

**INDEPENDENT EXTERNAL PROGRAMME AND
MANAGEMENT REVIEW
OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR
DEVELOPMENT ORIENTED RESEARCH
IN AGRICULTURE (ICRA),
WAGENINGEN, THE NETHERLANDS**

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Introduction

Since the last Independent External Programme and Management Review (EPMR) in 2000 ICRA has set itself steep institutional challenges. It decided to respond to the recommendations made by the panel, in particular those that called upon ICRA to move the centre of gravity of its partnerships, empowerment, relationships, actions and literature to the South, by becoming more demand-driven, and to continue to seek ways of enhancing its multiplier effect and hence its visibility and credibility, amongst others, by optimising the use of its alumni network. Besides, ICRA acknowledged the need for increasing and diversifying its European funding base by seeking support from other countries in Europe and the EU¹. In order to achieve the above ICRA decided to redefine its mission and strategy and to diversify from a core-funded “single-activity organisation” into an organisation that engages in a broader range of activities requiring new sources of income. The period 2001-2003 was used to develop a new partnership strategy, the current one, in consultation with potential partners. The implementation of this strategy was gradually phased in from 2004 and took full effect with changes in the Anglophone programme from 2005 and in the Francophone programme from 2006/07.

Purpose of the EPMR 2008

Against this background, the purpose of the EPMR 2008 is to:

- Evaluate ICRA’s implementation of the priority recommendations of the EPMR of 2000 and the continued relevance of its mission and strategy in its changing environment.
- Assess ICRA’s impact in terms of the progress that ICRA’s ARD partnerships in the South have made towards their desired outcomes and evaluate ICRA’s performance in terms of the effectiveness of its support to the achievement of these outcomes.
- Evaluate the performance of ICRA’s Board, management and staff and the adequacy of current organisational arrangements and human and other resources to maintain its relevance to partners, clients and donors and ensure the quality, sustainability and integrity of its services.

In order to achieve these objectives the EPMR 2008 is expected to assess in particular, whether ICRA has adequately redefined its mission and strategy in view of the main recommendations of the EPMR 2000 on the one hand, and important changes in its environment since 2000 on the other; what its main achievements, outcomes and impact during the period have been and, how effective its leadership, organisation, staff and management has been in ensuring ICRA’s relevance, integrity, sustainability and quality – see Annex 1 for the complete Terms of Reference. Given the importance attached in the Terms of Reference to assessing ‘ICRA’s move to the south’ the EPMR has emphasised ICRA’s partnership strategy in developing countries and less, its intense networking in Europe and international platforms.

¹ EPMR 2000, priority recommendation 4.2, points out: “There are potential demand-driven funding opportunities that exist (i.e. both multilateral and bilateral) which ICRA is currently not exploiting. The ICRA Board and the PAC should assist in identifying potential sources of such funds.”

Approach and methodology

Paul G.H. Engel, of the ECDPM² (team leader), Judith A. Francis, of CTA³, and Bernard Hubert, of INRA/CIRAD⁴, accepted the invitation by ICRA to join the EPMR 2008 panel. During the period January 28 to June 6, 2008, the team developed an analytical framework for the review; studied the global context for rural innovation and ARD; met with Board and staff of ICRA; held personal and/or telephone interviews with key stakeholders, including 2008 participants and alumni; paid visits to ICRA partners in South Africa and Ghana and worked together to synthesise and integrate findings and to develop recommendations. As required by the Terms of Reference, the team presents its analysis, findings, conclusions and recommendations in the form of a short comprehensive report.

The global policy context for ARD capacity development

Agriculture is back, but the world is different today

Agriculture is back at the centre of the international agenda and greater prominence is being given to the role of science, technology and knowledge for spurring innovation and to address agricultural development. After four decades of decreasing attention for and investment in agricultural and rural development, in particular in Sub-Saharan Africa and other vulnerable states, international institutions, OECD and developing countries are again recognising the crucial role of agricultural and rural development in reducing poverty and hence, in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (IAASTD, 2008; World Bank, 2007). Renewed attention for agricultural and rural development is demonstrated in particular in strategic efforts directed at development-support to trade – Aid for Trade – and natural resource management and more recently, in the renewed attention to food security due to the dramatic rise in food prices.

