



GCARD-Africa e-consultation report

Background

The Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) is organizing a series of GCARDs (Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development), working through its constituent agencies and networks, which include the CGIAR, the FAO and IFAD, the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), the Regional Research Fora (FARA, EFARD, AARINENA, APAARI, CACAARI and FORAGRO) and representatives from civil society, the private sector and donor agencies.

The GCARD seeks to lay the ground for change in the basic architecture of, and investment in agricultural research for development. Over the period 2009-2015, this will involve a rolling process of analysis, e-consultations and face-to-face discussions.

The GCARD effort for 2009-2010 consists of several key elements; the first is Regional Reviews. Through synthesis and analysis of existing national and regional documents, the reviews will extract and formulate key issues for public consultation regarding whether support to research is focused on the right questions, or is divorced from the reality of resource-poor farmers and consumers. These will help identify apparent challenges and current omissions in embedding research actions into demand-driven development processes. The subsequent e-consultations, face-to-face meetings and the dialogues they spark will examine the issues raised by this review from a wide variety of perspectives and situations, including those of civil society and specific interest groups and put forward constructive arguments for ways to improve these capabilities, outcomes and inter-linkages.

Examples of the sorts of issues that could require specific further exploration might be:

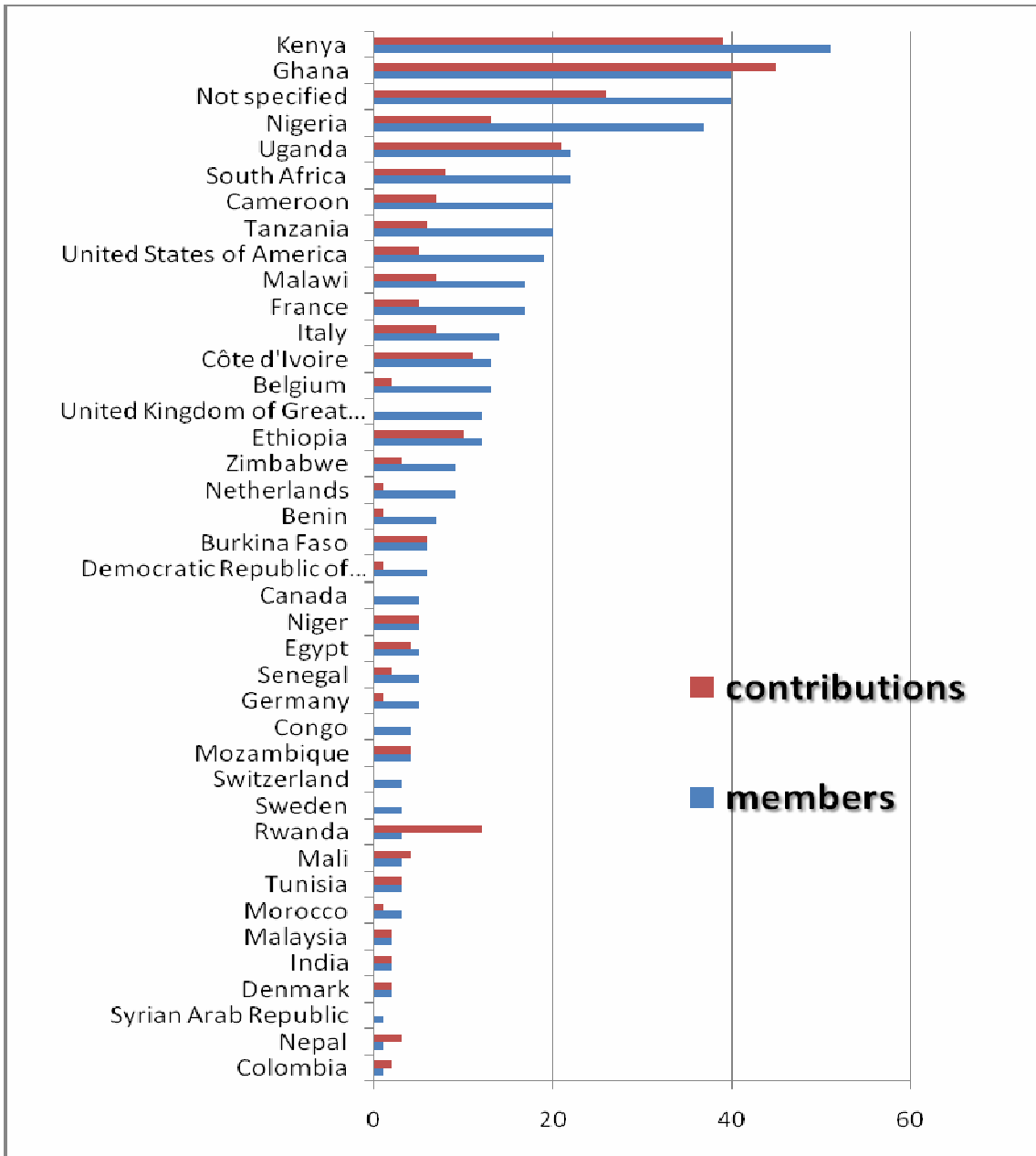
- Implications of specific new or anticipated research challenges?
- Critical regional trade-offs between agriculture and the environment
- The desired balance in focus on knowledge for production versus value addition and market needs?
- How is research meeting the specific needs of women?
- Where in the research to impact process is the greatest barrier to knowledge flow and use, or to technology development?
- What do we need to know about the balance of rural and urban income and food needs?

