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Mid Term Review
Future Agricultures
Consortium

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MID TERM REVIEW
FUTURE AGRICULTURES CONSORTIUM

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
DFID	Department for International Development
FAC	Future Agricultures Consortium
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation (of the United Nations)
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
ReSAKSS	Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System
RIU	Research Into Use (research programme funded by DFID)
RNRA	Renewable Natural Resources and Agriculture (Team in DFID Policy Division)
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies (London University)
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
WDR	World Development Report

Executive Summary

1. This review was undertaken by Prof Frank Ellis, Overseas Development Group, UK, and Dr Godfrey Bahigwa, Director, Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA), Uganda. The findings are based on written and timeline evidence provided to the reviewers by the consortium, including the complete published output of its current phase, and 17 telephone interviews with FAC members and independent commentators.
2. The reviewers consider that in its first phase FAC has substantively met its outputs and project purpose, within exceedingly limited resources for its international and national policy-influencing approach. It has done this by spreading resources very thinly but highly strategically, so that in effect FAC outputs have often been cross-subsidised by engagement in activities funded by other parties. The reviewers would agree that this serendipitous approach has some merits, but they also consider that core activities should have more substantive and reliable funding.
3. The reviewers recognise particular FAC success in engagement in the international effort to revitalise agriculture in Africa (including valuable inputs to the WDR 2008); in the work in Ethiopian regions towards influencing the country's PRSP (PASDEP); in the work in Malawi on the government's input subsidy programme; and in beginning to understand policy processes in ministries of agriculture and how to influence them.
4. In looking ahead to the next phase, the reviewers were mindful of resource constraints that may mean that difficult decisions need to be made between proposed activities. It was considered that an exercise in prioritisation was in any case required in the transition from Phase I to Phase II. The future set of activities put forward by FAC are as follows:
 - A. appoint an Africa-based coordinator to help facilitate Africa-wide policy dialogues;
 - B. strengthen the position of country coordinators in existing and new focal point countries;
 - C. expand into West Africa, in particular Ghana and possibly Senegal (in order to include French-speaking West Africa);
 - D. achieve greater alignment of FAC activities with CAADP and ReSAKSS;
 - E. launch the science, technology and innovation theme, involving a new set of partnerships;
 - F. consolidate and expand the communications capability with a full-time communications officer;
 - G. initiate a series of major FAC co-hosted annual events (e.g. the Salzburg Global Seminar).
5. The reviewers recommend that FAC continues to build on the existing portfolio of three substantive themes: agriculture and social protection, commercialisation and policy process. In the event of lower funding than envisaged in the Phase 2 proposal, items B, D and F in the above list should be prioritised in conjunction with pursuing those themes. This also includes item G as a sub-activity of F. Funding needs to be sufficient for FAC to continue to provide a learning platform for future agricultural policy in Africa.

6. The reviewers consider that in the event of budget limitations the true costs of an effective Africa coordinator are too high, and that engagement in the CAADP process to a considerable degree makes this post less essential to the aim of shifting the centre of gravity of FAC towards Africa. This does not mean that FAC should get ‘swallowed up’ by CAADP, rather that it should proceed as planned to make mobile and strategic inputs to the process as occasion arises.
7. Again due to budget limitations, FAC may need to make difficult choices concerning its theme and geographical coverage. The reviewers do not feel they are in a position to recommend specific decisions in this regard, nevertheless the expansion to West Africa may need to be selectively phased-in the light of the evolving resource position.
8. During Phase I an effective balance was struck between investigatory activities (including both orthodox and ‘action research’) and policy process engagement type activities: this balance needs to be maintained in the second phase, since investigatory activities provide the new messages that can be used in effective policy process engagement.
9. If FAC is successful in eventually obtaining full funding from DFID (and the reviewers consider that such funding should indeed be forthcoming), then two or three serious policy research sub-projects should be included in the Phase II portfolio of activities. There are important agricultural policy experiences going on across Africa that badly need in-depth and critical cross-continent comparative work. The approach to such research would need to be flexible and opportunistic – combining detailed primary work in some places, with use of secondary evidence and evaluations from others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of the review team are as follows:

Recommendation 1: FAC should be encouraged to ‘take stock’ of strengths and weaknesses emerging from Phase I, not from the standpoint of putting more future resources into weak areas, but rather from the viewpoint of identifying strengths and building forward on these, perhaps over a narrower but more focused array of future activities than is currently envisaged.

Recommendation 2: emerging out of Phase 1, FAC is recommended to give more thought on how to identify ‘policy windows’ (or ‘moments’ as they are stated in some places), and to utilize these for more effective policy influence at national level.

Recommendation 3: amongst proposed Phase II activities, the reviewers consider that ensuring the strength of the central secretariat and communications capability at IDS; establishing effective focal point country coordinators; and engaging in the CAADP process should be prioritized, within the context of continuing to pursue the existing 3 themes.

Recommendation 4: we propose that the Africa coordinator is dropped, since we consider that FAC engagement in CAADP considerably weakens the case for such a coordinator, and we also believe that the Africa coordinator, in order to operate effectively, would represent an expensive use of consortium resources in the context of more limited resources than those originally requested.

Recommendation 5: the reviewers consider that (resources permitting) country coordinators in collaboration with UK colleagues should adopt a rather more mobile country outreach mode of operation than has been typical in Phase I, this outreach including lesson learning from interesting policy experiments in countries other than the focal point ones themselves, and carrying policy messages across borders when opportunities to do so arise.