However it would be a serious mistake to see the renewed attention for agricultural and rural development as a revisiting of old romantic ideas on rural development. On the contrary, both local and international stakeholders call for a profound re-vitalisation of the rural economy, that includes re-valuing the cultural, ecological, economic, social and political dimensions of the rural space in the national economy; economic (product and market) diversification into non-traditional areas such as tourism, environmental, social and security services as well as improved agricultural productivity, better local, regional and international marketing, and attention to renewable resources, sustainability of a variety of (non-traditional) rural livelihoods and greater visibility of the contribution of rural entrepreneurship to the national and global economies. National as well as international actors are addressing the above complex challenges more and more through integrating agricultural research and development within an agricultural innovation systems perspective.

Innovation is seen as key to reducing poverty

“With globalization and new supply chains, farmers and countries need to continually innovate to respond to changing market demands and stay competitive” World Bank Report, 2007 pg. 158).

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According to the World Development Report 2008, agriculture operates in three distinct worlds – one agriculture-based, one transforming and one urbanized (World Bank, 2007 pg. 1). Consequently the agriculture-for-development agenda for achieving sustainable growth and development should differ. ICRA's core target groups in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean fall in the category of agriculture-based economies where agriculture continues to be seen as the basis for economic growth requiring a "productivity revolution in small holder farming" (World Bank, 2007 pg. 1). However, improving local, national and global governance in which the state has "greater capacity to coordinate across sectors and to form partnerships with private and civil society actors" is considered important for realizing this promise (World Bank, 2007 pg. 2).

The IAASTD report emphasizes that for any agricultural productivity enhancement to significantly impact on the livelihoods of the poor, it must be accompanied by changes in national and international policies, marketing and trade rules and capacity development as well as; a rethinking of the role of science, technology and local and traditional knowledge that is context specific (IAASTD, 2008). It further acknowledges that innovation is now even more complex and achieving a blend of technological, market and institutional innovations for productivity improvements that impact on the poor involves plural systems, diverse scales, multiple sources of knowledge and continuous learning and linkages among several state and non-state actors across a wide range of disciplines (World Bank, 2007; IAASTD, 2008).

The role of agricultural R&D

Public agricultural R&D in developing countries has declined or stagnated without any significant corresponding investments by the private sector (Pardey *et al.*, 2006). As such, developing countries face the double effect of under-funding and lack of an enabling environment at the policy and management levels to address the paradigm shift to adopting a multi-stakeholder innovation system approach for agricultural research for development. Consequently, the ability of agriculture-based economies to generate, adapt and use technologies and take advantage of or create the market opportunities to enhance agricultural performance is limited. They are challenged in taking advantage of the rapid changes in the international trade and technology environment e.g. through adopting international quality standards and the use of biotechnology, ICTs and nanotechnology.

The Global Forum for Agricultural Research also recognizes the paradigm shift in generating and accessing research results namely; innovations as consisting of hardware (technology), software (changed mindset) and org-ware (new organizational arrangements), new pathways to do research where science is seen as a multi-stakeholder process, higher education is transformed to facilitate learning participatory action research through practice and the need to create space for change through improved communication between stakeholders and institutional learning. As such, GFAR promotes a research for development agenda for securing increased public sector investment as governments need evidence of impact. The 2007 review recommended that GFAR should advocate for organizational and methodological changes in how research is administered, managed and implemented at national, sub-regional and regional levels.

Africa

African governments adopted the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) in 2002 and this is spearheaded by NEPAD. Within the CAADP framework, the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) has lead responsibility for leading pillar IV – Agricultural Research and Technology Adoption. FARA has emerged as a very influential platform for mobilizing political and international support for agricultural research in Africa (Gonsalves, 2007 – New Challenges and Perspectives for GFAR). FARA is

