

Trip Report:
Africa Agricultural Science Week, Accra, Ghana (15-19 July 2013)
and the Reforming Curricula in Higher Education in Africa and the
Tertiary Agricultural Education and Technical and Professional Training
Side Events

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This week long event was the 6th time the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) has held this event bringing together African agricultural researchers, scientists, educators and policy makers to share their experiences and plan for a unified program for agricultural development throughout the African continent on the basis of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP). The slogan for this year's event was Africa Feeding Africa through Agricultural Science and Innovation. I was invited by the African Network for Agriculture, Agriforestry, and Natural Resources Education (ANAFE) to present the *InnovATE* program and some of our findings from agricultural education and training institutional self-assessments.

Speakers and organizers at the FARA Agricultural Science Week repeatedly stressed the importance of investing in agricultural education to support local innovation platforms. This was the case not only for the ANAFE Reforming Curricula side events, but also during the plenary sessions. Several models for such programs were presented. Most interesting among them for our purposes:

Africa Institute for Strategic Animal Resource Services and Development (AFRISA) – a vocational/entrepreneurial plus intellectual/managerial program of the Animal Sciences College of Makerere University which stressed leadership and business skills as well as technical capacities with emphasis shifting up the degree hierarchy from vocational/entrepreneurial for diplomas (including farmers) through intellectual/managerial for PhDs. Stress was placed on 'nurturing producers' not 'in-service training'.

Auditing Instrument for Food Security in Higher Education (AIFSHE) tool for assessing institutional adaptation to the needs and priorities of food security developed by Wageningen University.

Universities, Business and Research in Agricultural Innovations (UniBRAIN) incubator program supports the establishment of the agribusiness incubators owned by universities, businesses and agricultural research institutions to commercialize agricultural technologies and produce graduates with entrepreneurial and business skills it is an initiative of the FARA and the government of Denmark.

Summary of the Reforming Curricula side events:

Critical bottlenecks in the process of reforming curricula

- a) The bureaucratic and long process of reforming curricula in universities needs shortening.
- b) Effective stakeholder involvement is needed.
- c) An incentives system needs to be put in place for staff, students and broader stakeholders to deliver the curricula as per the specifications.

Ways to enhance best practices in curricula delivery and managing challenges

- a) Skill enhancement for lecturers in pedagogy and mentorship scheme
- b) Facilitate staff and student exchange programs.
- c) Develop and implement a strategy for effective private sector and other stakeholders' engagement (in curriculum development and delivery).

Building on innovative ideas for curricula and curriculum reforms in SSA

- a) Develop a framework for incubation (entrepreneurial skills) and enhanced experiential learning (for practical skills).
- b) Profile best practices and lessons learnt from relevant curricula models such as AFRISA and UniBRAIN.
- c) Learning from successful models outside Africa such as the Bologna process as we develop a long term vision for TAE in Africa.

The steps for improving the processes of curriculum review and delivery

- a) Establish a working group on curriculum reforms; ANAFE and Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) jointly spearheading resource mobilization to facilitate reflection meetings and trainings for university leaders and lecturers.
- b) Networks of higher education facilitating the development of generic curricula in priority disciplines; universities and networks of higher education establishing national, regional and international partnerships for cross learning.
- c) Get from TAE institutional leaders commitment to owning and implanting the recommendations.

ANAFE, RUFORUM and TEAM-Africa Plan of actions for the next three years (2014 – 2016):

1. Establish a working group on curriculum reforms – tasked with mapping a strategy for improving the processes of curriculum review and delivery in African universities; Should be spearheaded by ANAFE, RUFORUM and other TAE networks.
2. Publish the proceedings of this event as a paper for the benefit of all stakeholders.
3. Develop innovative curricula frameworks and enhance linkage with quality assurance bodies (IUCEA, CAMES) for input and accreditation of the output.
4. ANAFE and RUFORUM jointly spearheading resource mobilization to facilitate reflection meetings and training for university leaders and lecturers.

While InnovATE is not named explicitly in the summary documentation, it is clear that we have a role to play. The InnovATE presentation outlining project objectives and modalities as well as some preliminary observations concerning institutional self-assessments was well received. I think we have a good partner in Aissetou Yaye (Executive Secretary, ANAFE). I spent considerable time getting to know Hamidou Boly of TEAM Africa and met briefly with David Nielson of the World Bank. TEAM Africa has a top-down policy reform program aimed at creating the enabling environment for ATE reforms. RUFORUM works at the institution level. Hamidou has shifted his office from RUFORUM where there appeared to be a poor fit, to ANAFE in Accra, Ghana. The continent-wide mandate of ANAFE (thru FARA) is more adapted to the policy level issues that TEAM Africa would like to address. I also met briefly with Adipala Ekwamu of RUFORUM and will see him again while in Uganda.

Clara Cohen (AOR) had contacted USAID/Ghana personnel (Samson Konlan, Pearl Ackah, and John Brighenti) to meet with me, but they seemed to be otherwise occupied during the week. I did manage to speak by phone with another USAID mission contact, Brian Conklin, as I was leaving. I touched base with Julie Howard who made a presentation at the end of the week.

Several university faculty and administrators spoke with me during the week. Some were interested in following up on how InnovATE might be helpful to them at their institutions. I have informed them all that USAID Mission involvement is necessary to mobilize our team. Individuals who made specific inquiries included:

Emílio Tostão, Dean, Faculty of Agronomy and Forestry Engineering, Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique.

Olusegun Adedayo Yerodun, Dean, School of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Mulungushi University, Zambia.

J.D. Kalenga Saka, Professor of Chemistry, Faculty of Science, Chancellor College, University of Malawi (Chair of Board, ANAFE).

Zac Tchoundjeu, Regional Director West and Central Africa, World Agroforestry Centre, Cameroun.

Irene Annor-Frempong, Director, Capacity Strengthening, FARA.

Some key concepts used during the week's discussions:

- Agribusiness education and training (from PhD through incubators and entrepreneurs)
- Moving from linear models to networks
- Agricultural innovation systems are networks of institutions, behaviors and attitudes
- Sustainable nutrition security; food and nutrition security
- Learning, innovation and technology platforms; not training centers
- From 'publish or perish' to 'impact or perish'
- Stimulating entrepreneurship and soft skills
- The importance of agricultural competitiveness
- Investing in education, rural space and the domestic private sector

While agricultural science and technologies were in evidence and discussed the focus was clearly on how to have them applied by agricultural producers and transformers along the value chains.