

Summaries of CN+ analysis on the bi-regional Cooperation in STI

WP1 | Food and Nutrition Security - WP2 | Climate Change - WP3 | Health

for

Transferring Knowledge into Solutions

Africa-EU Strategies for Science, Technology & Innovation (STI)
Addressing Societal Challenges

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Building Bi-regional Partnerships for Global Challenges



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WP1 | Food and Nutrition Security

Africa-EU Collaboration on Food Security

A Critical analysis of the Scope, Coordination and Uptake of Findings

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Food and nutrition security (FNS) is a complex, multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral issue, with links to health, sustainable economic development, environment, and trade. In the period 2010-12, the number of hungry people in Africa grew from 175 million to 239 million. The food and economic crisis of 2007 and 2008 makes FNS not only a priority for Africa, but a global priority requiring effective global science, technology and innovation (STI) cooperation.

This report showcases the key findings from an analysis of research cooperation between Europe and sub-Saharan Africa (EU-SSA). The analysis was conducted within the framework of the Advancing Sub-Saharan Africa-European Union Cooperation in Research and Innovation for Global Challenges, or CAAST-Net Plus, project. Our research has sought to highlight, first, the extent to which joint EU-SSA research cooperation supported by the EU's framework programmes, bilateral programmes of the EU's member states (MS), and private research funds has impacted on Africa-EU joint FNS priorities; and, second, the extent to which research outputs were being used in policy-making, programme planning and implementation, building capacity and contributing knowledge generation, and supporting innovation in products, processes and markets for increasing impact on FNS outcomes. The overall objective was to create and provide a knowledge base for the elaboration of a platform to address joint Europe-Africa FNS priorities.

Methodologically, the impact analysis involved desk research, a survey and interviews. The conceptual framework used in designing the survey questionnaire, and analysis of data, highlights the multiple dimensions involved within the domain of impact study. A database of 74 open and closed framework programme (FP) cooperation projects spanning the period 1998 to 2014 was generated, classified and analysed using the following five criteria: thematic focus area; the FNS pillars – accessibility, availability, utilisation, stability and ecological fundamentals as well as contribution to capacity building, policy, knowledge; total budget, EU contribution, number of countries and number and type of participating organisations; objectives and number of participants by region – SSA, EU and other; and, outputs. Several policy and strategy documents linked to FNS in Africa and Europe as well as joint programmes undertaken by some EU member states were also consulted.

The extent to which the joint cooperation programmes and projects responded to African FNS priorities as outlined in the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) and the related pillars, III and IV specifically, and impacted on the FNS situation was questionable. Results indicate that while capacity has been developed and new knowledge generated, as attested by the various publications and databases, challenges exist in ensuring that all the available knowledge is used to inform policy, improve food systems and processes, expand product range, markets and trade, and support innovation for social and economic gain in both Europe and Africa. Although food stability is a priority issue as stated in the CAADP Framework for African Food Security (FAFS), only about 7% of the projects addressed this issue. Private sector involvement comprised about 15.5% of and civil society representation was about 1.5% of total participating organisations. One major barrier to private sector engagement was the limited follow-up of research outputs and the differing motivations of business enterprises and research. Farmers also did not see the direct benefits of such research cooperation projects. Greater involvement of the private sector and farmers in determining joint research priorities and participating in research programmes and projects could lead to faster and increased uptake of the outputs in the future.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made to enhance Africa-EU joint STI cooperation to address the global FNS challenge:

Finding #1: A challenging food and nutrition security (FNS) situation still persists in sub-Saharan Africa despite more than a decade of high profile attention of the value of science and technology for addressing challenges in African agriculture, the recognition that the initiatives of many organizations were complementary and significant EU investment in bilateral research cooperation. Strengthening research networks was seen as important for future joint Africa-EU multi-disciplinary research addressing the global FNS challenge.

Recommendation #1: Establish a high level multi-disciplinary think tank comprising directors of the main agricultural research coordinating platforms and experts from key academic institutions in Africa and Europe to identify the joint priorities and work programmes going forward. The think tank should be mandated to consult with other experts within specific priority domains e.g. engineering, nutrition and health, private sector actors and farmers' organisations, as well as policy-makers in Africa and Europe. The think tank should also have responsibility for approving the monitoring and evaluation framework as well as tracking the progress of joint actions. Their recommendations should be submitted to the JAES, as well as AUC and EC high-level officials.

Finding #2: Political will exists at the highest policy level in the African Union and the European Union for addressing the FNS challenge; however, while the major outputs of bilateral research cooperation supported by EU framework programmes and other instruments and EU member states have resulted in capacity being developed and the generation of knowledge, these remain disconnected from policy and the impact on FNS remains questionable. Scientific output is often not translated into useable products beyond the end of the project life cycle and in the case where patents are generated, the economic benefits are still to be realized.

