

Collaboration needed to deliver food, nutrition security roadmap

Africa's apex organisation for coordinating and advocating for agricultural research and innovation has called on more African and European countries to prioritize investment in science, technology and innovation for agriculture on the continent.



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The Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (Fara) updated partners on a joint initiative between the European Union and the African Union to promote sustainable agriculture during its General Assembly last week. Fara also called on the agricultural research for development sector on the continent to unite and implement a roadmap for food and nutrition security.

The [Long-term EU-AU Research and Innovation Partnership for Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture \(LEAP4FNSSA\)](#), which is running from 2018 to 2022, support intercontinental collaboration over agricultural research and innovation. This partnership will establish, by 2022, an International Research Consortium (IRC) to facilitate cooperation in agricultural research and innovation of mutual benefit to Africa and Europe.

Accelerating agriculture transformation

"The general objective of LEAP4FNSSA is to establish a sustainable platform for the efficient and coherent implementation of the AU-EU Research and Innovation Partnership," said Yemi Akinbamijo, executive director of Fara.

"Agriculture is biology, and our agriculture is as good as our science. FARA drives the AU's mandate to strengthen the application of science and technology to accelerate agricultural transformation in Africa and ensure equitable access to resources like the International Research Consortium. Meanwhile, it is vital that African partners play their part to help drive the agenda for improved food and nutrition security across the continent."

The 8th Fara General Assembly included presentations from Dr Philippe Petithuguenin from the French research centre CIRAD, Dr Shadrack Moephuli the President of South Africa's Agricultural Research Council and Dr George Essegbey from the Science and Technology Policy Research Institute (CSIR-STEPRI) in Ghana. The Assembly called on African institutions to rally around Fara in its efforts to coordinate agricultural research for development on the continent.

Advocating mutual interests

"Fara holds an important mandate on the continent, which the LEAP4FNSSA can leverage for the establishment and operation of the International Research Consortium by Africa and Europe," said Dr Bouchaib Boulanouar, partnerships coordinator in agriculture and agro-industry at the African Development Bank and FARA board member.

"The roles of Fara and sub-regional organisations in building the IRC partnership platform are crucial. Among others, they involve inviting partners and disseminating information among stakeholders. Fara will ensure the IRC composition is equitable to advocate for mutual interests of Africans and Europeans."

Speaking at the high-level plenary panel of the 16th Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Partnership Platform, which preceded discussions on the LEAP4FNSSA, FARA's Executive Director also updated the African Union Commission and other stakeholders on the organisation's perspectives in mobilising support to African countries to enable them to achieve CAADP targets, with the EU-funded CAADP XP4 programme as a case study.

Several international development partners such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), the European Commission and the African Union Commission reiterated their support around the interventions that Fara is leading on the continent.

Designing appropriate responses

Fara has also recently acquired web-based survey instruments and training materials on Capacity Strengthening on Knowledge Management as legacy products of another joint institution, the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), which is winding down in December 2020. These will be used by African institutions to assess the state of institutional knowledge management and design appropriate responses to their needs.

CTA was established under the Cotonou Agreement between the EU and Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) state to support smallholder agriculture.

"FARA appreciates the support received from CTA in sharing these intellectual assets so that we can continue the important work of fostering EU and African collaboration by ensuring they remain shared resources for a common vision," added Dr Akinbamijo.

"As neighbours and, increasingly, as trading partners, Europe and Africa have many shared interests and much to learn from one another as our food systems face the challenges of the future."

As part of FARA's ongoing support for sustainable food systems across Africa, the organisation will also host the virtual Biennial Africa Climate Smart Agriculture Stakeholders Conference from 1-2 December, which will provide updates on the state of CSA initiatives and contributions of science to a food systems approach in Africa.

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