



# 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.
- 1<sup>st</sup> session was organized on 14<sup>th</sup> 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