

# ASARECA at a glance











# ASARECA Vision

Regional leader in agricultural research  
and development for improved  
livelihoods in Eastern and Central Africa

# ASARECA Mission

Enhance regional collective action in  
agricultural research for development,  
extension and agricultural training and  
education to promote economic growth,  
fight poverty, eradicate hunger and  
enhance sustainable use of resources  
in Eastern and Central Africa.

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*This woman from Mombasa in Kenya has avoided the devastating effects of cassava diseases by following advice given to her by ASARECA partner scientists in the region*

# ● Our coverage



# About ASARECA

The Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) is a not-for-profit inter-governmental sub-regional organization. ASARECA comprises 11 member countries: Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

ASARECA brings together scientists from the national agricultural research institutions of the 11 member countries, national agricultural extension service providers and other strategic partners to generate, share and promote knowledge and innovations to solve the common challenges facing agriculture in the member countries. ASARECA enables the member countries to work collectively to assist smallholder farmers to practice productive and profitable agriculture.

## Context of ASARECA work

Smallholder farmers in Eastern and Central Africa face similar challenges. Many use poor quality inputs such as seeds and farm implements. Their farms are often under the threat of attack by menacing pests and diseases, and weeds. This situation is aggravated by variable weather, changing climate and a declining natural resource base. As a result, farmers get poor yields from their crops and animals. In addition, lack of access to input and output markets and an environment characterized by limiting agriculture and trade policies, make farming a challenging business. These factors contribute to high levels of poverty among the farming communities in the sub-region. Owing to low returns from agricultural enterprises, the youth have abandoned farming in search of money-making ventures in urban areas, leaving farming to the elderly, women and children. Although these challenges can be tackled at national level, the national systems do not have adequate capacities to manage them comprehensively. Some of the challenges also cut across political boundaries.

ASARECA is addressing these challenges in a regionally coordinated manner by working with its partners that include farmers, national, regional and international research, extension, and training organizations; public and private sector actors, NGOs, Regional Economic Communities and development agencies.



*Elizabeth Kamau picks amaranth leaves in Kiambu, Kenya. She sells the vegetables at Uchumi, an upmarket shopping facility in Kenya.*









## ● What we do

The member countries established ASARECA:

- To address the common challenges and opportunities to agricultural research and development through collective action.
- To combine efforts to produce cost effective technologies, knowledge, innovations and best practices to be shared among member countries as regional public goods.
- To complement the activities of national institutions to deliver products and services needed by people in the sub-region.

Using this mandate given by the National Agricultural Research Systems, ASARECA strives to ensure that women, the youth and men smallholder farmers in Eastern and Central Africa are able to:

- Harvest and store water for agriculture and domestic use.
- Increase their yields by planting improved (high yielding, nutritious, disease and pest resistant) varieties.
- Improve the on-farm management of natural resources, including soils, water, genetic resources and trees.
- Improve production and profits from livestock and fisheries enterprises.
- Access improved input and output markets.
- Operate their farm-based enterprises in a favourable policy environment.
- Access and use agricultural information to improve their enterprises.

We carry out our work through multi-stakeholder projects in collaboration with multi-disciplinary partners in the 11 member countries. These projects were initially organized around seven programmes: Staple Crops; High Value Non-Staple Crops; Livestock and Fisheries; Agro-Biodiversity and Biotechnology; Natural Resources Management and Biodiversity; Policy Analysis and Advocacy; and Knowledge Management and Upscaling.

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*Left: These children in Bukoba, Tanzania are happy because their parents planted materials that are free from deadly banana disease, BXW. Their parents also made use of best practices and advice given by ASARECA partner scientists.*

# ● Statement of achievement

Projects supported by ASARECA have developed and promoted technologies, innovations and management practices such as improved varieties and seeds, water management, integrated soil fertility, agronomic packages (seed selection, planting and crop management), storage, value addition and marketing. Our initiatives have covered various staple crops such as banana, millet, pearl millet, maize, sweet potato, potato, sorghum, wheat and cassava; non-staple crops such as fruits, vegetables and legumes; and improved animal husbandry practices (breed selection, feeds, disease management) and fisheries. We have been involved in developing harmonized regional policies and standards that impact on agriculture and trade.

Between 2008 and 2013, ASARECA developed 250 agricultural technologies, innovations and practices. These interventions have directly benefited over 422,176 smallholder farmers' households with an average of six family members. This means that over 2.5million individuals have directly benefitted from ASARECA interventions which enabled them to access and adopt new and relevant varieties of selected commodities, livestock breeds, seeds, disease and pest management packages, extension and veterinary services. Their capacities to engage in productive and profitable agriculture were strengthened. ASARECA initiatives also opened up market opportunities for the farmers to buy farm inputs and sell their produce. This enhanced their productivity, leading to improved access to food, nutrition and increased income for their households.

## Interaction with the environment

While carrying out its work, ASARECA is mindful of the potential impact of its activities to the environment. We ensure that the development choices that we make are friendly to, and improve the health of the environment. We do this by balancing the relations between our needs and the natural systems, and mainstreaming environmental and social safeguards in all our initiatives.

## Gender mainstreaming

ASARECA is conscious that gender disparities undermine agricultural productivity and hence entrench poverty. Over the last five years, ASARECA undertook gender mainstreaming in all its agricultural research for development activities. This process has engulfed women, men, and the youth in our project areas to use productive resources for their mutual benefit.



