

Conseil Ouest et Centre
Africain pour la Recherche et
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West and Central African
Council for Agricultural
Research and Development

Operational Plan 2008-2013

Deploying Innovation Systems in West and Central
African Agriculture

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In February 2006, key CORAF/WECARD stakeholders reviewed the implementation of CORAF/WECARD's *Strategic Plan of 1999-2014* and recommended its revision; a proposal subsequently endorsed by the CORAF/WECARD General Assembly in April 2006, initiated in June 2006 and completed in May 2007. A revised *Strategic Plan 2007-2016* has been written and is ready for implementation.

Development of the new *Strategic Plan* aims at achieving the goals of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme [CAADP], an African Union initiative endorsed by the African heads of State and Government.

CAADP's primary goal is ***Agriculture-led development that eliminates hunger, reduces poverty and food insecurity, opening the way for export expansion***, supported by four main **Pillars**. FARA and its constituent SRO have been given the mandate by NEPAD to address delivery of Pillar IV, which is ***improving agriculture research, technology dissemination and adoption***. To facilitate this FARA has developed the Framework for African Agricultural Productivity [FAAP].

The new *Plan* makes a clear commitment to delivering a series of *Results* which encompass conventional research, and the use, *inter alia*, of innovation platforms, policy, capacity strengthening and knowledge management with the involvement of broad-based stakeholders; an approach termed *Integrated Agricultural Research for Development* [IAR4D]. CORAF/WECARD's strategic intentions are articulated in its *Vision* and *Mission* statements.

- **CORAF/WECARD's Vision** is for a sustainable reduction in poverty and food insecurity in WCA through an increase in agricultural-led economic growth and sustainable improvement of key aspects of the agricultural research system.
- **CORAF/WECARD Mission** is to establish sustainable improvements to the productivity, competitiveness, and markets of the agricultural system in West and Central Africa by meeting the key demands of the sub-regional research system as expressed by target groups.

CORAF/WECARD's *Strategic Plan* undertakes, provided certain assumptions hold, to make a significant contribution to agricultural growth in the sub-region. It intends doing this by achieving broad-based, sustainable improvements in agricultural productivity, competitiveness and markets of the sub-region by delivery of technologies and innovations, policy options, capacity strengthening and knowledge management appropriate to the demands of a broad-base of priority clients.

The Operational Plan's Structure

This five year *Operational Plan* for implementing the first phase of the *Strategic Plan*, follows FAAP principles linking it with CAADP. It supports CAADP's highest level objective by *sustainably improving broad-based agricultural productivity, competitiveness and markets* through the delivery of four *Results* which constitute a paradigm shift from conventional research, no longer focusing just on the development of isolated packages of technology.

Result 1 [*Appropriate technologies and innovations developed*] focuses on technology and innovation development. There is a shift to ensure responsiveness to demand as well as an adaptive approach. Key participants are smallholders and

pastoralists, although the approach is broad-based and does not exclude other stakeholders, including large scale and commercial producers.

Result 2 [*Strategic decision-making options for policy, institutions and markets developed*] encompasses policy, marketing, institutions, and socio-economics and is a broadening of perspective to ensure increased impact and more appropriate responses to demand.

Result 3 [*Sub-regional agricultural research system strengthened and coordinated*] covers all aspects of capacity strengthening in the *sub-regional agricultural research system* including the various and diverse agro-ecological systems and zones, public and private sector organisations and institutes and input and output markets, policy and decision making bodies.

Result 4 [*Demand for agricultural knowledge from target clients facilitated and met*] is an undertaking to increase efforts at developing and activating the linkages with uptake networks that are essential to delivery. It is about creating platforms to ensure information on technologies, and the information that makes the technologies happen, is combined to create the knowledge necessary for innovation.

