



GCARD

Second Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development

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DRAFT

Breakout session P1.1 National Food Security – Speaker Brief

Farmer involvement in scaling-out impacts on major crops

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Context – the problems being addressed

Africa is facing serious challenges with respect to food security and poverty among the majority in rural areas and significant pockets of urban residents. Recent global trends, reflected in higher food prices and the overall effects of financial volatility on commodity prices exacerbate the challenges even further. Yet the region has one of the fastest growing populations in the world with current forecasts estimating a 50 percent increase by 2050. Failure to match this rate of population growth with rapid sustainable increases in food production means that millions of Africans, especially women and children would go hungry and suffer from levels of malnutrition not seen in most other parts of the developing world.

The **Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa** (AGRA) is an initiative that works across African countries to improve the productivity and sustainable production of smallholder farmers, the majority of who are women. AGRA strives to effect change across the entire agriculture value chain through integrated programs that ensure smallholders have what they need to succeed –good seeds, healthy soils, robust markets, information, financing, storage, and effective policies.

AGRA recognizes that it cannot do this on its own given the complexity of Africa’s agro-ecologies and the social systems that embed agriculture. This is why the organization has built an alliance of partners who agree on the Green Revolution strategy and is aligning its investments with NEPAD’s CAADP Compact Strategy to achieve scale and impact.

Current activities presented and discussed in the session

Partnerships for capacity building in African R&D:

AGRA partners with and invests in national agricultural education, research and training systems in Africa to strengthen institutional capacities for technology innovation while building a cadre of scientists and policy analysts to drive Africa’s green revolution goals.

Private sector partnerships for agro-enterprise development:

AGRA is leveraging private sector partnerships for seed and fertilizer enterprise development by providing support to local agro-industries to increase production of released varieties and appropriate fertilizer blends that can be made available to farmers at prices 15-20 percent lower than the cost of imported products.

AGRA’s policy partnerships in focal countries:

AGRA recognizes that appropriate policies must be in place to encourage adoption of new technologies, but the organization does not, of course, set policies for countries. Instead it partners with advocacy actors to organize and support, leveraging the best available evidence on which

governments can base policy decisions.

Leveraging finance for agriculture:

For a green revolution to happen in Africa, first and foremost, there has to be a financial revolution – one that is inclusive of smallholder farmers. Less than three percent of total commercial bank lending currently flows into agriculture. AGRA has entered into partnerships with a number of commercial banks to increase lending to the agricultural sector, particularly to smallholder farmers. These banks have made impressive progress in the various countries where AGRA and its partners have established risk-sharing facilities.

Intended outcomes
<p>Implementing the GCARD Roadmap: Collective Actions by 2014</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Soil health consortia of private and public sector companies in countries in which AGRA works, enabling soils specialists and agronomists to more easily conduct necessary training and share data and information, along with lessons learned in the fight to save Africa’s soils. ▪ A new generation of highly trained agricultural scientists, policy analysts and extension practitioners who are well prepared to close the technology and policy gaps constraining Africa’s production systems; ▪ A critical mass of certified male and female agro-dealers in AGRA focal countries running locally-owned seed and fertilizer enterprises across the region;
Commitments to collective actions in 2012-2014 (national, regional or international)
i. With existing resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strategic partnerships with national and regional agricultural research and education systems in Africa; ▪ Knowledge sharing and learning partnerships with key stakeholders around gender responsive technology innovation in Africa’s smallholder systems.
ii. With additional support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthening farmer organization partnership roles as service providers linking innovation to rural entrepreneurial opportunities for men and women in Africa’s agricultural transformation.
iii. With specific large scale programme investment