



Synthesis paper on “Why Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) is needed in Europe”.

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A perspective of young professionals:

Context:

The world's food security and poverty reduction (MDG1) is of major concern in both developed and in particular developing countries, and increasingly concern is on the availability of land, use of water between agricultural *food* production and agricultural *biomass* production. Increasingly it is expected that agriculture, besides food be of paramount importance to a wide range of human life variables. The immediate environment, food, water, health along with agriculture comprising, as a system is present everyday and everywhere. Many of the developing countries (DCs) are dependent on agriculture. Perhaps about 2/3 of the total population from DCs are from the rural areas. If we talk about aid effectiveness and achieving long lasting development, there is certainly a need for the Europe to support ARD in the South.

Improving and enhancing the ARD capacity of DCs (and putting their R&D results into use) will certainly go a long way in contributing to reducing poverty, raising economic growth, and improving natural resources management (all of which will certainly contribute to achieving the MDGs) which all countries of the world have all committed themselves to. The diversifying roles of agriculture in Europe, shown for example by the rush for biofuels and recreational areas, predict that this sector will remain a vital pillar in spite of its low share in economic growth.

History shows that European researchers, development agencies and governments have in many instances been among the forerunner innovators and global trendsetters for agricultural research and agricultural projects. Among others, they have been among those who were driving for participatory and bottom-up approaches to agricultural research as well as development and use of farming systems research approaches. In many fields European researchers are as well at the cutting edge of international agricultural research related to, or with relevance for, developing countries.

What Young Professionals think?

Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) has to support the agricultural and food sector in all dimensions. ARD in Europe is losing its mandate over to other emerging disciplines, such as genetic engineering, nano-technology or stem cell research. ARD should be stronger and continue to play a strong role in advocating development research which results in the reduction of poverty in poor countries and at the same time work to inform the public in Europe on the role of sustainable



agriculture on food safety, quality, quantity, renewable energy, climate change and other factors.

There is a great potential in agricultural research in Europe combined with the private sector research, should benefit both the very costly European agriculture but also spur development in the so-called developing countries. Much of private sector research is still done in the North (including Europe). This means a concentration of knowledge and capacity in the north. Thus ARD should tap this knowledge and capacity to help developing countries. It should be possible to have more ARD in the South as ARD to be really Development relevant be carried out where the end-user is located.

There is an important question: to what extent, for how long, do we expect there to remain such an imbalance in means and maybe also capacity to tackle the ARD between, say, Europe and Africa? What does the increasing role of regional and international bodies mean in this context? Surely, various stakeholders in agricultural research would like to be in the same position as Europeans and have the means and possibilities to tackle the issues raised by their home agriculture themselves, without - to put it to the point including the Europeans, trying to tell them what to do. In this sense, among the "four" scenarios identified (Foresight document - A Strategic Vision for European ARD in 2015 and Beyond, June 2007), partnership approach is a fine recommendation for the time being as a tool to remedy the unsatisfactory distribution of power at present. But it should at some point come to a more natural fair partnership. This way the top priority should be "capacity development" and that if Europe wants to continue to it, it must keep and strengthen its ARD capacity to meet the needs and to not deliver academic curricula not relevant for the South..

Therefore we are sure that there is still a very important role of ARD in Europe especially for new and emerging topics such as Climate Shock, Energy Crisis, Emerging diseases, Food quality, and Society, science and technology, which should be carried out in close collaboration with the South. There is also a need in re-assessing ARD strategy in the North as in the in changing ARD capacity from the north to the south. There is another factor for us (the North) by supporting developing countries (DCs) is to build their capacities with the end in view of making them more self-reliant, self-sufficient and sustainable, less external support (e.g. aid) may have to be channelled to them (DCs) in the future.

By supporting agriculture in general and ARD in particular, Europe is in effect helping DCs in partly addressing brain drain problems faced by many DCs. Europe also imports a lot of its food and foodstuffs from the South and yet they "impose" strict requirements when it comes to the type and quality or standard of food and foodstuffs that will enter the territory. With the developing countries often limited research capacity to respond to these requirements, Europe is in a position to support building such capacities in the South as they themselves will benefit from the results through their food imports. By supporting DCs in their ARD say in food quality control and processing, they can be assured of safe and quality food products getting into the European market.