Hybrid session organised at the 10th TAP Partners Assembly

Views and Experiences of regional organizations on Continental Agricultural & Food Research and Innovation Strategies

Organised by IICA/ FORAGRO, APAARI, FARA and DeSIRA LIFT

Wednesday 22 November 2023

1. Context

There are multiple and complex demands (economic, social, environmental) on agriculture and food systems in different regions across the globe. Regional Research Extension and Education Organisations (RREEOs) have a particular role to play engaging in policy dialogue, designing and implementing Research and Innovation Strategies, involving multiple stakeholders.

IICA/ FORAGRO, APAARI, FARA and DeSIRA LIFT, organised an online session at the TAP Partners Assembly on the Views and Experiences of regional organizations on Continental Agricultural & Food Research and Innovation Strategies
The hybrid session, held on 22nd November 2023, gathered about 30 organisations which were members of the TAP network. During this session, we explored the experiences, successes and challenges in designing and implementing regional/ continental level Agricultural & Food Research and Innovation (R&I) strategies in different regions across the globe. Participating RREEOs shared their experiences and lessons on what worked and why; what has not worked so well and why; and what needs to be in place to make it work.

Panelists representing RREEOs (IICA/FORAGRO, APAARI, FARA) and FAO shared their experiences and lessons in designing and implementing R&I strategies. The session was facilitated by: Richard Lamboll (NRI, AGRINATURA), Isolina Boto (COLEAD), Renaud Guillonnet - DeSIRA-LIFT

2. Summary of presentations by RRREOs and FAO

Karen Montiel, IICA/CATIE/ *FORAGRO: platform for joint strategic planning and actions*
FORAGRO (the Forum of the Americas for Agricultural Research and Technological Development) is the hemispheric mechanism for the discussion and mobilization of agreements on topics of R&I that impact the agrifood sector of the Americas. FORAGRO: a) promotes dialogue b) generates relevant information and knowledge on priority RDI topics to support decision making processes c) provides a platform for coordinating actions and d) facilitates management and dissemination of knowledge and information.
International cooperation – and particularly through IICA – can serve as a BRIDGE to share and take advantage of the experiences, good practices and technologies of the region, and also to bring the voice of tropical agriculture in the region to global forums such as the UN Food Summit.
In 2021, the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA) supported 16 messages to be taken to the UN Food Summit (2021) relating to the hemisphere's agriculture sector, representing a perspective of the Americas in relation to agrifood systems. Three of these messages related to Production strategies and environmental factors focused on the key role of STI (Science, Technology and Innovation).

- *The new frontiers of S&T represent a strategic opportunity to develop a more productive and sustainable agricultural sector*, facilitating greater precision and efficiency. Circular and bioeconomy approaches that focus on resource use efficiency, reduction and reuse of agricultural production waste for the production of other goods, as well as investment in R&D, are key aspects.

- *Food production systems are vulnerable to climate change, making it essential to focus on adaptation and system resilience to support food security*. Agricultural production should move in the direction of sustainable systems that provide a balance between carbon emission and capture, while considering other ecosystem services; this will require measurement systems. New technologies contribute to reconciling agricultural production with environmental and ecosystem health, which is indispensable for agriculture's resilience.
- *Achieving a more balanced and efficient food system will require an investment plan for widescale development of production, transportation, and logistics technology and infrastructure*. For these investments to be effective, countries must design and execute medium-term strategic plans to facilitate public-private partnerships. States should invest in basic infrastructure and public goods, into which private actors may then channel their investments. These efforts will call for significant support from international cooperation and financing.

Challenges: In 2013, 80% of investment in agricultural R&D in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) was concentrated in 3 countries. In less developed countries, investment is less than 0.4% of agricultural GDP. In LAC, during 2011-2020 productivity growth was< 1%, compared to > 2% in 1991/2010. In tropical regions, productivity growth was significantly lower (about half) than in temperate regions.