Based on the regional review conducted in Africa by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), an e-consultation was held which is presented in this report. The purpose is to gather broader perspectives on how research can increase its development impact in Africa. Based on regional review and new ideas or knowledge from the field

Participants to consultations

In general the discussions were dominated by research but the second saw more NGOs and field research practitioners. Youth and women were highly active in the second week. The total participants were **500** from **65** countries, with **320** contributions from **42** countries across the globe (Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and USA). The segregated participation and contribution for each country is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. statistics of e-consultation participants



Work program

The e-consultation was held from 7 September 2009 to 23 September 2009. It used FARA’s dgroup platform for the exchange of information and ideas. The first week was participant’s self-introductions. It was somehow “therapeutic” for those who never have the chance to communicate to others what they believe in and strive for in their daily work to improve the

agricultural situation in Africa. The second week was much more focused: discussions were guided by questions based on the Africa regional review, FARA Secretariat collection of video interviews related to GCARD theme and week 1 messages. In order to capture all the ideas, the second week combined open answers from the dgroup and targeted responses using survey forms. Annex 1 shows the messages sent for the two weeks e-consultation.

The e-consultation was extended to third week due to dynamic exchanges amongst participants and give chance to further complete the survey.

Summary of discussion and consensus reached

The discussions highlighted the challenges in African agriculture such as; complexity of agricultural development hindering the attainment of the MDG; the use of common vision as stated by CAADP using the principles of FAAP require better understanding on frameworks application and guidelines to formulate actions, M&E mechanism. The government actions and policies are not always aligned with strategies and investments i.e. there is no mechanism to monitoring of government spending based on their commitments stated in Maputo Declaration. In addition, Africa has limited skilled human resources to respond to complex challenges, it does not have the adequate infrastructure and has low and poorly coordinated investments.

To improve the situation, the discussions suggested that agriculture research and development should focus more on farmer empowerment, involve key partners including youth and women, and combine the use of indigenous knowledge with modern technologies and, agricultural research and development must be linked with health and nutrition. Critical aspect will be changing the mindsets/approach of actors to find solutions i.e. less on individual or institutional interests and more on collective actions, understanding that production is different from increased agricultural productivity, open to international collaboration but solutions should target local conditions.

Four categories of players in agricultural research for development were highlighted. These are the farmers, youth, women and scientists. Tables 1-4 provide a summary on challenges, required change and specific actions for the concerned players.

