

Communication and Outreach Plan for AGRODEP

AGRODEP

The goal of AGRODEP is to position African experts to take a leading role in both (1) the study of strategic development questions facing African countries as a group, and (2) the broader agricultural growth and policy debate, which traditionally has been dominated by external actors and concerns. To this end, AGRODEP seeks to mobilize a critical mass of modeling experts within Africa's policy research and analysis community, broaden access to innovative research methodologies, and facilitate partnership with the global research community. In addition, AGRODEP's output will contribute to raising the quality of debate in African countries and promote evidence-based policy and strategy planning and implementation.

Goal

The goal of the present Communications/Outreach Plan is to *identify cost-effective activities that will link the AGRODEP research network to the policy decision-making processes in Africa*. The Consortium will thereby contribute to broader efforts under Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) to promote the transition to evidence-based policy planning and implementation processes supported by credible and locally-relevant research.

Objectives

This communications Strategy has four broad objectives:

- 1) Raise awareness about the AGRODEP Modeling Consortium
- 2) Increase the visibility of AGRODEP members both within and outside Africa
- 3) Promote/communicate research conducted by AGRODEP members
- 4) Strengthen partnerships with existing networks in Africa

Target Audience

AGRODEP communications and outreach activities will target policymakers in African countries, regional economic communities (RECs), international development community, country opinion makers, civil society and non-governmental organizations, media, and the general public.

Key Messages

The messages that will be communicated to the target audience will derive from sound research addressing specific economic policy issues in African countries. Among others, the messages will support the implementation of CAADP by identifying policy changes that are necessary to meeting CAADP's

development and poverty alleviation objectives. Another aspect of the messages that AGRODEP will communicate will focus on routinely featuring activities and publications by AGRODEP members as well as announcing events organized by AGRODEP.

Outreach Tools

AGRODEP will rely on three sets of communication and outreach tools to interact with its target audience:

- Communication/outreach tools designed and implemented by AGRODEP;
- Communication/outreach tools designed and implemented by AGRODEP and its Partners; and
- Communication/outreach tools designed and implemented by AGRODEP members;

I. Communication/outreach tools designed and implemented by AGRODEP

The first set of communication tools are designed by AGRODEP and include a) online communication tools (AGRODEP Website, Newsletter, Quarterly Bulletin, Policy Briefs, and Social Media), and b) direct communication (AGRODEP Biannual Conference, and Research Valorization Grant).

In implementing this plan, AGRODEP will work closely with IFPRI’s Communications Division in order to ensure AGRODEP’s representation in major IFPRI events.

a) Online Communication

AGRODEP has already developed a set of online communications tools which will enable it to become a better known consortium in Africa as well as globally. These online communications tools target a diverse set of audiences and contribute towards the objectives defined earlier in this strategy document.

Newsletter: AGRODEP will broaden the dissemination of its monthly newsletter to include policymakers and the media. This will increase AGRODEP’s visibility among local policymakers in Africa and will raise awareness about AGRODEP activities, its members, and policy research that is relevant to African countries.

The Newsletter currently features AGRODEP members and events, but it will soon start to feature new AGRODEP publications that can be of interest to local policymakers.

<p>Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness about the AGRODEP Modeling Consortium, by covering ongoing AGRODEP activities; • Increase the visibility of AGRODEP members, by announcing special achievements and awards • Promote research conducted by AGRODEP members, by announcing when members have a new publication
<p>Target audience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International development community • Regional economic communities (RECs) • Policymakers in African countries • Civil society and non-governmental organizations • Media and the general public

Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness about the AGRODEP → The number of people receiving the newsletter. Monthly reports on open and click rates of the newsletter. • Increase visibility of AGRODEP members → the number of featured members on the newsletter; • Promote research conducted by AGRODEP members → the number of members' publications featured in the newsletter
Timetable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing (Monthly)

AGRODEP Bulletin: AGRODEP will soon launch a four-page bulletin that will feature an editorial on Africa, recent economic data/statistics published on Africa, and information/events in Africa. The bulletin will be published every six months and will be disseminated via email.





Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness about AGRODEP, by highlighting AGRODEP research on highly relevant topics for Africa • Promote research conducted by AGRODEP members, by featuring high quality research conducted by AGRODEP members
Target audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International development community • Regional economic communities (RECs) • Policymakers in African countries • Civil society and non-governmental organizations
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness about AGRODEP → Subscription numbers. • Promote research conducted by AGRODEP members → Number of members' publications and events featured in the bulletin
Timetable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bulletin is published every six months in its first year (2012) and quarterly after that

Policy Briefs: Policy briefs can be used as an effective tool of making research findings more accessible to policymakers and practitioners in Africa. AGRODEP will consider publishing policy briefs based on selected AGRODEP Working Papers, if it considers that a particular AGRODEP Working Paper could add value to an important policy debate in Africa.

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote research conducted by AGRODEP members, by featuring high quality research conducted by AGRODEP members
Target audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International development community • Regional economic communities (RECs) • Policymakers in African countries • Civil society and non-governmental organizations
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote research conducted by AGRODEP members → the number of policy briefs published; the number of times the briefs are downloaded and cited
Timetable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occasionally as high quality, policy-relevant research by AGRODEP members becomes available

Website: While AGRODEP’s website is primarily designed to serve the needs of AGRODEP members, it has features that can be very useful to non-members. The AGRODEP website interface allows local policymakers to easily identify AGRODEP members from their own country and establish collaboration with them on policy issues of interest to both. In addition, policymakers and other target audience identified in his plan can also find other resources such as publications that deal with economic policy issues in their country.

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of AGRODEP, by bringing more traffic into the web portal • Increase visibility of AGRODEP members, by promoting members profile in the AGRODEP web portal¹ • Promote research conducted by AGRODEP members, by linking paper/presentation published by members to members’ profile and by displaying country profiles with members².
Target audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The general public
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of AGRODEP → The number of visits in the AGRODEP web portal • Increase visibility of AGRODEP members → The number of views on each member profiles, direct traffic searched by members’ name • Promote research conducted by AGRODEP members → The number of views on page regarding to paper/presentation which each member published
Timetable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing (Monthly log analysis)

Social Media: AGRODEP has recently established its presence in all major social media sites including [AGRODEP](#) , [AGRODEP](#) , [AGRODEP](#) , [AGRODEP](#)  attracting a wide range of audiences and followers. Social media allows AGRODEP to reach the target audience easily. For example, LinkedIn offers a search function of people/groups based on location, type of industry, their interests, and so on. This allows AGRODEP to easily narrow down the target audience and invite them into the AGRODEP social media groups. Social media also enable AGRODEP members to link to people who are working in civil society (i.e. The African Commission for Policy and Leadership³) and non-governmental organizations (i.e. University of Pretoria⁴) or media (i.e. Africa News Network⁵).

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of AGRODEP, by posting messages into social media • Increase visibility of AGRODEP members, by inviting AGRODEP members into social media and by expanding their network with group members which could be policymakers in African countries , regional economic communities (RECs) , country opinion makers, civil society and non-governmental organizations, media
Target audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • policymakers in African countries

¹ [AGRODEP Member’s profile](#)

² [Kenya country profiles including members’ name](#)

³ [The African Commission for Policy and Leadership](#)

⁴ [The Alumni of the University of Pretoria in LinkedIn](#)

⁵ [Africa News network in LinkedIn](#)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regional economic communities (RECs) • country opinion makers • civil society and non-governmental organizations • media • The general public
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of AGRODEP → The referring traffic from each social media to the AGRODEP web portal • Increase visibility of AGRODEP members → The number of followers of members who has the account in the social media
Timetable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing event (Monthly log analysis)

b) Direct Communication

AGRODEP biannual conference: AGRODEP will organize a biannual conference that brings together AGRODEP members and policy practitioners.

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen partnerships with existing networks in Africa, by inviting them to participate and/or contribute to the event • Increase visibility of AGRODEP members, by inviting AGRODEP members to present and by enabling them to network with regional and international experts and policymakers.
Target audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regional economic communities (RECs) • policymakers in African countries • country opinion makers • civil society and non-governmental organizations
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen partnerships with existing networks in Africa → Number of participants outside of AGRODEP
Timetable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This event will be organized biannually

AGRODEP Research Valorization Grant: AGRODEP will provide grants to its members to present their research at international conferences and workshops.

