

## ERA-ARD Briefing Paper

### A Tool Box to improve the EU Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) contribution towards the MDGs

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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, effects of 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.era-ard.org), to benefit both stakeholders and the wider public.

### Disclaimer

The views presented in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of EC.

# A Tool Box to improve the EU Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) contribution towards the MDGs<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The ERA-ARD report on “**Recommendations to improve the EU Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) contribution towards the MDGs**” analysed the situation of ERA-ARD Members concerning their contribution to the MDGs. Although improved at the policy level, the ARD contribution to the MDGs was lacking at the programme level. Considering the existing major gaps, the report made some recommendations as concerns the main drivers of the European ARD contribution to the MDGs in particular the MDGs 1, 7 and 8. The principles, concepts, and methodologies were defined to ensure a better contribution of European funded ARD to the MDGs. From this analysis, the idea of a tool box emerged for use ex ante as a checklist for programming and ex post for evaluation. In consultation with SEAG, a grid was developed including MDGs 1 & 7 main goals and GFAR Strategic goals. This inspiring grid and the above analysis results were added in order to build the **MDGs tool-box**. Finally, it articulates MDGs, Goals, Questions and scores each programme or project.

## List of acronyms

Acronym	Description
ARD	Agricultural Research for Development
CIRAD	Centre International de Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement
CGIAR	Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research
EIARD	European Initiative on Agricultural Research for Development
ERA	European Research Area
GCARD	Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development
GFAR	Global Forum for Agricultural Research
IAR	International Agricultural Research
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
SDG	Sustainable Millennium Goal
SEAG	Southern and Emerging economies Advisory Group

<sup>1</sup>It is acknowledged that the “MDGs” created in 2000 by the UN are in the process of being reviewed since their target (2015) is approaching. The transformation of MDGs into SDGs (Sustainable Millennium Goals) is being discussed. Without foregoing any decision on this point, we use MDGs in this document.

## Drivers and principles

### Drivers

Members' policies are now in line with the MDGs and if at the project level, this link is reinforced, there is still a huge gap at the programme level. Several documents, visions and approaches were analysed to understand and define the main drivers of the European contribution to the MDGs. Given the scope of ARD, the MDGs that are most directly concerned are **MDG 1** (Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger) **MDG 7** (Ensure environmental sustainability) and **MDG 8** (Develop a global partnership for development).

### Principles

A previous ERA-ARD study on MDGs, once updated and completed by Era-ard II analysis, revealed **the five consistent choices** to make at the ARD EU programming level in order to improve EU ARD contribution to MDGs:

- **Targeting the Poor:** ensure that least or low income countries are first beneficiaries of ARD programmes
- **Using the concept of Agricultural Innovation System (AIS)** at the programme and project levels which associates end-users and stakeholders from conception to research results dissemination
- **Targeting gender equity issue** to include the active part of agricultural human resources
- **Ensuring that programming is consistent** at each step from vision, strategy to final actions
- **Practising programme Evaluation & Impact assessment:** which means not only the usual evaluation of research outputs but more importantly the evaluation of outcomes before addressing from time to time the Impact assessment, necessary but long and costly (to be developed at the European ARD level)

## Building the MDG tool box

### The SEAG contribution

At an ERA-ARD meeting in The Hague (September 2012), the SEAG presented the GCARD Road Map through a grid crossing the MDG 1 & 7 Goals (Poverty Alleviation; Food Security; Natural Resources) and the 3 GFAR strategic objectives (Foresight & Prioritization; Alliances & Innovation; Humans & Institutional Capacities). This grid became the starting and inspiring point for the MDG Tool box development.

MDG/GFAR	GOALS
MDG 1	Relevance to Poverty Reduction
MDG 1	Relevance to Food Security
MDG 7	Natural Resources
GFAR A & B	Strategy, Partnership & Impact pathway
GFAR C	Gender
GFAR C	Capacities
GFAR B	Knowledge and Innovation

*A tool box: simple structure, easy to use.<sup>2</sup>*

The tool is simple because it is presented on the commonly used excel<sup>3</sup> software. The main grid is composed of three columns (see Figure 1):

1. MDG/GFAR referencies,
2. List of 7 Goals, each of which composed of 6 questions,
3. Scores: each question is given a score (0/1 for checklist usage; 0/6 for evaluation usage) which calculates a total for each goal and a grand total

The excel Tool box file includes three series corresponding to three usages:

- for ex ante checklist usage
- for ex post programme evaluation
- for ex post project evaluation

The tool is **easy to use**, the scoring delivering an immediate graph design. It can be used for **ex ante checking** when you write an ARD programme or call proposal. (see Figure 2).

Once a draft programme or proposal has been prepared, it is possible to check with the tool whether the text adequately answers to all the 6 x 7 questions. The results provide the opportunity of correcting a draft text in order to improve its contribution to the MDGs. It can also be used for **ex post evaluation**, either for a programme or mostly for projects.

Indeed, after a call has been launched, the submitted projects can be screened by the MDG tool box by several evaluation experts. In case the scoring and graphs are different, it becomes easier for experts to discuss their different views. The tool, based on precise questions, facilitates the experts judgement and exchange with colleagues.

The tool is **flexible**: When the MDGs evolve into SDGs (or any other title and content), it will be very easy to adapt the tool to the new goals by changing the questions and if necessary the architecture.