Table 1. Farmers in agricultural research for development

Challenges	Need for change / Recommendation	Action
Speaking on behalf of farmers	Involve farmers in planning, designing of policies	Create a platform for farmers to be part of the strategic

Identifying problems as justifications of actions/research	Formulate research agenda as a response to development issues	planning and implementation of ARD right from the beginning
Valuing research	Involve farmers in formulation of research topics	Targeting farmers to be involved in ARD process
Many organizations of collective actions by farmers and traders (e.g. co-operatives, farmer associations) collapsed due to poor governance	Link with CAADP and FAAP Training on organizational management	Invest in training farmers to build their institutional structures
Being informed	Modern technologies New opportunities - pharmaceutical, cosmetics and nutritional industries	Create formal channels of communication and knowledge sharing i.e. platforms
Farm mechanization for smallholders		

Table 2. Youth in agricultural research for development.

Challenges	Need for change / Recommendation	Action
Lack experience and depth of knowledge to implement projects	Combining formal and informal training	Mentoring

short-term contracts, lack of recognition from senior-level people and lack of access to strategic debate and decision-making	Social movement, young professional association	Support YPARD
Agriculture is the least preferred field of study in all universities	Creating a market for youth, providing grants and loans with low interests , entrepreneurship training	Inclusion of agriculture in curriculum at secondary and superior level
Youth prefer interventions which bring cash after a short circle	Awareness must be created to showcase farming/agriculture as a lucrative business	Support to YPARD
Access to land	Government should have a policy in place that allows youth to have access to land	Advocacy

Table 3. Women in agricultural research for development

Challenges	Need for change / Recommendation	Action
women and children walk several miles each day to bring water home before going to the farm or to school	increase nutrient status and offer tangible income generation opportunity	Provide equal opportunity if not target interventions
access to mass communication and to telecommunication where they miss often important announcements and information	Access to new technologies, financial systems, land	Establish platforms for women

Women are not empowered to make decisions without consultation	Better understanding of socio-economic issues	Strengthen capacity to raise voice and give strategic interventions
Land area allocated to most rural women is insufficient to grow food for consumption and for extra income	Government should have a policy in place that allows women to have access to land	Access to micro-credits

Table 4. Scientists in agricultural research for development.

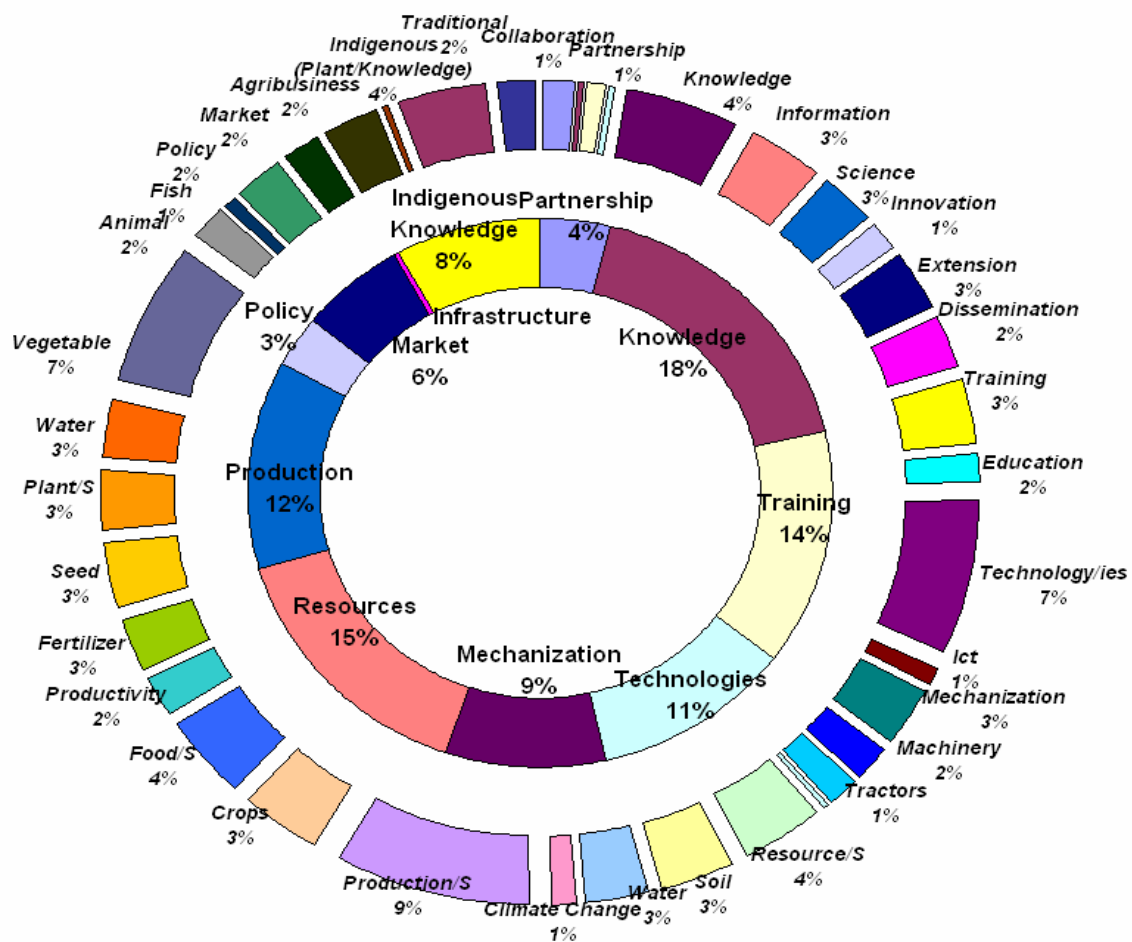
Problems	Need for change / Recommendation	Action
Lack of interest to indigenous crops and knowledge	Better understanding of CAADP and FAAP which focuses on farmer empowerment	Communication skills training and incentives for such issues
Functional research-extension partnership mechanisms	African scientists should break out of the “closed nest” syndrome to contribute to development	Formalize partnerships between farmers, extension and research with accountability
Lack of resources	Formulate agenda towards development demands Better understanding of research cycle	Better research management i.e. planning and M&E systems
Responsiveness to farmer’s demands	Explore ICT tools to communicate and reach out to greater number of farmers and extension	Establish regular, focused dialogues with government, farmers, extension