Recommendation 6: amongst other proposed Phase II activities, the reviewers consider that the expansion of coverage to West Africa is likely to require careful consideration by the consortium in the light of budgetary outcomes, and its adoption has lower priority in the reviewers' view than the components listed in Recommendation 3 above.

Recommendation 7: the balance struck in Phase I between investigatory activities (including both orthodox and 'action research') and policy process engagement type activities should be maintained in the second phase, since investigatory activities provide the new messages that can be used in effective policy process engagement;

Recommendation 8: in the event of full funding being obtained (and we recommend continued vigorous pursuit of such funding), identification of 2-3 in-depth policy research topics to involve more systematic and thorough cross-country exploration of those topics, including primary data collection in the sense of country visits to collect original documents and implementation data on policies; these research topics to involve partnerships between UK and African researchers;

Recommendation 9: The reviewers recommend that FAC Phase II is fully funded, preferably from DFID sources, since funding from multiple organizations inevitably incurs rising transaction costs. Full funding is required so that the consortium can continue to build on its proven capability to provide innovative and alternative insights into the Africa agriculture policy agenda, without having to depend as much as in Phase I on fortuitous events (arising from third-party funding) in order to achieve these beneficial outcomes.

MID-TERM REVIEW

FUTURE AGRICULTURES CONSORTIUM

1. Introduction

The Future Agricultures Consortium (FAC) is a project funded by the Renewable Natural Resources and Agriculture (RNRA) Team of DFID's Policy Division. It is a project that has the aim to improve the quality of public policy towards agriculture in low income Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) countries. This objective arises from DFID's Policy Paper on agriculture published in 2005 (DFID, 2005), in which the central importance of agricultural growth for poverty reduction in countries where the majority of the poor live in rural areas is affirmed. The project began in May 2005 and is scheduled to complete its current phase in March 2008. The project team has submitted a proposal to DFID for a second phase of the project to last from April 2008 to March 2011. The tasks of this mid-term review are as follows (see Review TOR at Annex A):

- (a) to assess the likelihood of FAC meeting its purpose to 'encourage dialogue and sharing of good practice by policy makers and opinion formers in developing countries on the role of agriculture in broad based growth';
- (b) to make recommendations on the FAC plan for the remaining 6 months of their current funding period (to March 2008); and
- (c) to make recommendations on the FAC proposal for extension and expansion beyond March 2008.

Agriculture has certainly been moving up the strategic poverty reduction agenda in SSA. Agriculture often has a key position in individual country's PRSPs (for example, the Ethiopia PASDEP is largely built around a strategy entitled Agricultural Development Led Industrialization), and the sector has become a priority strategic focal point for NEPAD in the shape of its Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). Many international reports on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals have also accorded agriculture special strategic priority; for example, the UN Millennium Project (2005), the Africa Commission (2005), and of course most recently the World Development Report 2008 (World Bank, 2007), the preparation of which involved significant contributions from members of FAC.

FAC operates at the intersection of knowledge and policy. This is a difficult intersection at which to work. On the one hand, the knowledge side of this interaction may be incomplete, contested, and complex to the extent that straightforward messages are difficult to formulate and convey. On the other hand, policy often represents a considerable dead weight of past practice, entrenched organizations and interests, and unwillingness to reorder priorities. Moreover, the personal and political interests that make some policy options more attractive than others to public decision makers can be exceedingly difficult to decipher or anticipate. What FAC sets out to do is to try to open up this policy space so that information and options can circulate more freely, and good ideas may stand a better chance of being taken up. There is no doubt that this is a worthwhile activity. FAC's relative success to date in achieving this objective, and the way it might go about doing this more effectively in the future, are the focal points of this review.

2. The Approach Taken by the Review

This review is predominantly based on examining the activities and outputs of FAC since its inception in May 2005 to September 2007. A comprehensive set of documents and reports produced over the past two and a half years was made available to the review team. In addition to these written materials, telephone interviews were held with key individuals both within FAC and from amongst those that FAC has sought to influence in the policy sphere in this period. A list of documents examined is provided at Annex B, while a list of individuals consulted is provided at Annex C to this report. The report seeks to reflect majority views expressed arising from interviews, as well as to allow dissenting voices to come through where these seem helpful for shaping ideas for the second phase.

FAC has to date operated utilizing a consortium of UK researchers in three leading institutions (IDS Sussex, Imperial College and ODI) working with in-country collaborators in three focal point countries (Ethiopia, Kenya and Malawi). The UK researchers are mainly well-known individuals with established professional reputations in the areas of rural development, agricultural economics, agricultural policy, and environmental sustainability. IDS Sussex provides a Secretariat for the Consortium as a whole. In-country collaborators are established researchers working within academic, teaching or research institutions or in research-oriented private consultancy outfits in each country. The success at achieving a unified in-country team has varied between countries, with Ethiopia and Malawi representing strength in this regard, and a more disconnected situation prevailing in Kenya during the first phase.

The structure of this review follows the three principal tasks that the review team were asked to accomplish. The next section (Section 3) is concerned with the likelihood of FAC achieving its project purpose by the end of the project in March 2008. This also involves a detailed consideration of the pattern of outputs produced under FAC, and the extent to which those outputs can be verified to have made their intended contribution towards the project purpose. Section 4 considers what needs to be done over the remaining 6 months of the current phase of the project in order for FAC to comply as fully as possible with the achievement of its purpose. Section 5 examines critically the proposed second phase of FAC put forward by the FAC team, and puts forward recommendations regarding the way forward for a second phase.

