



International Workshop:

"Improving Responsiveness of Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services in the context of Climate change and Agripreneurship in Western and Central Africa"

"Better engagement with women, youth and farmer's organizations through knowledge management"

September 30 – October 2, 2016; Limbe (Cameroon)

Executive Summary

Introduction

In West and Central Africa (WCA), the expected contribution of agricultural and rural advisory services (ARAS) to address the urgent challenges of the transition to climate-smart agriculture (CSA) and development of Agricultural entrepreneurship (agripreneurship) remains low. The international workshop on the responsiveness of ARAS held in Limbe, Cameroon, from 30 September to 2 October 2016 was designed to fill this gap. It was also in line with the vision of the West and Central Africa Network of Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services (RESCAR-AOC): "Efficient agricultural and rural advisory services mobilized in line with the demand to facilitate sustainable development in WCA".

The overall objective of the international workshop was to discuss the necessary adjustments to SCARs to support the inclusive management of climate change and the development of agricultural entrepreneurship (agripreneurship) contributing to sustainable development in WCA. Specifically, the objectives were: (i) to increase the awareness of participants in the workshop on climate change

1



and agripreneurship; (ii) enhance participants' understanding of the challenges and opportunities posed by climate change and agripreneurship to women, youth and producer organizations and make recommendations accordingly; (iii) discuss the needs of SCARs in knowledge, innovative approaches and operational arrangements to facilitate the inclusive adoption of AIC and agripreneurship from the use of efficient knowledge management practices; (iv) outline a regional knowledge management plan for the SCARs.

This workshop was organized by RESCAR-AOC in partnership with GFRAS, CTA, GIZ, IIED / GWI, AFAAS, MINADER and ACEFA as a prelude to the 7th Annual Meeting of the GFRAS organized from 3 to 6 October 2016 at the same venue with the theme "Role of rural advisory services for inclusive agricultural entrepreneurship".

Articulation and main results of the workshop

Introducing the workshop, Dr Patrice Djamien the Acting Executive Secretary of RESCAR-AOC recalled the context in which the workshop was held. He presented RESCAR AOC, its history, vision, mission, overall objective and its 4 strategic axes: A1.: Knowledge management; A2: Capacity Development; A3.: Advocacy and strategic dialogue; A4: Network and partnership. It also stressed the need to operationalize and strengthen country fora of ARAS and to implement quick-win actions for the recognition of RESCAR-AOC. Participants stressed the importance of carrying out an analysis on impacts of ARAS in WCA.

Conceptual bases and practical options necessary for agricultural and rural advisory services to better support the development of value chains and facilitate the integration of gender were discussed. Lessons were learned on gender issue: gender, gender in diagnosis for counseling, gender mainstreaming in ARAS, capacity building for men and women, development of economic activities for women. Discussion also included relationship between SCAR and value chains (value chain approach, need for dialogue, exchanges between ARAS and other actors), and between ARAS and gender (integration of gender in ARAS, role of ARAS in facilitating gender mainstreaming initiatives for the development of value chains).

An example of effort to reinforce coherence between requirements of the family farms and managers of the Agricultural extension schemes, in particular in large irrigated perimeters of West Africa was presented. It enriched exchanges on the adjustments needed to improve the responsiveness of agricultural advisory services, with particular emphasis on strengthening demand and inclusiveness and governance performance of advisory services' schemes.

Introductory presentations and case studies on climate change and the development of agricultural entrepreneurship and their challenges in adapting agricultural practices, renewing approaches and tools were shared. These presentations gave rise to interactions that allowed participants to learn more about climate-smart agriculture and agripreneurship. ARAS needed to support farms in their diversity, women, youth and climate change, climate-smart agriculture, agricultural entrepreneurship are more complex than providing advice to farmers on agricultural production. They require an important need for new knowledge and references, but also a greater diversity of skills on these changes and the capacity building of agricultural extension schemes and actors.

