

THE SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA CHALLENGE PROGRAMME (SSA-CP)

The Sub-Saharan African Challenge Program (SSA CP) is a continental initiative, led by Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), which started in 2004 with the aim of finding a solution to the observed low contribution of the agricultural sector to national economic and social growth. At that time it was established that the agricultural sector was faced with a range of constraints which led to the under-performance of the sector. One of these constraints was the vertical nature of how agricultural research was organised. This led to the proposal for a new approach to agricultural research, known as Integrated Agricultural Research for Development (IAR4D) as an alternative to the linear model, commonly referred to as the Agricultural Research and Development (ARD) approach.

The IAR4D approach emphasises on conducting demand-driven research, combined with capacity building and improvement of the policy and institutional environments. Inclusiveness of all stakeholders and farmer organisations is also a central factor in IAR4D, and is usually anchored on the principles of an innovation platform within a value chain.

The programme promotes the Integrated Agricultural Research for Development (IAR4D) approach, drawing upon innovation and uses a systems perspective as its organising principle.

The SSA-CP focuses on:

- (i) delivering international public goods concerned with best practices in relation to multi-stakeholder engagement in the generation and wide-scale adoption of agricultural innovations, and
- (ii) Evaluating whether IAR4D works and is more cost / benefit effective relative to conventional approaches.

The Programme is being implemented at three Pilot Learning Sites (PLS) covering 8 countries in the ASARECA, CORAF / WECARD and CCARDESA sub-regions.

The continental perspective of the programme means that cross-SRO evaluations can be conducted, data can be pooled across the continent and so derive lessons and identify best practices and share this knowledge among the SROs. In this way the SSA CP contributes knowledge of best practices relating to multi-stakeholder agricultural ARD approaches. After satisfactorily answering the above research issues, the SSA CP will metamorphose into a clearing house for promoting the adoption of IAR4D. This will be achieved through the creation of a platform that will share information and knowledge concerning agricultural innovation and multi-stakeholder (partnership) engagement in agricultural R&D.





Achievements

In phase 1 of the Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Programme (SSA CP), research was carried out in 3 Pilot Learning Sites (PLS) in West Africa, East Africa and Southern Africa. In Southern Africa, the PLS was spread over three countries: Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. In these countries, like the other PLS, the focus was on proving the concept of IAR4D in readiness for out-scaling to other countries. This proof of concept was completed in 2010. In the next phase, the SSA CP will concentrate on consolidating the results of Phase 1 and out-scaling to other countries in the region.

The PLS in Southern Africa was under the overall coordination of BOIVERSITY Centre in Nairobi. CCARDESA assumed the role of coordinating the project in Southern Africa. In 2013, CCARDESA initiated the process of assuming the central coordination role of the SSACP in the Southern African region. Consultations were carried out between CCARDESA and FARA on this subject and led to the drafting of a formal agreement between the two institutions in order to formalise the role of CCARDESA in the SSA CP.

Current Status in the CCARDESA sub region

In preparation for taking over the coordinating functions of the SSA CP in the region, CCARDESA drafted Sub-agreements between CCARDESA and the institutions carrying out the research work in the three sites located in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. These sub-agreements have been signed with the Ministries of Agriculture in Malawi and Mozambique, as well as CIAT in Zimbabwe. Joint programmes are expected to be finalized and implementation of activities initiated by June 2014. The agreement between FARA and CCARDESA was also concluded and the resources for the project have been received.

