

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA CHALLENGE PROGRAMME PROPOSAL**Building Sustainable Livelihoods Through
Integrated Agricultural Research For Development**

“Securing the future for Africa’s children”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**RATIONALE FOR A CHALLENGE PROGRAMME FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in which livelihoods and food security continue to deteriorate. Over the last 14 years, the number of Africans living below the poverty line has increased by 50 percent and Africa is dependent on a disproportionate amount of food aid. This situation, intolerable for humanitarian reasons, also threatens peace across the region and prevents Africa from playing its proper role in expanding world trade and conserving the global environment.

There is much land degradation in Africa, manifested in terms of soil erosion, nutrient depletion, desertification, deforestation or overgrazing, but it is not a singular cause of poverty and low productivity in rural areas. It is rather a symptom of the multiplicity of factors that drive both poverty and food insufficiency: The state of land degradation reflects both a dramatic draw down of natural capital and a simultaneous lack of investment to replenish it. Motivating investment in natural resources requires incentives, inputs, information, and institutions more or less concurrently, which has not been the case for sub-Saharan Africa.

The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), established by Africa’s leaders in Abuja in October 2001, recognised the importance of agriculture as the engine for economic growth, as well as the importance of research in making this happen.

But agricultural research is not a simple matter: It took an extensive consultation process, which culminated in this proposal for a Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Programme, to determine the three highest priority issues. These were: failures of agricultural markets, inappropriate policies, and natural resource degradation. The overwhelming consensus, however, was that addressing these issues in isolation had failed to raise the productivity and profitability of African agriculture sufficiently or sustainably. The roles of scientists and farmers have to be redefined in collaborative learning processes, addressing questions about the level, timing, type and form of participation, as well as the most effective approaches and methods to foster them. Policy and marketing issues must also be dealt with to either remove constraints or to create conducive conditions for the adoption of sustainable income enhancing innovations.

It was in an attempt to reconcile all these factors that the concept of Integrated Natural Resource Management evolved. It reflected the general recognition of the importance of addressing the interactions between different factors, e.g., water, pests and soils, as well as the interactions between their components.

THE SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA CHALLENGE PROGRAMME

The Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Programme (SSA CP) was inspired by the considerations outlined above, reinforced by a number of important recent initiatives for agricultural

development in Africa. Foremost among these is NEPAD's *Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme* (CAADP). In May 2001, FARA, its subregional members and the CGIAR Centres issued the *Durban Statement*, reconfirming their full support for the African vision, and calling "on the international research system, including the CGIAR Centres and advanced research institutions, to forge more effective and efficient partnerships with African NARSs and achieve greater programmatic integration." **Those words will translate into action through this Challenge Programme .**

A Programme Formulation Workshop convened by FARA in March 2003 found that the differences between the older concepts of natural resource management and the more inclusive concepts of Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM) were not well perceived and were subject to confusion. This Challenge Programme therefore uses the more distinctive term '**Integrated Agricultural Research for Development**' (IAR4D).

The **vision** for the Sub-Saharan Challenge Programme is: improved rural livelihoods, increased food security and sustainable natural resource management throughout sub-Saharan Africa as a result of greater impact from agricultural research for development. Its **mission** is: to contribute to achieving the poverty and hunger targets of the *Millennium Development Goals* and add value to on-going agricultural research for development in sub-Saharan Africa by achieving greater coherence and efficiency and more lasting impacts through the application of integrated agricultural research for development. Its **goal** is: within fifteen years, to attain quantifiable improvement in alleviating rural poverty, agricultural productivity, sustainable natural resource management and the adaptive capacities of scientists, policy-makers and farmers. It will do this through integrated agricultural research for development (IAR4D), supported by organisational change, better knowledge management, and capacity building.

IMPLEMENTING THE SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA CHALLENGE PROGRAMME

The Programme will be implemented by a continent-wide set of projects, which will be established by Pilot Learning Teams at Pilot Learning Sites as a result of a competitive grants process.

Three major sets of actions are proposed: the development of functioning agricultural markets, sustainable management of natural resources (including germplasm), and development of enabling policies. These three themes should not however be seen as being separate programmes. Indeed the interactions between them should be regarded as of equal, if not greater, importance to an integrated agenda than the themes themselves.

The key feature of the SSA CP is that entry points, identified and diagnosed in a participatory process by the Pilot Learning Teams, including the beneficiaries, will be starting points for the exploration of the full dimensions of the problem being studied, across the whole agricultural system in the resources to policy chain.