3. Achieving the Purpose of the current Phase of FAC

The purpose of FAC set out in the project logframe is already stated above. This purpose was considered to be achievable by the realization of four main outputs (paraphrased from the logframe):

- (i) public policy [internationally and in African countries] being better informed about good practice and contemporary thinking on the role of agriculture in broad-based growth;
- (ii) evidence about the role of agriculture being made available to a wide constituency to use in influencing and informing public policy processes;
- (iii) developing country institutions [involved in the project] becoming effective policy contributors in their own countries and regions;

- (iv) the “consortium model” turning out to offer lessons to other projects and agencies [other than DFID] about how to promote improving policy through opening up the space for policy change and debate in the ways pursued by the consortium.

These outputs are somewhat opaquely specified. The reviewers prefer to think of the four outputs as comprising (i) research and analysis accomplished (including action or process research where relevant), (ii) dissemination successfully undertaken, (iii) capacity building in local teams achieved, and (iv) lesson learning and influence on other players verified.

As it turned out, FAC has performed since its inception under quite onerous resource constraints. An initial bid for a budget of around £1.7 million got reduced, first, to £1.2 million, then eventually to £750,000 providing £250,000 in each of three years in its current phase. With these budgetary reductions, early ambitions got significantly eroded:

- the number of UK partner organizations was reduced from five or six down to three;
- an intention to undertake comparative work between South Asia and Africa was axed, thus constraining lesson learning for Africa;
- the number of topic themes was reduced from four to three, excluding the agricultural technology and innovation strand of the original proposal;
- the number of focal point countries in Africa was limited to three (excluding, significantly, West Africa); and
- the prospect of outreach from focal point to adjacent countries in each selected Africa sub-region had to be abandoned.

Nevertheless, and despite these limitations, FAC has achieved a very considerable amount towards the outputs and the project purpose over the two years that it has effectively been fully operational after its inception period. It has done this by spreading resources (and therefore the purchase of individual’s time) very thinly but highly strategically so that in effect FAC outputs have often been cross-subsidized by the engagement of individuals and teams in activities funded from other sources that have been able to contribute to building the FAC profile. The reviewers of FAC consider that there is some merit in this approach as a means of ensuring that FAC makes the best use of the knowledge and portfolio of activities of its members; nevertheless FAC has probably been a bit too dependent on some of these ‘happy accidents’ and more solid core funding would have been beneficial to long term project coverage, consistency and coherence. We return to these considerations in due course.

The eventual FAC model pursued in its current phase can be briefly elaborated. FAC has so far been built around three key themes:

- (i) growth and social protection: demonstrating the synergies between achieving agricultural growth and forms of social protection that contribute to, rather than defeat, productive engagement (for example, the Malawi fertilizer subsidy as a focus for policy debate)
- (ii) commercialization: encouraging rising market engagement on the part of small farmers, but also looking to the growth in high value markets (e.g. growing urban populations)

and participation in domestic and international value chains (supermarkets, horticultural exports)

- (iii) policy process: how to influence strategic policy priorities (for example into PRSPs), but also to open up responsiveness to new policy ideas in ministries of agriculture.

The FAC ‘model’ has comprised pursuing these themes in three focal point countries, with the particular emphasis in each country being determined in part by the priorities of the local research team, but also by opportunistic synergy with particular in-country policy issues on which FAC members have been engaged with funding from other sources. The result is a matrix of activities, with strengths in particular themes occurring in some countries that are not necessarily replicated in other countries.

The verifiable achievements of FAC towards meeting its output objectives and project purpose can be listed as follows:

- the establishment of a website that has created a distinctive FAC ‘brand’ and that is increasingly being used by international and national policy actors as the first place to look for the latest ideas and discussions on agricultural policy change in Africa;
- energetic engagement in the agricultural policy debate at international scale, as exemplified in particular by injection of ideas into the writing of the 2008 World Development Report on Agriculture for Development (see Box 1);

Box 1: Endorsement

“I have the highest regard for the FAC work that was extremely useful to us in preparing the WDR”

Professor Alain de Janvry, Co-Lead Author, World Bank, World Development Report 2008 (email comment received by the reviewers 12 October 2007)

See also a letter received from Prof de Janvry, subsequently received on 26 October 2007, and provided here at Annex D.

- effective and motivational Secretariat at IDS despite constrained resources;
- the formation of FAC teams with a unified purpose and engagement in research and policy engagement in two out of the three focal point countries (Ethiopia and Malawi);
- particular success in Ethiopia with decentralized work in three of the country’s (internal) regions on the building of agricultural policy scenarios and feed in to the country’s PRSP;
- success also in Malawi through engaging in the monitoring and evaluation of the Malawi government’s Input Subsidy Programme, influence on the downstream redesign of the programme, and the ability to disseminate findings broadly through FAC media;
- successful organization of high-level workshops to inform policy processes, including:

- FAC workshop at IDS that brought together all collaborators, including from Africa;
 - Workshop at IDS at which FAC provided input in the WDR 2008;
 - 5th International Conference on the Ethiopian Economy hosted by the Ethiopian Economic Association;
 - Ethiopia regional workshops on agricultural pathways out of poverty
- a very considerable published output to date, with more in the pipeline due in the final six months of the project, comprising:
 - the 2005 IDS Bulletin issue containing 25 articles on the future of agriculture;
 - some 30 papers presented at 4 different workshops held under FAC auspices;
 - a total of 16 ‘hot topic’ and briefing papers on agricultural growth and poverty reduction topics
 - a number of substantive theme studies
 - a number of IDS Working Papers and similar outputs available on the websites of international agencies

Nevertheless, FAC Phase I has exhibited some specific weaknesses, recognized as much by members of the FAC team as by outside observers. Some of these weaknesses result from the eventual rather low level of funding in comparison to original project ambitions, while others result from in-country difficulty with establishing a coherent team (Kenya):

- the low level of eventual funding meant that West Africa could not be represented in FAC activities in this phase, with consequent diminution of its ability to claim Africa-wide authenticity;
- in Kenya, efforts have ended up separated between three different players involved in FAC work, and this delayed and diminished the realization of effective local profile and policy impact in that focal point country.