## ● Why work with us?

- ASARECA is an African led institution with a pool of experts in agricultural research and development from within the ECA region.
- We have a unique structure built on partnership with farmers, national, regional and international research, extension, and training organizations, public and private sector actors, NGOs and development agencies.
- We have a good understanding of the Eastern and Central Africa region and have the ability to deal with problems facing the agricultural sector.
- We are a bridging organization that facilitates linkages between stakeholders and organizations within and between countries, thus helping them to work more cost efficiently.
- We are a regional agricultural knowledge hub that facilitates various partners to learn from one another by generating, accessing and sharing information.
- We provide high-quality backstopping. We ensure that there is quality technical knowledge sharing and learning in all our projects. We inject inputs, such as advisory services and training, which strengthen our projects. Our projects are well managed and supervised.
- We have a track record of good financial management and effective use of funds, grounded on value for money ethics.
- One of our greatest strengths is our ability to work in partnership with different types of organizations in the public, non-profit and private sector. We develop and implement collaborative projects with national, regional and international organizations.

**At the national level,** we work with agricultural research institutes, universities and extension agencies, farmer and producer organizations, private sector, NGOs and regulatory agencies. We support national bodies in various ways including generating and promoting agricultural innovations, capacity building, policy harmonization, and accessing information.

**At regional level,** we work with regional economic bodies such as the Common Market for Eastern and Central Africa (COMESA) and the East African Community (EAC). We also work with the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA). We support regional bodies in various ways including providing technical advice on strategy, programme development, capacity building of stakeholders and hosting or managing their programmes.

**Our international partners** include among others; Advanced international agricultural research laboratories such as the Danforth Centre, and the CGIAR. For example, ASARECA and the CGIAR/CRPs have identified mechanisms of collaborating on research and development issues. In addition, ASARECA has linked the CGIAR/CRPs with her member countries' CAADP processes.

## ● Our team

Our team comprises professional staff at the secretariat who manage, coordinate and backstop regional multi-disciplinary teams of scientists, farmers, social economists, development workers, extension agents, policy analysts, private sector actors and decision makers, and knowledge and communication specialists from the National Agricultural Research Systems.

## ● 7 i ff Ybh focus

Since 2014, ASARECA initiatives have been organized around three themes: Natural Resources Management and Eco-systems Services; Markets, Market Linkages and Trade; and Sustainable Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition. ASARECA has targeted to reach a minimum of 1.8 million households with innovations, technologies and management practices. This is projected to positively impact the livelihoods of 11 million individuals, 50% of which are below poverty line.

### 1. Natural Resources Management and Eco-system Services

Under this thematic area, we work with smallholder farmers to develop and implement climate smart (CSA) initiatives that address the three pillars of CSA to among other things:

- Promote harvesting and storage of water for agriculture and domestic use and for micro-irrigation.
- Improve management of farm-based natural resources—soils, water, trees and biodiversity.
- Conserve biodiversity (micro-organisms, plants and animals) by promoting activities such as agroforestry, storing seeds and genetic reserves and providing incentives for investment in conservation.
- Develop and implement mechanisms of coping with harsh conditions such as shortage of water and pasture, and diseases.
- Promote equal participation of men and women at community level in the governance of their natural resources.
- Promote the value of ecosystem services such as clean air and water, soil fertility, clean environments, pollination, pest control and conservation.





*Farmers harvest pineapples in Masaka, Uganda.*

## 2. Markets, Market Linkages and Trade

Under this theme, ASARECA is supporting smallholders to engage in farming as a business and working with other stakeholders to improve access to input and output markets for strategic crops, livestock and fisheries. Among other things, we are:

- Strengthening value chains for key crops, livestock and fisheries.
- Facilitating farmers to develop group-based enterprises. This is to enable them to access services such as the assembly, storage and marketing of their produce, and other business development services such as financing.
- Promoting formulation and implementation of policies to facilitate free trade and easy movement of agricultural commodities within the ECA region.
- Accelerating investment in agricultural innovations by the private sector by promoting business incubation models.









### 3. Sustainable Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition

Through this theme, we address issues of nutrition and food security with links to human, plant and animal health. Areas of focus include:

- Enhancing the production and availability of quality, safe and nutritious foods for improved health and wellbeing of the people in ECA.
- Developing innovations to address and mitigate the effects of climate change. These include promoting adaptation strategies and the use of new and indigenous knowledge for weather forecasting and interpretation.
- Enhancing regional capacity for surveillance and control of emerging diseases and pests that affect crops, livestock and fisheries.
- Guiding advocacy for implementing regional policies related to food security and an environment that address the needs of men, women and the youth.
- Improving post harvest handling and processing of crops, livestock and fisheries resources.
- Maximizing production and profits while reducing the cost of inputs for crops, livestock and fisheries.
- Conserving crop, livestock, fish and neglected plant species; and genetic resources with traits preferred by the market.

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*Through improved adoption of water productivity innovations and market linkages, off-season onion growing is becoming a major source of income for small-scale farmers in Madagascar.*

## ● Funding

In the past five years, ASARECA has been funded by national governments of member countries in Eastern and Central Africa and international development partners. The development partners include the European Union, the UK Department for International Development, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Canadian International Development Agency, USAID East Africa, African Development Bank and Canada's International Development Research Centre. Some of these funds have been managed through a multi-Donor Trust Fund managed by the World Bank.

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*Right: Feeding dairy cattle well for good results in Masaka, Uganda. ASARECA and partners are promoting crop-livestock innovations to enable farmers tap the integrated benefits of crops and livestock.*

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*Back cover: This farmer in Tanzania is assured of food security because she has embraced the growing of pearl millet, which is considered the most suitable crop for semi-arid and arid lands.*











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