Pre-2007 CORAF/WECARD sub-regional agricultural research was implemented through a number of different *operational units* located throughout the sub-region. The effective coordination of the diverse sub-regional *operational units* during the period pre-2007 was a great challenge. Thus it was difficult to track any impacts since most of the initiatives were very dispersed. There was little to connect these initiatives, no matter how successful, with an overall strategy or plan for the sub-region.

The new paradigm

This *Operational Plan* provides a fresh perspective and approach to sub-regional agricultural research. It addresses previous shortcomings through a paradigm of integrated agricultural research involving all stakeholders in the supply chain, focussed on a clearly articulated, prioritised, sub-regional strategy.

The approach is centrally managed and programme-based, the institutional basis lies in the CAADP framework. The principal advantages of the new approach include:

- *Excellent opportunities for inter-programme linkages and planning*
- *More effective monitoring, evaluation and learning*
- *Simplified streams for knowledge and information –*
- *Independence from undue non-programme influences –*
- *Clear lines of accountability*
- *Strengthened corporate cohesion*
- *Clear focus for resource mobilisation and development partners*
- *Ensuring that all work conducted is coherent with the new Strategic Plan*

Programme Managers are responsible for high quality programmes comprised of a number of projects, and of delivering Programme *Results* in order to make a significant contribution to CORAF/WECARD's overall objectives. Project leaders focus on implementation with oversight from appropriate governance structures. The new programme approach allows more effective planning which takes into consideration sub-regional needs and priorities.

The Principle of Subsidiarity

Agricultural research for development in Africa is a critical part of the economic growth process necessary for the successful elimination of poverty on the continent. It is complex and extensive, involving countless individuals and organisations in an enormous variety of tasks, projects and programmes. CORAF/WECARD's position and role in this is defined by its sub-regional constituency and is governed by the *principle of subsidiarity*.

This principle enables CORAF/WECARD to devolve authority to those best placed to deal with it and allows it to focus on functions that spill-over national decision domains so that NARS benefit from decisions and actions at the sub-regional level.

Regional Economic Communities

Within the sub-region, there are several RECs operating with whom CORAF/WECARD has formal agreements and extensive informal connections. The Heads of States of WCA have provided ECOWAS and ECCAS with the mandate of coordinating and following up the implementation of the CAADP in West and Central Africa. ECOWAS for West Africa and CEMAC for Central Africa have formally commissioned CORAF/WECARD to implement CAADP *Pillar 4* through WAAPP and CAAPP.

Implications of Programme Approach

The shift to a programme-based approach requires significant changes in organisational and institutional systems and structures throughout the sub-region.

Networking as a mechanism for ensuring sub-regional collaboration and delivery of *Results* is critically important; existing networks are being re-organised and reformed to address specific sub-regional issues. Permanently financed network structures will **not** be supported by CORAF/WECARD under the programme approach of the revised *Strategic Plan* and this *Operational Plan*.

Current *operating units* have an important role to play in implementation, but are no longer responsible for overall management of CORAF/WECARD programmes. They may form the nucleus of resources to address a specific problem, but their accountability and access to SRO resources is through the CORAF/WECARD programme management structure.

The current organisational structure is not appropriate for the implementation of these changes under the new paradigm, increased capacity at the Secretariat is essential to creating an appropriate enabling environment for successful operationalisation of the Strategic Plan.

Programme Identity and Content

All programme types are, to a greater or lesser extent, delivering on all of the *Results* in the logframe

***Results* are not programmes - key to the *programme approach* is the integration of activities within and between programmes - all contributing to *Result* delivery**

Research within this Operational Plan is done by those members of

CORAF/WECARD best placed to deliver

Members with reduced capacity are supported through the *Capacity Strengthening Programme* until such time as they are in a position to contribute to sub-regional research initiatives

Eight Programmes form the basis of this *Operational Plan*., These Programmes were identified as priorities through a sub-region study conducted by IFPRI. As the *Operational Plan* is implemented, Programmes will be reviewed and their performance evaluated to determine whether or not they are appropriate. The new programmes fall into three broad categories:

- **Technical research** – using an integrated approach based on systems and commodities employing new holistic, participatory methodologies:
 1. **Livestock, Fisheries and Aquaculture**
 2. **Staple Crops**
 3. **Non-staple crops**
 4. **Natural Resource Management**
 5. **Biotechnology and Bio-safety**
- **Policy research** – identifying and responding to key issues preventing achievement of the improved markets, competitiveness and productivity through research:
 6. **Policy, Markets, Trade, Institutions and Socio-economics**
- **Efficient research delivery** – improving information and knowledge management and access, including research into mechanisms and methodologies:
 7. **Knowledge management**
 8. **Capacity strengthening and co-ordination**

Technical Research Programmes

Research Programmes are only implemented by those in a position to deliver *Results*

The new paradigm of the *Strategic Plan* places great emphasis on IAR4D. Under the new paradigm the focus is on **putting farmers and end-users at the centre of research** and expanding the involvement of non-conventional partners and stakeholders in the research process. The targeted clients of this *Operational Plan* include female-headed and disease-affected households, youths and other vulnerable groups.

Emphasis is on **adaptive and applied research, which is allocated at least 70% of all operational resources**; focus is on impact-oriented activities. Basic, strategic, and more upstream research is only planned where CORAF/WECARD has a comparative advantage.

For the five technical research programmes several policy, marketing, trade and socio-economic priorities are also identified as high priorities. These are being primarily dealt with by Programme 6, under the broad heading of *Policy Research*,

but there is also cross-fertilisation of ideas and exchange of information between technical research and Programme 6, through the use of *innovation platforms*.

Policy and Socio-economic Research Programme

The policy programme is a new area of commitment for CORAF/WECARD. It recognises the importance of effective dialogue and relationships with policy makers to ensure that appropriate research meets demand. In its broadest sense, policy research responds to the demand of policy- and decision-makers for information on how to improve policy, and create the enabling environment for high levels of sustained economic growth in the sector.

All *technical research* Programmes contain elements of policy and socio-economic research

The skills to implement this Programme in full may not necessarily exist at present and some development and/or enhancing of competencies may be required.

Programmes for Effective Research Delivery – Core Functions

This group constitutes the third set of Programmes in this *Operational Plan* and is concerned with *effective research delivery*. They may be considered **core functions**, not only promoting the exchange of knowledge and information between technical programmes, but also between the policy, delivery and technical aspects of the *Strategy*. These **core functions** may be summarised as:

- **Knowledge**
- **Capacity Strengthening** which includes **Co-ordination**

The strengthening of the NARS is the basis for creating a strong sub-regional organisation. Capacity is not uniform across the sub-region and the Programme is focussing on those with greatest need in priority areas. As capacity is strengthened more stakeholders will be able to participate in the technical activities of CORAF/WECARD's research agenda.

The distinction between *Effective Research Delivery* and Technical and Policy Research is important because whilst some research may be appropriate, and be included in them, the focus is on empowerment of a broad-base of stakeholders

It is important to note that within this *Operational Plan* research is treated as a means to delivery and impact, *NOT* as a mechanism for direct capacity building

CORAF/WECARD direct involvement in developing effective research delivery through these Programmes is limited to initiatives with a sub-regional dimension

CORAF/WECARD has **no** direct responsibility for the strengthening of capacity in the national systems of member countries where there is **no sub-regional dimension**. However in its role as an advocate of sub-regional agricultural research, the possibility remains for CORAF/WECARD to co-ordinate and identify options for intra sub-regional responses to those national needs.

Co-ordination - The IAR4D paradigm requires multi-stakeholder and multi-level engagement, which requires carefully managed co-ordination. CORAF/WECARD was established, *inter alia*, to do this in order to minimise duplication of effort, optimise synergies, support resource mobilisation, enhance the effectiveness of the sub-region and ensure the achievement of objectives.