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<sup>2</sup>Based on the report "how to improve the EU ARD contribution to the MDGs?" by Danielle Barret, the tool itself is a collective work associating Danielle Barret & Vincent Baron (CIRAD), Monica Berti & Paolo Sarfati (IAO) and Manfred Kaufmann (SDC)

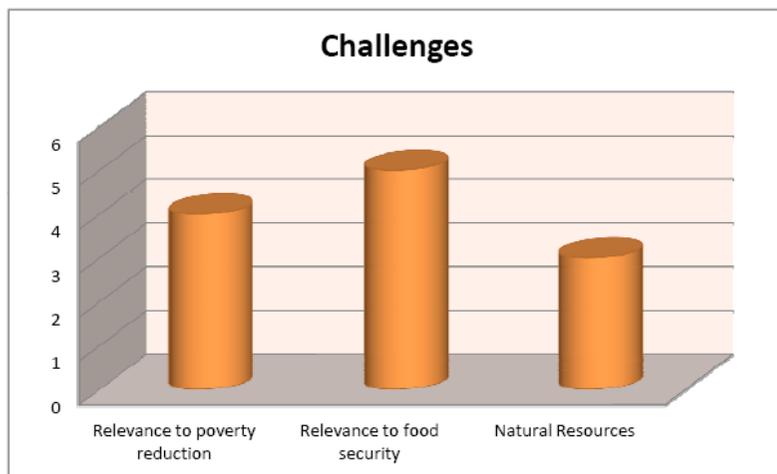
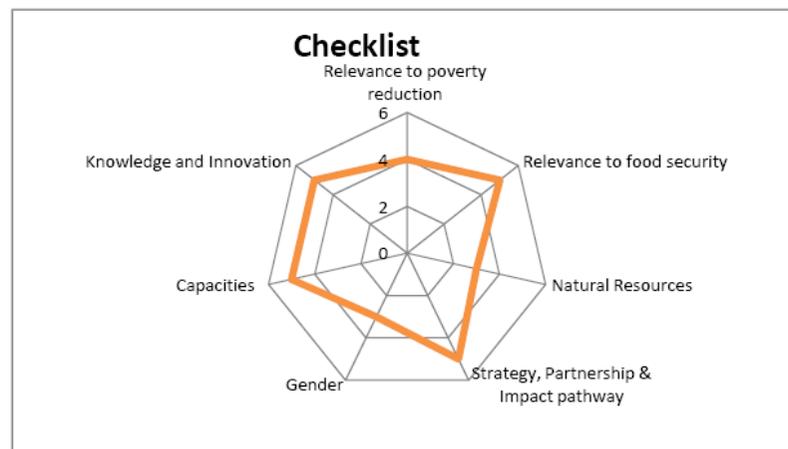
<sup>3</sup>Or any other spreadsheet, non-Microsoft

**Figure 1 MDG Tool box structure (examples of 2 goals)**

MDG	GOALS		Ex-ante Checklist Score: 0/6	Ex-post Programme or project evaluation Score: 0/18
MDG 1	<b>Relevance to poverty reduction</b>		<b>4/6</b>	<b>12/18</b>
	Does the project	target specific rural poor group(s) (such as landless/ woman headed family/ AIDS presence/ no cattle)?	2	2
		take into consideration the financial and time constraints of the target population?	1	1
		consider issues of applicability by the target population?	3	3
		take into consideration agricultural risk of the target population, and measures for mitigation and reduction?	1	1
		take into consideration existing local and indigenous technologies or approaches?	2	2
	Is the project design based on an analysis of the needs and problems of the target population?		1	3
	<b>Relevance to food security</b>		<b>5/6</b>	<b>14/18</b>
	Does the project aim at	increasing the food supply of the target population?	2	2
		improving the diet of the target population?	1	1
		contributing to increase the food safety?	2	2
		respecting the food preferences of the target population?	3	3
		improving the access of children to food?	3	3
improving the food storage and conservation facilities?		3		

**Figure 2 Checklist analysis for designing an ARD proposal or ex post evaluation**

Goals		Checklist	<i>scaling</i>
<b>Challenges</b>	Relevance to poverty reduction	4	<i>7 goals</i> <i>6 questions for each goal</i>
	Relevance to food security	5	
	Natural Resources	3	
<b>Means</b>	Strategy, Partnership & Impact pathway	5	<i>yes=1, no=0</i>  <i>goal: from 0 to 6</i>
	Gender	3	
	Capacities	5	
	Knowledge and Innovation	5	
<b>Total</b>		<b>30</b>	
<b>Score/100</b>		<b>71</b>	



## Conclusion and Recommendations

All EIARD & ERA ARD members' ARD policies have accepted the challenge of contributing to the MDGs. This political consensus can be improved by making use of this toolbox, either before or after finishing projects or programmes.

Given the difficulty of translating MDGs into research programmes, the MDG Tool box here presented should at first be used to check ex ante the contribution of future programmes to the principles analysed and adopted by ERA ARD community. With an initial testing at the start of the ERA ARD joint projects, the toolbox has proven to be useful.

Once the programming phase is finished, the MDG Tool box could also be used ex post for project evaluation, helping evaluation experts to exchange their views on the basis of multiple goals, questions and scores.

## Follow-up

The ERA-ARD consortium partners would like to invite feedback and further discussion of the proposed step-wise approach. Please contact Danielle Barret at [danielle.barret@cirad.fr](mailto:danielle.barret@cirad.fr) (ERA-ARD Improving European ARD contribution to the MDGS briefing paper author) and/or Patricia Wagenmakers (ERA-ARD coordinator) at [p.s.wagenmakers@minez.nl](mailto:p.s.wagenmakers@minez.nl).

## Quotation

Barret, D. (2013) Improving European ARD contribution to the MDGs. ERA-ARD briefing paper (<http://www.era-ard.org/outputs/phase-ii/>) - 7 pp.