Recommendation #2: A shift should be made from the focus on producing databases to executing joint research that responds to the joint priorities and leads to scientific and technical outputs, which can be measured/ quantified with the outcomes and impact appropriately tracked. Hence, a monitoring and evaluation system should be put in place. Scientific publications should be published in peer-reviewed journals. Their content should also be converted into policy briefs and working papers for wider dissemination for the benefit of other stakeholders and to better influence policies and programmes. The joint research priorities should be co-funded and co-owned. Hence, approaches and modalities, as exemplified in the ERAfrica project, should be further explored and strengthened. This has implications for the time span of funding research projects, which should ideally be greater than three years. It also has implications for the research outputs which may be considered as public goods. The need for intellectual property rights agreements among project partners, especially for those projects in which the private sector is implicated, should be considered.

Finding #3: The STI collaboration between Africa and the EU needs to be strengthened and go beyond the participation of the traditional African (South Africa and Kenya) and EU (France, Germany, UK) major players. African organizations are not sufficiently enabled to participate in joint projects due to several constraints; namely financial resource, human resource capacity and physical infrastructure, which hinder effective engagement in setting priorities and joint implementation and greater ownership and uptake of research outputs.

Recommendation #3: African governments should be encouraged to make financial resources available to African organizations for conducting national, regional and Africa-EU joint FNS research and to support capacity building and infrastructural development so that the partnership between Africa and the EU can be strengthened for the mutual benefit of both continents and to make significant progress in efforts to address the global FNS challenge.

WP2 | Climate Change

AFRICA-EU RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

A Summary of Critical Analysis of the Scope, Coordination and Uptake of Findings

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In the area of climate change, CN+ has conducted a critical evaluation of the scope, coordination, communication and uptake of Europe-Africa bi-regional research cooperation in addressing the joint European Union and African Union priorities for climate change mitigation and adaptation. The main focus was on bi-regional research funded through the EU Framework Programmes FP6 and FP7. The analysis considered the extent to which research knowledge is being used to inform policy-makers in developing effective responses to climate change, as well as whether and how bi-regional research and development outputs are being translated into technologies, goods and services.

We found that there is a significant body of scientific research on climate change funded under FP6 and FP7, resulting from collaborations between European and African institutes. The majority of this work reflects the priorities of the JAES. However, from the vantage point of project management and leadership, all recent framework-funded climate change research projects have been managed by European-based institutes. This fact appears to be of material consequence in terms of their limited contact with local policy making and business leader networks, though this is already being addressed, to some extent, under the ERAfrica initiative.

In analysing the research-policy nexus we find a low level of ‘outcome thinking’, to the extent that many respondents confused project ‘outcomes’ with project ‘outputs’. This is a fundamental issue that appears to explain the paucity of plausible arguments to attribute project outputs to demonstrable outcomes. Furthermore, we found that often statements of ‘intended impact’ are more akin to aspirations expressed by project designers and managers. In most cases these aspirations do little more than offer rhetorical support to wider climate and development targets, such as the Millennium Development Goals. As such, there is generally no explicit explanation of how these impacts can — even theoretically — be achieved. Indeed, there is a predominant focus by Framework Project managers on outputs that are easy to document and report. Where an ‘interaction with policy-makers’ is mentioned the precise mechanism through which research outputs actually influence policy or practice is rarely explained in any detail. As such, efforts to engage and influence policy-makers are mostly ad hoc at best, and amount to little more than a hope or expectation that the research findings will be accessed, understood and taken up by the relevant actors in government or the private sector. In turn, the general lack of clear mechanisms or theories of change undermines efforts to reflect upon the project implementation process or face the hard question of what difference they made.

We argue that many of these issues can be easily addressed, either at the design stage for future research collaborations under Horizon 2020 or during and after project implementation. Some recommendations are provided below. These are intended to help direct the remainder of the work of CAAST Net Plus in implementing solutions to enhance bi-regional research collaborations.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding #1: There is a lack of ‘outcome thinking’ at the level of research project management, and on the part of the European Commission. There is undue focus on project outputs (as opposed to project outcomes) that are easy to document and report on. There is minimal questioning of the actual difference projects make.

Recommendation #1: Stimulate debate on the role and importance of outcome thinking in Framework Project design, implementation and follow-up to influence projects being designed under Horizon 2020 and in other funding programming.

Finding #2: There is minimal evidence of framework research projects generating knowledge that feeds directly into technology development or patents. This is largely due to low levels of private sector involvement in EU-Africa research collaborations.

Recommendation #2: Promote systematic collaboration with civil society and private business lobbying sectors that have expertise in advocating policy change in support of climate technology development and uptake.

Finding #3: There is no need to set up another ‘knowledge management’ facility, online network, or portal.