Developing more efficient markets

Farmers in Africa face persistent poverty because they do not have good market opportunities. This research will provide options for improving input and output markets, across borders and between regions, as well as between communities for smallholder and pastoral produce.

Sustainably managing natural resources while intensifying their use

Research interventions will therefore incorporate the interactions with water and pest management and be developed within a social and economic context of market-driven smallholder agriculture. This research will build African scientific capacity for IAR4D to

promote sustainable use of natural resources, particularly in respect to enabling smallholders and pastoralists to adapt appropriately to market changes, while optimising ecosystem services, and reducing land degradation.

Intensifying subsistence-oriented smallholder farming systems

IAR4D will produce options for smallholders to intensify the use of their limited resources while maintaining food security and without jeopardising the resources on which the future of farming for them or their children depends. It will allow resource-poor households, especially those headed by women, to intensify their production systems and move into the market economy, and it will provide options to cope with labour shortages due to migration to urban areas, HIV/AIDS and other factors.

Developing enabling policies

A smallholder-led transformation of Africa is both technically and economically feasible. However, this will not happen where there are constraining policies. There must be reforms in market and trade policies for export crops and intra-regional trade in agricultural products, and these will have to be built on further domestic market reforms.

Policies are also required to facilitate the formation of producer organisations so that they can standardise and bulk up their commodities to reduce the cost of sales; for supportive rural infrastructure to reduce high transport and marketing costs and issues such as property rights and more effective ways of managing common property. There are also issues regarding the financing of smallholder production and marketing and encouraging saving and investment by smallholders and pastoralists.

The Challenge Programme will incorporate policy aspects amongst the points of entry for all aspects of IAR4D in order to improve the prospects for the rural poor in sub-Saharan Africa and provide policy-makers with options from which pro-poor policies can be formulated.

Civil society, community-based organisations, and non-governmental organisations will be involved and instructed in IAR4D so that they can internalise the approach and **scale it out** to neighbouring communities.

Scaling up from the household through community, district, national and regional to international levels will be assured by forging relationships with client organisations, and incorporating IAR4D in capacity building for critical cadres of stakeholders, and through demonstrated impact.

Organisational change

This component of the Challenge Programme will resolve the critical organisational arrangements and processes for implementing IAR4D on the basis of equal participation amongst diverse and unequally endowed collaborators. It will provide essential knowledge of the ways and means of removing inter- and intra-institutional barriers.

Knowledge management

There is a lot of agricultural information and knowledge in Africa which, through poor management, does not have the impact it should. The IAR4D approach provides a framework for effective fusion of different knowledge systems, reconciling the different knowledge levels and information requirements of the diverse stakeholders. It will ensure that research outputs and information on the processes of IAR4D serve to make all stakeholders more

knowledgeable. As a departure from much previous research, it will ensure that the beneficiaries can interact effectively with their formally trained colleagues.

Capacity building

Team-building has too frequently been left to ‘just happen’ but experience shows that it requires dedicated skill and attention, and modern research teams need to be learning organisations able to apply adaptive management skills to all aspects of their agenda. The IAR4D Pilot Learning Teams will be composed of wide ranges of partners with highly complementary but differentially developed skills and objectives: In addition to NARIs, IARCs and ARIs, they will include farmer groups of various kinds, extension staff, NGOs, and participants from the private sector and government.

This Challenge Programme will explicitly encompass the capacity building required to ensure that all the critical stakeholders will be able to implement IAR4D, and also to internalise IAR4D in NARIs to ensure outscaling and upscaling of the approach.

Recognising that there are wider needs for capacity building for agricultural research, a secondary but important product of the Challenge Programme will be arrangements and processes for strengthening agricultural science capacity generally.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

The SSA CP will be implemented in two phases. The first five-year phase, on which this Proposal concentrates, will be a pilot learning phase in which the principles of IAR4D will be applied and tested at selected sites, administered at subregional level; the second will constitute a continent-wide mainstreaming of the lessons of the first phase, building on its successes but more concerned with outscaling and upscaling and institutionalising IAR4D.

The first phase of the Challenge Programme will be implemented over 5 years as a series of IAR4D projects. The SSA CP will implement a **Competitive Grants Scheme** to make merit the overriding criterion for all prospective participants in the Pilot Learning Teams. Eligibility to apply for grants will be **open to all FARA members, i.e., all stakeholders in agricultural research for Africa’s development**. All teams must include a national research institute from each of the participating countries.

