



Bringing public and private sector actors closer together in the Africa-EU Research and Innovation Partnership on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture¹

PUBLIC



PRIVATE



Expectations are high that the brand new research and innovation partnership between Africa and the EU in food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture will make a tangible contribution to the human development priority area of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (European Commission & African Union Commission, 2016).

For this contribution to be realised in both regions and at scale, much stronger linkages need to be forged between publicly financed R&I actors, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, and large-scale industrial players. How – and how soon – can this goal be achieved?

3 Framing Principles



Responsiveness



Innovativeness



Connectedness

Terms and Definitions

¹ The Africa-EU Research and Innovation Partnership on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture (EU-Africa Partnership on FNSSA) was launched at a meeting of the EU-Africa High-Level Policy Dialogue on Science, Technology and Innovation on 4-5 April 2016. <http://l.caaast-net-plus.org/iC>

Private sector actors refer to the full spectrum of formal and informal for-profit entities — working across agricultural value chains from inputs to markets, including large corporations, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, farmers and farmer cooperatives, and church groups — for the attainment of food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture.

Public sector actors refer to the range of public and publicly funded entities supporting research and innovation actions in food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture, including universities, science councils, funding institutions, ministries and state-led innovation promotion agencies.

The Policy Challenge

The performance of publicly financed R&I for the public good does not often exactly coincide with the immediate or long-term business needs of large companies or micro informal enterprises. Different underlying motivations, investment horizons, and risk profiles serve to compound the public-private divide. Yet, collectively solving shared challenges, such as global food insecurity, or addressing regional economic and social development visions, such as Europe 2020 or Africa's Agenda 2063, increasingly requires that public and private sector actors from all over the world work together in diverse and non-traditional forms of partnership.

If the pathways to realising this greater level of cross-sectoral collaboration are complex, non-linear, and not always self-evident, then policymakers and grantmakers need solid general principles from which to shape their interventions and investments. This Brief describes three such framing principles, targeting African and European Union policymakers and grantmakers working at national, sub-regional, and regional levels within food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture value chains. Our ultimate goal? To reinforce ideas and good practices that we know from our research and experiential learning will work effectively for the drivers of the new EU-Africa Partnership on FNSSA.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION #1:

Sharpen the responsiveness of public R&I performers to private sector actor needs in the EU-Africa Partnership on FNSSA, by:

- + Investing in R&I that is demand-led
- + Strengthening the capacity of private sector actors, including formal and informal enterprises, to formulate, prioritise and communicate their R&I needs

POLICY RECOMMENDATION #2:

Boost the innovativeness of publicly-financed R&I outputs for uptake by private sector actors in the Partnership, by:

- + Designing agile and innovative financing mechanisms that companies and the research community can access easily
- + Improving private sector research uptake, technology transfer capacities and visibility in key public R&I fora

POLICY RECOMMENDATION #3:

Strengthen the connectedness of a wider range of public platforms and private sector actors in the Partnership, by:

- + Bringing together longstanding collaborators and networks under a common umbrella
- + Investing in existing incubators and developing new ones

Responsiveness

Demand-led R&I is performed when publicly financed researchers and technologists have an appreciation of the many diverse needs of the actors along food and agricultural product value chains, and reflect this appreciation in their work. To better enable responsive R&I, however, private sector actors need to be able to identify, rank and relay their business development needs in which public R&I performers can play a meaningful role. By the same token, financiers of public R&I must, where necessary, continue to invest in initiatives with the highest possible chances of commercial viability, while ensuring that the public good is also served. In addition, by combining traditional or indigenous knowledges with formal research, and by involving youth and women, truly innovative approaches to support sustainable productivity growth among family farms can be achieved. The key word here is **responsiveness** — responsiveness of R&I performers to the needs of entrepreneurs, industrialists and family farms, and responsiveness of business owners and business leaders to the cycles of R&I funding and results.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

The **Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa's (FARA) Integrated Agricultural Research for Development (IAR4D)** programme uses **Innovation Platforms (IP)** to connect actors along a value chain of a specific commodity or in a system of production. Together, they interact, share information and solve problems. Strategic Innovation Platforms (SIP), also a component of the IAR4D programme, involve high-level decision-makers, such as CEOs and senior government policymakers. FARA estimates that IPs have resulted in yield increases of 40-100%. <http://l.caast-net-plus.org/jc>

The **European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability** builds bridges between research and practice by creating **Operational Groups (OG)** of farmers, researchers, business and community leaders, who work on delivering competitive and sustainable agriculture and forestry. This is called the **Interactive Innovation Model (IIM)**. <http://l.caast-net-plus.org/jb>

Innovativeness

Too many public R&I funding instruments are far too cumbersome for large companies and SMEs to access. Funders need to be encouraged to create more adaptive funding instruments that connect cutting-edge advances in R&I to market realities. Enterprises need to have greater access to get much better at taking up existing research results through developing the particular skills and competencies needed to turn knowledge into solutions that can benefit their production, distribution or marketing processes. The key word here is **innovativeness** — innovativeness in the application of new knowledge for social, ecological and economic benefit, innovativeness in the engagement of the private sector from the beginning of the research process, and innovativeness in the financing of research and innovation for uptake by the right target groups.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

