GFAR TO EMPHASISE INNOVATION SYSTEMS APPROACH

The Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR) announced that an innovation systems approach — focused on poor, smallholder producers — will guide its strategy and future actions. Representatives of stakeholders from GFAR, a multi-stakeholder initiative that contributes to eradicating poverty, achieving food security, and conserving and managing natural resources, announced at its annual retreat in Alexandria, Cairo, in April that they would emphasise an innovations systems approach that involves partnerships of multiple actors in the public, private and community sector to collaborate toward agricultural development.


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FARA BUILDS UP SUB-SAHARAN CHALLENGE PROGRAMME

FARA and its partners have spent much of this year finalising the design of the Sub-Saharan African Challenge Programme. The Programme, to be supported by the CGIAR, is an ambitious attempt to develop new ways of organising agricultural research so that it forms a more effective component of innovation capacity. Striving for “business unusual”, the programme has adopted a learning-based approach it refers to as Integrated Agricultural Research for Development – IAR4D. This approach will be used to experiment with innovation platforms as a way of focusing collective action for innovation.

The programme is designed as an action research project where the main question is how to structure the learning needed to help different players — including agricultural researchers — in different operational settings organise themselves into the patterns of linkage and interaction needed for innovation to take place. The research will simultaneously build innovation capacities in its pilot sites in West, Eastern and Southern Africa as well as provide a vehicle to draw generic principles that can be used to stimulate the institutional learning and change needed to develop such capacities in other locations. The programme awaits final approval by the CGIAR Science Council.


DFID LAUNCHES RIU PROGRAMME

The UK Department of International Development (DFID) had the official launch of its Research Into Use Programme (RIU) on June 14, 2007 during the Forum for Agricultural Research In Africa (FARA) Fourth General Assembly and Africa Agricultural Science Week held in Johannesburg, South Africa between June 10 and 16. The first programme to come about under DFID’s new Strategy for Research on Sustainable Agriculture (SRSA), RIU plans to use novel modes of implementation to explore the complex issues involved in moving research into use, including “changing attitudes and behaviour, not only those of potential technical innovators such as farmers, but also those of policy makers and other influential people”. RIU’s approach is to shift the focus of attention away from the generation of new knowledge to the ways in which that knowledge can be put to productive use through innovation. Central to RIU’s strategy for promoting wide-scale use of earlier research outputs will be the formation of national innovation coalitions, which will empower potential users to articulate their demand for innovation. Within the RIU, this will involve working with existing agencies to facilitate their formation into coalitions through which the demand can be channeled.


STEPS CENTRE SET UP IN SUSSEX

The UK Development Studies Association (DSA) held its annual conference, titled “Connecting Science, Society and Development”, at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex in the UK between September 18 and 20 to debate how technology can help the world’s poorest people. Prominent development experts, including Judi Wakhungu, Executive Director of the Nairobi-based African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS), Sir David King, the UK Government’s Chief Scientific Advisor, and Pedro Sanchez, of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, New York spoke on topics such as genetically modified crops, innovation in the IT industry and e-governance at event.

http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/news/index.html

IDRC FUNDS INNOVATION RESEARCH

Under Its Innovation, Technology and Science (ITS) Initiative, Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC) has stepped up its commitment to support research on science, technology and innovation policy issues. IDRC hopes to enhance the understanding of innovation processes and functioning of innovation systems, and ultimately use evidence-based research to suggest policy changes in developing countries. IDRC supports research and research-related activities with three explicit objectives — “improving understanding, capacity and inter-linkages of innovation system actors (organisations and individuals) in developing countries”; “supporting the development of explicit and implicit S&T policies contributing to improved functioning of developing country innovation systems”; and “strengthening socio-economic impact analysis, social inclusion and learning capabilities in support of innovation and the governance of new technologies”.


LINK coordinator Jeroen Dijkman visited Condesan (Consorcio para el Desarrollo Sostenible de la Ecorregion Andina) in Lima, Peru in September to advance a joint Condesan-LINK initiative known as the Innovation Dynamo. This initiative, currently needing investors, seeks to build learning links between technology/innovation-based rural development initiatives and relevant area of development and S&T planning. The goal is to promote the learning needed to strengthen the policy and operation frameworks in which interventions are conceived and executed — and, in this way, strengthen rural innovation capacity. The initiative is also aimed at assisting Condesan, traditionally a broker of technology, to assume a new role as facilitator of institutional and policy learning on rural innovation.

IAASTD SUB-GLOBAL ASSESSMENT OF EAST-SOUTH ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION

LINK associate Rajeshwari S. Raina will be the resource person and Coordinating Lead Author for the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development's (IAASTD) sub-global assessment in the East-South Asia and Pacific region, between November 2005 and January 2008.

UPCOMING


ACTS-LINK WORKSHOP ON A NEW PERSPECTIVE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

LINK Ph.d Researcher Ekin Keskin gave a presentation on “Insights on Innovation Systems: An Ethiopian Case Study” at a workshop organised by the Science and Technology Policy Analysis and Training Institute of the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS) in Nairobi, Kenya on April 4, 2007. Ekin was also a facilitator for a course, titled, Science, Technology and Innovation: A New Perspective for Public Policy (The Case of Livestock). LINK researcher Mirjam Steglich, who helped organise the event with ACTS, and associate Norman Clark also participated. The event had as its theme “A New Perspective for Public Policy — The Case of Livestock”. The workshop brought together a wide range of participants — from the public and private sectors, from civil society, research organisations, NGOs and the media — to discuss the idea of innovation systems and learn how to apply it as an aid to public policy. The learning process was assisted through a series of case studies drawn from the livestock sector that illustrated the properties of successful innovation systems.

(Left) Ekin Keskin gives a presentation at the ACTS-LINK workshop in Nairobi.


For further details on the LINK activities or publications listed in this bulletin, visit our website at www.innovationstudies.org or contact us at info@innovationstudies.org. LINK (Learning INnovation, Knowledge) is an initiative of United Nations University – Maastricht Economic and social Research and training centre on Innovation and Technology (UNU-MERIT).