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AGRODEP Steering Committee (SC) Meeting
Tuesday, July 30, 2013
Virtual Meeting

Minutes

Steering Committee Participants:

Ousmane Badiane (Co-Chair), IFPRI
Lindiwe Sibanda (Co-Chair), FANRPAN
Bridget Chilala, WTO
Janet Edeme, African Union
Mutasim Elrasheed, Members’
representative
Stephen Karingi, UNECA
Cristina Mitaritonna, CEPIL
Kenneth Onyango (for Abdul Kamara), AFDB
Greg Traxler, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
Nathalie Troubat (for Pietro Gennari), FAO
Michael Waithaka, ASARECA
Terrie Walmsley, GTAP

AGRODEP Staff Participants
in DC:

Antoine Bouet (IFPRI)
Betina Dimaranan (IFPRI)
Ismael Fofana (IFPRI)
Soonho Kim (IFPRI)
David Laborde (IFPRI)
Sarah McMullan (IFPRI)

Meeting Agenda

The second virtual meeting of the AGRODEP Steering Committee (SC) was hosted at IFPRI’s headquarters in Washington, DC on Tuesday, July 30, 2013. The agenda items included the following: i) Opening Remarks, Introductions, and adoption of the agenda; ii) Update on 2013 AGRODEP Activities; iii) AGRODEP Membership Issues; iv) Hosting the 2014 GTAP Conference in Dakar; v) Steering Committee Membership; vi) General Discussion; and vii) Closing Remarks.

The [online meeting page](#) for the SC virtual meeting on the AGRODEP website provides links to all presentations and documents for the virtual meeting and other documents related to the meeting agenda items.

The minutes are organized according to the agenda items and the discussions among the SC members and AGRODEP staff present at the meeting. The decisions and recommendations of the SC are summarized at the end of each section.

1. Opening Remarks

Ousmane Badiane gave the opening remarks and introduced the agenda for the meeting. A roll call was taken among the participants in the meeting. Twelve SC members were on the call. Fourteen members originally accepted the meeting but two were unable to attend due to unexpected scheduling conflicts.

2. Update on 2013 AGRODEP Activities

An [update on AGRODEP's activities](#) since the Annual Steering Committee meeting in Dakar, November 2012 was presented. The highlights of AGRODEP's 2012-13 activities include the 2012 Annual Members' Workshop on November 13, 2012; launch of the Fourth and Fifth Membership Rounds on October 2012 and March 2013, respectively; launch of the Technical Notes Series with nine technical notes to date; completion of 2012 training courses in 2012 and launch of 2013 training courses; continuation of the Grants Programs (Grants for Innovative Research, Research Gap Grants, Grants for Research Valorization); Data Portal with more than 60 data sets added since last year's reporting; and website improvements including online course and grant applications, online Stata test, key statistics data mash-ups, and the AGRODEP Impact Evaluation Network (AIEN) collaborative space.

AGRODEP Plans for Remainder of 2013

- Continue with activities defined in the 2013 work plan – models, data, and network components
- Continue GTAP 2014 conference preparations
- Start implementing membership plans: de-selection, affiliate members, Friends of AGRODEP
- Annual meetings and members' workshop in November

3. AGRODEP Membership Issues

As AGRODEP continues to attract greater attention among researchers around the world, [several issues regarding AGRODEP membership](#) have come up. Some qualified researchers who would like to join the consortium but are ineligible since the key criterion for membership is to be based in Africa. The Steering Committee asked AGRODEP AMT to provide guidelines on how non-Africa based scholars and experts can contribute to AGRODEP. Additionally, there is the issue of AGRODEP members who relocated outside Africa, but want to remain active with AGRODEP.

The **affiliate membership** option was created to address both issues. Affiliate Members may include AGRODEP members who move out of Africa, qualified African researchers who live and work outside of Africa, and qualified African and non-African researchers working in international and CG centers in Africa. This arrangement will help increase AGRODEP members' exposure to experts outside of Africa and accommodate members who no longer live in Africa.

Since the successful implementation of AGRODEP activities relies on the contribution of individuals and institutions outside the AGRODEP network, the **Friends of AGRODEP** group is being constituted to recognize the role of these individuals and institutions and address how they, in return, can benefit from AGRODEP. Friends of AGRODEP include individuals or institutions that are not AGRODEP members or affiliate members and who have actively participated in the consortium's activities within the past year. The AMT invite individuals or institutions to be named as a Friend of AGRODEP.

PROPOSAL FOR MEMBERSHIP DE-SELECTION

A proposal was made to de-select three AGRODEP members due to inactivity over the last two years. Every year the AMT evaluates membership activity and after every two years identify who should be removed due to lack of sufficient participation. The following three individuals, who have not been active since 2010, were de-selected.

- Ramos Mabugu
- Festo Maro
- Johnny Mugisha

PROPOSAL FOR MEMBERSHIP RE-CLASSIFICATION

Three members were also nominated to be re-classified as affiliate members since they are currently living outside Africa.