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase visibility of AGRODEP members, by enabling AGRODEP members to participate at international events and network with peers globally. • Raise awareness about AGRODEP, by having AGRODEP support acknowledged at international conferences
Target audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International development community
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase visibility of AGRODEP members → Number of grants awarded per year. • Raise awareness about AGRODEP → Number of grants awarded per year.
Timetable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing

II. Communication/outreach tools designed and implemented by AGRODEP and its Partners

Partnerships: AGRODEP seeks to find cost-effective ways to communicate with policymakers in Africa. In light of this, the approach that is chosen is to partner with existing initiatives such as the Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS) and other organizations based in Africa that have the infrastructure in place to implement outreach activities targeting policymakers, practitioners, and other members of the target audience identified in this plan.

ReSAKSS is an Africa-wide network lead by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). It is designed to support evidence-based policymaking in Africa. It has three regional nodes that collaborate with three corresponding regional economic communities in Africa: i) ReSAKSS-East and Central Africa which supports the COMESA region, ii) ReSAKSS-Southern Africa which supports the SADC region, and iii) ReSAKSS-Western Africa which supports the ECOWAS region. These ReSAKSS nodes facilitate “...access by the regional economic communities (RECs) and their member states to policy-relevant analyses of the highest quality in order to improve policymaking, track progress, document success, and derive lessons that can feed into the review and learning processes associated with the implementation of the CAADP agenda”.

AGRODEP will collaborate with ReSAKSS on various outreach activities, including regional conferences, workshops, and roundtables. ReSAKSS nodes will also be helpful at facilitating regional seminars for AGRODEP members to present their Working Papers published by AGRODEP.

In addition to ReSAKSS, AGRODEP will also collaborate with institutions that are already part of AGRODEP’s various committees (Steering Committee, Scientific Advisory Board, and Network Advisory Committee) as well as its existing partners. AGRODEP has partnered with five major African organizations operating in North, East, South, and West Africa including ASARECA, CORAF/WECARD, FANRPAN, IAV Hassan II, and University of Pretoria.

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen partnerships with existing networks in Africa, by participating at their events or organizing joint events Raise awareness about the AGRODEP Modeling Consortium, by establishing booths - when possible - at partner events and distributing AGRODEP brochures and promotional items Increase the visibility of AGRODEP members, by facilitating their participation to some of these events
Target audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional economic communities (RECs) Policymakers in African countries International development community Country opinion makers Civil society and non-governmental organizations
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen partnerships with existing networks in Africa → number of events organized jointly or to which AGRODEP contributed Raise awareness about the AGRODEP → number of events where AGRODEP was represented in some way
Timetable	Ongoing

AGRODEP will also actively participate in major outreach events that promote interactions with policymakers and practitioners organized by leading organizations at the country, regional, and continental levels.

III. Communication/outreach tools designed and implemented by AGRODEP members

AGRODEP members play a key role in the communication and outreach activities. There are several members who work for various government agencies or ministries in their countries including the ministry of trade and industry, office of the prime minister, financial and fiscal commission, and national assembly.

Presentations at government institutions: AGRODEP will encourage its members to organize presentations and seminars targeting policymakers.

Presentations at universities: Most AGRODEP members are reputable professors or lecturers in the largest universities in their countries. They can play an important role policy outreach organizing outreach activities such as seminars and presentations of their research at the universities where they teach.

Guest columns: AGRODEP will encourage its members to write guest columns in local newspapers on important policy topics that are based on their research findings.

Radio and Television Talk Shows: AGRODEP members will also be encouraged to participate in various Radio and TV talk shows to talk about their research.

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the visibility of AGRODEP members, by encouraging them to engage more actively in policy debates in their own countries through the channels listed above.
Target audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policymakers in African countries • Regional economic communities (RECs) • Country opinion makers • Civil society and non-governmental organizations • General public
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the visibility of AGRODEP members → number of presentations given by AGRODEP members at government institutions and universities, the number of local news items by or about AGRODEP members.
Timetable	Ongoing

Evaluation of the Communications Plan

AGRODEP will evaluate its communication plan against its objectives at the end of each year. Based on the annual evaluation, it will improve and update the plan as necessary.