On balance, the reviewers consider that FAC has done rather well in its current phase, given really quite severely limited resources for this type of umbrella, policy influencing and policy process engaging, learning platform. An excellent start has been made, and a second phase can build on what has been achieved so far. However, due to probable resource constraints, it will almost certainly have to do so more selectively than is currently envisaged in the Phase II proposal, in order to avoid a continuation of the ‘spreading thin’ mode of operation that has characterized the current phase.¹

4. Recommendations for the remaining 6 months of the current phase

By the time this review has been presented and finalized, the current phase of FAC will only have 5 months left to run, from November 2007 to March 2008. This period is more or less fully assigned to a series of high profile events that illustrate both the enthusiasm that FAC is putting into its overall remit, and the extent to which it is engaged in international agricultural growth initiatives. The key such events are summarized here as follows:

- November 2007 – ODI seminar series and workshop linked to the launch of the World Development Report 2008

¹ Phase II activities have been costed by the consortium at £3 million; however, the reviewers understand that only one third of this amount can be confirmed at the time of submitting the review.

- December 2007 – Farmer First Revisited workshop, linking to the reinstatement of the technology and innovation theme into FAC
- January 2008 – presentations and workshop on agriculture, seasonality and social protection (linked to CAADP, FAO)
- February 2008 – DFID-FAC joint meeting on FAC Phase II, and going a little beyond this period;
- April 2008 – high level international policy forum, the Salzburg Seminar, on the African Green Revolution

While these and other activities, including finalization of various published outputs, are helpful to maintaining and taking forward the high international profile of FAC, there is a missing activity in this period that is required in order to ensure the effectiveness of the February 2008 discussion with DFID, given potential constraints on future resources (see footnote 1). This comprises prioritising the key lessons, topics, and strands from the current phase that can be productively taken forward in Phase II. In other words, the current approach to Phase II has a tendency towards being non-discriminating between things that have worked and those that have not worked in Phase I. It is also non-discriminating concerning choices between the vast array of agricultural growth and policy sub-themes that could be pursued in the future. While part of the reason for this lack of prioritization is admirable because it rests on priorities that should arise from within African countries themselves, it also creates a risk that FAC could end up in Phase II being spread even thinner than it is already across multiple topics and layers of engagement in the agricultural growth and poverty reduction arena.

From its Phase I experience, FAC needs to revisit and reaffirm where its comparative advantage lies (in terms of approach, themes, topics and gaps in understanding), as compared to other institutions or groups covering agriculture in Africa. It also needs to distinguish from within Phase I, the components of what it has been doing that have worked well from those that have not worked so well, and move forward in Phase II with the stronger components. In carrying out such an exercise, it may also be discovered that certain things that worked reasonably well in Phase I nevertheless have little additional scope for productive further development in Phase II, while others seem to offer a lot of scope.

Recommendation 1: FAC should be encouraged to ‘take stock’ of strengths and weaknesses emerging from Phase I, not from the standpoint of putting more future resources into weak areas, but rather from the viewpoint of identifying strengths and building forward on these, perhaps over a narrower but more focused array of future activities than is currently envisaged.

Recommendation 2: emerging out of Phase 1, FAC is recommended to give more thought on how to identify ‘policy windows’ (or ‘moments’ as they are stated in some places), and to utilize these for more effective policy influence at national level.

5. Recommendations for extension and expansion beyond March 2008

It will already be apparent from earlier comments that the reviewers consider that FAC has done well in the relatively short period of time since its work programme properly got underway, and that it has a positive and distinctive role to play in taking forward the agricultural policy agenda in Africa. The central consideration is what FAC does that other

international agencies or policy groups are not doing, or are unable to do due to their particular terms of reference and remits. The reviewers consider that this distinctive position derives in part from FAC's potential to feed ideas and findings into the AU-CAADP process through the regional SAKSS (see Box 2). This does not mean FAC being 'swallowed' by CAADP. Rather it means making strategic forays into the process, conveying ideas that are not constrained by the politics and process of formal intergovernmental deliberations.

