

AGRODEP Steering Committee and Scientific Advisory Board

Annual Meetings · Nov 12, 2012 · Joint Morning Session · Dakar, Senegal

**Minutes**

**Steering Committee (SC) Participants**

**Yemi Akinbamijo**, African Union; **Ousmane Badiane** (SC Co-Chair), IFPRI; **Joy Kiiru**, AGRODEP Member Representative; **John Makuka**, COMESA; **Mustapha Sadni-Jallab**, WTO; **Greg Traxler**, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; **Terrie Walmsley**, GTAP

**Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) Participants**

**David Olusanya Ajakaiye**, African Centre for Shared Development Capacity Building; **Bernard Decaluwe** (SAB Co-Chair), Université Laval; **Augustin Kwasi Fosu**, UNU-WIDER; **Jane Mariara-Kabubo**, University of Nairobi; **Johann Kirsten**, University of Pretoria; **Maximo Torero** (SAB Co-Chair), IFPRI

**AGRODEP Staff Participants**

**Lacina Balma**, IFPRI-Dakar; **Antoine Bouet**, IFPRI; **Betina Dimaranan**, IFPRI; **Alimatou Diop**, IFPRI-Dakar; **Ismael Fofana**, IFPRI-Dakar

**Meeting Agenda and Introductions**

The meetings of the AGRODEP Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) and Steering Committee (SC) were held at the IFPRI-Dakar office in Dakar, Senegal on Monday, November 12, 2012. The two committees met in a joint session in the morning. This was followed by a presentation during lunch by the guest speaker, Joy Kiiru, an AGRODEP member from the University of Nairobi, who presented her research on the impact of microfinance on rural poor households' incomes and vulnerability to poverty. In the afternoon, the Scientific Advisory Board and Steering Committee held separate business meetings before coming back together for a joint session at the end of the day.

This document covers the joint meeting held in the morning of November 12, and is organized according to the meeting agenda, as follows: i) Opening Remarks; ii) Overview of AGRODEP Activities; iii) AGRODEP Modeling Component; iv) AGRODEP Data Component; and v) AGRODEP Network Component. The minutes of the parallel meeting of the SAB and SC are provided separately.

Ousmane Badiane gave the welcome remarks and introduced the agenda of the meeting. This was followed by introductions from all those present at the meeting.

**Overview of AGRODEP Activities**

Betina Dimaranan provided an overview of AGRODEP's activities in the past year. She started with the background on the goals of AGRODEP, the project's key components, and the management and

governance structure before providing an update on key activities in 2012 such as membership, the website, communications, the initial set of models, data activities, the grants program, training activities, publications, and collaboration with key partners.

#### **Key Discussions:**

- **Grants:** A distinction was made between grants for innovative research and grants to cover research gaps. Grants for innovative research cover topics of relevance to Africa, including priority topics defined under the CAADP Agenda. These grants are open only to AGRODEP members. Grants for gaps in research focus on emerging issues in Africa that have previously received little or no attention. These grants are open to both AGRODEP and non-AGRODEP members.
- **Alignment to CAADP framework:** Research in line with the CAADP Agenda is currently facilitated under the grants of innovative research. It was pointed out that CAADP is changing the way it is doing business and there should be greater opportunities for alignment with CAADP research areas now. However, AGRODEP is still a young institution and has yet to explore the targeted type of research that is in line with CAADP, and/or to potentially link with CAADP through complementary funding, e.g. in impact evaluation research.
- **Membership:** To be eligible for AGRODEP membership, an individual must be: (1) a citizen of an African country, (2) based in Africa, and (3) must have obtained a Ph.D. within the last 15 year, or currently pursuing a Ph.D. degree, or obtained a Master's degree combined with technical skills and experience. There is currently no graduation criterion for current members. However, there is a de-selection procedure in place for members who have not participated in any of AGRODEP's activities, including website visits, over a two-year period. The management team will revisit the membership policies for members who relocate out of Africa.

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#### **AGRODEP Modeling Component**

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Antoine Bouet presented an overview of the activities of the modeling component in the past year, along with the component's work plan for 2013. By the end of 2012, the modeling component will have developed nine models and in 2013 will focus on completing the documentation of the initial set of models and the development of seven new analytical instruments. He also presented several illustrative cases from studies where models similar to the ones being developed by AGRODEP were used.

