? • Practices of services?

This step should include an assessment of what, from the stakeholders' viewpoints, there is to be gained from establishing or developing a CF (what will be the added value?).

To illustrate what could potentially be seen as added value from a CF, the box below lists the added values as it was perceived by AAS stakeholders during a consultation conducted in 2008 by Neuchâtel Initiative, FARA, AFAAS and four subregional farmer federations in five African countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Malawi and Uganda) (AFAAS-FARA *et al.* 2008).

List of possible added values of Country Forums

- Enable coordination of national activities
- Provide a forum for shared learning
- Provide a forum for strengthened lobbying and advocacy for AAS investments
- Connect the stakeholders beyond the national level to other organisations on the continent.

Source: AFAAS-FARA *et al.* (2008).

The assessment should conclude with:

- The main achievements and challenges with regard to aligning with FAAP principles
- The expected added value from establishing a CF
- Identification of eventual entity to develop into a CF or spearhead the process of its establishment.

Some countries have not yet entered change or reform processes to develop towards the FAAP principles; others are at different stages in a reform process. No matter where in this process the country or the organisations are, there are always challenges in implementing the changes/reform. For the assessment to be useful for the future planning for the CF, it is important that the assessment not only describes the policies and intentions on AAS, but also spells out the actual achievements and the challenges of implementation, because these provide the rationale for establishing the CF with a focus on sharing and learning to improve the AAS system.

9. Identification of existing entity to become Country Forum or setting up a new entity

9.1 Assessment of existing entities

From the existing collaboration platforms identified (section 8.1), the broadest and most relevant should be assessed using the following criteria and questions (Table 4). Based on this and on general agreement among the stakeholders, the most promising platform should be recommended.

Methods

- Awareness raising of AFAAS and FAAP principles among the stakeholders
- Consultation with the stakeholders as well as the direct participants.

Table 4 defines important criteria for assessing a good and effective network for collaboration on AAS, and the related questions that can be used to assess these criteria.

Table 4 should also be used in assessing existing CFs in order to define areas for strengthening them.

Table 4: CF assessment criteria and questions

Assessment criterion ³	Questions
Genuine ownership by participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the entity active in pursuing its objectives? • Who are the 'drivers' of the activities?
Involvement of all stakeholders and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there stakeholder groups represented among the participants (see above)? • How is participant accountability to the group of stakeholders that they represent ensured?⁴
Legal recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the legal status of the entity?
Objectives matching or complementing AFAAS objectives for the CF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the objectives of the entity match with and/or complement the AFAAS objectives for the CF?
Partnership and alliances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the entity have other partnerships or alliances? • How do they match with or complement an eventual partnership with AFAAS? • Are there gaps – potential partners or alliances that could strengthen the efforts?

3. The criteria are adapted and developed from different sources on network organisations, among others, Sluijs-Doyle (2009).

4. It should be noted that some of the AAS organisations are competitors in the service market. There must therefore be clear procedures for how the participating organisations represent the stakeholder group that they belong to.

Leadership recognised and accepted among AAS stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who leads the entity (person / organisation)? What is the mandate of the lead person or organisation in relation to the AFAAS objectives for the CF?
Required knowledge and skills available	<p>What are the knowledge and skills required to address the objectives of a CF?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do the participants have these knowledge and skills? Can the entity be complemented with participants who can fill gaps in knowledge and skills?
Internal communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the entity have functional, effective and regular lines of internal communication?
Outcomes and external communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the entity keep track of outcomes and does it have procedures for external communication of these?
Management and finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the entity have an effective system for management of activities and finances?
Institutional and financial sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the entity hosted? How are the activities funded? Are there mechanisms in place to secure financial sustainability? What are they?

Genuine ownership

According to the AFAAS constitution and strategy, the CF is the backbone of the institution and all the AFAAS activities that support the CF should be driven by demand from the countries. It is therefore crucial for the function of a CF as a part of the AFAAS network that the ownership is established genuinely in the countries and that the drivers of the activities are the participants in the CF and not outside drivers such as AFAAS secretariat or external development partners.

Involvement of stakeholders and accountability

Aligning with the FAAP principles means working towards pluralism in the delivery of AAS. This must be well and effectively reflected in the involvement of stakeholders in the CF in such a way that all the stakeholders participate equally and fairly. It is often a particular challenge to secure fair representation of NGOs and private enterprises in the cooperation. The extent to which this challenge is addressed in a proper way should be carefully assessed. The participation should reflect the aim of integrating AAS with research, private sector, training, capacity building and education programmes, so that organisations representing these are involved as participants.

