

ERA-ARD Briefing Paper

Illustrating the Alliance Concept – Burkina Faso Workshop on Water Resource Management in Agriculture (March 2013)

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Background

For developing countries, agriculture is crucial for economic growth, through its role in food security, and in addressing global issues such as bio-energy, climate change, etc. Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) responds to the needs to feed growing populations and to drive economic growth in a sustainable manner.

The second phase of ERA-ARD is a € 1 million European Research Area Network (ERA-Net) project funded under the European Commission's 7th Framework Programme from 2010 to 2013. The project is a partnership of 17 organisations involved with funding agricultural research for development in 15 European countries. ERA-ARD aims to improve ARD coordination between national research programmes and promote collaboration in European agricultural research for the world's poor.

ERA-ARD briefing papers are made available widely to sensitize the European population to the critical importance of ARD and that its results and impact are not limited to "outside Europe" but also have direct benefits for "within Europe". The achievements of ERA-ARD are documented and made available through its website www.era-ard.org, to benefit both stakeholders and the wider public.

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Abstract

Funders, regional policy makers, practitioners and researchers were invited to come together in Burkina Faso in March 2013, in order to foster an alliance of investors and a network of innovators focussing on sustainable water resource management for agricultural production. The workshop process illustrates the “ERA-ARD-Alliance Concept”, a response to the Road Map of the Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD) that proposes a multi-stakeholder approach to the implementation of GCARD recommendations.

The Alliance workshop focused on building/strengthening a regional network around water resource management in agriculture. This thematic priority with its focus on West Africa was chosen following the needs of the region, and is not an integral part of the concept itself. Such networks increase the impact of joint investments, by creating and implementing coordination mechanisms, and contribute to increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of joint research and development.

Collaborative Transnational Thematic Networks, therefore, aim to place agricultural research within an innovation system, to strengthen the performance of research in a demand-driven context, and to foster effective institutional partnerships that leverage impact.

List of acronyms

Acronym	Description
ARD	Agricultural Research for Development
CORAF / WECARD	Conseil ouest et centre africain pour la recherche et le développement agricoles / West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development
CTTN	Collaborative Transnational Thematic Network
ERA	European Research Area
FARA	Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa
GCARD	Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development
INERA	Institut de l'Environnement et Recherches Agricoles (Burkina Faso)
IRD	Institut de Recherche pour le Développement
MDG	Millennium Development Goal

Goal: Launch of a reference framework

The ERA-ARD Alliance Concept¹ was developed as a methodology to capitalise on the high diversity of actors that characterises the European ARD landscape: members from different institutions and often with very different mandates are supposed to align their programme priorities regardless of their thematic, structural, geographic and political differences. Experience showed that one of the biggest challenges to European joint funding is the different regulations and eligibility criteria applicable to funding opportunities. The Burkina Faso workshop reported in this briefing paper was organised to develop a reference framework for transnational coordination of programmes that fund agricultural research within the theme of “Sustainable Water Resource Management in Agriculture”.

A reference framework defines a set of priorities for joint research and programme objectives, which are shared by different stakeholder groups. It, therefore, provides thematic guidance to program managers confronted with the structural specifications of European joint funding opportunities, and to scientific administrators for defining targets for research and capacity development.

The core of the reference framework is a set of tables listing priority actions to be taken by the research community and/or the community of practice. This impact-oriented reference framework also contains indicators for success, in the same way as a typical table for guidance of scientists and evaluators during a call for proposals. This type of framework could, therefore, be used for the coordination of investments in thematic and geographic areas, and contribute to joint programming initiatives. It is expected that the reference framework text can support preparation of guidelines for joint research programme calls, but which respect international commitments such as GCARD, MDGs, etc.

Specific objectives

1. To establish a framework, shared by the various actors in research and innovation. This framework consists of a cross-tab of priority issues and common directives for the implementation of funding programs and research projects.
2. To foster an Alliance to efficiently use resources and build synergies.
3. To establish an organizational structure capable of maintaining such a thematic network – in the case of Burkina on "sustainable water resource management".