#### **Key Discussions:**

- **Model adaptability:** The question of country-specificity of the models was raised. The AGRODEP model library includes global models and single-country models. The single-country models are purposely generic enough but can be modified to address country specificities and answer specific questions. Research grants, with associated mentoring, can be used by AGRODEP members to contextualize the models for their countries and research questions. In the case of two different single-country models that could potentially provide conflicting results, i.e. the PEP model and the IFPRI model, AGRODEP has prepared a technical note to guide users about the similarities and differences between the two models.
- **Model transmission:** Aside from posting in the AGRODEP model library with complete codes and documentation, models are transmitted to AGRODEP members through training courses. AGRODEP offers training courses that cover special topics on quantitative techniques, data development, and on specific models. Additional mentorship activities are available after the training courses. Instructors can mentor participants on customization of models for specific contexts.

- **Tracking use of models:** AGRODEP management keeps track of the research methodologies used by AGRODEP research grantees. AGRODEP will also keep track of the download and use of the models that were introduced by AGRODEP in the past year.

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### AGRODEP Data Component

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Betina Dimaranan presented an overview of the activities of the data component in the past year, along with the workplan for 2013. She reported on the current country coverage for the main data types (household survey data, social accounting matrices, national agricultural statistics) in the AGRODEP data portal, and outlined the plans for continued data warehousing and data construction projects in 2013.

#### Key Discussions:

- **Data Use:** The datasets that are currently available in the AGRODEP portal are all publicly available. Since these datasets that are located in other websites, AGRODEP is not able to track download and usage information. However, AGRODEP can monitor web search activity for different datasets. In the future, with datasets that are either obtained or developed specifically for AGRODEP members, AGRODEP will be able to track downloads since these datasets will be housed in the AGRODEP web server. These datasets will initially be made accessible only by AGRODEP members.
- **Data Development:** The importance of linking datasets with models was emphasized. Data sets should be provided for specific types of models. Documentation on the linkage between data and models should be provided as well. The AGRODEP model and data components are already working together on this. Bernard Decaluwe suggested that AGRODEP should stick to simple rather than complex social accounting matrices in the data construction projects and put more effort in improving geographic coverage and obtaining more recent data. AGRODEP members who received grants should also be asked to share the data that they are using in their study.
- **Other available datasets:** Several meeting participants offered information about existing databases that the AGRODEP team should look into.
  - Mustapha Sadni-Jallab emphasized the availability of various data and data tools from the WTO website for AGRODEP members. These include trade, tariff, and services profiles; tariff download facility; tariff analysis online; international trade and market access interactive online data; RTA databases; PTA database; and NTM database.
  - Bernard Decaluwe shared the information that the statistical office of the African Union has a project to deliver social accounting matrices for UEMOA countries.
  - John Makuka reported that ACTESA is developing its web portal. The portal will include data on staple foods trade within COMESA.

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### AGRODEP Network Component

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Ismael Fofana reported on the progress in 2012 in the areas of membership, training program, grants program, publications support, and communications and network support. He also reported on members' participation in each of the activities and outlined the network component's workplan for 2013.

## Key Discussions:

- **Membership Issues:** The discussion focused on the optimal number of members, geographic and gender balance, and the non-active members. AGRODEP intends to have a “critical mass” of 150 members by the end of the third year and considers 150 as the feasible size in terms of funds and other resources. The project will continue to ensure geographic and gender balance, aiming not so much for having each African country represented but looking more at regional representation. The management team will review the de-selection criteria and explore other options to deal with the few non-active AGRODEP members, i.e. members who have not participated in any AGRODEP activity (grants, trainings, publications).
  - **Publications:** The discussion focused on how AGRODEP can keep track of members’ publications, how to provide incentives for members to publish, and to how to help promote the publications. The AGRODEP management team plans to launch an incentive scheme to provide AGRODEP members with monetary awards for publications in top-ranked journals. The publication should be linked to an AGRODEP activity (e.g. research undertaken under an AGRODEP grant, research benefited from AGRODEP training received by the member).
  - **Training:** AGRODEP is offering eight training courses in 2012 on topics including data, CGE modeling, poverty analysis, impact evaluation, and panel data econometrics. Most of the courses range from 3 to 5 training days. A question was raised about the quality of training that can be expected from a 3-day course. AGRODEP ensures that training materials are provided by the course instructors and that mentorship is available to the participants after the course. A suggestion was made to consider developing AGRODEP as trainer of future trainers or mentors.
  - **Grants:** AGRODEP launched three types of grants, namely: (1) Grants for innovative research which are open only to AGRODEP members. The average size of the grant is \$12,000 and it includes grants for research to address on policy bottlenecks on CAADP topics; (2) Grants to cover gaps in research which are open to AGRODEP and non-AGRODEP members. Three research projects were awarded with \$15,000 each; and (3) Grants for research valorization which is open to AGRODEP members for conference presentations. Grantees are provided maximum funding of \$2,500 per year. All recipients of research grants are encouraged to submit their papers to the AGRODEP working paper series.
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