BOX 2

Implementing CAADP and ReSAKSS: An Opportunity for FAC to Interface

FAC is not alone in trying to bridge the gap between research and policy. About 4 years ago, five CGIAR centers: IFPRI, ILRI, IITA, ICRISAT and IWMI initiated the Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS). The main objective of ReSAKSS is to empower policy makers and development practitioners in Africa with information and knowledge to improve the quality of debate and decision making. The focus of ReSAKSS is on improving the design, implementation, monitoring, and impact assessment of agricultural and rural development strategies in African countries in general. More specifically, ReSAKSS aims to provide knowledge and analytical support to regional economic communities (RECs) in the implementation of CAADP. Three ReSAKSS nodes have been established in the main RECs in Africa: COMESA, SADC and ECOWAS. The ReSAKSS node for COMESA is hosted by ILRI in Nairobi, Kenya; that for SADC is hosted by IWMI in Pretoria, South Africa; while the node for ECOWAS is hosted by IITA in Ibadan, Nigeria. Each ReSAKSS node has a coordinator with direct links to the respective REC and member states, and all the three nodes are already engaged with a number of countries in efforts to align their agricultural strategies and plans towards CAADP objectives and targets. IFPRI provides overall oversight and coordination for the ReSAKSS nodes in Africa. The ReSAKSS nodes are fairly funded for the next three years by a consortium of donors: USAID, DFID and SIDA.

This established network of ReSAKSS nodes provides an opportunity for FAC to channel its outputs to end users. Therefore, the proposal by FAC to hire an Africa-based coordinator for its operations would create a parallel structure that will not only duplicate efforts of ReSAKSS, but also is expensive to establish and maintain. Instead, the reviewers propose that FAC establishes links with ReSAKSS nodes in East and West Africa that already have regional coordinators. All the three FAC countries in eastern Africa: Ethiopia, Kenya and Malawi are members of COMESA and covered by the ReSAKSS node at ILRI. FAC would bring on board the much needed research and analytical capacity and substantially reduce the turn-around time for producing knowledge products in the ReSAKSS network. This scenario presents a win-win situation for both FAC and ReSAKSS

FAC have set out their own proposals for a Phase II in both long and short versions. The key set of future activities put forward by FAC are as follows:

- appoint an Africa-based coordinator to help facilitate Africa-wide policy dialogues;
- strengthen the position of country coordinators in existing and new focal point countries;

- expand into West Africa, in particular Ghana and possibly Senegal (in order to include French-speaking West Africa);
- achieve greater alignment of FAC activities with CAADP and ReSAKSS;
- launch the science, technology and innovation theme, involving a new set of partnerships;
- consolidate and expand the communications capability with a full-time communications officer;
- initiate a series of major FAC co-hosted annual events (e.g. the Salzburg Global Seminar).

The reviewers see strengths, flaws, and a slight proneness to drift in this set of proposals taken as a whole. When this set of activities are linked to the Work Areas identified in the Phase II main document, and to the way it is considered that budgets should be spent, there appears a little too much scope for multiple and not necessarily very productive ‘talking shops’ and not enough focus on more selective and in-depth activities, whether these involve action engagement in particular policy process activities or more substantive investigation of policy alternatives and the lessons that can be learned from them. This is a matter of emphasis and degree and is finely balanced – we are not talking about substantial alterations in intentions here. This is also irrespective of the funding eventually obtained, and links directly to the recommendations made above concerning a necessary stock-taking during the last six months of the current phase of FAC. Potential budget constraints add urgency to the need to prioritise in this way.

From the foregoing list of future activities, there are several that we consider should be prioritized unambiguously, with secure and proper funding for the duration of Phase II of the project. These are:

- A. the appointment of a full-time communications officer, and reliable funding to the core secretariat capabilities around the website, networking, knowledge dissemination, and co-organisation of high level workshops;

Box 3: Research and Policy Influence in Phase II

The ultimate goal for FAC and other knowledge providers in Africa is to see policy debates and policy formulation increasingly informed by evidence from policy research. For this to happen, more needs to be done in the second phase, beyond what has been achieved in the current phase. It is one thing to identify and work with competent researchers in Africa, it is another to use the same people in the hope that they will influence policy. Good researchers do not always have the drive or skills to engage with policy processes in their countries. Therefore, FAC will have to think carefully how the research products can reach the targeted users in-country and actually stimulate debate. One way is to “keep ears open” to emerging policy windows, and this is where working with ReSAKSS nodes again becomes useful because they are on the ground and tuned into what is happening at regional and national level in many of the REC member states. It is also an area where the ReSAKSS nodes are still on a learning curve and joint efforts with FAC would strengthen the nodes.

- B. strengthening the national level policy dialogue process by appointing national coordinators in the focal point countries (also see Box 3)

- C. engaging in the CAADP process through linkages to the ReSAKSS, thus providing a valuable external stimulation to deliberations that can easily become stifled by institutional inertia.

The reviewers are less certain about other elements of Phase II FAC, not only as expressed in the ‘shortlist’ of activities, but also with respect to the development of the ideas and their budgeting in the main Phase II document. Some observations on other components of Phase II, taking into account potential budgetary limitations are as follows:

- during Phase I an effective balance was struck between investigatory activities (including both orthodox research and ‘action research’) and policy process engagement type activities – this balance needs to be maintained in the second phase, since investigatory activities provide the new messages that can be used in effective policy process engagement;
- FAC will almost certainly need to make difficult choices concerning its geographical coverage: there will be no point in expanding to West Africa if resources are insufficient to achieve substantive outcomes from that expansion;
- The engagement of FAC with the broader African agricultural development agenda as represented by CAADP reduces the force of the argument for an Africa coordinator, since it is through the CAADP engagement that a pan-Africa presence can be achieved: moreover the Africa coordinator will be a costly investment requiring basic minimum support, office and travel budget in order to be effective.

