



## **Recommendations from the First ASARECA General Assembly**

The following recommendations from the ASARECA Business committee were presented and adopted by the First ASARECA General Assembly on December 16, 2012 at Imperial Resort Beach Hotel, Entebbe, Uganda:

## Recommendations on Agricultural Development Challenges and Opportunities

1. Science and Technology and Innovation will continue to be the major driver of agricultural development.
  - There is urgent need to increase investment in Science and Technology and Innovation to enable the Eastern and Central Africa (ECA) region cope with the ever-increasing demand for food.
  - Biotechnology in particular is very critical in enhancing agricultural productivity.
  - Advancement in Information Technology (IT) provides greater opportunities for access and use of agricultural knowledge/information.
  - ASARECA and national Governments should increase investment in STI that supports agricultural development.
  
2. Whereas more and relevant technologies are needed to meet the changing needs and contexts, there already exists a large pool of technologies that have not been fully utilized. A major challenge is the uptake and use of available technologies especially by the smallholder farmers. ASARECA therefore should:
  - Increase focus on technology dissemination and scaling-up/out.
  - Support mechanisms and approaches that encourage participation of targeted technology users in the development of the technologies for relevance and easy uptake.
  
3. All countries in the Eastern and Central Africa (ECA) region face similar challenges in agricultural development, and therefore collective action promoted by ASARECA is the most plausible approach for dealing with cross-border constraints. Evidence shows that the returns to investment are much higher when the countries collaborate than when they pursue those constraints independently.
  - ASARECA should, therefore, strengthen the mechanisms for its member countries to tap into existing opportunities (including technological options) to enhance agricultural production and productivity.
  
4. Policies and political commitment are the most critical success/failure factors for advancement and use of Science and Technology and Innovation for agricultural development.

- ASARECA should strengthen its engagement in policy advocacy and dialogue to solicit political will and development of supportive policies for agricultural development. It should also:
  - Create and facilitate platforms for multi-stakeholder engagement in policy dialogue.
  - Facilitate mechanisms for effective coordination of research, extension and training to effectively deliver services to a wide-range of stakeholders in the agricultural sector
  - Lobby for government support to smallholder farmers to access inputs and credit services to invest in more productive technologies and practices.
5. Climate Change induced risks are a major constraint to agriculture, which also increases the vulnerability of the smallholder farmers, however climate change has not been given adequate attention by research and development institutions due to, among other things, limited awareness and lack of relevant policies and institutional arrangements to deal with effects of climate change. ASARECA should make climate change a focal and crosscutting issue in its programmes and projects.
6. To proactively cope with effects of climate change, weather forecast is critical for preparedness of all stakeholders to make rational decision. The Science and ASARECA region lacks systems for collection, collation and storage of reliable weather related data as well as the capacity for analysis and interpretation of that data to aid decision-making. ASARECA should support its member countries to generate reliable data and build the capacity at national and regional levels for dependable weather forecasts to aid decision-making and appropriate responses to climate change.
7. Climate change does not work in isolation, it interacts with other factors that reduce agricultural productivity, hence, it is a multi-faceted phenomenon requiring multiple interventions (including insurance) and commitment of the political leadership. ASARECA should sensitize its members and promote best practices that enhance production, food security and adaptation to effects of climate change.

8. CAADP is the first African initiative and framework of evidence-based agricultural development with clear targets and outcomes. The pace of progress in the CAADP process by different countries is dependent on the political will and commitment, thereby underscoring the importance of governance in agricultural development. ASARECA therefore should strengthen its collaboration with Regional Economic Communities to influence political support to the CAADP process.
  
9. By taking on leadership of the CAADP Pillar IV in the ECA region under the FARA mandate, ASARECA widened its scope of stakeholders to include universities, extension organisations, NGOs, private sector and Farmer Organisations. ASARECA therefore should:
  - Ensure that all these stakeholders fully participate in the CAADP process
  - Use this opportunity to provide directions and guidelines to advance science and technology, particularly biotechnology
  - Use the same framework to engage more with private sector to develop the agricultural value chain.
  - Widen the capacity building support to all stakeholder categories to contribute more to agricultural development.
  - Adopt English and French as official languages to enable the various stakeholders interact and communicate more effectively to learn from each other.
  
10. Volatile food prices are a major threat to the rapidly increasing population in the ECA region. In addition to increasing agricultural production and productivity, there is need to increase efforts for regional market integration and trade, remove of non-tariff trade barriers, develop infrastructure (e.g. roads) to enhance access to markets and trade within the countries.

