12 mln dollars for livestock research

Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) funded the five-year Bio-Innovate program, which is managed by International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), at a cost of 12 million dollars last Wednesday.

The Bio-Innovate program, which is co-located within the Biosciences Eastern and Central Africa (BCEA) Hub at ILRI’s Nairobi campus, will be implemented in Ethiopia, Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. According to ILRI’s press statement, the new program provides grants to bio-scientists working to improve food production and environmental management in eastern Africa.

The five-year program is funded by a 12 million dollars grant from the SIDA. This newly established Bio-resources Innovation Network for Eastern Africa Development (Bio-Innovate) Program, the first of its kind in Africa, provides competitive grants to African researchers.

"By emphasising innovations to help drive crop production in the six partner countries, Bio-Innovate is working at the heart of one of the region’s greatest challenges, that of providing enough food in the face of climate change, diversifying crops and addressing productivity constraints that are threatening the livelihoods of millions," Carlos Seré, ILRI’s director general said.

In its first three-year phase, the program is supporting five research-based projects working to improve the productivity of maize, millet, cassava, sweet potato, potato and beans farmers; to help smallholder farmers adapt to climate change; to improve the processing of wastes in the production of meat and coffee; and to better treat water generated in leather processing and slaughterhouse operations.

In its second three-year phase, beginning mid-2011, Bio-Innovate will help build agricultural commodity “value chains” in the region and a supportive policy environment for bio-resource innovations.

In sub-Saharan Africa, where agricultural production relies on rain-fed smallholder farming, hunger, environmental degradation and climate change present a triple threat to individual, community and national development. In eastern Africa alone, over 100 million people depend on agriculture to meet their fundamental economic and nutritional needs.

"Bio-resources research and use is key to pre-poor economic growth," Seyoum Tetteh, Bio-Innovate’s program manager said. "By focusing on improving the performance of crop agriculture and agro-processing, and by adding value to primary production, we can help build a more productive and sustainable regional bio-resources-based economy.”

Bio-Innovate works closely with the African Union/NEPAD Partnership for Africa’s Development (AUP/NPAD) and its new Planning and Coordinating Agency, as well as with the countious and communities for science and technology in eastern Africa, to encourage adoption of advances in bio-sciences. The program builds on AUP/NPAD’s Committed Plan of Action for Africa’s Science and Technology and the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program (CAADP).