From the Phase II document it seemed a little unclear to the reviewers where FAC’s comparative advantage in the technology and innovation area lies. There are many high profile international agencies and actors involved in this area. The ‘gap’ here is almost certainly, in most settings, the effectiveness of ministries of agriculture, especially in the context of decentralized local government, to provide effective support capabilities to farmers for the adoption of innovations. This is perhaps the ‘technology governance’ dimension alluded to in the Phase II proposal. Whether this ‘gap’, or some variant of it, represents a sufficiently distinctive set of concerns from the policy process theme is a matter for FAC to further consider.

If FAC is successful in eventually obtaining full funding from DFID (and the reviewers consider that such funding should indeed be forthcoming), then two or three serious policy research sub-projects should be included in the Phase II portfolio of activities. There are limitations on the impact FAC can achieve solely on the basis of digestion of secondary information, and working with the shifting political and institutional sands of policy processes. There are important agricultural policy experiences going on across Africa that badly need in-depth and critical cross-continent comparative work. The fertilizer subsidy issue begun in Malawi is just one of these. Post-liberalisation experiments in a wide variety of different public-private approaches to delivering technical advice to farmers is another. The approach to such research would need to be flexible and opportunistic – combining detailed primary work in some places, with use of secondary evidence and findings from others. Clearly budgets are unlikely to support numerous different sites for expensive primary research.

Allied to the latter consideration (dependent probably on funding from central research) is a sense that the reviewers have that FAC needs to have a more mobile opportunistic approach to interesting experiments in agricultural policy change going on around Africa. While the country focal point approach has benefits in terms of duration of engagement (and influence on policy thinking in that individual country), it does mean that potential lesson-learning from other countries is neglected. It is not always necessary to set up formal and ponderous research teams in a country in order to discover the lessons that can be learned from an interesting policy experiment in that country: good networking and local contacts, plus evaluation and review documents are often sufficient, and the engagement with CAADP also offers potential in this direction.²

Taking these observations into account, the reviewers would suggest the following modifications to the list put forward by FAC in its Phase II proposals:

- D. expansion of the focal point coordinator role (in alliance with UK researchers) to adopt a mobile two-way outreach to adjacent countries, both identifying specific policy experiences in those countries that should be examined in order to expand FAC's range, and taking FAC policy messages to those countries when ability to do so occurs;
- E. in the event of sufficient funding being obtained, identification of 2-3 in-depth policy research topics to involve more systematic and thorough cross-country exploration of those topics, including primary data collection in the sense of country visits to collect original documents and implementation data on policies; these research topics to involve partnerships between UK and African researchers.

The reviewers consider that FAC should be properly funded for its portfolio of activities. The current phase has depended to a very considerable degree on the goodwill and enthusiasm of some of FAC's leading members, their willingness to bring other things in which they are engaged under the FAC umbrella, and the occurrence of fortuitous events that have enabled a particular FAC line of work to spring into life (such as the evaluation of the Malawi input subsidy). Resources in the first phase were insufficient and spread too thin, with busy individuals being expected to deliver an impact on the project purpose on as little as 8-10 days in a calendar year funded by the project.

We would therefore recommend that the resources requested by FAC be met from DFID sources to the nearest extent that it is possible to do so. The budgeting of these resources may need to be remodeled to take into account the recommendations made above about changes in the emphasis of Phase II. But these changes do not signify a reduction in financial resources required. On the contrary, the proposed expansion to 4-5 country focal points, the proper funding of the central secretariat and its communications capability, the consolidation of the position of the country coordinator, and the instigation of 2-3 lines of serious cross-country comparative policy research, all point in the direction of the Phase II funding level being maintained.

² An example of what is being alluded to in this paragraph would be to examine Uganda's experience with empowering farmers to purchase privatized extension advice under NAADS

The foregoing considerations result in the following set of additional recommendations regarding the transition from Phase I to Phase II in FAC, and the organization and emphasis of Phase II itself:

Recommendation 3: amongst proposed Phase II activities, the reviewers consider that ensuring the strength of the central secretariat and communications capability at IDS; establishing effective focal point country coordinators; and engaging in the CAADP process should be prioritized, within the context of continuing to pursue the existing 3 themes.

Recommendation 4: we propose that the Africa coordinator is dropped, since we consider that FAC engagement in CAADP considerably weakens the case for such a coordinator, and we also believe that the Africa coordinator, in order to operate effectively, would represent an expensive use of consortium resources in the context of more limited resources than those originally requested.

Recommendation 5: the reviewers consider that (resources permitting) country coordinators in collaboration with UK colleagues should adopt a rather more mobile country outreach mode of operation than has been typical in Phase I, this outreach including lesson learning from interesting policy experiments in countries other than the focal point ones themselves, and carrying policy messages across borders when opportunities to do so arise.

Recommendation 6: amongst other proposed Phase II activities, the reviewers consider that the expansion of coverage to West Africa is likely to require careful consideration by the consortium in the light of budgetary outcomes, and its adoption has lower priority in the reviewers' view than the components listed in Recommendation 3 above.

Recommendation 7: the balance struck in Phase I between investigatory activities (including both orthodox and 'action research') and policy process engagement type activities should be maintained in the second phase, since investigatory activities provide the new messages that can be used in effective policy process engagement;

Recommendation 8: in the event of full funding being obtained (and we recommend continued vigorous pursuit of such funding), identification of 2-3 in-depth policy research topics to involve more systematic and thorough cross-country exploration of those topics, including primary data collection in the sense of country visits to collect original documents and implementation data on policies; these research topics to involve partnerships between UK and African researchers;

Recommendation 9: The reviewers recommend that FAC Phase II is fully funded, preferably from DFID sources, since funding from multiple organizations inevitably incurs rising transaction costs. Full funding is required so that the consortium can continue to build on its proven capability to provide innovative and alternative insights into the Africa agriculture policy agenda, without having to depend as much as in Phase I on fortuitous events (arising from third-party funding) in order to achieve these beneficial outcomes.