Below is the summary of issues raised in the second week of e-consultation;

1. **Development** : A lot has been said about “why there are so many initiatives/projects/programs and at the end we don’t see the impact at all”. Participants recognized the complexity of real world and suggested a holistic approach for development. But many other questions were raised Do we have human capacity? Do we have political will and good governance system? Are we ready to invest in this?
2. **Agriculture, Research, production and productivity**: Research and Development of Agriculture is essential in the fight against hunger and against poverty in Africa. Improving the production and so the productivity in agriculture is a must if we want to see an improvement in the livelihood of most poor rural African people. Many orientations have been discussed: improving seeds, irrigation, use of renewable energy, mechanization, exploitation of underutilized and/or indigenous plants, fertilizer, and better use of funds in this area.
3. **Information, knowledge, innovation, training, education and extension**: The main problem is that results from research don’t have impact on real life of rural family. This is due lack of information sharing, inexistence of collaboration between farmers and researchers during research process, weakness of extension systems after privatization. The solutions are multiple, among other : enhance the extension systems through private sector implication, start the information and knowledge transmission at the primary and secondary school, organize trainings and frequent information sessions among farmers.
4. **Young professional**: Series of questions have been asked by young professionals about how to encourage young people to be more involved in the rural development and especially in agriculture. This topic has been discussed in length and many recommendations have been given to young people.
5. **Rural women**: Good news! Rural women have been at center of the discussion this week in this GCARD African group. Participants have recognized the importance of women in number and in workforce. Her role in the fight against malnutrition and poverty is crucial in Africa.
6. **Natural Resource management**: Discussion turned around problems such as soil fertility decline, water scarcity, climate change and its effects on farming, bad practices in African agriculture. Some recommendations have been given about preserving the environment, preserving biodiversity for a more sustainable and productive agriculture.
7. **Machinery and mechanization**: Is mechanization in agriculture a solution to fight hunger in poverty? Some will say: “no, we’ve seen many tractors and pumps, but no real development at the end”. The discussion was oriented towards the use of adequate tools and machinery and the source of power to be used. A good balance must be observed depending on the size of the land and the capacity of farmers to exploit the tools at their disposal.

