

AGRODEP Steering Committee

Annual Meetings · Nov 18, 2013 · Afternoon Session · Dakar, Senegal

Minutes

Participants

Steering Committee (SC) Participants

Ousmane Badiane (SC Co-chair), IFPRI; **Stephen Karingi**, UNECA; **Mustapha Sadni-Jallab**, WTO; **Greg Traxler**, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

AGRODEP Staff Participants

Betina Dimaranan, IFPRI; **Kathryn Kincheloe**, IFPRI

Meeting Agenda

The meeting participants discussed the following broad topics:

- i. GTAP Conference
- ii. Steering Committee Membership and Meeting Schedule
- iii. Mentorship
- iv. Policy Relevance

GTAP 2014 Conference

AGRODEP's goal is to have 150 graduate students and African economists at the upcoming 17th Annual Conference on Global Economic Analysis that AGRODEP is co-organizing with the Center for Global Trade Analysis (GTAP) in Dakar on June 18-20, 2014. The following issues and options related to this goal were discussed:

- The number of selected papers from African researchers may not be sufficient to reach the targeted number of African participants. It will be difficult, however, to justify funding for conference attendance for African researchers who will not be presenting at the conference. Options for funding researchers from Africa who will not present a paper at the conference should be explored. We can potentially expand the pool for African researchers that can be provided with sponsorships by:
 - Scheduling AGRODEP training courses right before and right after the conference so that training participants can also be sponsored to attend the conference (e.g. 4 courses with ten participants each)

- Organizing training for non-AGRODEP members back-to-back with the conference, e.g. graduate students, collaborative Master's program, PTCL (Interuniversity Graduate Program)
- Organizing side sessions during the GTAP conference. This can be coordinated with potential sponsors of side events, e.g. AfDB, UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA), European Commission in Senegal, etc.
- The UNECA will organize two Organized Sessions at the conference. This will have a maximum of 10 participants. The sessions will be on:
 - FDI on land and land markets
 - International trade and food security (including intra-African trade)
- The UNECA proposes to sign a letter of intent or agreement with AGRODEP that will indicate that they will give AGRODEP funding that will be used to sponsor participants to the AGRODEP conference.
- The WTO will finance the participation of 5 WTO African Chairs (from Morocco, Namibia, Mauritius, Kenya and Senegal)
- AGRODEP will cover the participation of members who will make presentations.

Steering Committee Membership and Meeting Schedule

The issue of the size of the SC membership was discussed during the annual meeting of the SC held on November 12, 2012. It was proposed that SC membership be trimmed down from 20 to 12 member institutions to allow for better coordination, especially in scheduling meetings and getting a quorum. When the issue was revisited during the SAC virtual meeting held on July 30, 2013, it was agreed that the SC members will postpone the decision on this and revisit the issue at a later date with possible implementation during the second phase of the project. In revisiting the issue again during the meeting, it was agreed that AGRODEP will wait until the second phase of the project to restructure the SC membership but will nevertheless go ahead and implement the following changes which will bring SC membership down from 20 to 15:

- The institutions that have not been able to participate in any virtual or annual SC meeting will be dropped from the SC. These are the ECOWAS (Rui Silva), USITC (Marinos Tsigas), and World Bank Institute (Soamiely Andriamanjara)
- SC institutions that are also represented in the Network Advisory Committee will be requested to serve only the NAC. These institutions are ASARECA (Michael Waithaka) and CORAF-WECARD (Harold Roy-Macauley).

Since several SC members will be in Dakar for the GTAP conference in June 2014, it was agreed that the next physical meeting of the Committee be moved to June 2014 around the time of the GTAP conference and the virtual meeting be moved to November 2014.

Mentorship

Since the AGRODEP project has become more established and has made greater progress in its training and grants programs, the issue of mentorship has become more important. The reputation of AGRODEP may eventually depend upon its alumni, hence the need to invest heavily in mentorship since this can be reinvested by graduates onto new members. The following observations and suggestions came out of the discussions on this issue:

- AGRODEP was designed to function mainly as a capacity-strengthening project and its main focus should be on providing training and not research. There is a perception, however, that the project has a strong research focus. This confusion, which may be due to the project being facilitated by IFPRI, needs to be addressed.
 - There is a need to balance the capacity-building needs of members and research requirements of IFPRI.
 - AGRODEP is still relatively new and some research is needed up front to support the training activities.
 - AGRODEP should consider broadening the mentorship supply network outside of IFPRI and will need to figure out how to attract mentors.
 - While the majority of AGRODEP members are young researchers, there are also some members who are more experienced and can serve as mentors to younger members. AGRODEP can possibly “graduate” some members and have them become mentors.
 - Affiliate members and more advanced researchers who have not been selected for membership can be tapped as mentors.
- AGRODEP mentoring is currently attached to the training courses and the grants program. AGRODEP should consider a broader approach to mentorship and explore ways to expand the mentoring function so that it applies to everyone.
 - AGRODEP should look at other comparable networks (e.g. GTAP, PEP, IATRC) to learn from their mentorship programs.
 - AGRODEP should consider linking with other networks to partner with them for mentorship.
 - Survey what members are working on and use connections to match members to mentors; this can be done in a pilot experiment initially starting with 20-30 members.
 - AGRODEP should push for more networking among members.

Policy Relevance

In order to become relevant in the policy arena, AGRODEP first needs to build scientific credibility and increase visibility through newsletters and publications. The following are some suggestions for increasing members’ visibility in the AGRODEP website: feature members’ journal publications, include their CVs and fields of specialization, feature members who are going to, include members’ presentations.