



The Future of Agricultural Advisory Services in Africa: Evidence and New Directions

An event sponsored by the Feed the Future Developing Local Extension Capacity Project with the Regional Community of Practice Convening with the West and Central Africa Network for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services for (RESCAR-AOC) and African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS)
24-26 June 2019, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

SUMMARY OF KEY RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1/ Background, objectives and structure

In Africa, efficient agricultural extension and advisory services (EAS) are essential for the achievement of increasing and unprecedented efforts undertaken at country and regional levels to make agriculture more productive, profitable and sustainable. This requires that various stakeholders involved have a good knowledge and consideration of recent and ongoing evolution, but also emerging challenges and opportunities that shape the agenda for extension and advisory services. The Feed the Future Developing Local Extension Capacity (DLEC) project co-hosted a regional Community of Practice meeting in June 2019. The Convening was attended by representatives from RESCAR, AFAAS, the DLEC Consortium partner Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS), and implementing partners from the private sector, civil society, and research. The overall objective of the event was to share lessons learned from evidence on advisory services in Africa and to discuss ways to implement them through existing and new projects using AFAAS country forums as the basis for multi-stakeholder platforms. Through plenary presentations and discussions, and group work sessions, the meeting enable the sharing of knowledge and experiences, collective reflection on issues and opportunities for the development of EAS in Africa resulting in the formulation of recommendations.

The event took place in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) from 24 – 26 June 2019. Day one focused on the status of EAS in Africa, particularly in West and Central Africa (WCA), and discussed priority recommendations for strengthening country fora and sub-regional extension networks. Day two and three were dedicated to the GFRAS-led Last Mile Programme (LMP) and covered partnerships and implementation arrangements to strengthen advisory services, using multi-stakeholder country forums. The event brought together 50 participants from 14 countries. Participants included funding and implementing partners of EAS, directors of extension, country forum focal persons, and EAS resource persons and related institutions from the region and beyond.

2/ Opening remarks

Dr Kristin Davis mentioned that the DLEC project improves agricultural advisory services through evidence, action and advocacy. DLEC galvanizes diverse EAS stakeholders to measurably improve agricultural extension programs, policies and services.

DLEC strengthens extension and advisory services through three interrelated sets of activities: (i) diagnostics, (ii) engagements, and (iii) communities of practice. Among other achievements, DLEC has so far released 11 reports on national EAS systems and organised eight customized demand-driven activities launched across six countries and catalyzed over \$1 million in additional funding to improve extension. DLEC also mobilizes and strengthens communities at national and global levels to support extension; facilitating cross-country learning; linked in with GFRAS and AFAAS networks and country forums.

Mr. Siaka Minaya Coulibaly, the Director of Cabinet of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, formally launched the meeting. He pointed out that there is a growing interest of agricultural policymakers and investors for EAS. There is unanimous recognition that agricultural transformation will require improved access of producers to quality agricultural EAS. Experience sharing and learning are indeed very enriching and can allow a fruitful hybridization of ideas leading to the identification of the types and modalities of actions necessary for the renewal of EAS in light of new development challenges and opportunities. The diversity and caliber of the meeting participants will help to provide a broad overview of the state of the EAS and the options to consider for its development. He stressed that the exchanges during the workshop will help the different actors to have a better understanding of the LMP and to see the contribution they can make to it either directly or through partnerships. This will not only provide a good basis for the successful implementation of the LMP, but also start now to raise awareness and develop partnerships for replication of the model, with possible adaptations, thus contributing to creating a greater impact.

3/ Status of agricultural extension and advisory services in Africa

The main objective of this session was to set the scene through sharing and discussion of results and recommendations of recent EAS studies in Africa. It was facilitated by Dr Patrice Djamen and was informed by three key inputs from Dr Kristin Davis, Co-Director of DLEC and Senior Research Fellow at IFPRI, Mr. Pierre Rebuffel, Senior Researcher and member of the Joint Research Unit on Innovation at CIRAD and Dr Hippolyte Affognon, Coordinator of the Partnership for Agricultural Research, Education and Development (PAIRED) program at CORAF. Within the context of agricultural transformation in Africa, this session highlighted that despite some innovations, EAS face several challenges that prevent them from fully playing their expected key role in increasing the performance of the agricultural innovation systems. Issues facing EAS are numerous and diverse, related mainly to inadequate or lack of governance and policy, poor efficiency of EAS methods and tools, capacity development, insufficient and non-sustainable funding mechanism, weak integration and consideration of cross-cutting issues e.g. youth, climate change, agripreneurship. Several examples were provided by the three main inputs but also from contributions of the participants.

