

## TRANSFORMING AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD SYSTEMS RESEARCH FUNDING TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY – CALL TO ACTION

Working towards transformational change in agriculture and food systems research funding in Kenya, representatives from national and international research and academia, ministries, civil society, farmers and the private sector met in a series of three virtual roundtable discussions between April and October 2021. The virtual roundtable, featuring high-level speakers, was hosted by the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture (JKUAT) and Biovision Foundation.

The following message, urging for transformational change in agriculture and food systems research and research funding, and proposing priority actions to spur change, received broad support amongst participants.

### Key Recommendations

- **Aligning food systems research towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** is essential to realizing food and nutrition security, protecting the environment, and achieving inclusive economic growth in view of evolving food system threats from pandemics, environmental degradation, and climatic change.
- **Increasing funding for agriculture and food systems research** is vital to achieve Kenya's national visions, agendas and strategies through innovation in the agriculture and food sector, and for creating opportunities for young and innovative researchers.
- **Shifting agriculture and food systems research funding towards greater sustainability, equity, and resilience** is necessary to build solutions that work for people and planet by strengthening currently neglected research areas, including agroecology, traditional or orphan crops, as well as local and regional agricultural markets.
- **Advancing long-term funding and enhancing collaboration for integrated, transdisciplinary, participatory research** is key to develop, test and scale agriculture and food systems innovations that not only work in theory, but also in practice.
- **Rooting all forms of research funding (Public, private, Non-state actors) in national policy and research priorities** is essential to support the transformational potential of research in agriculture and food systems by promoting local relevance, adoption and ownership of solutions.
- **Assessing and monitoring the environmental, social and economic impact of research investments and funding** is crucial to continuously improve and learn, identify promising approaches, and support advocacy and dissemination activities.

## Priority Actions

### GOVERNMENT

- Develop a clear strategy for Kenya outlining national research priorities in an inclusive process.
- Increase public/government funding for agriculture and food systems research.

#### *Specific potential actions:*

- Identify national research priorities for food system that are aligned with the Big Four Agenda, the National priorities in scientific, technological and innovation activities (STI) in Kenya, the National Research Priorities Framework, and involving Kenyan research institutions and partners.
- Increase government funding towards 2% of GDP annually for the R&D sub-sector and develop a national strategy for research funding to attract other sources of funding.



### DONORS

- Shift towards long term funding models to enable integrated, transdisciplinary, and participatory research.
- Enable proof of concept, pre-study and proposal development to support collaboration and innovation.
- Support assessments of the environmental, social and economic impact of research in agriculture and food systems.
- Align funding calls and decisions with national priorities, and consider areas that have received limited research funding.

#### *Specific potential actions:*

- Support pre-trials for agroecological research innovations as a first step toward project development.
- Engage diverse actors in developing criteria on how funding is prioritized.
- Develop a strong monitoring and evaluation framework for food system research focussed on sustainable impacts.
- Consider under-research areas such as underutilized and indigenous crops, integrated food system approach, income generation from agroecological systems.





## RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

- Strengthen partnerships and collaboration between various actors, including research and non-research actors and science-policy interface.
- Further interdisciplinary courses and integrating agroecology and food systems in education systems.
- Advance outreach and dissemination, including by involving young farmers, grassroots organizations, and the private sector.
- Support involvement of youth in agriculture and agricultural research and development.
- Advocate with parliamentarians to allocate more funds to agricultural research.
- Build capacity of researchers for grant applications, impact-oriented research and collaborations.
- Partner with professional communicators to translate science results and mobilize mass media and social media, publish in dissemination platform, organize science shows and innovation week.
- Strengthen the embedding of sustainability, integrity and ethical principles in research projects and ensure their implementation
- Add an impact assessment component in research projects and track the adoption of technologies by farmers and practitioners.

### *Specific potential actions:*

- Facilitate secondment of staff between institutions or companies for a short period of one to five years with a research partnership arrangement.
  - Create an inventory of past research and innovation developed by each research institution and build a common database of innovations to encourage further phases and dissemination efforts.
  - Promote innovation centres focussed on scaling up innovations adapted to the needs of the youth, for instance, urban agriculture or ITC integration.
  - Build a national platform for multiple research institutions to collaborate and develop joint proposals, including young scientists and science-policy interface.
  - Build impactful campaign targeting young generation on the importance of agriculture and its attractiveness and attract bright students in agriculture curricula.
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