- Vinaye Ancharaz
- Dawit Birhanu
- Evans Osabuohien

Discussions:

- AGRODEP Membership
The discussions began with a question regarding the rationale for AGRODEP membership being contingent on the location of the researcher on the African continent. Many of those actively doing research outside of Africa would like an opportunity to be a part of an institution that can provide the support AGRODEP provides for researchers in Africa. In response, it was explained that researchers who are able to leave Africa to work at international organizations have access to resources that researchers based in Africa often lack. AGRODEP is designed to address this gap and provide resources and tools for researchers that may lack adequate institutional and financial support. On the other hand, the affiliate membership is designed to address the issue of researchers outside of Africa having the opportunity to contribute to AGRODEP.
- Friends of AGRODEP
It was pointed out that potential members of Friends of AGRODEP may be left out due to the activity requirement (required to be active with AGRODEP for at least a year). However, it was also argued that the requirement proves a person's commitment to AGRODEP, demonstrating proof of interest.
- Difference between AGRODEP Management Team (AMT) and SC
Clarification was asked regarding the difference between the AMT and the SC. The AMT is the technical team running the project. Each team member has been appointed based on technical expertise and skills. The team is therefore not subject to automatic rotation, but individual members can be replaced when they leave or are terminated. The SC is the oversight body of AGRODEP. The SC brings together institutions that contribute to AGRODEP, guides the AMT on key issues of policy and strategy, and helps AGRODEP stay focused on its mission and members. The SC also evaluates the quality of AGRODEP's performance. SC members are appointed (and represent their organizations).

Decisions/Recommendations:

- The AMT and the SC agreed that an AGRODEP member who leaves Africa may be reinstated to their previous AGRODEP membership status upon return to Africa. While away, they have the option of becoming an affiliate member.
- The proposal for de-selection of three AGRODEP members was approved by the SC.
- The nomination for re-assignment of three AGRODEP members to Affiliate Members was approved.

4. Hosting the 2014 GTAP Conference in Dakar

An update on all activities surrounding the planning of the [2014 Global Trade Analysis Project \(GTAP\) Conference](#) to be held in Dakar, Senegal on June, 18-20, 2014 was presented. This included a brief background about GTAP, its annual conferences, and the proposal to hold it in Dakar next year. The proposed theme of the conference is “New Challenges in Food Policy, Trade, and Economic Vulnerability,” and the nine subthemes.

There will be three plenary sessions and speakers have already been invited. The proposed venue is the King Fahd Palace Hotel. AGRODEP expects 250 participants, among them 50 students from Doctoral programs in West Africa and 100 African economists. Sponsorship and funding of the participation of African scholars is being secured from IFPRI and several African organizations.

Discussions:

- The importance for AGRODEP and IFPRI of hosting the 2014 GTAP conference was emphasized. The event will help AGRODEP members’ interaction with high-level speakers and researchers, but also help GTAP gain an anchor in Africa. There needs to be a continual effort to reach out to organizations in Africa that can support and sponsor African researchers.
- A question was raised about why plenary speakers have already been selected. It was explained this would give each speaker ample time to prepare for his or her session—12 months in all. Additionally, selection of the plenary speakers is the responsibility of the conference program committee which has already been identified by GTAP. Speakers for the special session will be contacted in January 2014 when a call of papers will be launched. Applicants will be invited to present their papers on April 15th. It was also emphasized that information must be transmitted to AGRODEP members early so that they can begin working on the research themes as soon as possible.
- It was proposed that pledges to support African researchers’ participation in the GTAP conference be recorded to paint a complete picture of the funding available. There is a need to amplify the commitment from the ground and find champions in various organizations to promote funding of these African researchers. During the meeting each SC member was asked to be a champion of his or her institution. There will be a follow up with each member to confirm this commitment.

Decisions/Recommendations:

- Check with FARA on funding opportunities
- Centralize all information about funding opportunities to be easily accessible to researchers in Africa
- Contact or follow-up with “champions” from each organization to spearhead effort to secure funding and sponsorship of African researchers to the GTAP conference.

5. Steering Committee Membership

The proposed change in the number of members of the SC raised during the 2012 Annual SC meeting was discussed. A proposal was put forth by the 2012 SC meeting participants to reduce the number of the committee members to 12 instead of 20 due to difficulty in reaching a quorum. The discussion also included the possibility of rotating the membership of representatives of regional economic communities (RECs) like COMESA and ECOWAS.

Decision/Recommendations

- The SC members decided to reflect on the proposal some more and revisit at a later date with possible implementation during the second phase of the project.

6. General Discussions

The impressive achievements of AGRODEP over the last year were highlighted. The fact that the membership number was met by the mid-term gives AGRODEP 2½ years to work with all members. There are several state-of-the-art models and over 200 data sets which are mostly linked to models. The training, conferences, grants, and membership participation is good. Communications materials are good and timely.

However, it was also pointed out that there is room for improvement. The review process for the discussion paper is a bit slow and steps to speed up the process and encourage the publication of more papers should be explored. So far there has only been one Excellence in Publication Award. It would be good to increase this number. There is a need to increase members' participation in the post-training mentorship program; so far there is only one example of a member taking advantage of this opportunity. Finally, there is a need to address the membership participation which has fallen over the last year, due primarily to the fact that no call for innovative grants program was launched and the members' workshop held in November 2012 was targeted only to selected members who to present AGRODEP grant-funded research.

It was suggested that AGRODEP reach out to members who are not participating to find out how AGRODEP can get them to be more engaged. This issue should be further discussed by the Network Advisory Committee (NAC).

The proposed date for the annual meetings of the SC around November 18-20, 2013 was announced. The Scientific Advisory Board, NAC and the members' workshop will be scheduled on those dates.

Decision/Recommendations

- Circulate proposed date of November 18-20 for the 2013 SC Annual Meeting

7. Closing Remarks

Lindiwe Sibanda thanked the AGRODEP management team for the meeting preparations and appreciated the challenges of conducting a virtual meeting. She recommended the preparation of a one-page summary with key points discussed during the meeting, and to continue on a bi-monthly basis from this time forward.