8. **Technology (and ICT)**: There is a need for effective and efficient use of technology, especially ICT to improve the awareness and the competence of farmers and rural persons. Technology must be used at all level, from the researchers in his laboratory to the producers who work in the conservation and/or transformation of food.
9. **Indigenous plants, traditional knowledge**: Many recommendations and some projects were suggested to preserve and use indigenous plants and traditional knowledge specific to each region.

Figure 2. Mapping e-consultation ideas.



In summarizing the ideas and issues raised during the e-consultation, its limitations recognize that it is not exhaustive due to time and limited participation to actors with internet access. There have been very diverse opinions that it was difficult to have more in-depth discussions on any particular theme such as crops, livestock, fisheries, health, and nutrition. The ideas shared lack supporting statistical data to ensure targeted solutions in order to focus interventions where there is observed highest occurrence of poverty linked with figures on daily food consumptions and demands. Suggested solutions did not link to local solutions using local natural resources.

Annex 1. GCARD-Africa e-consultation guiding messages

Session 1: Welcome and beginning of the e-consultation

Welcome to the GCARD Africa e-consultation, a 2.5-week electronic dialogue on possible pathways to transform agricultural knowledge into development impact.

Agenda

- Week 1 (7-11 Sept): Introduction. Participants introduce themselves, share their experiences/initiatives related to African agricultural for development
- Week 2 (14-18 Sept): Reflections and raising ideas. Together we reflect on the issues raised in the preceding week and put our experiences in perspective of the regional review findings. Participants are invited to suggest and discuss reforms to make innovations help to have greater impact on major development needs of the region.
- Week 3 (21-23 Sept): Conclusion. Facilitation team shares summary of discussions, participants' comments for the final conclusion and closing.

Having a virtual conversation can be challenging. You may perceive electronic communication environments as impersonal, and you may feel uncomfortable "*sending a message to a list*". That is why we invite you personally, during this first week, to share your experience on how an agricultural innovation achieved an impact in Africa. We appreciate reading your short descriptions of your work or by simply linking us to your documents.

To start we invite you to introduce yourself briefly by providing:

- *Your name*
- *The organization you work with*
- *Your professional background*
- *The work you are currently involved in*

It will be great if you can also update your profile within the dgroup, so we can put faces into names as we work together the next couple of days. You can follow instructions on how to do this at gcard-africa dgroup session.

Then share your experience or any interesting initiative:

- *Describe briefly the agricultural innovation or the initiative*
- *Analyze its impact in terms of what worked and what didn't and why*
- *Include aspects like partnerships involved, barriers and bottlenecks.*
- *If possible relate the experience to your regional context.*
- *If available you are welcome to share links to more information.*

Hope that in the next couple of days, we can know and learn from each other's knowledge, at the same time contribute to the shaping of the African and global agenda for agricultural research for development!

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For any further information or need for assistance, do not hesitate to contact us at andrew.raso@gmail.com; fstepman@fara-africa.org; mwopereispura@fara-africa.org.

Session 2

The purpose of this e-consultation is to gather various perspectives on how research can increase its development impact in Africa.

So we have in our hands;

1. The **regional review** which gives us an overview of actualities in Africa. The report tells us;

- a. Existing needs and recommendations
 - i. As stated by independent reviews such as IAC, WDR, etc
 - ii. As stated in African frameworks (CAADP, FAAP, MAPP, SRO strategies, national agricultural programs)

Give your comments (if there's any) below if these reviews and frameworks cover the major issues of Africa:

- b. Recommended Actions
 - i. Empower farmers (FAAP)
 - ii. Improve agricultural productivity and food security through S&T (IAC)
 - iii. Invest in 4 pillars (CAADP)
 - iv. Link agriculture to other sectors (ref...)

Have you seen concrete actions directly responding to these recommendations?

- c. Current implementation strategies
 - i. At continental level – CAADP as a framework for agriculture, FAAP for ARD, FARA Strategy with 5 NSFs
 - ii. At regional level – RECs = MAPP for agriculture, SRO strategies
 - iii. At national level – CAADP country compact, national agriculture strategies

Are these strategies adequate? Can we relate to them as a researcher, farmer, extension worker, civil servant?