closely linked to sub-regional research and economic organizations, university networks, farmers' organizations and other interest groups. In 2003, the African Union adopted the Maputo Declaration wherein member states agreed to allocate at least 10% of national budgetary resources to the agricultural sector by 2008. Many countries continue to fall short in achieving this commitment. A five-country study across southern and east Africa showed that allocations ranged between 2 – 4% of GDP for 2005 and this could have been attributed to policies that were unfavourable to small holder farmers (FARA/Pelum, 2007) although there are exceptions e.g. Mali, Zambia, Kenya and Malawi. It has also been reported that African universities are ill prepared to train the continent's next generation of agricultural scientists, professionals and technicians and one of the priority strategies proposed for strengthening the contribution of agricultural education and training to agricultural productivity in SSA is that the curricula and pedagogy should be modernized by emphasizing analytical skills, problem solving, agribusiness processes and post harvest technologies and 'soft' but essential skills such as communication and teamwork (Agwe, J. 2007, "Cultivating Knowledge and Skills to grow African Agriculture" in *Agriculture & Rural Development Notes Issue 29, December World Bank (2007)*). The IAASTD sub-Saharan Africa report (2007) notes that options exist for improving the connection between education and the research system to move towards problem-based learning and remove outdated disciplinary barriers to include training on the socio-economic and policy environment that impact on agricultural development and field-based research with farmers as a new cadre of specialists is required.

Latin America

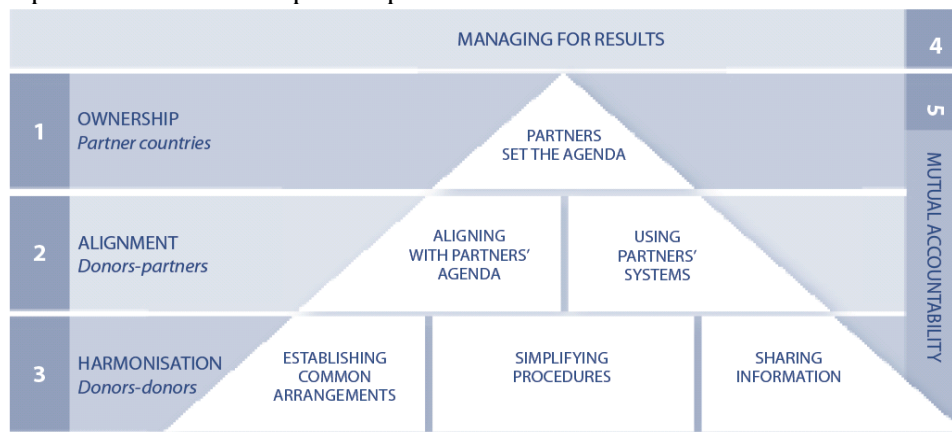
Agricultural performance in Latin America and Cuba is mixed with countries like Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Costa Rica being internationally competitive in some key sub-sectors and effectively demonstrating high performance with respect to the impact of agricultural research. However, poverty is still high in many Latin American countries and small holder farmers are still struggling even in the urbanized countries of LAC where agriculture is still seen as important in reducing rural poverty if small holders can become direct suppliers in modern food markets (World Bank Report, 2007). It is noteworthy in this case that a Latin American applied agricultural research networks⁵, RIMISP, played a key role and provided a strong input to the WDR 2008, specifically on the need to recognise country differentiation regarding the role of agriculture in development and to address agriculture-based and transition economies in different ways in order to reduce rural poverty. Another important player on agricultural development in Latin America is FORAGRO (Foro Regional de Investigación y Desarrollo Tecnológico Agropecuario), a regional forum which exists to facilitate and foster dialogue and cooperation among ARD stakeholders including farmers and the private sector. Its key role is to promote agricultural development from a technological perspective.

The European research and development policy context

Over one hundred governments, non-governmental organisations, international institutions, led by the OECD/DAC, have signed up to the Paris Declaration in 2005. It commits the signatories to improving the effectiveness of aid by strengthening partner country ownership, alignment with national development priorities and systems, harmonisation between donors, to reduce the transaction costs of aid for developing countries, management for results and, mutual accountability (see figure below).

⁵ RIMISP, Santiago de Chile, concentrates on facilitating policy dialogue, knowledge exchange and networking among Latin American agricultural (systems) research organizations, non-governmental and rural organizations.