References

Africa Commission, 2005, *Our Common Future: Report of the Africa Commission*, published on the internet: <http://www.commissionforafrica.org/english/report/introduction.html>

DFID, 2005, *Growth and Poverty Reduction: The Role of Agriculture*, DFID Policy Paper, London: Department for International Development, December

UN Millennium Project, 2005, *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals-Overview*, UNDP: New York

World Bank, 2008, *World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development*, Washington DC: World Bank

Annex A: Terms of Reference
(relevant extracts from formal contract document)

MID-TERM REVIEW FUTURE AGRICULTURES CONSORTIUM

Objective

Mid-term review of the Future Agricultures Consortium to determine [1] how likely is it to meet its purpose to 'Encourage dialogue and sharing of good practice by policy makers and opinion formers in developing countries on the role of agriculture in broad based growth'; [2] recommendations on the FAC plan for the remaining 6 months of their current funding period (to March 2008); and [3] recommendations on the FAC proposal for extension and expansion beyond March 2008.

Scope

Review of documentation, interviews with key stakeholders, preparation of preliminary findings for presentation and discussion; and preparation of review report. This work will be lead by Professor Frank Ellis in the UK who will be assisted by an African colleague (tbc). They will need to contact stakeholders in the UK and Africa and thus have access to good telephone connections. Prof Ellis and his African colleague may also need to make a limited amount of short journeys.

Reporting

1. Recommendations as required above; 2. presentation on preliminary findings; and 3 final report and completion of DFID OPR format

Timeframe

The FAC has been funded by DFID's RNRA team for a three year period from 2005 to 2008. The mid term review work will be completed within October: Oct 1st - FAC to email review documents to consultants; Oct 1st to 9th - Review team to review docs and identify key questions for discussion with stakeholders; Oct 10th - Review team to ask FAC to arrange interviews with nominated stakeholders; Oct 11th, 12th and 15th - telephone interviews with key stakeholders; Oct 18th - Review team to present preliminary findings at meeting at DFID HQ; Oct 27th - final review report submitted.

Annex B: Selected FAC Published Outputs

Briefing Papers

Steve Wiggins and Lidia Cabral (2007) *Politics and the Future of Ministries of Agriculture: Rethinking Roles and Transforming Agendas*

Blessings Chinsinga (2007) *Reclaiming Policy Space: Lessons from Malawi's Fertiliser Subsidy Programme*

Rosemary Atieno (2007) *The Limits of Success: The Case of the Dairy Sector in Kenya*

Andrew Dorward, Rachel Sabates Wheeler, Ian MacAuslan, Chris Penrose Buckley, Jonathan Kydd, and Ephraim Chirwa (2007) Promoting Agriculture for Social Protection or Social Protection for Agriculture? part 1: *Concepts and Frameworks*_part 2: *Policy Approaches & Emerging Questions*

Lidia Cabral and Ian Scoones (2007) *Narratives of Agricultural Policy in Africa: What Role for Ministries of Agriculture?*

Lidia Cabral and Ian Scoones (2007) Donor Policy Narratives: What Role for Agriculture?

Samuel Gebreselassie, Amdissa Teshome, Stephen Devereux, Ian Scoones, and Kay Sharp (2007) Pathways for Ethiopian Agriculture: Options and Scenarios

Amdissa Teshome (2007) *Agriculture, Growth and Poverty Reduction in Ethiopia: Policy Processes Around the New PRSP (PASDEP)*

Samuel Gebreselassie (2007) *Food Aid and Small-holder Agriculture in Ethiopia*

Samuel Gebreselassie (2007) *Land, Land Policy and Smallholder Agriculture in Ethiopia*

Samuel Gebreselassie (2007) *Intensification of Ethiopian Smallholder Agriculture*

Patrick O. Alila and Rosemary Atieno (2007) Agricultural Policy in Kenya. part 1: *Policy Issues and the Strategy for Revitalising Agriculture* part 2: *Policy Processes, Structures and Actors*

Ephraim W. Chirwa, Jonathan Kydd and Andrew Dorward (2007) Future Scenarios for Agriculture in Malawi. part 1: *Concepts* part 2: *Policy*_

Edited Journal

Ian Scoones, Aaron deGrassi, Stephen Devereux and Lawrence Haddad (eds) (2005) *New Directions for African Agriculture*, IDS Bulletin 36(2), June.

Working Papers

Devereux, S. and Rachel Sabates-Wheeler, R. (2004). *Transformative Social Protection*. Working Paper No. 232, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, Sussex.

Farrington J. (2005). *Social Protection and Livelihood Promotion in Agriculture: Towards Operational Guidelines*. Revised Draft Paper. Department for International Development (DfID), London.

Amdissa Teshome (2006) 'Agriculture, Growth and Poverty Reduction in Ethiopia: Policy Processes Around the New PRSP (PASDEP)', March

Cabral L., Poulton C., Wiggins S. and Zhang L. (2006) 'Reforming agricultural policy: lessons from four countries', July.

Sabates-Wheeler, R., Dorward, A., MacAuslan, I. and Buckley, C. P. (2007). *Agriculture for Social Protection or Social Protection for Agriculture: Linking Policies for Pro-Poor Growth*. (Draft).