- d. Agricultural Research for Development
 - i. Is asked to focus on thematic themes such as;
 - Staple crops, livestock, fisheries, forestry,
 - ii. But have more broader perspective to accommodate the diversity of Africa
 - Natural resources and genetic resources management
 - Use of innovation systems to
 - iii. And take advantage of modern technology , biotechnology and ICT
 - iv. Improve African capacities through stronger partnerships between research and universities

Your views and comments ...

2. Having these frameworks and strategies, **concerns** are still being raised by stakeholders (video interviews)

- a. <http://farastaff.blogspot.com/2009/07/investments-in-agricultural-research.html>
Dr. Monty Jones (ED FARA) is worried by the fact that agricultural research is highly dependent on the support of external partners with only occasional support from the national governments.

Do you have a specific strategy at national level to lobby for more investments towards agricultural research? Which are the arguments policy makers find relevant in your experience?

- b. <http://farastaff.blogspot.com/2009/07/is-european-fp-7-programme-good-model.html>
Dr. Kevin Urama (African Technology Policy Studies - ATPS Kenya) thinks that the modus operandi of the European Framework Programme is very useful because it is trying to forge partnerships and collaborations both between disciplines and across cultures and countries.

Most of the support to agricultural research comes from bilateral sources. Are consortia more interesting? Or they are just time consuming?
Do you agree with the statement that collaborations between disciplines and countries are often triggered by outsiders? Or is it more a fight for survival?

- c. <http://farastaff.blogspot.com/2009/07/nepad-paradigm-shift-on-agricultural.html> Dr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki (NEPAD CEO) says there is a need to include the civil society, producers and research institutes/universities in the elaboration of sectoral policies.

Is the inclusion of the civil society, producers and research institutes/universities in the elaboration of sectoral policies just paying lip service to new trends?
Do you have examples of genuine successes?

- d. <http://faraportal.blip.tv/file/2406817/> Interview with Gladys Nyambura, farmer / trainer from Kenya, about the use of www.infonet-biovision.org at the IAALD Africa Chapter conference on 17th of July 2009, Accra – Ghana. Currently most farmers' information is provided either by extension workers, through libraries or via websites.

Do you agree voice solutions are by far the most attractive platform for the farmer as it can be customized for language, is readily accessible and very natural? How can a farmer, who earns at least 1 USD per day, be expected to pay for a phone call just to ask a question?
Do you know of systems which can be rolled out on a continental level (if adapted to the local/national situation and languages)?

3. Thought provokers' coming from the participants of the e-consultations ('survey')

Let's take action by listening to what we've been saying!

Dr Monty Jones: "we want to consolidate priorities and have more action-oriented discussions. We would like to see highlighted major initiatives that have achieved impact and how we can scale them out and up across the region... We would like to follow-up this discussion to more concrete recommendations ..."

- If you could continue your study and prepare 2 other PhDs (say the following degrees exist in your university), which 2 would you choose to bring faster development in your area?
- Dr Monty Jones has mentioned the "Collective action for change" and Dibi Amlan Béatrice said: "Change won't happen by itself, we make it collectively".
- Many parameters, depending on different actors must be taken in consideration. How will you prioritize your attention for this list (taken from Beatrice's contribution?)

Click on an item in the list on the left, starting with your highest ranking item, moving through to your lowest ranking item.

Particularity of this GCARD-Africa consultation is the diversity of participants.

Let's listen to some voices (among others) coming out of Africa!

- a. Robert Gondo said "Integration of **young** intellectuals and rural youth ... will produce more positive results towards rural development ..."
What do you think?
- b. DIBI Amlan Beatrice said: "The improvement of economical and social conditions of **woman** in all spheres of society will bring efficiency in economic growth ". What do you say?
- c. Prof Oniango said: "Considerable **funding** has been availed for agricultural research over the decades"
According to you, who must get more funding during the next decade? (1 for top priority) i.e. researchers, poor woman, politicians, young farmers, trainers and extensions
- d. Juliet Aphane said : "**Education** is a vital component of any social or economic development and it the most effective single investment a country can make for good returns on economic growth and nutritional status"
What do you say about that ?

In conclusion, what is the message you want to raise at the GCARD 2010?