In the European Union, the European Commission in close collaboration with successive EU Presidencies since 2006 has taken the lead in promoting the application of the Paris Declaration amongst European donors. Amongst other things, this led to the adoption of the EU Code of Conduct on Division of Labour in Development Policy by the European Council in 2007⁶. It commits European donors to seek greater effectiveness by eliminating the duplication of efforts in partner countries and to harmonising their regulations and rules of engagement. This has provided a framework for the growing movement amongst European donors to put the Paris commitments into practice. An evaluation of actual progress is underway which will culminate at the High Level Summit in Accra in September 2008, aiming to formulate a concise Accra Agenda for Action. One of the key players in the European effort is the European Network of Development Practitioners, a network of technical agencies from EU member states committed to implementing the Paris Declaration in practice with their respective partners.



Source: Paris Declaration evaluation⁷

Regarding agricultural research, several national EU organizations are now involved in capacity development for ARD at the national level in southern countries which go beyond the provision of research fellowships (Giger et al. 2007). Support is increasingly being focused on the institutional level where applied research programmes are made to include institutional capacity development. The aim is to maintain a critical mass in the North while strengthening ARD capacity in the south to increase ownership by local partners. In 2007, the EC launched its Food Security Thematic programme (FSTP) which has capacity building for ARD as a core strategy for developing national research systems. Innovative elements in capacity development identified by European institutions include mechanisms such as: Southern agenda setting, increased responsiveness to local/Southern demand; programmes developed in partnership with Southern partners; programmes designed to support dissemination of research into practice. South-south knowledge exchange however is not yet very prominent and there is little collaboration between different EU programmes even where mechanisms are similar.

It should be noted that some ICRA member countries are engaged in ARD e.g. in France, IRC offers a Masters of Science “Stakeholders in Rural development” (a Natura MSc) made up of nine one-month modules valid over a five-year period and a seven month field study and is also involved in research, partnership projects which deliver technical, social and economic change and publications about development processes. The EC recently advanced its strategy for Advancing African Agriculture (EC 2007). At the European level, ICRA keeps links with ERA-ARD, EIARD and EFARD.

⁶ <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/r13003.htm>

⁷ Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness: Evaluation 2007.

Findings

Mission and strategy

ICRA core business has remained remarkably stable over the years: its anchor and mainstay has been to help improve the contribution of agricultural research to agricultural and rural development, helping agricultural research to provide adequate answers to the complex questions faced by the millions of rural farm families, many of them female-headed, who in 2008 still harbour 70% of the world's poor.

The 2000 EPMR team advised ICRA, that 'with the move towards increased globalisation, partnerships, stakeholder involvement and empowerment, it is important that ICRA (...) is seen to be moving explicitly (...) towards developing a relationship with the South that results in increasing empowerment of, and more collegiate relationships with, the South than is apparent to outsiders at the moment'. It advised ICRA to be more pro-active in keeping in touch with its alumni and to make use of their skills, expertise and contacts as a means of improving its visibility and multiplier effect. Also an increase and diversification of European funding was recommended, to underline more explicitly ICRA's European origin and international remit.

Response to EPMR 2000

In response to the recommendations of the EPMR 2000, ICRA set out to thoroughly revise its approach to strengthening ARD for development on the basis of a clear redefinition of its mission and strategy as stated in the discussion paper⁸ published in 2001. Then ICRA moved ahead with a gradual widening of scope towards rural innovation and a significant up-scaling of activities in the South. Content-wise, the move towards up-scaling ICRA partnerships for increased impact & multiplier effect in the South was undertaken mainly along three axes:

- (1) From training ARD researchers - to training the ARD trainers - to facilitating learning in multi-stakeholder rural innovation processes in the South.
- (2) From ARD training to mainstreaming ARD in regional, national and international multi-stakeholder rural innovation processes in the South.
- (3) From supply to demand driven interventions: as of 2004 ICRA depended increasingly from (jointly acquired) project funding.

