



TRANSFORMING AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH FUNDING TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

Summary of Findings from First Roundtable Session

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Background

- ❑ Agricultural research critical in developing sustainable agricultural practices and policies toward achieving greater sustainability, equity, and resilience
- ❑ Emphasized in Kenya's 10-year Agricultural Sector Growth and Transformation Strategy (ASTGS) as
- ❑ However, agricultural research still suffers from underinvestment.
- ❑ Additionally, agricultural research in SSA is currently dominated by highly specialized research, which produces isolated solutions.
- ❑ Holistic and transdisciplinary approaches that systematically approach multiples challenges of today's food systems - such as climate change, agroecology etc. - are not receiving a commensurate share of research funding.
- ❑ In order to contribute to Kenya's Vision 2030 and realize progress towards the Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development, more integrated research approaches are needed.

Objectives

Main Objective

The virtual roundtable series aims to provide a platform to discuss pathways for transforming agricultural research funding towards more sustainability, in line with agroecological principles.

Specific Objectives

- Present the findings of a special report on funding flows to agricultural research in sub-Saharan Africa (“Money Flows” Report)
- Develop action plans for Kenya and the region to strengthen integrated agricultural research for development.
- 1st session was organized on 14th April 2021 and attended by over 50 participants

Key findings from first session

Funding for agricultural research is critical for a sustainable food system (Prof David Mburu, JKUAT)

“Innovations don’t fall from trees – they require substantial funding” (Dr Frank Eyhorn, CEO, Biovision Foundation)

- ❑ Kenya has put in place the Science, Technology and Innovation Act and regulatory framework for research funding
- ❑ Following the Act, funding for NRF rose from 373m in 2016/17 to over 1.8 billion in 2018/2019 but has declined to 320 million in 2020 due to budget constraints and impact of COVID on the economy
- ❑ Government targets on research funds (2% of GDP) are not being met- currently at 0.8% of GDP
- ❑ Most analyses show a high return on investment in agricultural research
- ❑ Part of the reason for high returns is that agricultural externalities are often not factored into calculations (biodiversity loss, pollution, climate change etc.)
- ❑ Investment in agroecological approaches can be expected to be particularly high return because they focus in producing in ways that minimize externalities!

Status of agricultural research funding

- ❑ KALRO's annual budget of 6 billion against their requirement of 12 billion
 - ❑ Government meets only recurrent expenditure
 - ❑ Research budgets met by bilateral and multilateral agencies
 - ❑ Currently running 60 medium to large projects
- ❑ JKUAT research funding for agriculture mainly from external donors
 - ❑ Internal research funding declined significantly due to reducing government capitation
- ❑ Money flows report show;
 - ❑ Public support for agricultural funding (governmental, bilateral and multilateral contribution) has stagnated over the last 3 decades
 - ❑ Current funding of agricultural research in Sub-Saharan Africa focuses on industrialized agricultural approaches. Investments in sustainable agroecological research remains very limited. Limited number of projects using interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches
 - ❑ New types of narratives e.g. climate change can be used as an entry door to change funding priorities

Current challenges

Key challenges include;

- Limited financial resources from government –for instance only 2% of maize funding comes from government
- Donors have competing requirements
- Weak linkages and partnerships
- Research organisations competing for resources
- Funding is short to medium term yet impactful research needs to be conducted over longer timeframes
- A strategy for research funding in the county is lacking
- Limited funding for underutilized crops and new areas such as big data

Potential opportunities

- ❑ Develop research projects within the priority areas of STI (based on National Priorities framework)
- ❑ Reduce fragmentation of research activities/ promote collaborative research projects to reduce competition
- ❑ Increase capitation for universities and national research organisations
- ❑ Prioritize funding for underutilized crops: blending of flours as a concrete example of a research topic linking food security, nutrition and circular economy
- ❑ Promote interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research projects to deliver real solutions to societal problems
- ❑ Develop or strengthen research funding strategy for the county

Potential opportunities ctd

- ❑ Promote research that follows ethical standards and national regulations
- ❑ Shift towards long term funding models
- ❑ Consider areas covered by emerging narratives such as climate change and agroecology
- ❑ Building alliances between African and other international organisations to share experiences, best practices and foster collaboration at local, regional, and global scales