Recommendation #3: Rationalise and/or better coordinate existing data platforms in order for Africa-EU partnerships on research and innovation and climate change to ‘speak with one voice’. These must be evidence-based processes — that is, informed by original EU-Africa research. EU-Africa research collaborations should seek to cooperate with a select few of the many networks and portals already in existence and that aim to inform the research-policy nexus.

Finding #4: There is a general lack of follow-up studies to monitor longer-term outcomes of framework research projects that reflects the predominant focus of monitoring, reporting and evaluation on the strength of short-term project outputs.

Recommendation #4: Stimulate debate in relevant forums about the proper role and importance of understanding longer-term outcomes of EU-Africa research collaborations and how this could be built into the project design stage.

Finding #5: The unequal proportion of African to European project leaders can create unbalanced partnerships and threaten the effectiveness of bi-regional cooperation.

Recommendation #5: Explore and further develop financing and cooperation models, such as ERAfrica, which allows for more balanced partnership and cooperation.

WP3 | Health

Africa-EU Cooperation in Health Research and Innovation - Bridging the public-private sector divide for greater impact on health outcomes around joint priorities

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Africa and Europe share health challenges and have obligations to collectively contribute to the global health agenda. Africa has a high burden of disease that undermines its own economic prosperity but also has implications for Europe security. Communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and the recent Ebola epidemic can spread into Europe causing challenges to European health systems. Like Europe, Africa is also experiencing a growing burden of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and cancer. Poor health in Africa undermines or affects trade between the two continents. For example, poor health is a source of low agricultural productivity with potential to reduce Africa's exports to Europe. On the whole, there are explicit relationships between health and Africa-Europe politico-economic cooperation.

The Joint Africa-Europe Strategy (JAES) adopted by both African and European leaders in 2007 recognizes the importance of the two continents cooperating in addressing their shared and global health challenges. The JAES identifies some of the health challenges for joint attention and action. These include combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis as well as non-communicable diseases. It also puts emphasis on the need for joint scientific research on the health challenges, investments in innovation to develop vaccines and other health products, and cooperation to strengthen Africa's health systems.

The JAES gives political legitimacy and forms the basis for strengthening Africa-EU cooperation in health research and innovation. The cooperation, which has a relatively long history, takes different forms and covers or focuses on a range of research priorities. It covers scientific research mainly on HIV/AIDS, malaria and Tuberculosis, capacity building with emphasis on postgraduate training, and some activities related to innovation (mainly around applied research or clinical trials).

To contribute to the strengthening of Africa-EU cooperation in health research and innovation, CAAST-Net Plus' Work Package 3 (the CN+ WP3) focuses on three objectives:

1. Generating an evidence-based (or empirically based) assessment of the impact of Africa-EU bi-regional cooperation in health research and innovation. The assessment focuses on the extent to which R&D outputs of the cooperation have been (or are) used to inform policy-making; whether and how well there is uptake of R&D results by private sector to produce health products; extent to which the research cooperation is contributing to strengthening research and innovation capacities of the two regions, particularly African ones; ;
2. Promoting dialogue aimed at supporting Africa and EU partners to identify research priorities and areas of health innovation that have high potential of being developed into cooperative programmes for medium and long-term joint investments; and
3. Identifying strategies for enhanced private sector engagement in collaborative Africa-EU health research and innovation programmes.

CAAST Net Plus' Partners are undertaking a study that aims at realizing the above objectives. The study largely examines the impact of the previous and current Africa-EU cooperation in health research and innovation. It aims at identifying specific ways and means of strengthening the cooperation through greater private sector engagement, better financing mechanisms, and improved institutional arrangements or partnerships. The study will also inform CAAST-Net Plus' Partners of specific actions or interventions that they may wish to make in order to help strengthen Africa-EU cooperation in health research and innovation.

Preliminary findings of the study show that Africa-EU cooperation in health research and innovation has intensified over the past decade or so. Some of the FP7 funded initiatives have generated knowledge outputs and have also helped to build skills in various areas of health research in Africa. Opportunities for scaling up some of the initiatives exist particularly to stimulate more engagement of private sector in the research and led innovation type of activities.

Key issues that the Forum will need to address include:

- (a) What are the specific challenges that the cooperation faces in order to deliver specific impacts/outcomes from health research and innovation?
- (b) What are the policy, institutional and technical barriers to private sector participation in on-going Africa-Europe cooperation in health research and innovation? What should be done to remove the barriers?
- (c) What are the specific programmatic interventions that platforms such as CAAST-Net Plus and international institutions such as the African Development Bank and the World Bank can make in order to strengthen the cooperation and improve private sector engagement?

Please find further relevant documents for the forum at:

<http://caast-net-plus.org/object/news/994>