Out of concern with the emerging situation, IICA, the World Bank and the One-CGIAR, called a stakeholder meeting. This identified the need for: i) Identification of new priority international technological public goods and construction of consensual work and research agendas necessary to develop them. ii) Strengthening institutional organization, with a focus on operational agility and coordination with the private sector. iii) Modifying the forms and magnitudes of financing provided to R&D activities. Iv) Designing a set of public policies to build a productive and technological ecosystem suitable for technological modernization and innovation of the region's agri-food systems.

Way forward: The suggested way forward takes into consideration the contribution of public and private sectors, national institutions, cooperation mechanisms and international agencies (research and funding). There is broad consensus that a formerly effective institutional approach is not performing in the face of emerging new priorities and context (Climate Change, food systems, private sector, scientific environment). There is agreement on a roadmap for action, which includes reinvigorating FORAGRO as a platform for joint strategic planning, addressing in parallel priority issues demanding actions (closing gaps in tropical areas and with respect to more advanced technologies). Work is starting on this, and specific action proposals are expected in 2024.

Ravi Khetarpal, Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI)

Key continental level agricultural and food R&I Strategies in the Asia-Pacific region (representing 60% of the world's population) include: i) FAO Asia-Pacific Science and Innovation Forum for further investments in science, technology and innovation in agriculture; ii) The CGIAR R&I strategy and iii) APAARI's Strategic Plan.

APAARI's strategic plan involves: a) Embedding an agri-food system and innovation system (AFRIS) approach in the plan to bring about sustainable agricultural development in Asia and the Pacific; b) Thematic areas including natural resource management, risk mitigation, inclusive development and policy & advocacy and c) Engaging with members with this mission in all the activities including various regional projects.
APAARI's strategic plan was developed though: a) Consultation with various country members and stakeholders; b) Creation of strategic programmes: Knowledge management, Capacity development,

Women and youth, Foresight and visioning and Policy and advocacy; and c) Deriving strength from the TAP CDAIS project and integration of both technical capacities and functional capacities.
APAARI's role in implementing this strategy has included: i) Supporting and coordinating e.g. by establishing benchmarks through surveys on existing individual and institutional capacities; ii) Ensuring that regional and national projects have the elements of blending of technical and functional capacities; and iii) Adopting an innovative approach for blending capacities for different purposes (policy framework, etc.).

What has worked well? Working with 22 countries, many members were very receptive. Case studies and success stories were developed. Changes in mindset were observed.

What has worked not so well? Some countries were not always convinced of the importance of strengthening functional capacity and wanted to focus on technical capacities only. In some counties, AIS was missing in the national strategies. The AFRIS approach did not align with some national strategies. There has been limited support from certain donors. USDA provided very large support to the implementation of this initiative, but more support is needed from global donors.

Way forward: Going forward, there should be less focus on individual capacity building but more at organizational and policy level. Appropriate policy process is needed to enable sustainable R&I strategies.

Aggrey Agumya, Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA)

The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) has served as the policy framework for action for agricultural transformation across Africa since 2003. The Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa (S3A) provides an organizing framework of issues, science options, and partnerships to bring about a desired future which (in its original form) prioritised a more productive and efficient food and agricultural sector that has a minimum guarantees food and nutrition security. CAADP provided the larger frame in which the S3A is operationalized. S3A was developed from 2011-2013, endorsed by the AU and led by FARA. When developing the S3A, there was a strong rationale that each of the SROs have their own Science strategy agenda, but that there is a need for a continental one.

There have been a number of attempts to develop a Science Strategy for Agriculture in Africa prior to the SA3. These have been informed by and/or include: the Inter-academy Council Panel; the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) and the Vision for Africa Agricultural Research / CAADP Pillar IV --- the Framework for African Agricultural Productivity (FAAP). The rationale for these were the need for: Advocacy instruments for science, Priority setting, Coherence in action and investments. Previous attempts were not successful because they: i) Did not mobilise broad African ownership of these agendas; and ii) Lacked clear mechanisms for implementation (financing (primarily), institutional arrangements etc.

