

DANISH DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH NETWORK (DDRN)

Travel report

Reference: South Africa_19062007
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Travelling to: South Africa (SA)
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1. Objectives for travel:

- To participate in the 4th Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) General Assembly in Johannesburg, South Africa, 8-16 June 2007.
- To 'brand' DDRN and identify potential members and collaborators in Africa
- To meet with staff of the Danish Embassy in Pretoria to introduce DDRN and discuss collaboration related to the Urban Environmental Management Programme (UEM)

2. Background

The Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) held its 4th biennial General Assembly (GA) 10 - 16 June 2007, in Johannesburg, South Africa. The theme of the GA was: Promoting the productivity and competitiveness of African agriculture in a global economy. The conference brought together the Sub-regional organizations (SROs), national agricultural research system (NARS), international agricultural scientific community, farmers' organization, governments, non-governmental organizations, the international donor community and the private sector. The GA which coincided with the Africa Agriculture Science week and South Africa day was attended by more than 670 delegates, including 10 ministers and deputy ministers from throughout the continent, as well as Africa's development partners and non-African collaborating institutions.

3. Activities

Participation in FARA Conference

Ten sub-themes were identified and over the course of the six days of the GA, plenary sessions were conducted, with the objective of identifying key resolutions for all of FARA's stakeholders to action over the next three years, when the fifth general assembly will be hosted. I participated in side-events under sub-theme 5: Positioning agricultural research institutions to be fully effective, and sub-theme 7: Africa's capacity to build human and institutional capacity for the agricultural industry. At the first mentioned side-event I gave a presentation on the European Forum for Agricultural Research for Development (EFARD) representing EFARD¹. I also participated in the second meeting of the second steering committee of the Platform for African and European Partnership in Agricultural Research & Development (PAEPARD) held on 15 June 2007. In addition, I had a number of less formal meetings with researchers and key persons from the donor community and African and international organisations and institutions. DDRN had a stand at the poster exhibition where a newly developed poster and flyers on DDRN were displayed. I did not participate in the South Africa Day on 12 June 2007, where I met with the Danish Embassy in Pretoria. The plenary sessions were attended according to the programme.

¹ DDRN (previously NETARD) represents the Danish Forum and the coordinator of DDRN is member of the steering committee of EFARD.

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The full list of resolutions adopted at the GA and highlights from the conference are available on the [FARA website](#).

Meeting with the Danish Embassy in Pretoria

In addition to participating in the FARA conference I had a meeting with staff of the Danish embassy in Pretoria. On 12 June 2007 I met with Troels Jørgensen (TJ), councillor environment, and Portia Poulsen (PP), programme officer for the UEM Programme to follow up on the report on DDRN Danish competence profiles within UEM submitted to the embassy prior to the visit of AS to SA.

4. Outcome

4.1 FARA Conference

Side-event: The Platform for African and European Partnership in Agricultural Research & Development through PAEPARD (under sub theme 5).

PAEPARD is a platform to facilitate exchange of ideas and learning. The platform will be built in 2007 with the support of the European Commission (EC). Its objective is to increase the number and efficiency of joint research projects for African ARD that are contributing towards achieving MGDs financed through FP7 (2007-2013, EDF10 (2008-2012 and the Food Security Thematic Programme. The main partners of PAEPARD are FARA and EFARD, through two of its institutional networks, European Consortium on Agricultural Research in the Tropics (ECART) and Sub tropically Oriented Universities and Scientific Complexes Related with Agricultural Development (NATURA). University of Copenhagen/Faculty of Life Science and DIAS/Faculty of Agricultural Sciences at University of Aarhus are members of NATURA.

The presentation of PAEPARD given by the facilitation unit at the workshop and the summary of the conclusions of the workshop presented in the plenary are attached as Annexes 1 and 2, respectively.

The challenge that lies ahead will be to create ownership of PAEPARD in Africa and Europe and involve other stakeholders than researchers. In order to avoid that PAEPARD becomes just another 'coordination' project, it is important that those who are expected to be the key implementors of the planned projects, i.e. the research institutions in Europe and Africa, take charge.

Take home messages:

- √ This strategic partnership will include Universities and other scientific academies or networks to fully integrate the capacity building dimension, but will also go beyond research institutions and networks and include farmers organisations, NGO's, private sector, consumers as key partners
- √ The Competitive Grant Schemes which all the Sub-Regional Research Organisations by now have considerable experience have been a time-consuming nightmare in terms of procedures and administration (in the case of ASARECA 80% time had been spent on procedures and 20% on research) which should not be repeated in future research funding schemes
- √ EC FUNDING OPPORTUNITY FOR PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS! The first grant from EC for one year is only for building the platform (seed money) – hopefully this will be followed

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- by EC funded partnership projects within the framework of a second three-year phase of PAEPARD. The funding possibilities in EC for a second phase are judged to be promising.
- √ There is need to facilitate a better understanding of EC funding mechanisms and procedures among African institutions.

Follow up actions:

- The DDRN secretariat will ensure that all relevant information on PAEPARD is disseminated to Danish ARD institutions and other relevant actors and brief Danish members of NATURA and other relevant institutions in DK on the opportunities offered by PAEPARD
- The coordinator will continue to follow PAEPARD through EFARD and the PAEPARD steering committee.
- When the project has reached a more advanced stage and has concrete results and a clear business plan the secretariat will consider organising a meeting on PAEPARD for interested members and collaborators.

Side event: Capacity strengthening, information exchange, learning, foresight and S&T policies for agricultural innovation (under sub-theme 7).