## Recommendations on National and Regional Institutions Perspectives

### A: Way Forward for Supporting Farmers and their Organisations

1. Farmer Organisations are critical to enhancing competitiveness of small-holder farmers in a market-oriented economy. Currently Farmer Organisations are

focussing more on production/productivity and less on post-production activities. ASARECA should assist Farmer Organisations to:

- Build their capacity to engage in post-production activities in the value chain e.g. value addition, marketing and enterprise development
  - Provide knowledge and information to enable Farmer Organisations and their partners to solicit and/or access support services such as credit, advisory services, and market information access.
2. For effectiveness, Farmer Organisations should be empowered to initiate, undertake and sustain their development agenda. ASARECA should therefore support and nurture Farmer Organisations to:
- Mobilise membership and manage their organisations in an accountable manner
  - Lobby, advocate and influence policies (such as land reforms) that favour investment in their development plans including agricultural technologies
  - Create a platform for knowledge management including indigenous knowledge and information sharing to promote continuous learning and adaptation among the different stakeholders.
  - Articulate and pursue their needs and priorities
  - Network and build partnerships with other stakeholders including research and training institutions as well private business entrepreneurs
  - Monitor and evaluate programmes, projects and policies that contribute to livelihoods and food security
  - Enhance the entrepreneurial capacity of Farmer Organisations and their partners including record keeping, business planning, etc.
3. Knowledge and information are increasingly becoming more critical in agricultural production and agri-business. However, farmers have limited access to relevant knowledge and information. ASARECA should support innovative approaches for information and knowledge flows between farmers and other service providers. Due to diversity of farmers, multiple approaches to dissemination of information and technologies should be encouraged including the use of electronic media such as radio, TV, mobile phones and internet.

4. Sustainability of the FOs lies in their ability to provide relevant services to their members including access to low-cost and low-risk technologies for increased productivity. ASARECA should support FOs and their partners to develop systems that guarantee access and utilisation of productivity enhancing technologies such as improved seed and agro-inputs.

## **B: Way Forward and Recommendations for Strengthening Extension**

1. Technology is not the most limiting factor to increased agricultural production and productivity. Many proven technologies are available but the problem is limited uptake and utilisation of the available technologies. Therefore, ASARECA should:
  - Commission studies to understand the underlying bottlenecks to technology adoption
  - Review and critique the extension approaches and their relevance in different contexts
  - Take an inventory of the existing proven technologies and invest more in technology promotion and scaling-up/out to ensure sustainable food security and income.
  - Contribute to building the capacity of pluralistic extension services delivery system encompassing public, private and farmer-based extension.
2. There is a communicative gap between technology generation and technology users. ASARECA should support initiatives that foster partnerships and closer collaboration between research/training and extension service providers including Farmer Organisations NGOs, private sector organisations and civil society to better serve the farming community. ASARECA should also widen its scope of capacity building to include extension.

## **C: Way Forward and Recommendations for Supporting NGOs**

1. There are diverse NGOs with varying levels of engagement in agricultural related activities. ASARECA should encourage and support inventory of genuine NGOs that play a supportive role to ASARECA's functions and create platforms for their networking and partnerships with research/training institutes.
2. Professional associations in agriculture are not registered as NGOs and therefore have no framework for working with ASARECA. ASARECA should broaden its

“concept of NGOs” to civil society organizations in order to embrace and or tap into the contribution of professional associations in agriculture related disciplines

3. NGOs are expected to engage with ASARECA at project level, but at the moment, they are not strongly involved in planning and priority setting, which takes place at the programme level. In addition to representation of NGOs at the Governance Board, ASARECA should enhance the participation of NGOs in programme priority setting
4. To increase the participation of NGOs in ASARECA programmes/projects, there is need to create a window through which NGOs can favourably compete for resources from ASARECA. ASARECA should nurture and enhance the capacity of NGOs to mobilise resources including competing for ARD funds.

#### **D: Way Forward and Recommendations for Supporting the Private Sector and their Strategic Partners**

1. The private sector is key in driving and sustaining innovations along the value chain; however its participation is hampered by unfavourable policies and financial limitations. In order to embrace a holistic value chain support, ASARECA should empower the private sector by;
  - Building the private sector capacity to lobby and advocate for favourable policies (e.g. tax exemptions on agricultural goods and products) and increased access to finance for agriculture
  - Commissioning research into strategic entry points for private sector and farmers that trigger and boost economic transformation within the agricultural subsector.
  - Facilitating innovation systems approach to make value chains in the agricultural sector in the region work and support dialogue/multilogue of the different actors
  - Supporting agribusiness incubation centers in research institutions so that private sector/farmers can learn about how the business works
  - Influencing creation of banking facilities that can offer favourable loan facilities and insurance for large and small-scale farmers against all risks including climatic change related risks.
2. Knowledge and information are key to private sector growth. ASARECA should strengthen information and knowledge access including an inventory of available technologies and their suitability in the different areas within the

region, production levels, potential markets, value addition, etc. for all players along the value chain