This approach has been accompanied by a **conceptual reinforcement with regard to training trainers**, by working not only at the individual but also at the multi-stakeholder level and by training groups of participants from the same country, but from different organizations that are to be involved in a common innovation process. Within the framework set by the EPMR 2000, the challenges emanating from such an approach were manifold: to find potential *clients* which are interested in this kind of offer and ready to pay for it (or to seek money in order to pay for it) – i.e. not only the demand for services is important but the *effective* demand: a demand plus the money to be able to respond to it. Another major challenge was to design *tailor-made training programs* adapted to the situation, issues, composition of heterogeneous teams. Besides, learning processes had to be redesigned to accommodate for the interests and timing of non-research participants: from (regional) administrations, farmers' organizations, food chain operators and educational institutions. Also, the composition of the groups of participants or teams to be trained can't be at random, it has to reflect complementarities between actors vis-à-vis future opportunities for innovation

⁸ ICRA's Global Partnership Strategy for Agricultural Research for Development – ICRA, July 2001, 17 pp.

and impact, requiring a specific preparation and even negotiation for each training event, course or wider learning process.

As a result, **ICRA has designed ‘tailored-made’ training courses**, adapted to new demands emerging from multi-stakeholder processes in the South with a new time schedule: less time in Europe (Wageningen or Montpellier) and more learning events and courses abroad. This is clearly reflected in the explosive growth of international travel days for ICRA staff and the number of de-centralized training courses done. It shows a considerable effort on the part of ICRA and its partners to deliver at once the main theoretical and practical principles of ARD and to meet local interests, with participants who are professionals, but given the work load in their own organizations, are less free to dedicate their time and minds to reflection and learning. Consequently, the burden on ICRA staff increased.

The next step was **to collaborate in creating platforms of innovation** - at the national level if possible - mobilizing the main stakeholders involved in agricultural development in each particular situation. Here ICRA distinguishes itself clearly from many other organizations or consulting firms:

- It aims at multi-stakeholder processes and to work with stakeholders in order to strengthen their capacity to interact and create an efficient innovation system; its interventions are clearly process oriented.
- It provides a robust learning approach and procedure (and not just teaching recipes) which make a distinction between policy, managerial, operational, support levels of the process
- It gives priority to institutional change, necessary to enable changes in mindsets, attitudes and behavior of the individuals: it aims to induce learning organizations
- It builds long term engagement with stakeholders (and not one-off services)
- It aims to promote the role of universities in the development of effective and sustainable innovation systems, narrowing the gap between education, research and development; this is a quite ambitious goal and extremely relevant to effective, long term institutional change.

Value added

As part of the above process of change and redesign of its strategy and approach, ICRA’s value added has been strengthened vis-à-vis the international context in which it operates.

ICRA has developed a strong ARD position with regard to enabling rural innovation processes

ICRA’s mission is capacity development for improving the contribution of agricultural R&D to sustainable development and poverty reduction. It has framed this mission in a strategy that aims at stimulating innovation by strengthening the abilities of people and organizations in the rural sector to relate to each other, for research and education to collaborate with them and by actively promoting learning. Changing research mentality and practices remains the crucial target. ICRA does so by:

- Developing multi-actor partnerships with national and/or regional organizations
- Building national teams that can facilitate learning between rural development partners and develop academic learning programs
- Facilitating learning from experience and diffusing good practices to improve rural innovation and organizational change
- Combining problem-oriented field work and experiential learning consistently throughout its learning events and courses.

ICRA bases its strategy on *the concept* of Agricultural Research for Development (ARD). It has developed, stabilized and documented *its approach* during the many years it engaged in professional ARD-training, and developed and structured the *ARD-process principles*, through long term use and on-the-job learning. By placing as much, or even more emphasis in its work on the *ARD-process principles* – of identifying actors, systems and working and learning together on finding possible solutions to real problems with stakeholders of ARD – ICRA has developed a pragmatic, not recipe-like approach that guides interdisciplinary teams through systems and stakeholder analysis, team and relationship building, planning and implementation steps of the design of complex action plans with the participation of stakeholders.

Not totally original but well defined, well packaged and strongly grounded on recent research and experience

This approach enhancing collective action for rural innovation is not totally original, it has emerged in interaction with different sources (KIT, WUR, DFID, UNU-MERIT, IFDC, CGIAR, CIAT, FARA, to name just a few) but has been combined and redesigned by ICRA staff into a functional and robust approach that has repeatedly proven its practical value and impact in training courses.