The development of the Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa (S3A) drew on the above lessons to emphasize a) Ownership: AUC (African Union Commission) and AUDA-NEPAD (African Union Development Agency-NEPAD) oversight; FARA and the Sub regional organisations convened multi-stakeholder consultations at continental and regional levels; b) Several studies, including some foresight work and c) Implementation arrangements.

What has worked well? S3A is an advocacy tool for science for agriculture. There was high level support, with recognition that without adequate mobilization of science, CAADP commitment targets

cannot be attained. The S3A Theory of change showed how mobilisation of science enhances development impact. The roll-out of the S3A was conceptualized as a phased process starting with a set of initial (tier one) countries (Egypt, Ghana, Malawi, Rwanda and Senegal). These Tier 1 countries developed their agricultural science strategies relating to how to mobilise science to achieve their food security aspirations. There were country level engagements to identify priorities at regional level.

What has not worked so well? After initial interest, traction of the S3A waned. This is likely due to various aspects of the implementation arrangements. Financing national implementation of the S3A depended on external resources. Whatever had been mobilised by FARA was spread too thinly across too many countries. Implementation arrangements were complex. The strong ownership at the design stage was not sustained. For example, the SROs who were instrumental in its formulation were not as supportive at implementation—this may be linked to their leadership having changed. A further issue was a lack of alignment with the CAADP planning cycle (2014-2025) vs 2011—onwards.

Way forward: FARA and partners are currently in the process of refreshing the S3A based on what has and has not worked with the support of DeSIRA LIFT.

Delgermaa Chuluunbaatar, FAO/Office of Innovation
Regional/ continental organisations are key in supporting Research Extension and Education services. TAP (outcome 3) has been focusing on three regions: Asia-Pacific, LAC and Africa.
Key achievements under TAP Outcome 3 (2023) include: i) Close collaborative work in each region: APIARAS and APAARI in Asia-Pacific; IICA and RELEASER in Latin America and the Caribbean and the CAADPXP4 organizations in Africa; ii) Strengthened linkages between research and extension within regions and interregional collaboration between RREEOs; iii) Training of trainers organized in each region on capacity development tools and approaches in AIS (78 experts trained); iv) A series of good practices notes published, including capacity strengthening of regional authors (10+ from A-P region and 7 from LAC); v) Regional working groups on agroecology in A-P and on Higher Education in A-P and LAC; vi) Regional training in A-P on multi-stakeholder policy engagement. vii) Training manuals, guides and resource materials produced for operationalizing TAP common framework and approaches.

Future plans include: i) Inter-regional synthesis and policy brief on good practices in AIS from A-P and LAC; ii) Regional policy dialogues in Asia and LA; iii) Further regional trainings on policy engagement; iv) Publications including a training manual on capacity development for AIS and a guide on multi-stakeholder policy dialogue; v) Regional briefs on higher education and agroecology; vi) Sustainably strengthening collaborations between RREEOs to create further opportunities to synergise.

Way forward: There is no one size fits all solution for all the regional organisations. There is a need to adapt the approach and solutions for each region.

3. Conclusions and Takeaways

1. **Lessons we can take around the design and implementation** of regional R&I strategies.

- In widely varying contexts and plural values, design and implementation processes need strong buy-in at all levels (local, national, sub-regional and regional). Buy -in needs to be sustained, although this can be challenging as actors and context change over time.
- Financial resources are often a limiting factor. Implementation is often dependent on external funding, and funders own strategies change over time.

- Institutional arrangements may need to change in face of emerging new priorities and contexts (e.g. climate change).

2. **Priorities for the future** to enable regional organizations to: a) Improve their capacities to support countries/ members and their innovation capacities and b) Contribute to more enabling regional & international policy environments for agricultural innovation.

- There needs to be an appropriate balance between strengthening capacity at organizational & systems levels and individual level.
- Regional organizations need adaptive capacity and strategies should be adaptable to changing contexts and priorities with built-in evaluative learning.
- Regional organizations should have capacity to -as appropriate- engage, inform/ influence, co-develop and align with regional and global policy processes.
- Strengthening collaborations between RREEOs can create further opportunities to synergise.