Most of the challenges are related to the fact the new pluralistic nature of the agricultural extension and advisory system is not yet fully recognized and taken into account by decision-makers in the planning and implementation of agricultural development policies and interventions. There is a high diversification of methods and tools (ICTs, farmer-to-farmer, innovation platforms etc.) but their specific efficiency are yet to be evaluated as the capacity for their customized and adequate use by extensionists are yet to be developed in many cases. The professionalization and renewal of profiles and skills are major constraints to meet the challenge of improving service quality and the thematic and geographical coverage of the demand for agricultural advisory services. Despite the challenges, there are innovations and initiatives with potential high impact e.g. the N-Agro Program in Nigeria and the use of ICT for extension delivery in Ghana. Several interesting experiences and innovations on few or several aspects of EAS are ongoing in several countries (e.g. policy reform in Benin, Cameroon etc.), that are not yet sufficiently documented, shared, and mainstreamed. Addressing gender and youth requires

further capacities and use of customized approaches and tools. The session concluded based on recent evolutions and current major trends that EAS have to be better acknowledged and treated as pluralistic. The potential of ICT should be harnessed further but with consideration of the human element and capacity to use, gender and other socio-economic elements. Demands for EAS are not only for production, there are also at different downstream nodes of agricultural value chains.

4/ Domestication of the Last Mile Programme

Dr Joep Slaats, Program Manager at GFRAS introduced the LMP. The overall objective of LMP is to enhance the capacity of rural advisory service providers to effectively facilitate knowledge and technology flows within agricultural innovation systems in ways that foster equitable, resilient and sustainable market-oriented smallholder agriculture. Its final goal is improved incomes, sustained market linkages and reduction of climate vulnerability for smallholder farmers. The LMP focus is on strengthening institutional and organisational capacities of country fora, comprising stakeholders active in agricultural advisory services, as well as supporting their initiatives for improved service delivery to farmers. The programme which is implemented by GFRAS, comprised a cascade of networks from country to global level. The AFAAS Secretariat is responsible for implementation of the LMP in Africa. For the start of LMP, nine African countries are selected based on maturity of their country forum and regional balance: Uganda and Kenya from Eastern; Madagascar and Malawi from Southern; Cameroon from Central; and Benin, Ghana, Nigeria and Mali from Western Africa.

Mr. Max Olupot, the Partnerships, Planning and Learning Officer of AFAAS, gave an overview of AFAAS and its constituencies with a focus on the key role of country forum (CF) play in the global landscape of EAS networks. He recalled the value proposition of CF which include inter alia the: provision of a neutral platform for information and knowledge exchange among EAS, enabling coordination of investments and initiatives in EAS within the country especially the publicly and privately funded initiatives; Facilitate scaling up/out of agricultural technologies, innovations, approaches, practices; and advocacy for: investments, policies and capacity strengthening and service delivery. The final mandate and format of CF are context specific. Discussions took place on issues but also good practices in relation with the establishment of a CF and successful pathways for maturity. It came out from discussion that champions are key for the launching of the process but that formalization with full and credible governance system is crucial for deployment and sustainability.

Ms. Sanne Chipeta, GFRAS consultant, introduced and led discussions of the LMP M&E Framework. Key concepts of M&E were reviewed to ensure common understanding as well as indicators anticipated for the monitoring, evaluation and learning of project activities. Group work discussed relevant criteria to measure quality services, capacity of public-private partnerships to sustain services, availability of EAS and knowledge products. It is important to ensure inclusion of youth and women in the LMP. This may be achieved through setting clear targets for youth and women, involvement of champions, use of ICTs and community-based and gender responsive approaches and tool etc.

Dr. Dan Kisauzi introduced the concept of EAS observatories that will be implemented in the framework of the LMP. Observatories are aimed at providing an extensive view of EAS delivery at national, regional, and global levels to define where capacities need to be strengthened, what key results are achieved, and whether all relevant partners are engaged. The final form and modalities of observatories should be customized by project implementers. They later will address issues of which type of indicators, credibility of data, clearance from local authorities, efficient tools and approaches to use, sustainability, partnerships and capacities for the gathering, analysis and sharing of data.

