

Communiqué

22 March 2010

African smallholders say that enhancing farmer voice in strategic R&D processes and investing in innovations to improve market access, soil fertility management, small-scale irrigation and water management, and access to ICTs and credit should have more emphasis in agricultural research for development (AR4D) reform agenda promoted by GCARD. In three national workshops with representatives of nearly 100 smallholder organisations, the Future Agricultures Consortium shows how decisions made in Montpellier in March 2010 can be stronger with true farmer inclusion.

Farmer voices needed for success at GCARD

By David Hughes
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African Farmers Speak Out

The Future Agricultures Consortium's recent consultations with farmers and farmer organisations in Ethiopia, Kenya and Malawi on AR4D highlighted six crosscutting priorities that should be included in the GCARD agenda.

The priorities are:

1. Support participatory research process that create true demand-led research to meet developmental priorities
2. Revitalise agricultural extension as a catalyst for capacity building, rural innovation and enterprise
3. Increase active farmer representation and voice on AR4D in key decision making forums
4. Improve access to information technology in rural areas, particularly mobile technology
5. Invest in R&D to enhance staple crops, promote integrated soil fertility management and expand small-scale irrigation and water management
6. Support micro-credit and rural finance for investment in small and medium-scale agro-enterprise development

The consultations took place late in 2009 in a series of national workshops with representatives of nearly 100 farmers' organisations to discuss the GCARD agenda. These consultations also invited farmers to comment on recommendations emerging from FAC's May 2008 high-level international conference: "[Towards an African Green Revolution](#)", which was co-organised with the [Salzburg Global Seminar](#), Austria, and included Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General. A key outcome of this conference was consensus on the need to prioritise farmer engagement in decision-making and policy formulation processes and on the need for better coordination across institutions and on African agricultural reform processes.

Farmers' Priorities for GCARD

Across the three countries, farmers repeatedly stressed that information, partnership and coordination needed more



Kenya's farmer workshop at KARI (Kenya Agricultural Research Institute - Kakamega)



Malawi's farmer working groups in Lilongwe

On our web site

Farmer First: [Farmer First workshops and books](#)

FAC [Global Conference on Agricultural Research](#)

Related material

FARA's [GCARD-Africa e-consultation report](#)
[Regional Review of Africa's Agricultural Research and Development](#)

[Proceedings on the Face-to-Face Consultation in Africa](#), 5-7 October 2009, FARA Secretariat, Accra, Ghana

[GCARD](#): The Global Conference web site
[Consultation](#): The FARA survey now shaping the agenda for GCARD

attention and that research on staple crops and agricultural productivity should be made more demand-driven and linked to rural transformation.

FAC is working to take these views to GCARD and will continue to press for the full engagement of small-scale producers in research reform processes and to putting '[farmers first](#)' in agriculture policy more generally.

Preparing for GCARD

Preparations for GCARD have taken place across Africa, supported by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa ([FARA](#)) and their GCARD e-consultations in Africa highlighted the following issues:

- keep development linked closely to research
- improve agricultural productivity
- improve information sharing and build capacity
- maintain a focus on youth and women farmers
- manage natural resources
- invest in more appropriate machinery and mechanisation
- include technology and indigenous knowledge and plants

In addition, a recent review of Africa's agriculture research and development identified the following priority areas: staple and root crop productivity, rice research, livestock productivity, collaboration among the national agricultural research systems, private/public partnerships, capacity building and resources for demand-driven research.

In a further regional meeting organised by the FARA in Accra in October 2008, participants further identified CAADP as a strong expression of Africa's agricultural priorities. The meeting agreed that CAADP priorities needed to figure prominently in GCARD deliberations.

Future Challenges

In the FAC consultations in Africa, farmers acknowledged the importance of the GCARD process, and the need to prioritise agricultural research for development. But they also argued that not enough is being done to involve farmers' representatives in key strategic decision-making meetings and processes where AR4D priorities are being debated and agreed. Nor is enough being done to bolster the management capacities, analytical capabilities and advocacy skills of farmers' organisations to enable them to contribute effectively to key agricultural policy processes.

For these reasons, FAC continues to champion farmers' inputs into policy dialogues across Africa, with research and support emphasising the important role farmers' organisations play in driving agricultural innovation and rural transformation in Africa.

See also:

- [FAC's Farmer First web site](#)
- [Challenges and Opportunities for Strengthening Farmers Organisations in Africa: Lessons from Ethiopia, Kenya and Malawi](#)
- [The "Seven Habits of Highly Effective Farmers' Organisations"](#)
- [Big farms or small farms: how to respond to the food crisis?](#)

[GFAR](#): The Global Forum for Agricultural Research web site

[CGIAR](#):
The various agriculture-related research agencies

[FARA](#): FARA's web site

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FAC is hosted by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID).



- [Land, Land Policy and Smallholder Agriculture in Ethiopia](#)
- [Intensification of Ethiopian Smallholder Agriculture](#)
- [Smallholder Coffee Commercialisation in Malawi](#)
- [Building synergies between social protection and smallholder agricultural policies](#)

Supplemental information

The Kenya workshop in Kakamega brought together representatives of over 30 national and regional producer associations, farmers' cooperatives and marketing organisations, agricultural researchers and youth groups. The Malawi workshop in Lilongwe placed a special call for women and young farmers and included participants from nearly 30 national and regional farmer organisations and representatives of key commodity producers' associations. The workshop in Ethiopia took place in Hosanna (SNNPR) following two days of community consultation with three major cooperatives. It was attended by over 30 representatives of farmers' cooperatives, cooperative union managers, regional Cooperative Promotion Officers and zone and agriculture development officers.

The priorities from the three FAC workshops with farmers are listed below:

Malawi farmers prioritised:	Kenyan farmers prioritised:	Ethiopian farmers prioritised:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifying sources of productivity in smallholder farms - improving cost effectiveness of alternative ways of restoring soil fertility - identifying alternative ways to strengthening and sustain farmer organisations - developing cost effective mechanisation and irrigation systems for smallholder farmers - understanding international price movements and market dynamics - understanding the value chain (hence profitability) of crops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improving local research presence - building capacity and facilitating farmer representation and voice - establishing better links between farmers, research, value-chain stakeholders and development - providing better and more timely information for farmers - improving policy makers' understanding of the smallholder and their role in agriculture and development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifying specific crop varieties that reflect agro-ecological conditions - investing in livestock research - adopting a grassroots approach (enhance community participation) to identify the root causes of food insecurity and identify solutions - investing in market outlets/linkages research and productivity enhancement - providing education and training geared to needs of farmers - building awareness to control population growth - providing access to credit for farmers - enhance the capacity of FOs to effectively represent farmers and drive the required change - maintaining strong linkages between extension and research