

Practicing Agricultural innovation in Africa: A Platform for Action.

A brief travel report by Karsten N Kryger

Background

The “Forum on Developing Agriculture and Agribusiness Innovation in Africa” held in Dar es Salaam, May 12-14, 2008 was organized by WB Institute (WBI) in collaboration with Danida and six African Governments, including the Governments of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique, Rwanda and Ghana.

The overall objective of the Forum was to facilitate learning on key policies, practices, and actors that enable innovation and technology development in agriculture and food industry in African countries. The intended result was to inform stakeholders in agricultural and food sectors on crucial agricultural innovation and technology development issues and replicating and scaling up success in African countries. An important intention was to establish national action plans for the six participating countries.

The Forum

The forum was organized to give national delegations valuable inputs for their work on national action plans for developing agricultural innovation systems.

One part of the programme included contributions on agricultural innovation in Brazil, Denmark and China as well as presentations of several case studies, mainly from participating countries on specific experiences with agricultural innovation. Invited speakers and case study presenters acted as resource persons for the national delegations, to the extent the delegations requested for this.

Four of the case studies included collaboration between Danish and African research institutions. These cases were:

- Upgrading traditional African food processing targeted towards the international market
- Selection of healthy seeds for commercial farming in Kenya
- Technology transfer and innovation assessment of transgenic plants in East Africa
- Access to private veterinary services for the poorest

To the extent possible, the cases were jointly presented by the Danish and African partners, but not all cases were represented by the Danish partner. The four cases are available in a folder jointly produced by Danida/Ministry of Science Technology and Innovation. [“Danish education, research and development assistance in support of agriculture and agribusiness development in Africa”](#) (May 2008).

Another part of the programme was allocated for the six national delegations to draw up national actions plans. At the end of the forum, the result of this work was presented.

Follow up:

In practice, all national delegations are expected to follow up based on the action plans elaborated during the forum. Information received after the forum confirms that the delegations from Kenya and Rwanda have taken action, but I have no information whether the delegations from Tanzania, Uganda, Mozambique and Ghana have taken steps to move the process further.

World Bank Institute has recently announced a “Workshop on Effective use of Research Communication” to be held in Addis Ababa on 21st-22nd October, 2008.
<http://www.gdnet.org/middle.php?oid=1492>

I, the undersigned, extended my travel to include visits at the Danish Embassies in Kampala and Nairobi. Based on the visits it is clear that agricultural sector programme support is being closed in all three East African countries, and only the private sector based activities within these programmes (e.g. support to private sector operatives in a few specified commodities) will be carried over into business sector programmes. On this basis it is questionable whether Danida will be involved in carrying the process of developing agricultural innovation systems forward in East Africa. It is more likely that agricultural innovation systems will be under the purview of other development partners than Danida.

At University of Copenhagen/Faculty of Life Sciences (LIFE), we have received a request from a promising Kenyan PhD candidate with interest in Agricultural innovation Systems. As far as I am informed, plans have progressed well for this PhD project. And LIFE is considering further action within the area of agricultural innovation systems.

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