Communication, Information, and Knowledge Management (CIKM) arrangements in the framework of LMP were presented by Mr. Emmanuel Atenga and Ms. Ingrid Oliveira respectively CIKM Officer at AFAAS and GFRAS. The arrangements will build on AFAAS CIKM whose objective is to develop and implement a CIKM system that enables EAS actors to network with each other, to access information and knowledge from internal and external sources, and to generate new knowledge themselves. Communication convergence between AFAAS and LMP were discussed. It was suggested the CIKM system in the framework of the LMP should develop capacities and tools for the identification and integration of indigenous knowledge and local innovations of farmers and also produce communication material in local languages, so that information truly reaches them. Messages should be customized to consider the peculiarities of different stakeholders. GFRAS will work with communication focal points in the various regional networks and country fora to identify tools already in use in the regions, as well as how to best support and integrate, when already existing, their own knowledge management efforts.

Ms. Cate Mubiru, the Finance and Administration Officer of AFAAS, gave an overview of finance, management and governance in the framework of the LMP. She provided technical guidance on: project documents and grant management during implementation and the grace period. Conditions for disbursement and modalities for the management of funds were discussed thoroughly. To be part of the LMP, a forum should have a good governance systems in place including a legal entity and executive committee. Participants stated that a smooth and efficient implementation of LMP requires capacity strengthening of country fora in financial management and governance.

5/ Partnering for Progress and Synergies with the Last Mile Programme

Mr. Phil Malone of Access Agriculture shared a practical presentation of the video-based extension approach. The innovation presented consists of a small projector and solar panel that allow extensionists to easily move around. Beyond the tool itself, the presenter stressed the potential of video to facilitate knowledge sharing and learning, including in groups. The use of local languages improves the reach of videos. He stated there are hundreds of videos on the Access Agriculture website dealing with topics of interest to African farmers.

Dr Hippolyte Affognon presented the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF). Its general objective is high broad-based agricultural growth sustainably established in West and Central Africa. The specific objective is agricultural productivity, competitiveness and markets sustainably improved for target groups in the region. To achieve this CORAF undertakes a set of interventions articulated around three pillars including (i) Scaling technologies and innovations for impact; (ii) Regional integrated capacity strengthened and coordinated and, (iii) Knowledge management, foresighting and anticipation. Some of the 400 technologies developed by CORAF could be promoted in LMP countries where relevant with the demand of producers. Furthermore, CORAF experience in setting and running innovation platforms that are actually multistakeholders frameworks could be harnessed for the successful promotion of public-private partnerships in the framework of LMP.

Dr Ann Degrande of the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) gave a presentation focused on Rural Resource Centers as innovative mechanism for EAS delivery. Rural resource centers are useful for the implementation of large programs for land restoration, climate change and tree crop value chain development. They play three key functions including: (i) Production and enterprise development, (ii) Demonstration and training and, (iii) Dissemination. The concept was inspired by the “farmer to farmer” approach but it places emphasis on building the capacities of producers on subjects that meet their needs. These centers also operate as incubators for young people who want to be able to work on a specific subject. Leading and

experienced producers are those who are generally chosen to lead initiatives to set up an Center with the support of ICRAF and partners.

6/ Recommendations

The following recommendations emerged from the presentations, plenary and group work discussions:

- i. **Consolidation of results of the workshop.** It is important that the dynamics of interactions and reflections generated by the workshop be pursued and maintained so as to produce more refined results and concrete actions. Representatives of the various countries and networks present at the workshop were invited to proceed, once back in their countries and organisations, to a prioritization of the main challenges and areas of actions needed to develop EAS in their respective countries. In the same vein, country fora, RESCAR-AOC and AFAAS were urged to extend exchanges on different areas of recommendations through their working groups so as to have a further and bigger picture of the current situation of EAS.
- ii. **Development and implementation of regional projects in response to EAS challenges.** The workshop highlighted that despite some national specificities, the problems of EAS in West and Central Africa are very similar across countries. These similarities highlight the necessity of a regional approach for developing solutions that would also enable the pooling of human and material resources, thus contributing to improve the efficiency of interventions. On this basis, it seemed appropriate to develop regional projects around EAS issues and with relation to development objectives. The idea of a regional project to strengthen the use of ICT-based extension for the promotion of agricultural entrepreneurship and climate smart agriculture emerged.
- iii. **Build partnerships for the establishment of EAS observatories.** Partnerships are needed for setting and running EAS observatories to ensure efficient and sustainable functioning, both in terms of finance and technical expertise around formation and management. It will be worth linking EAS observatories with the other data-collecting activities such as IFPRI-led ASTI and African Union-led AOSTI. Country forums, sub-regional, and continental networks will take the lead at their respective levels to raise awareness of actors of the usefulness of EAS and develop relevant and efficient partnerships for the operationalization of the observatories.
- iv. **(Re)definition of strategic orientation for EAS.** Most of the issues facing EAS are due to the poor or even-non management of the new pluralistic nature of EAS. The pluralism of EAS actors requires a (re)definition of strategic orientations and institutional arrangements to take advantage of the full potential of EAS in the achievement of national agricultural, economic, and social development objectives. In this perspective, it is important for states to develop inclusive national EAS policies and strategies so as to guide and harness interventions of the different actors.
- v. **Documentation and dissemination of preliminary achievements and effects of country fora, and more general of evidence on EAS.** The public-private partnerships advocated in the LMP project have already been in various forms by some existing country fora. Documenting these early experiences would provide material for learning and knowledge sharing, but also for advocacy and engagement of decision-makers and investors. National fora were encouraged to capitalize on their partnering experiences and more generally on the first results and effects they have generated since their creation. AFAAS and RESCAR-AOC should support this capitalization by developing tools and providing technical support. Discussions during the event highlighted the

need for more and better documentation of evidence of effects and impacts of EAS on social and economic development, and natural resource management.

- vi. **Expansion of LMP within and beyond the target countries.** EAS networks and fora at country and sub-regional levels should use the LMP approach to engage with other strategic and funding partners to expand the initiative. This will entail building robust CIKM and learning schemes involving LMP and non-LMP countries. Furthermore, partnerships should be explored and concretised with regional and national organizations e.g. ICRAF, CORAF, Access Agriculture etc.
- vii. **Awareness raising and engagement of policymakers and investors around key levers for the development of EAS in Africa.** Organizers of the event were encouraged to package and customize key outcomes and recommendations and share them with policymakers, investors and decision makers. For this purpose, it will be necessary to produce short briefs for each domain of action/recommendation and organize policy dialogues at national and regional levels.

7/ Closing remarks

Dr. Kristin Davis expressed her satisfaction with the organization of this joint meeting, which provided an opportunity to take stock of the situation and discuss with experts from different backgrounds. She greatly appreciated the quality of the exchanges and reaffirmed DLEC's readiness to continue to support the efforts for the development of EAS in Africa. Speaking on behalf of RESCAR-AOC, Dr Patrice Djamen expressed his gratitude to all the participants who took part in the discussions, to all the partners who supported the organization of the event. He promised that RESCAR-AOC with the support of its partners will do its best to continue the momentum generated by the workshop and facilitate the operationalization of the workshop's recommendations. Dr Silim Nahdy thanked the participants and reaffirmed that AFAAS as a continental forum of EAS will continue to facilitate exchanges, knowledge sharing, networking, and assisting countries in modernizing their agricultural extension systems. Dr Sidiki Cissé, Director General of ANADER, officially closed the meeting. He stated that it was an honor for Côte d'Ivoire to host the event, and that it will always be present whenever there will be a request to support the development of the EAS. He concluded by inviting all participants to the 4th Africa-wide Agricultural Extension Week, which will be held from 25 to 29 November 2019 in Abidjan on the theme of synergies between the private sector and agricultural advisory services in the context of efforts for sustainable agricultural development in Africa.

The day after the workshop, a mission of members of the AFAAS Board of Directors, led by Dr Kristin Davis Vice Chair, and Dr Silim Nahdy, Executive Director, shared the synthesis of findings and recommendations with Mr. Siaka Minaya Coulibaly, the Chief of Cabinet of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER) of Côte d'Ivoire. Mr. Coulibaly promised MINADER's support for the implementation of the recommendations. This support will begin by facilitating the organization of a high-level panel involving decision-makers, investors and development partners during the African-Wide Agricultural Extension Week.