Key words are : innovation, complexity, learning processes, connectedness, systems concepts, integrate disciplinary perspectives, empowerment of stakeholders, up-scaling, accommodate different scenarios, comprehensive range of criteria, integrate action to support policy, institutional, market and technological changes within a development strategy ...

Although the underlying approaches applied by ICRA have been known for some time and have been recognized by most stakeholders involved as very relevant, even in the agricultural domain such recognition remains, in many cases, a statement of intent and not a day-to-day principle of implementation. With the exception of few developing countries that insisted on continuing to support their agricultural research and education even while international policies did not favor such support – such as Ghana and South Africa - the daily reality of agricultural research and education has unfortunately changed little over the past decades. This makes the approach, instruments and tools that ICRA has developed in partnership with these ‘agricultural front-line’ developing countries extremely relevant to agricultural development and poverty reduction today.

ICRA promotes new ways for participatory research involving a wide range of stakeholders in rural innovation

To achieve these shifts ICRA’s strategy aims to enhance the capacities of key actors involved in national innovation processes – both people and organizations- to learn from each other and to exchange and integrate their knowledge by creating ‘ARD learning partnerships’ (at the national level if possible); in line with a modern understanding of the role of agricultural research in for example, the Global Forum for Agricultural Research – GFAR. The table in Annex 2 shows the main organizations in these new ICRA Partnerships. ICRA ideally performs six functions in such a partnership:

- (1) It helps to form a multi-stakeholder ‘national innovation platform’ (steering group)
- (2) It contributes to strengthening the capacity of learning facilitators from R&D and educational organizations (at the national level)
- (3) It co-facilitates tailor-made learning programs designed and facilitated by these national teams
- (4) It acts with these teams in order to improve research practice and stimulate institutional change
- (5) It helps introduce rural innovation competencies into academic programs

- (6) It promotes the exchange of experience and learning from each other at national and international levels

Considering that agriculture can no longer be thought of as production alone, the inescapable interconnectedness of agriculture's different economic, social and environmental roles and functions is duly taken into account and recognized. This is reflected in the goals of the national ARD learning partnerships: improved rural livelihoods, sustainable use of natural resources, competitive agro-product chains, equitable development and the environment.

ICRA aims at institutional change, i.e. to work in the core of research organizations to generate changes in perspectives, mental models and practices, program design and partnership building

The core project of ICRA is to promote improved innovation systems by changing the interactions between their stakeholders including, ranking first, research organizations⁹. It is in that way that ICRA is different from the other training and consulting bodies that are involved in innovation processes. It nudges research organizations and universities towards understanding and building an innovation system in a more comprehensive way. Therefore, it addresses mainstream researchers and not just those who are already convinced; for that it needs a strong partnership with organizations in the South and in the North, and links with international research networks. Its goal is not only to promote a 'local research' or 'pro-poor research' but to create innovative research areas linking scientific knowledge (as a global public good) with diverse strands of local knowledge (from practitioners, men and women, farmers and stakeholders ...) to initiate the interactive dynamics that may generate original, country and culture-based solutions and contribute to knowledge generation at different levels. For this, generally the institutional environment in which agricultural research and education operate needs to be adapted and 'windows need to be opened' on worlds and opportunities hitherto unperceived by scientists and practitioners alike.

ICRA is ready to play a key role in modern approaches to rural innovation and development

With its ARD approach, tested methodology and tool box in hand, ICRA can play a key role in the necessary shift from 'national agricultural research systems' to 'national agricultural innovation systems'; this includes contributing to mainstreaming the shift from linear transfer of knowledge thinking to innovation systems thinking; helping to address the gaps between design activities (science), local, regional and (inter)national trade (markets), national institutions (policy) and application (farmers, rural entrepreneurs); contributing to include the benefits of local culture and traditional knowledge into modern research practice; and contributing to integrate local (geographical, cultural ...) particularities, and environmental and social consequences of agricultural development in agricultural research thinking, management and methodology. Contributing to these shifts affects the essence of the current research and development paradigms – the top-down technology transfer model - that mostly still inform the way in which universities educate students and in which professional organizations are organized and managed. It will take time and a sustained, robust effort to engage in relevant processes in close collaboration with Southern Partners. And it is definitely not only relevant to the South but also to improving research impact in the North.

