

South Africa to Burkina Faso: African Agricultural Innovation in a Changing Global Environment



This was the theme that brought together more than 700 hundred diverse participants for the 5th Agriculture Science Week and Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) General Assembly, held 19-24 July 2010 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The FARA Science Week has become a major event in the African agriculture scene and has successfully expanded its stakeholder base beyond the national agricultural research systems to include

NGO, government, farmer organization and some private sector participants, as well as several ministers of agriculture.

One of the highlights of the week was the discussion on the role of the private sector in implementing the activities of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). A panel composed of various ministers of agriculture, among others, said that - rather than wait for external support - African countries need to provide structured leadership in agriculture, form thematic groups, and mobilize resources.

The increasing interest in South-South cooperation and partnership was evident by the launch of the Africa-Brazil Agriculture Marketplace. This initiative seeks to promote knowledge exchange, promote investment and support agriculture research and development in the two regions. Up to seven joint project proposals are expected to be selected in October for funding.

The need for access to knowledge, formation of partnerships and adequate allocation of resources to communication, as well as the coordination of regional agriculture research was echoed by various presenters. The CGIAR Collective Action's CGMap Ongoing Research in Africa, which responds to these needs, demonstrated the use of the map at one of the week's events. Participants commended the CG for its efforts in sharing and opening up its research activities, and there was interest in the adoption of the map and the use of the tool to synchronize agriculture information in Africa.

The week saw a diversity of side events – nearly 30 in total – many of which were proposed and facilitated by the stakeholders. Among the many side events there was one on technological foresight, and one on an assessment of lessons learnt from the sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Program. A side event organized by ILRI, WorldFish, CIAT and ICARDA to help shape the new CGIAR mega program on livestock and fish attracted many participants and allowed for valuable partner interactions.

The general mood of the week was one of things happening and opportunities to be captured: Africa's economies are growing; important infrastructural investments (ports, roads, railways, internet, etc) are taking place; and direct foreign investment is picking up, particularly with the interest of foreign investors in large scale commercial farming. At the political level the CAADP compacts are being signed by more and more African countries, and advancing regional economic integration is creating new market opportunities. Overall, the FARA Science Week presented a very positive picture about the development of Africa's agricultural sector.

More highlights of the FARA Science week can be found here: <http://faraweek2010.blogspot.com/>

For further information about the Mega Program on livestock and fish: www.livestockfish.wordpress.com

Ongoing Research in Africa blog post: <http://regionalplan.wordpress.com/2010/07/29/share-fair-on-networking-tools-5th-agriculture-science-week-and-forum-for-agricultural-research-in-africa-fara-general-assembly/>

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Newsbytes

Launch of the Agricultural Biodiversity Initiative in Africa

A two-day conference on biodiversity held during the FARA Science Week culminated in the establishment of the FARA-led Agricultural Biodiversity Initiative for Africa (ABIA). ABIA will support the efforts of sub-regional organizations, national agricultural research systems, and partners on agricultural biodiversity research and development in Africa; it will build partnerships for action, seek resources, and commission research; and it will engage in policy intervention, advocacy and public awareness to promote proper management and sustainable use of genetic resources in Africa. Bioversity International will be a technical partner with FARA in the technical implementation of ABIA.

Collective Action on a higher notch!

This year's FARA Science Week saw the CGIAR Centers come together and showcase their work under one large CGIAR booth. The collective booth not only showed what the CGIAR is all about by illustrating the overarching system, but also displayed the diversity of research efforts being carried out by the individual Centers. Communications experts from the CGIAR Fund Office, ICT-KM, ILRI, CIMMYT and Regional Collective Action compiled contributions from the various centers, illustrating twelve impact stories in a series of bilingual posters. An extra large monitor played videos from Centers and also displayed web-based programs such as the CGMap Ongoing Research in Africa. There were approximately 40 exhibition booths at the FARA Science Week marketplace, and the CGIAR stood out not only as a successful one but as a successful collective!

<http://regionalplan.wordpress.com/2010/08/03/collective-action-on-a-higher-notch/>

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