Another FAAP principle is the empowerment of end-users. This also needs to be reflected in the involvement of stakeholders. End-users are the farmers or agribusinesses using the services. They should be involved as participants through farmer or commodity organisations or relevant business associations.

Legal recognition

The level of legal recognition required depends on the functions that the CF is expected to perform. The networking function alone does not necessarily require a formal and officially recognised organisation. It can, for example, be hosted by an organisation that is capable of providing secretarial services and managing funds on its behalf. However, if the CF is expected

to have its own financing mechanism, manage participants' contributions, receive external funding, etc., it will need to be officially registered, for example, as an NGO.

It should be considered how and what is required to be officially recognised as an entity to give an official voice to AAS stakeholders in the country's processes of developing CAADP Country Compacts, as well as in the prioritisation and planning processes related to this.

Objectives

From AFAAS, the objectives of the CF are the following:

- To lead the development of AAS in the country
- To reflect and learn about how to improve AAS provision within an agricultural innovation system
- To act as the country CAADP-implementing organ in linking with AAS stakeholders.

It should be noted that the entity identified will most likely have its own agenda with corresponding objectives, which needs to be respected in order to ensure full ownership and interest from the participants. An important question is: to what extent do the objectives of the entity fit and/or complement the AFAAS-formulated objectives for a CF?

Partnerships and alliances

For the CF to be effective, it is important that it is appropriately connected to other networks and initiatives with overlapping or complementary objectives that can strengthen the national efforts in providing effective AAS. The CF's partnerships and alliances should therefore be examined. How do these match with or complement the partnership with AFAAS? Eventual gaps in partnership and alliances, which could potentially strengthen the efforts, should be identified.

Leadership and hosting

It is important that the entity has a clear and effective leadership (eg, an executive committee), and that this is recognised and accepted among all the stakeholders in such a way that all have confidence in the CF serving their interests.

Lack of trust between stakeholders is a common constraint and should not be taken lightly, but be dealt with appropriately. For example, there can be several advantages of the CF being led by a government institution in terms of capacity for hosting, financing of activities, financial management, etc. On the other hand, in doing so, NGOs and private-sector actors may fear that the aim of establishing the CF is more for control than for their actual benefit, and this may severely affect their interest in participating. Sometimes the placement of hosting and/or leadership outside government institutions (as an independent institution or, eg, hosted with a national farmer organisation) can enable stronger participation from the private sector.

Knowledge and skills

Regarding the knowledge and skills required, it may be necessary to define this more precisely later. But for now a suggestion would be:

- Knowledge of AFAAS objectives and FAAP principles for AAS
- Knowledge about new trends and modern approaches to AAS provision
- Knowledge regarding the New Partnership for Africa's Development's (NEPAD's) agenda and the CAADP process for agricultural development
- Skills for facilitation of stakeholder dialogue at national level
- Learning attitude to improve AAS provision within an agricultural innovation system.

Internal communication

As sharing of experiences and information and giving voice to the AAS stakeholders are major objectives, it is crucial that the entity has effective, functional and regular lines of internal communication.

Outcomes and external communication

For the sake of ensuring that learning processes are integrated in the concept of both CF and AFAAS, it is important that the CF keeps track of how it progresses in terms of achieving expected and desired outcomes, and also that it has a way of communicating this externally – most particularly through the continental network AFAAS.

Management and finance

It is important that the entity has an effective system for management of activities as well as the finances.

Institutional and financial sustainability

The sustainability of the CF will depend on several factors, of which the motivation and interest from the stakeholders and the added value that they see in it are probably the most important for keeping it alive.

Appropriate hosting and financing are other important factors, so it should be considered how financial sustainability is ensured. If the CF is only relying on external project- or activity-related funding, the initiative is likely to function only periodically and very *ad hoc* – and will not be to the full benefit of the stakeholders. Therefore, a mechanism should be considered to secure a level of institutional funds. A promising avenue could be that the participants contribute through membership, subscription and/or registration fees. This would at the same time raise the level of ownership and expectations of results from the collaboration.

When a strategic plan for the CF is ready, the executive committee should be responsible for developing proposals and concept notes to raise funds for the activities. It is hoped that AFAAS secretariat will be able to use its continental and global network to support the CF by leveraging funding for some of the proposals from the CFs.

Conclusion

The assessment should conclude with describing the main strengths and challenges of the potential entity (or the CF) in relation to the assessment criteria, as well as the acceptability

of the selection to all the stakeholders. The conclusion should provide recommendations for the way forward – eg, what will need further development; reorientation or widening of membership – in order for the entity to develop towards an AFAAS Country Forum or for strengthening the CF.