The Regional Universities Forum for capacity building in Africa (RUFORUM), the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA) and FARA organised this side-effect. It was the best visited side-event with more than 100 participants. Issues discussed at the workshop included the urgency and the means of strengthening Africa's capacity to build capacity to and raise awareness of the potential, and means of enhancing the exchange of information and learning by all actors in the agricultural value chains across the continent.

Take home messages:

- √ There is a systemic problem (including management) in reforming reforming and recreating the African universities in a development context
- √ Trigger for reform in universities is change in mindsets and challenging entrenched beliefs and values
- √ The meta change is shifting from producing "disciplinary experts" to producing "change makers"
- √ African universities need support to reform for relevance
- √ African access to and thorough knowledge of Communication Technology is a key factor in capacity strengthening and information exchange

Follow-up actions:

- The Secretariat will continue to maintain contact with professor Adipala Ekwamu, Coordinator of RUFORUM - with a view to facilitation partnerships between Danish institutions and universities affiliated to RUFORUM and explore collaboration opportunities within the framework of PAEPARD
- Dr. Paul Kibikwa's (Makerere, Uganda) book in on learning to make change and developing innovation competence for recreating the African university of the 21st century will be ordered. His key-note address on this subject was brilliant.

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Plenary sessions²

The plenary sessions were of varied quality but there were many good presentations and presenters. A number of potential presenters at future DDRN arrangements within the area of agriculture, natural resource management and development were identified. Apart from a few critical remarks on the delays in implementation of the sub-Saharan Challenge Programme from the West African sub-regional organisation CORAF, the progress report of FARA presented at the GA was well received and endorsed by the SROs. The reports from the various sub-themes were very useful.

Take home messages and key resolutions related to sub-theme 5 and 7 above include:

- √ addressing the broad and systemic issues in capacity strengthening to focus on causes rather than symptoms and to assure that the capacity strengthening initiatives reflect established demands – redressing gender and age imbalances and inequities
- √ advocating and facilitating the strengthening of research management and agricultural sciences
- √ maximising the impact of agricultural research and development by providing policy makers with evidence-based pragmatic options, preferably developed jointly by researchers and policy makers
- √ mainstreaming indigenous science into agricultural research and development and making the necessary personal and institutional adjustments that are required to enable communication and joint learning between practitioners of the different
- √ regarding research on peri-urban agriculture as a mainstream activity, but one that requires new approaches to research
- √ the development of endogenous innovation capacity, including the ability to identify and adapt potential foreign innovations

Poster exhibition

During the FARA Conference quite a number of people were visiting the poster exhibition during the conference and this was a good opportunity to inform about DDRN and learn more about institutions, organisations and projects within ARD. A list of major publications brought back from the Conference is attached as Annex 3. I was contacted by several African researchers who wanted to inquire about southern membership of DDRN. The fact that DDRN is in the process of developing its information system and clarify its focus on the south at times made it difficult to concretise what DDRN can offer Southern members, apart from general services such as contacts, links and information.

4.2. Other meetings and contacts made

Useful meetings were held with

- *Jon Daane*, Director of [ICRA](#) and Colletah Chitsike, Southern Africa Representative of ICRA, based in South Africa to get to know more about ICRA's activities in Southern Africa and follow up on earlier contacts and the collaboration initiated at the NETARD-ICRA workshop on innovative approaches related to capacity development within agricultural research and education for development held in 2006

² For more detailed information about the presentations at plenary sessions and the results of the GA reference is made to the forthcoming proceedings and the FARA website.

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- *Wyn Richards*, Director: Communications & Knowledge Management, Research into Use Programme, to discuss research communication and collaboration.
- *Dr. Adipala Ekwamu* about possible areas of collaboration between DDRN and RUFORUM
- Members of the Steering Committee of *PAEPARD* (*steering committee meeting*)

4.3. Meeting with the Danish Embassy in Pretoria

Outcomes and follow-up actions:

- The Danish UEM profiles will be included in the programme's data base of consultants and Candidates for consultancies will be contacted directly by the UEM programme if needed.
- The 13 researchers who have contributed to the DDRN competence profile should be briefed and asked to inform the secretariat if contacted for consultancies as this will be a useful indicator for measuring the effects of DDRN activities.
- The dialogue about development of long term research collaboration between Danish and South African researchers within areas of priority of the UEM programme and partners, and where Danish researchers have the relevant expertise will continue.

After my return to DK Portia Poulsen has informed that a suggestion of a joint DK-SA research session to be included at the annual UEM meeting 13-14 September 2007 in South Africa has been forwarded to the partners. The idea is to make available to UEM programme partners quality UEM researchers from Denmark. This would enable a focused research approach, targeted at current programme and partners, and project areas. It would also be a good venue for the Danish resource base to meet with SA partners, understand their needs and offer relevant Danish expertise. In addition, the SA research base will also be invited so this would also be opportune to meeting and forging more comprehensive networks with the SA resource base. I am currently awaiting the partners reply to the Embassy's proposal. The where, who, how many, what content, who is paying and other practicalities has not been discussed yet.

5. Conclusions

The fourth FARA general assembly, with its large, diverse and active participation, provided a good opportunity for introducing DDRN to potential partners and networking with African and European colleagues. It was also a useful source of information and knowledge on the opportunities and challenges currently facing African agriculture. FARA is not an implementing body, but an umbrella organisation and as such it has managed to establish itself as a significant facilitator of African agricultural research for development.

The trend towards 'doing things differently' using problem-oriented approaches and focusing on multi-institutional and multi-stakeholder collaboration, which I also observed during the third FARA general assembly in Entebbe in 2005 has continued.

AS/27 June 2006