Omiti John and Timothy Nyanamba (2007) 'Using Social Protection Policies to Reduce Vulnerability and Promote Economic Growth in Kenya', A Background Paper, Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) and Institute of Development Studies, Sussex.

Dorward, A. R., Anderson S., Nava Y., Pattison J., Paz R., Rushton J. and Sanchez Vera E. (submitted). *Hanging In, Stepping up and Stepping Out: Livelihood Aspirations and Strategies of the Poor*. World Development.

Nyamu-Musembi C, (2006) 'Breathing Life into Dead Theories about Property Rights: de Soto and Land Relations in Rural Africa.' IDS Working Paper 272, Institute of Development Studies: Brighton

Background Papers

Aaron deGrassi (2005) 'Envisioning Futures of African Agriculture: Representation, Power and Socially Constituted Time', November

Aaron deGrassi (2005) 'Political Studies of Agricultural Policy Processes in Africa, 1975-2005: Review, Critique and Recommendations', November

Aaron deGrassi (2005) 'Beyond Blueprints: Agricultural Transformations and Growth Linkages in Asia and Africa', November

Briefing Notes

Steve Wiggins (2006) 'Agricultural Development Issues in Kenya', report from Steve Wiggins and Colin Poulton's visits to Kenya for the Future Agricultures Consortium in August 2005 and January 2006

Media Coverage

'Bottom up Policy Process: an agenda for Future Agricultures', Ethiopian Herald, 23 June 2007.

Various contributions from Amdissa Teshome to local and English language newspapers in Ethiopia

Annex C: List of Individuals Consulted by Telephone

Individual Consulted	Role in Relation to FAC
Argwings-Kodhek, Gem	FAC Kenya: Tegemeo and AFCU, MoA
Atieno, Rosemary	FAC Kenya: IDS University of Nairobi
Cabral, Lidia	ODI FAC member
Chinsaga, Blessings	FAC Malawi: Chancellor College
Chirwa, Ephraim	FAC Malawi: Chancellor College
de Janvry, Alain	Co-Lead Author: World Development Report 2008
Dorward, Andrew	Wye/SOAS FAC member
Ochwada, Dennis	Leader of Cotton Growers Association, Kenya
Omiti, John	FAC Kenya: KIPPRA
Poulton, Colin	Wye/SOAS FAC member
Robertson, Tim	Ethiopia DFID Advisor
Sabates-Wheeler, Rachel	IDS FAC member
Sanchez Naffziger, Bernabe	Malawi DFID Advisor
Sarch, Terri	DFID Policy Division, RNRA
Scoones, Ian	FAC Joint Coordinator IDS
Thompson, John	FAC Joint Coordinator IDS
Wiggins, Steve	ODI FAC member

Annex D: Letter from Professor Alain de Janvry

Professor Frank Ellis
School of Development Studies
University of East Anglia
Norwich NR4 7TJ, UK

October 25, 2007

Dear Professor Ellis:

This is in response to your request for an assessment of the contributions made by the Future Agricultures Consortium to the World Bank's World Development Report 2008, "Agriculture for Development". The WDR team has made extensive use of contributions originating from the Consortium and several of its members. The Consortium organized a consultation held at the University of Sussex in January 2007. This brought together many of the leading experts in agriculture and development from the Consortium and beyond. This meeting was highly influential on the Report principally because it helped explore the fundamental importance of a political economy approach to agenda design and implementation. It explored in particular ways in which the quality of governance for agriculture could be improved. This included case studies of reforms of ministries of agriculture. It also explored options for intersectoral coordination and decentralization more favorable to agriculture. While some of these country case studies were still in progress, the patterns of reasoning were quite influential on the way these subjects have been treated in the WDR. The political economy approach is present throughout the Report and a formal approach was added to the report after the Sussex meeting. The theme of governance for agriculture was developed in a Chapter 11 also added after meeting with the Consortium.

Several of the Consortium members have played important roles in the WDR. This includes the work of Professor Andrew Dorward on coordination in markets that guided much of the early work of the WDR team for Chapter 5 on markets. Work on supermarkets was also derived from contributions made by affiliated members of the Consortium such as Tom Reardon and Julio Berdegué. Also influential was the work of the consortium on the future of small farms and conditions for competitiveness of a smallholder sector. This included in particular the work done on this subject by Peter Hazell, Colin Poulton, Steve Wiggins, and Andrew Dorward. This theme became central to the WDR, and much of the information used derives from work done by these authors and discussions on the subject organized by the Consortium. The role of the Consortium in stimulating dialogues on important policy issues was thus of direct benefit to the WDR.

The theme of the future of agriculture in Africa is central to economic growth

and poverty reduction on that continent. The WDR made extensive use of materials available on the Consortium's website. The distinguishing feature of materials available on this website is the relevance of the policy questions addressed, and the professionalism of the analyses and policy recommendations. The Consortium brings together people with considerable expertise. It also has the merit of bringing together a broad array of opinions and opening important debates among these different positions. Having access to these materials was a major contribution to the WDR 2008.

I would hope that the Consortium will be able to continue its work, and extend it to a broader coverage of Africa. Country case studies are at the moment still limited. Considering a broader range of situations will certainly enrich the analysis and policy recommendations.

We are grateful to the Consortium for the contributions made to the WDR. Thank you for the opportunity of testifying on the importance of the Consortium for the development profession.

Sincerely yours,

Alain de Janvry
University of California at Berkeley and WDR 2008 co-director

(received by email 26 October 2007)