It is also clear that the training of the actors alone is not enough, a long-term support is needed, and a variety of ARAS (technical, economic, etc.). Approaches presented (Rural Resources Center, Business Plan, Innovation Platform, etc.) at the workshop have a proven interest but are not specific to addressing these issues. These approaches focus on different and complementary activities: (i) Production, training, consulting with infrastructures (Rural Resources Center), (ii) feasibility study and follow-up of farmers' projects (Business Plan), (iii) All actors on a thematic, a value chain (Innovation Platform).

Other participatory ARAS approaches help to address other aspects and implications of climate change and entrepreneurship (FFS, Management Advise, Farmer Business School). The use of ICTs for information and linking of actors in different nodes of value chains (production, marketing, processing, etc.) has emerged as an important theme that RESCAR-AOC shall consider in the framework of its efforts to strengthen ARAS' responsiveness to climate change and entrepreneurship.

Mechanisms to support investment by youth (guarantee funds, seed money, etc.) and favorable institutional environment are still insufficient, despite an increase in initiatives to support youth employment in many countries. Expectations of youth, women and POs vis-à-vis ARAS networks in relation to climate change and agribusiness are of several types: (i) facilitating access to land, inputs and credit, Agricultural insurance, with specific measures and arrangements for women and young people, (ii) strengthening their empowerment capacities: developing entrepreneurship, (iii) developing sustainable ARAS, more specifically for youth, counseling services on agribusiness and value chains development, iv) promoting the involvement of women and youth in national and regional schemes and networks of agricultural extension and advisory services.

Knowledge management has been defined operationally as the discipline that enables individuals, teams and organizations to collect, create, share and apply knowledge in order to better achieve their goals, improve their practices and learn from what they do. Its crucial role in improving responsiveness of ARAS was highlighted through presentations, exercises and exchanges that allowed participants to better master the concept of knowledge management and the use of the tool Knowledge management tree for conducting needs assessments and planning ARAS interventions.

The implications of climate smart agriculture and agribusiness for women, youth and producers' organizations from a knowledge management perspective in agricultural advisory systems were identified and discussed. For the RESCAR-AOC, these implications have been translated into actions to be implemented in the different strategic axes. An action matrix integrating the types of actors and the necessary interventions along each of the four strategic axes has been developed.

The recent achievements of RESCAR-AOC were shared with participants and reviewed. Discussions were held on the national fora and the 2017 action plan. After two presentations on the functioning of the network and on country fora of ARAS, discussions were held with the participants. The working groups proposed by the Executive Secretariat were validated, but participants asked for further clarification of their terms of reference and how they would operate. Priority working groups are: (i) Innovative and sustainable policy, advocacy and financing, (ii) Knowledge management, ICTs and communications for development, (iii) Functioning and sustainability of national agricultural advisory fora, (iv) Professionalization of actors / development capacities.

The activities proposed in the 4 axes have been validated, subject to minor corrections on some wordings and precision on the added value provided by RESCAR-AOC on most of the activities that are carried out as a matter of priority at the level national. For all the participants, country fora of the ARAS are indeed the mainstays of the network. To play this role, country fora may be existing organizations or organizations to be created. In all cases, organizations serving as country fora will have to fulfill the following criteria: functionality, representativeness, viability, neutrality, added value, regional and international openness, transparency and good governance, etc. It came out that processes for the establishment of country fora are more efficient when they are led by focal points or champions with the following profile: professional, volunteers, with good skills and competences in ARAS, are credible and designated by others Actors in the country, mastery of multi-stakeholders facilitation processes.

Participants

The workshop was attended by 122 participants from 27 countries. Participants were representatives included leaders of women's, youth and producers' organizations, policy-makers, managers of agricultural and rural advisory programmes, ARAS platforms (national, regional and continental), investors, resource persons on the topics addressed by the workshop.