9.2 Establishment of a new entity for the Country Forum

If a suitable entity does not already exist – or if it is non-functional – but there is sufficient interest among the stakeholders to continue the process, then the next step is sensitisation among the stakeholders and facilitation of the establishment of a CF. The Focal Points are important for leading this process with the support of AFAAS.

It should be noted that, if there is not sufficient and genuine interest among the national stakeholders to continue the process, the process should **not** proceed.



10. Facilitation of the process of establishing a Country Forum

When the stakeholders in the country have agreed on the process to establish a CF, identified an entity to evolve towards becoming a CF or decided on the establishment of a new collaboration platform, it is relevant to call for a national workshop with as many of the AAS stakeholders as possible represented.

The actions are the following:

- Arrange and facilitate a national workshop for AAS stakeholders
- Arrange and facilitate a establishing or launching meeting

Method

Mobilisation and facilitation of meetings

10.1 National workshop

A national workshop would have the following agenda:

- Awareness raising of AFAAS objectives and capacity building in relation to the FAAP principles
- Establishment of what the stakeholders want from the CF
- Establishment of the objectives of the CF
- Establishment of the composition, roles and responsibilities, including leadership structure and hosting.

The national workshop should be facilitated to discuss and agree on answers to the following questions:

- What is expected to be the added value of the CF to the stakeholders?
- What will be the main objectives of the CF?
- How will the different groups of stakeholders be represented in the CF?
- What will be the roles and responsibilities of the different participants?
- How will the CF be hosted?
- How will the CF and its activities be financed?
- What should the legal status of the CF be?
- Which are the important partners or alliances to the CF?

- Who will lead the CF?
- Are the required skills and knowledge available in the CF? How can they be complemented?

10.2 Establishment meeting

When these issues have been agreed by the stakeholders, the CF should meet for a scoping meeting or workshop. Here it should establish itself, its structure and procedures for functions. This means:

- Establishing leadership (eg, an executive committee), roles and responsibilities
- Drafting operational guidelines for functions and communication (internal and external)
- Discussing the establishment of a charter (can be included in the strategic planning)
- Making a plan for the next steps: strategic planning and operational planning.

In some cases it may be possible to combine the two meetings – the national workshop and the establishment meeting. It should, however, be noted that there may be important advantages in taking enough time to internalise the idea and the CF concept within the stakeholder organisations.



11. Facilitation of a Country Forum to develop a strategic plan

The highest degree of broad ownership of the CF and its strategic plan will be obtained if it is developed in a participatory process involving all the AAS stakeholders. This means that it should be developed in a facilitated workshop, where all the stakeholders are well represented. As a parallel to the AFAAS structure, the CF may call this forum a 'general assembly'.

The strategic planning process should be carefully designed to ensure full participation, as well as an effective change and learning framework. Various methodologies and designs can be chosen from, but the expected role and objectives of the CF indicate a good case for designing the strategic planning within the methodology of Outcome Mapping. First, the mapping of wanted outcomes as changes in behaviour and relationships of stakeholders is highly relevant for the purpose of the CF. Second, the mapping will include mapping of partners and boundary partners. Third, Outcome Mapping is based on principles of participation and fully includes those who will implement the programme in the design, which will suit the purposes of local ownership and anchoring in the participating organisations.

Methods

- Two to three days facilitated workshop with all the involved stakeholders in the CF to develop the strategic plan
- Adapting an appropriate methodology, eg, Outcome Mapping, as process design.

A strategic planning process using an adapted form of the Outcome Mapping methodology⁵ will consist of the following seven actions:

1. Defining the vision and mission of the CF
2. Identifying boundary partners (CF participating stakeholders)
3. Identifying strategic partners (other partners and alliances)
4. Describing outcome challenges for the boundary partners
5. Describing progress markers for the boundary partners
6. Strategy mapping
7. Describing organisational practices.

In this process, it should be remembered that the CF may be developed from an already existing entity which already has its own agenda – vision, mission and objectives. In this case, it is important

5. The methodology is well described by Earl et al. (2001). An important link for this methodology is www.outcomemapping.ca.