Successful project proposals will have the following characteristics:

1. They will be designed around entry points targeted at removing specific constraints or bottlenecks at identified locations, leading to on-site knowledge development;
2. The projects will integratively explore the wider dimensions of the constraints and their systematic and geographical significance;
3. They will be demand driven and executed by multi-disciplinary teams from a range of different stakeholder institutions and organisations;
4. The teams will be committed to building capacity and be able to adapt as the dimensions of the constraints are realised and confronted;
5. The projects will contribute to improved methodology and capacity for integrated agricultural research for development in sub-Saharan Africa.

The competitive grants for Pilot Learning Projects will be implemented in three stages: (i) a call for Expressions of Interest, (ii) development of Concept Notes for stakeholder consultation, capacity building and project development, and (iii) submission of Full Proposals for implementation of IAR4D. The decisions concerning the grants will be

amongst the most critical that the Programme makes because they will determine the content, mode and outcomes of the Programme as a whole.

At each stage, the expressions of interest, concept notes and proposals will be reviewed by the Subregional Steering Committees and the SSA CP Programme Manager prior to submission to the SSA CP Scientific Advisory Committee for evaluation and selection. The Scientific Advisory Committee will arrange for independent review by appropriate Peer Review Panels. At all stages, full guidelines for proposal preparation will be given.

The **Pilot Learning Sites** will be carefully selected to provide effective, contrasting demonstrations of the impact of IAR4D that optimise the opportunities for learning from comparisons between divergent environmental, economic and policy environments across sub-Saharan Africa.

The **Programme governance and management** structure are based on the outcomes of discussions with stakeholders representing all potential participants, and consideration of the CGIAR Guidelines for Challenge Programmes, lessons learned from other Challenge Programmes, comments on the pre-proposal by the interim Science Council, and communications between FARA and the CGIAR Secretariat. The proposed structure is flexible but capable of ensuring rigorous management and accountability.

In addition to providing day-to-day supervision and guidance to the **Programme Management Unit**, the FARA Executive Secretary will support the Programme through the primary services of advocacy, promoting functional partnerships, and promoting exchange of knowledge and training. The FARA Secretariat will be administratively responsible for the recruitment of all Programme staff, including the Programme Manager.

PROGRAMME ORGANISATION

FARA will have overall responsibility for the SSA CP but governance and management will follow the principal of subsidiarity, with decisions being delegated to the lowest practical level to ensure ownership and representation.

The SSA CP **Programme Steering Committee** will be comprised of representatives of the principal stakeholders appointed by their constituents. It will appoint **Subregional Steering Committees**, on the recommendations of the relevant SROs, to provide closer oversight and convenient co-ordination with the SROs. The Subregional Steering Committees will assume responsibility for those components of the SSA CP that can be appropriately managed at Subregional level.

Pilot Learning Team Management Committees will be formed by the collaborators to make decisions about operations at the Pilot Learning Sites. However, there will be a lead agency, which will be legally responsible for managing and accounting for the funds, for the progress of activities at the site and for reporting progress and outcomes to the relevant Subregional Steering Committees which will be linked to the Programme Steering Committee.

The Programme-wide services provided by the Facilitation and Mentoring Unit, the Programme Integration Unit, and the Monitoring, Evaluation and Quality Control Unit will be managed by FARA's SSA CP **Programme Management Unit** and overseen by the Programme Steering Committee. This will ensure that the processes and outcomes of IAR4D are effectively conveyed across sites and subregions, and made available for outscaling and upscaling.

The **Scientific Advisory Committee** will ensure that the SSA CP employs the best science and methods throughout the Programme. It will be aided in this by nominating, supervising and working with **Peer Review Panels**.

A **facilitation and mentoring service** will be provided throughout the life of the Programme to bring all members of the Pilot Learning Teams up to speed in their knowledge and capacity and to make the institutional changes required. It will also ensure that the Pilot Learning Teams can learn from each other. To achieve these purposes, the Programme Management Unit will, through competitive grants, engage the services of professional facilitators to work with the Pilot Learning Teams.

The **Programme Integration Unit** will be responsible for methodological development, information exchange and knowledge management systems, upscaling IAR4D from where it is piloted to policy-makers and research institutions at district, national and regional levels. It will synthesise and disseminate capacity building beyond the needs of the Pilot Learning Teams to critical cadres of stakeholders, including communities, civil society, national governments, regional organisations and development agencies in ways that will make them readily incorporated into development programmes.

The programme is budgeted at US\$100 million over 5 years. The **funding strategy** of the SSA CP will be broad based and aimed at attracting resources that are new and additional to those normally earmarked for the CGIAR centres. The SSA CP has received expressions of interest in co-funding that is expected to provide a further 25%, and more interest is anticipated once the SSA CP proposal is published.