

Draft concept

"Sub Sahara Africa - Regional ARD-Alliances"

as a working mode for demand-driven co-ordination and alignment of joint research- and training activities in SSA-ECA region

Demand-driven agricultural research for development

Greater involvement of the representatives from developing countries (end users) of agricultural research for development-programmes in the design and implementation of joint and transnational activities is necessary to take into account end users' research- and education needs and demands. Demand-driven coordination of agricultural research will help to establish a truly effective research, training and education, based on articulated demand.

One to three Regional ARD-Alliances (upon regional demand expressed by ARD end user stakeholders) will be established. BMFLW (Austria) and BLE (Germany), together with IRD (France) and CIRAD (France) and the ERA-ARD-II coordinator will accommodate this process.

This process will:

- Focus on impacts in terms of MDGs and in particular the improvement of livelihoods of the rural poor;
- Address the research, capacity development and innovation continuum from farmer training to basic research;
- Articulate bottom-up demand as expressed in farmer information networks and by other stakeholders;
- Solve bottlenecks (thematic area) along the rural production value chain (production environment, genetic resources, production technologies, postharvest & processing, market environment);
- Concentrate on regionally relevant agricultural commodities and products.

Background

ERA-ARD II (www.era-ard.org) is a network project, funded by the European Commission research and innovation programme, FP7. It has two strategic objectives:

1. Improving the European contribution to International Agricultural Research (IAR) by promoting joint activities and trans-national programs in the field of Agricultural Research for Development (ARD).
2. Increasing the impact of European contributions in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) and to sustainable growth in the poorest countries in the world.

Its predecessor project, ERA-ARD I (funded through FP6) has, among other achievements, promoted a shared vision and a strategic agenda on ARD in Europe, analysed collaboration

models to the implementation of joint and transnational activities, increased involvement of Southern partners through the establishment of an Advisory Group, and implemented a transnational call on “Bio-energy” in which 8 partners from 6 European states funded 6 research projects contributing a total of € 2,5 million.

ERA-ARD project II will continue this work through

1. Expansion of joint and transnational activities initiated during ERA-ARD I.
2. Stronger involvement of end users of European ARD programmes in the design and implementation of joint and transnational activities.

Regional ARD-Alliances as a bottom-up stakeholder involvement process

In a pilot process for East & Central Africa, ERA-ARD, together with FARA and regional experts, has developed a new approach for strengthening collaboration with partners in the target regions towards the achievement of the MDGs. ERA-ARD will promote the formation of Regional ARD-Alliances by ERA-ARD consortium members and respective regional / national government funding programme owners or managers (representing the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme - CAADP process, National Development Plan - NDP Agriculture Sector and Education Administration, Agriculture Sector Development Strategy and Investment Plan - DSIP, etc.). Other governmental or international institutions or programmes, foundations, agencies, NGOs, etc., active in ARD or academic capacity development in the respective region may join in. The focus will be on achieving impact in terms of MDGs, in particular in terms of improvement of livelihoods of the rural poor.

Guiding principles towards joint activities envisage contribution to the formation and strengthening of impact oriented Collaborative Transnational Thematic Networks (CTTNs). Discussions should build onto recommendations of the Dialogue of Ministers of Agriculture, Science and Technology. Shared programme ownership is envisaged with respective National Development Plans (NDPs). Complementary investments are to be made according to the needs identified during joint programming. Joint activities should follow a value chain approach, address the research, capacity development and innovation continuum from basic research to farmer training and make data and solutions publicly accessible for sharing. Finally, joint M&E and Impact Assessment will need to be included into proposals for joint activities.

Thematic areas of Regional ARD-Alliances

The thematic areas of the Regional ARD-Alliances will be regionally specific and based on pre-evaluation of:

- Bottom-up demand as expressed in farmer information networks;
- Bottlenecks (thematic areas) along the rural production value chain (production environment, genetic resources, production technologies, processing, market environment);
- Relevant agricultural commodities and products;
- Postharvest problems;
- Capacity development- and training problems;
- Genetic resources problems.

Expected outcomes and results of the Regional ARD-Alliance process will provide:

- Better access of rural sectors in developing countries to European ARD expertise
- Increased ownership of research and capacity development initiatives by SSA- regional producers and policy makers
- Commitments for additional investments by ERA, SSA- regional governments', and other interested programme managers

Support from European and global ARD cooperation stakeholders

Representatives of strategic and policy institutions (SCAR, EIARD, the Global and the co-organizing Regional Forum for Agricultural Research) will be invited to observe the process. Monitoring and feedback to the Regional ARD-Alliance will also be provided by participating regional (NAROs, extension services, university alliances, professional associations, farmer networks, civil society organisations) as well as ERA-ARD II stakeholders (AGRINATURA, and other European as well as national ARD organizations).

Planned activities and results

A first regional ARD-Alliance Event will be organised in Uganda (11-13 October 2011). This pilot Regional ARD-Alliance Workshop will be organized for the ECA region and in close collaboration with FARA. The Regional ARD-Alliance will invite CTTN experts to present scientific solutions meeting the evaluated demand. Proposed solutions will be discussed with scientists and stakeholders for prioritization. The Alliance members will then proceed with decision making towards joint funding (a call for proposals), the alignment to and strengthening of, or complementing the actual R4D and capacity development landscape.

The results of regional ARD-Alliance Workshops are envisaged to include joint (European paid) research projects, training projects, PhD's and other activities which are SSA-problem oriented.

Further information

Uganda workshop organisers:

- BMLFUW (Austria): Josef Schmidt (Josef.Schmidt.fl@ait.ac.at) and Maria Zacharias (Maria.Zacharias@lebensministerium.at)
- BLE (Germany): Marc Bernard (marc.bernard@ble.de) and Henning Knipschild (henning.knipschild@ble.de)

ERA-ARD coordinator:

- EL&I (Netherlands): Sander van Opstal (a.j.f.m.van.opstal@minlnv.nl) and Janny Vos (i.vos@cabi.org)