3. Develop research and development agenda targeting the private sector and provide evidence based recommendations that should inform the policy formulation processes, and also put as much emphasis and importance on commercial research on activities, processes and procedures that will support commercialization of agriculture

### **E: Way Forward and Recommendations for Dealing with Emerging Issues Underlying Food Insecurity in the ASARECA Region and Role of Agriculture in Overall Regional Transformations**

1. Agricultural research and development efforts of various actors towards addressing the food insecurity challenge are faced with unfavourable laws and policies. Therefore ASARECA should:
  - Contribute towards strengthening/influencing policies, by-laws and ordinances that guard against food insecurity.
  - Support studies on the pros and cons of implementing big agricultural-related policies in diverse cultures within the ECA region.
2. Whereas there are proven technologies to boost agricultural production and productivity, a number of farmers in the ECA region (especially youths) do not actively participate in agriculture and this contributes to food insecurity. ASARECA should:
  - Develop appropriate strategies of attracting farmers to agriculture e.g. rural financing to support the various agricultural initiatives.
  - Upscale and strengthen proven technologies (e.g. biotech) to boost food production and create employment.
  - Strengthen centres of excellence with relevant scientists and infrastructure that produce appropriate technologies for the diverse cultures.
3. The adverse effects of climate change (particularly floods and droughts) on food security in the ECA region are evident. ASARECA should:
  - Play a key role in raising awareness on climate change to minimize post-harvest losses and address the issue of access to food. Emphasis should as well be put on post-harvest handling and storage (warehousing).



- Support member countries to invest in rainwater harvesting, water harnessing and irrigation to boost agricultural productivity and enhance food security.
4. Food insecurity in the ECA region is aggravated by gender disparities in food production and consumption. ASARECA should strengthen her efforts in engendering agricultural research and enhance equity to boost food production.
  5. Food insecurity in the ECA region is also due to bottlenecks within the entire value chain. ASARECA should:
    - Promote and strengthen value chain approach in the region
    - Recruit agro-economists to address the market issues along the value chain
    - Support capacity building of scientists, recruit and retain scientists to exploit the existing potential for agricultural productivity
    - Strengthen quality assurance in the entire agricultural research and production system.
    - Zone the ECA region and implement mega projects in suitable agro-ecological zones for bigger impact

#### **F: Way Forward and Recommendations for Mainstreaming Universities in the Research and Development System**

1. The strength of Faculties/colleges of Agriculture in the ECA region lies in its large pool of highly qualified agricultural scientists. However, utilisation of the human resource is limited due to weak coordination within the Faculties/colleges of Agriculture themselves and with their counterparts in the NAROs/NARIs and even more so regionally and internationally. Therefore ASARECA should:
  - Support a mapping exercise as a step towards building a data base of expertise within the ECA region and initiate arrangement for sharing that capacity within the individual country members and across the region
  - Establish and co-ordinate national platforms which brings together various FAS in the ECA regions to foster and develop regional programs on capacity building as well as research and development to be implemented by the FAS.
2. Various partners, networks and alliances that strengthen the collaboration between universities and national research institutions exist in the ECA region. ASARECA should:

- Explore possibility of using the institutional infrastructure which has been established in the ECA region to develop regional programs on HR capacity building and R & D efforts in agricultural sciences in the region
  - ASARECA should tap into the existing regional and global networks to strengthen human resource capacity development, institutional knowledge management and learning.
3. There is a disconnect between agricultural research in NARIs and the training that takes place in various FAS in ECA universities. In all countries in the ECA region NARIs report to ministries of agriculture, while Faculties/Colleges of agriculture report to the ministries of education. ASARECA should:
- Initiate and or strengthen national institutional frameworks that coordinate and consolidate agricultural research in national agricultural research institutions and training in faculties and schools of Agriculture and related disciplines
  - Support Universities to undertake reforms that make them more relevant to the current and future needs.
  - Champion the establishment of a new generation of agricultural universities that integrate agricultural research and university training as a strategy to facilitate the interface of research and training. Such university should be anchored in the ministries of Agriculture but linked with other relevant sectoral ministries; for example education, environment, roads, etc.
  - Influence and lobby for new policies that maintain the niche of the new generation of universities and avoid falling back into conventional style of universities while ensuring good quality.
  - Mobilize more resources and extend more funding to universities as a strategy to strengthen the relationship between the private sector and the national research institutions.
  - Support and foster collaborative research between Universities, national agricultural research institutions and engage with the private sector to commercialize the research outputs.
  - Increase representation of Universities on the ASARECA Board given the number agricultural oriented universities and number of scientists and diversity of disciplines therein.