In addition, the formulation of recommendations for organising similar conferences in other geographic areas and on other technical themes is encouraged. Participants in an Alliance workshop ideally form an Alliance that will be sustainable beyond the lifespan of any particular project, and, thus, support the sustainability of international collaboration.

- In accordance with the GCARD Roadmap, the Alliance seeks to identify Southern research needs and to develop adequate responses to them.
- The Alliance seeks to assure the integration of existing activities which will implement and/or strengthen the Collaborative Transnational Thematic Networks (CTTN). These networks assure the operative integration of actors and sustainable collaboration in implementation.

¹Bernard, M. (2013) The Alliance Concept – a framework for Agricultural Research for Development. ERA-ARD briefing paper (www.era-ard.org/outputs/phase-ii) – 6 pp.

- Alliances/thematic networks should facilitate the realisation of long-term research through a knowledge-brokering process that ensures rapid dissemination of information and the formation of consortia to capture available funds, in order to overcome financial constraints.
- Programme owners are responsible for their role in both, (1) launching new programmes and their respective calls for proposals, but also in (2) formulation of new interventions to be coordinated with on-going projects.

Approach - ERA-ARD's recipe for an Alliance Workshop

Bringing together necessary actors

The organisers of the Alliance Workshop, ERA-ARD II (represented by a work-package leader from Europe in this case from Austria), and the relevant research fora (in this case CORAF and FARA) mobilised participants who could contribute to planning and coordination within a given thematic and regional focus.

In the Burkina Faso Water Resource Management in Agriculture workshop, co-organiser CORAF had already launched studies describing the demand and need of solutions and research, and hence this provided a solid basis for this workshop. Project managers residing at the workshop location in Ouagadougou (IRD/France and ERA net Susfish/Austria) contributed with logistical support to ensure the success of the workshop. The table below reflects the diverse profiles of representatives that participated in the Burkina Faso Alliance Workshop discussions. There were roughly as many African as European participants.

Stakeholder	Europe: donors, research	European Agency, Africa based	Research Fora	Govt. Orgs, Researchers from West Africa	Govt. Orgs Researchers from East Africa	Govt. Orgs Researchers Southern Africa	Int'l Orgs.	Farmers, community of practice	Capacity development	Total
No. of participants	13	13	2	24	1	1	1	3	1	59
% of total participants	22	22	3	41	2	2	2	5	2	100

Exchange of offer and demand

Experts from research organisations, from research fora and policy units were asked to present their ideas for discussion by the different stakeholders about pressing research needs and existing program offers. The reference framework was developed by parallel discussion groups organised along three technical sub-themes and one strategic group focussing on the alignment of principles along the implementation process. Each group had to develop a matrix of priority areas providing guidance for targeted and co-ordinated investments into research and accompanying measures of capacity building.

Methodology of Sub-theme Working Groups

Members of the *technical groups* were asked to select two topics, which are urgent and defined the two most limiting factors (gaps / priorities) in terms of impact on innovation and productivity for each topic.

For the selected topics, participants identified:

1. Research priorities that have to be addressed by basic research and applied research to overcome the limiting factor
2. Suitable indicators to monitor impact

The technical groups should ideally also indicate financing opportunities, capacity development needs and potential partners for implementation. The table below summarises the type of listings produced:

Intervention area	Research priority	Indicators for successful research	Limiting factors according to priority
RAINFED AGRICULTURE			
Rainwater management	analysis of different rainwater harvesting techniques; currently studied techniques: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half-moon, • Stone lines, • Zaī, • Rock bunds, • terraces & grass bunds, • water diversion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased profitability 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cost benefit of the technology 2. Effectiveness and sustainability of the technology 3. Inadequate rainwater 4. Land tenure 5. Forecasting 6. Inadequate Capacity 7. Lack of political will 8. Lack of data 9. Lack of investment in innovation 10. Lack of sustainability 11. Cultural mechanism of the technology 12. Inadequate water governance
	study of rainfall variability		
Watershed management	“in situ” water management-techniques of a particular watershed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water outlets that do not contribute to performance are minimized 	
Capacity development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and analyse capacity gaps across scales • Include institutional and human capacity building in research programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and nature of gaps identified at various levels • Number of people and institutions with enhanced capacity 	
Innovation and activities to accelerate adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • documentation of farmer’s knowledge and practices • inventory of technologies • identification of communication channels for different clients • economic valuation • targeting and scaling out strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • online database • dissemination channels established • appropriate communication tools developed • forum / platform for joint learning and feed-back mechanisms created 	
IRRIGATION			
inter-disciplinary approach to different techniques of water retrieval ensuring the socio-economic feasibility of technical solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • technique of water production • access to energy for machinery • systematic approach within the different dry zones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase of irrigated surface after innovation • improved food security • increased income for farmers 	
accompanying capacity development and knowledge management measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training manuals for farmers and technicians to guarantee adoption of scientific innovation into practice • diffusion of information to the larger community of practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of trained actors and producers applying the developed technology • impact on rural livelihoods 	