The Secretariat's coordination role is critical in CORAF/WECARD and this role is fulfilled by **direct involvement** in co-ordination and **indirectly** through facilitation of the process by encouraging dialogue, mobilising resources and providing appropriate levels of information.

The main focus of capacity strengthening is on non-conventional areas and is concerned with *empowering stakeholders* to identify and respond more effectively to their own needs

Programme Implementation - coherence

The new programmes are not only coherent with CORAF/WECARD's *Strategic Plan* but also align with those of the CGIAR Research Flagships, FARA's *Strategic Result* areas and networking support functions and the thematic areas of the CAADP. All the CORAF/WECARD Programmes contribute to delivery of the organisation's *Results* and are therefore harmonised with the wider aims of the sub-region.

Programme Budgets

Programme budgets are presented, and identify:

- *Committed Funds* which are currently available and being disbursed, or will be disbursed at the times indicated.
- *Pipeline Funding* which refers to funds and projects which are in negotiation, but are not yet committed. The origin of funds is shown where this is known.
- *Projected Needs* which are based on anticipated project activity and are **indicative** only.

Harmonisation of Agricultural Investment Activities in the Sub-region

Ensuring harmony and complementarity of on-going agricultural investment in this *Operational Plan*, is an important focus during the initial stages of implementation. The change in approach is not limited to mobilising new funding for new activities, but is also to ensure that existing investments from all sources in the priority areas, as well as critical gaps, are known.

Organisation and Governance

The *Operational Plan* requires significant changes in organisational structures as well as the institutions that govern them. Change to support the implementation of the new paradigm is essential.

The *General Assembly* (GA) and *Governing Board* (GB) remain sovereign; the composition and the responsibilities of the GB have changed under this *Operational Plan*. The Board membership is being expanded; and the Scientific and Technical Committee remains its technical arm.

The Secretariat has an important role to play in implementation, with five main functions. It needs to be larger and better resourced with changes in its internal structure and management systems.

The Programme Managers are, as far as possible, located centrally under the overall leadership of the new *Director Programmes* [D-P]. The Office of the D-P includes units to support implementation.

Each programme has a *Steering Committee* or *Technical Advisory Group* to provide transparent oversight of the programme. Funding for the Managers and other units comes from core funding.

Projects are implemented at NARS level with organisations that have a comparative technical advantage taking the lead. Resources are mobilised through the Programme Managers.

The Director Finance and Administration is responsible for all financial and administrative issues, and reports to the Executive Director. There is a separate *internal audit unit* that reports directly to the Executive Director.

An Information and Communications Unit is the interface with the external community, to act as a public relations body and focal point for information.

Issues of Change and Change Management

All the major changes identified need to be adopted throughout CORAF/WECARD. The aim is to integrate the changes into programme strategies as they develop. The change is being managed through a formal Plan implemented through the office of the Executive Director.

Budgets and Financial Planning

A financial plan has been developed to identify key requirements for implementation, taking into account two basic cost centres of *Research* and *Governance and Management*. The projected budget for the full implementation of the Operational plan is **US\$ 111,982,232**. The level of funding already secured as at June 17, 2008 amounts to **US\$ 18,525,000**, which is **16.15%** of the total budget requirement. The total committed funding as at June 17, 2008 is **US\$ 66,090,111**. The total of secured and committed funding as at June 17, 2008 is **US\$ 84,170,111** which is **75.16%** of the total budget needed for full implementation of the Operational Plan. Although CORAF/WECARD hopes to secure all the necessary funding in order to fully implement the Operational Plan, there is a possibility that there will be shortfalls in level of funding required for the Operational Plan. Contingency plans aimed at managing risks associated with any short-falls in funding include identifying and implementing top-most priority projects; encouraging NARS for increased in-kind contribution to projects implementation; and ensuring low administrative costs.