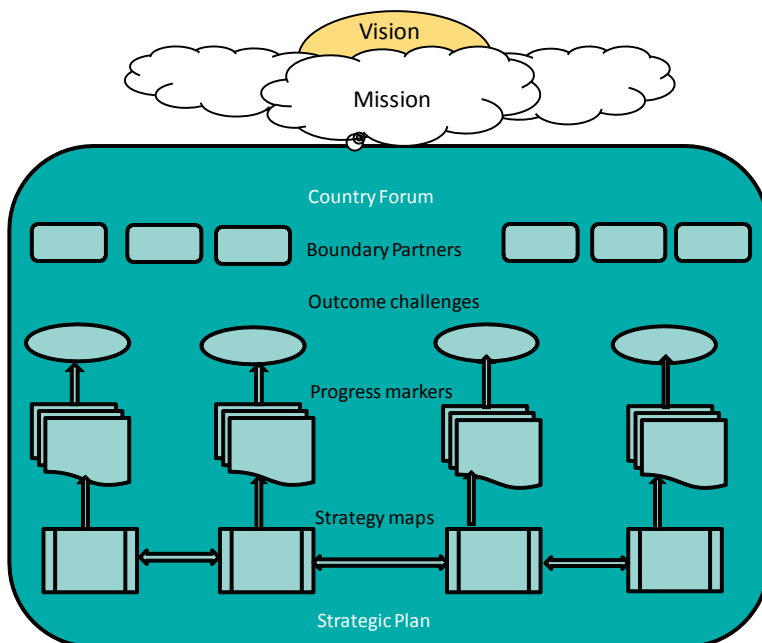


Figure 2. Key elements in strategic planning through Outcome Mapping (after Schulz and Roduner 2010)

that the facilitator designs this process in such a way that it does not hijack the original agenda, but integrates the CF functions with the original goals and objectives of the proposed entity.

11.1 Defining vision and mission statements

The vision statement will define the overall goal of the CF in the bigger picture of the broad improvement of human, social and environmental spheres in which the CF is engaged and to which it will contribute. This is likely to closely follow the vision statement of AFAAS.

The mission statement is that part of the vision statement on which the CF is going to focus. It will define:

1. What the CF will do
2. What the CF's philosophy is
3. What approaches the CF will use
4. The principle collaborators
5. How to work with the collaborators.

The mission statement may also relate to the AFAAS mission statement.

AFAAS vision:

Agricultural advisory services that effectively and efficiently contribute to sustained productivity and profitability growth of African agriculture.

AFAAS mission:

Promotes lesson learning and adds value to initiatives in agricultural advisory services through sharing of information and increased professional interaction.

11.2 Identification of boundary partners

The boundary partners are the partners that the CF is working directly with – ie, the participating stakeholders and the institutions that they represent. The institutional assessment – the stakeholder analysis described in section 8.1 – will form the basis for this part.

11.3 Identification of strategic partners

These are other partners and alliances that the CF collaborates with and which will also contribute to the achievement of the results.

The assessment of the CF described in Table 4 can assist in this part. But it should also be considered whether there are other potential strategic partners that need to be included.

11.4 Describing outcome challenges for the boundary partners

Outcome challenges are the desired changes in behaviour and relationships of people, organisations and institutions.

In this step, the CF participants should map and describe the particular changes in behaviour and relationships between AAS stakeholders that they would like to see as the stakeholders contribute in an ideal way to the CF's vision.

The system analysis described in Table 3 would be a good basis for starting the discussions of the particular challenges that the AAS system is facing in the country.

It is also necessary to describe how the changes are expected to contribute to the vision.

11.5 Describing progress markers

The progress markers are a graduated set of statements that describe how it is expected that the progression of changed behaviours and relations in and between the boundary partners of the CF will be seen. This will be described as changes of actions, activities and relationships that will lead to the desired outcomes.

11.6 Strategy mapping

The next step now is for every progress marker to clarify what the CF and its boundary partners will do, with whom and why in order to achieve the outcomes.

As part of the strategy mapping it is important to prioritise, detect strategy gaps, and adjust to the expected levels of human and financial resources.



12. Validation of the Country Forum strategic plan with national stakeholders

Based on the strategic planning workshop, a strategic plan for the CF will be drafted by the workshop facilitator. At the end of the workshop, the participants can agree that the draft will be distributed to a task force, which will be appointed during the workshop. The task force will review the draft and it will be finalised on the basis of their comments. The executive committee will be given the authority by the stakeholders (eg, the general assembly) to endorse the strategic plan.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AAS	agricultural advisory services
AFAAS	African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme
CF	Country Forum
FAAP	Framework for African Agricultural Productivity
FARA	Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa
GFRAS	Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NI	Neuchâtel Initiative



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AFAAS has the mandate to implement the Agricultural Advisory Services aspects of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) – an Africa-owned and Africa-led initiative through which interventions to transform agriculture are coordinated. The CAADP has four pillars one of which (Pillar IV) addresses agricultural research, technology dissemination and adoption. Leadership of the implementation of this Pillar is mandated to the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA). In this context AFAAS operates under the umbrella of FARA but has its own autonomy and governance structure.