The working group on *policy issues* elaborated an operational framework in response to the agreed principles and political commitments. The objective of the policy issue group was to digest international recommendations into an operational plan that can be implemented in the local/regional context.

Results of the water resource management workshop

Increased ownership of research and capacity development initiatives:

- The Alliance Workshop clearly showed the commitment of West African countries. The Burkina Faso Minister of Scientific Research and Innovation, Mr. Gnissa Konaté and his officials opened the ceremony, attended the workshop and declared the Ministries' support for the initiative. The workshop itself was moderated by Dr. Paco Sérémé, former director of CORAF and one of the very prominent personalities in West African ARD.
- National research institutions supported the workshop: Dr. Korodjouma Ouattara and Dr. Albert Barro (both INERA) kindly supported the workshop as rapporteurs and documented working group results. They produced a report on the main results of the alliance workshop.

Improved contribution and visibility of Europe towards achieving the MDGs due to **higher effectiveness and efficiency** of programming research for development:

- A reference framework for water-management issues in the region was elaborated. Relevant research topics and limiting factors for the given thematic focus were defined. Necessary activities and actors were identified and have already been followed up by some member states?

Better access of rural sectors in developing countries to European ARD expertise:

- Conference presentations are freely made available online. The links to websites of represented organisations and all the presentations from the workshop were published by IRD on the African platform on Agriculture, i.e. on FARA's web-based system called erails.net. Information can be viewed [here](#)².

Alliance Workshop Outcome

The ERA-ARD initiative to organise the Burkina Faso workshop was welcomed by participants. Further meetings of the thematic network will use this concept as a tool for regional priority setting for joint ARD planning purposes and could feed into the Joint Strategic Working Group (SWG) that will be initiated by the European Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) and the European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development (EIARD). Clusters areas for priority setting should be considered and experiences from the Alliance Concept workshops provide valuable inputs for this process.

² <http://www.erails.net/FARA/era-ard-ii/burkina-faso-ws>

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Alliance Workshop is a relevant tool to ensure participatory planning of activities in line with GCARD principles. Based on the general principles of the Alliance Concept, actors from research, policy and the community of practice can effectively collaborate to define shared project objectives of any given thematic area. Results should feed directly into the innovation process of development activities set up by the community of practice. Objectives can be followed-up at a more sustainable level, if policies from Europe and Africa continuously and efficiently invest resources specifically for such alliances or networks, prior to funding research programmes. This approach also offers opportunities to consolidate previous work and to apply lessons learned into formulation of future programmes.

Follow-up

In order to continue the process and further the Alliance Concept, the ERA-ARD II consortium partners would like to invite feedback on this Briefing Paper and further discussion of the proposed recommendations. Please contact Henning Knipschild at henning.knipschild@ble.de or Karla Krieger at Karla.KRIEGER@lebensministerium.at and/or Patricia Wagenmakers (ERA-ARD II coordinator) at P.S.Wagenmakers@minez.nl.

Quotation

Knipschild. H. & Karla Krieger (2013) Illustrating the Alliance Concept – Burkina Faso Workshop on Water Resource Management in Agriculture (March 2013). ERA-ARD briefing paper (<http://www.era-ard.org/outputs/phase-ii/>) - 7 pp.