Evaluation of the workshop and recommendations

The evaluation of the workshop revealed that participants were generally satisfied with the topic, but also with the articulation and content of various thematic sessions. The logistics and quality of the organization were unanimously acknowledged. The average percentage of participants who reported that they had well or very much appreciated the general facilitation of the workshop, the content and quality of presentations and exchanges exceeded 65% for all sessions. The interactions allowed participants to share their experiences and strengthen their knowledge about gender, climate change, agripreneurship and knowledge management in agricultural advisory systems. The evaluation revealed slight differences in the assessment of the different sessions dedicated to each of these themes. The detailed opinions and specific suggestions for each sub-theme have been formulated (see evaluation report in the appendixes of the present document), and will be taken into account when preparing and conducting next workshops. Participants agreed that the workshop was a unique opportunity for sharing experiences, learning and building knowledge. The main recommendation is to improve the format and articulation of the workshop to make it more efficient. The following actions have been suggested for this purpose:

- limit the number of sub-themes so as to have a clearer common thread, which would allow more time for in-depth discussions on the main theme and thus resulting in more concrete results;
- improve the representativeness of the different categories of actors, in particular by ensuring a stronger presence of women, young people, field advisers, the private sector, researchers, decision-makers and development agencies;
- strengthen the links between the themes discussed and the strategic orientations (vision and mission) of RESCAR-AOC in order to guarantee the operability and the actual valorization of the results. During the next workshops, it would be good if different presentations and exchanges put more emphasis on the links with the objectives and implications for RESCAR-AOC and country fora;
- carry out field trips to visit sites, actors and initiatives related to the theme discussed at the workshop;
- Facilitate the capacity building of national agricultural advisory systems in knowledge management;
- to institutionalize this type of workshop and to give it an annual frequency in order to stimulate a real dynamic and to reinforce exchanges and learning between the different types of actors as well as between different countries of West and Central Africa;
- take the necessary measures to operationalize the recommendations and results of the workshop at the various scales (RESCAR-AOC and fora national in particular), and monitor and document the changes induced at the level of individuals, organizations and the agricultural innovation system in general.

Prospects

RESCAR-AOC will build on and continue the momentum generated by the Limbe international workshop on the responsiveness of the Agricultural Advisory services. With this in mind, it will:

- facilitate the sharing and implementation of workshop results and recommendations. These results will be used in advocacy activities for a better recognition and mobilization of the potential of agricultural advisory services in sustainable development initiatives in WCA;
- organize a writeshop in partnership with GFRAS, CTA and other regional and international players to refine the outputs of the Limbe workshop and develop an appropriate strategy for their valorization;
- facilitate the development and strengthening of capacities of national agricultural advisory schemes and fora to ensure their specific contributions in the improvement of the performance of ARAS;
- work with members and partners of RESCAR-AOC to develop and share knowledge products on the role and good practices of ARAS in promoting AIC, agripreneurship and gender mainstreaming in the development of Agricultural value;
- mobilize national, regional and international partners to organize a regional meeting in 2017 on the same logic as the Limbe workshop.

The workshop was closed in the presence of representatives of MINADER, GFRAS, CTA, GWI, and AFAAS. These representatives expressed their satisfaction with the progress of the workshop and the quality of the results achieved. They reaffirmed the commitment of their respective organizations to continue to support the deployment of RESCAR-AOC. There was unanimity of the need to capitalize this type of experiences, to increase their frequencies and to take necessary measures to ensure that they generate positive and significant changes at the levels of actors, practices, policies and ultimately development indicators in WCA.

RESCAR-AOC expresses its deep appreciation to all the partners who have brought their valuable contributions to the successful preparation and organization of this workshop. These include: Global Forum for Rural Council (GFRAS), Technical Center for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) / Global Water Initiative (GWI), African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS), Program for Improving the Competitiveness of Agropastoral Family Farms (ACEFA) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Cameroon (MINADER).