The **Southern African Innovation Support Programme (SAIS)** is an initiative of the Finnish Government that used a multi-helix platform to strengthen national innovation ecosystems in Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia and Zambia (Phase I ended in 2015). Its strategic components included networking, capacity building, learning from best practices, and institutional development. The SAIS programme also offered seed money for the establishment and development of new projects. <http://l.caast-net-plus.org/jd>

The EU Delegation to Uganda has established the **Small and Medium Agribusiness Development Fund (2014-2019)** to provide commercially viable SMEs with access to business development services and long-term finance. <http://l.caast-net-plus.org/jf>

The **Agricultural Value Chain Mentorship Project (AVCMP)**, which was funded by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and the Danish International Development Agency during the period 2011-2014, gained active private sector support in Ghana. The project aimed at strengthening the capacity of agro-dealers, SMEs and farmer-based organizations in Northern Ghana, and targeting 34,000 farmers. AVCMP increased maize, rice and soybean farmer access to output markets by building their entrepreneurial and technical capacities. <http://l.caast-net-plus.org/jg>

Connectedness

Through their individual activities and within a networked architecture, existing multi-stakeholder, multi-disciplinary platforms are well-placed to advocate for responsive and responsible research, improved research uptake and technology transfer, as well as increased private sector investment in FNSSA. These platforms all have unique strengths that can contribute to the implementation of the EU-Africa Partnership on FNSSA. Incubators that specialise in linking researchers and technologists to entrepreneurs and business owners provide essential spaces for knowledge to be co-created, for learning to be shared, and for mutual understanding and trust to be fostered. The key word here is **connectedness** — connectedness of networks made up of diverse actors representing diverse constituencies, and specifically, connectedness of networks that line up research with innovation with entrepreneurship with social, ecological and economic development.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

The **Platform for African European Partnership on Agricultural Research for Development (PAEPARD)** networks a wide range of organisations in Africa and Europe. In particular, PAEPARD supports the establishment of innovative partnerships between African and European stakeholders that engage in agricultural innovation and collaborative research to address shared challenges and opportunities. It also supports the establishment of multi-actor partnerships and assists these partnerships to formulate proposals and seek funding for joint agricultural research for development activities that support their innovation processes. <http://l.caast-net-plus.org/jh>

CAAST-Net Plus (2013-2016) is an excellent example of a network connecting ground-level needs to policy dialogues at the highest level. Funder collaboratives, such as the **ERAfrica Initiative**, aim to pool resources to support Africa R&I partnerships. <http://caast-net-plus.org>

The **Danida-funded UniBRAIN initiative** supports incubators to develop links between research and private sector actors in Africa. Specifically, UniBRAIN promotes innovation by improving the flow of technology and knowledge through eliminating barriers between actors in value chains.² <http://l.caast-net-plus.org/ji>

² UNIBRAIN incubators include: **Creating Competitive Livestock Entrepreneurs in Agribusiness Consortium (CCLEAR)**, Ghana; **Sorghum Value-Chain Development Consortium (SVDC)**, Kenya; **Afri Banana Product (ABP) Limited and the Consortium for Enhancing University Responsiveness to Agribusiness Development (CURAD)**, Uganda; **Agribusiness Incubation Trust (AgBIT)**, Zambia.



Participants at a stakeholder forum on the implementation of the Africa-EU Research and Innovation Partnership on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture, which was held from 5-6 April 2016 at the African Union Commission's headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.



Download the stakeholder forum brochure from the CAAST-Net Plus website <http://l.caast-net-plus.org/iG>

References

CAAST-Net Plus (2015). Africa-EU Research Collaboration on Food Security: A Critical Analysis of the Scope, Coordination and Uptake of Findings [Online] Available at: <http://l.caast-net-plus.org/hX> (Accessed: 31 March 2016)

European Commission & African Union Commission (2016). Joint Communiqué Between the African Union Commission and the European Commission at their 8th College to College Meeting. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: 7 April 2016. [Online] Available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-16-1301_en.htm (Accessed: 18 April 2016)

Background

This Policy Brief draws on results of original survey research undertaken by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, Senegal, as part of its involvement in the CAAST-Net Plus project. It also brings together the results of four roundtable discussions:

- + **Engaging SMES in EU-Africa Science, Technology and Innovation Research Cooperation** (Brussels, Belgium: 31 March 2014) <http://l.caast-net-plus.org/iY>
- + **Innovation Serving Food and Nutrition Security in Europe and Africa: A High-level Roundtable Private Session at the EU-Africa Business Forum** (Brussels, Belgium: 1 April 2014) <http://l.caast-net-plus.org/iF>
- + **Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture: The Role of Private Sector Institutions, Non-Governmental and Philanthropic Organizations** (Brussels, Belgium: 2 October 2015) <http://l.caast-net-plus.org/iE>
- + **The Role of Innovation and Private Sector Engagement in EU-Africa STI Food Security Cooperation** (Johannesburg, South Africa: 26 November 2015) <http://l.caast-net-plus.org/iD>



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