European dimension

ICRA has maintained and strengthened itself as a tested and significant instrument for an active EU contribution to rural and agricultural innovation, improving the contribution of

⁹ As its acronym doesn't show, the developed title of ICRA is: International Centre for **development oriented** Research in Agriculture.

research and education institutions to development in the South. As a result, ICRA is uniquely placed to play a key role in EU efforts to support developing regions regarding issues of common concern such as, innovation and trade, food security, resilience in the face of climate change, environmental degradation, science and technology, social cohesion and others. The most basic issue, in view of the current food crisis, is meeting the goal of affordable nutritious food for all in an environmentally and socially sustainable manner. This is achievable, but it cannot be achieved through current agricultural 'business as usual'. As IAASTD¹⁰ states, in this changing world we need new tools, which means increased investments in agricultural knowledge, science and technology, meeting the main conclusions of the 2008 World Development Report (*Agriculture for Development*) of the World Bank. We also need to care about rural livelihoods, i.e. the employment opportunities and working conditions of rural laborers and their families, as well as small farmers, traders and small scale agro-enterprises. Existing and new science and technology can only help us reach development goals if we understand that land security and tenure, appropriate technologies and good governance are critical to better food security and conserving precious resources such as land, soil and water. It requires a convergent effort of all forces to build and reform Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology (basic sciences, social, political and legal knowledge as well as local knowledge) and innovation capacities of rural communities, agricultural organizations and consumers. ICRA has gained itself a respected position as an effective contributor to just these types of complex challenges. In short, for the EU to play its role in securing food and sustainable development, ICRA over the past 7 years has become an even more relevant and effective instrument.

One of the key European strengths of ICRA is its close linkage with the two main places in Europe where agricultural research and higher education are provided with an international dimension: Wageningen and Montpellier. Therefore it is uniquely placed to understand and combine the Anglophone and French traditions, their relationships with research and development bodies in the South and Mediterranean area, their training schemes at different levels and grades, research facilities, international reputation and recognition. This European dimension is well known by ICRA's clients, and very much appreciated as well. The opportunity to further build such a supra-national setup is unique and particularly needed at this moment. In the field of agricultural research for development ICRA in fact represents a concrete and successful European answer to the 2007 EU Code of Conduct on (Complementarity and) the Division of Labor in Development Policy 'avant la lettre'.

Alumni network - outreach could be even stronger

From 1981 to 2000, 762 people have participated in ICRA training courses (half Anglophone course, 25% Francophone, 15% in LAC). During the seven years since 2001 this number has been doubled to 1447. This represents a formidable asset, a network of over one and a half thousand trained ARD practitioners and (future) trainers in developing countries. Many of these alumni have now gained responsible positions in their organizations or governments and, as becomes apparent from the materials available, the majority is still in touch and still very much appreciates their time with ICRA. To a large extent, it has been this network of alumni that has been the breeding ground for the spectacular shift to the South made by ICRA since 2004 – see next chapter.

However, it is the impression of the panel that despite the positive effects this network already had on the successful implementation of ICRA's new partnership strategy, ICRA's engagement with its network could be much more pro-active and purposeful. If strategically

¹⁰ The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development, lead by 60 countries, the World Bank, UNESCO, FAO and UNEP, adopted in Johannesburg in April 2008.

approached and well monitored, this network could constitute an even stronger basis to build an international partnership program on ARD. Besides, it would allow, more than is the case right now, an international exchange between national and regional networks, provided ICRA would have the means to support that. It is the view of the panel that, if well-managed, the ICRA alumni network could be a strong force for exchanging experience and lessons learned on complex rural innovation processes and successful policies to enhance these. Such a permanent and living network stimulating reflection on innovation dynamics in different parts of the world involving both research and higher education bodies could play a role also in generating an interest by researchers to work on rural innovation. For this, however, ICRA would have to be able to generate some research capacity of its own, if only to formulate relevant research questions with its partners from the many interactions it maintains in developing countries.

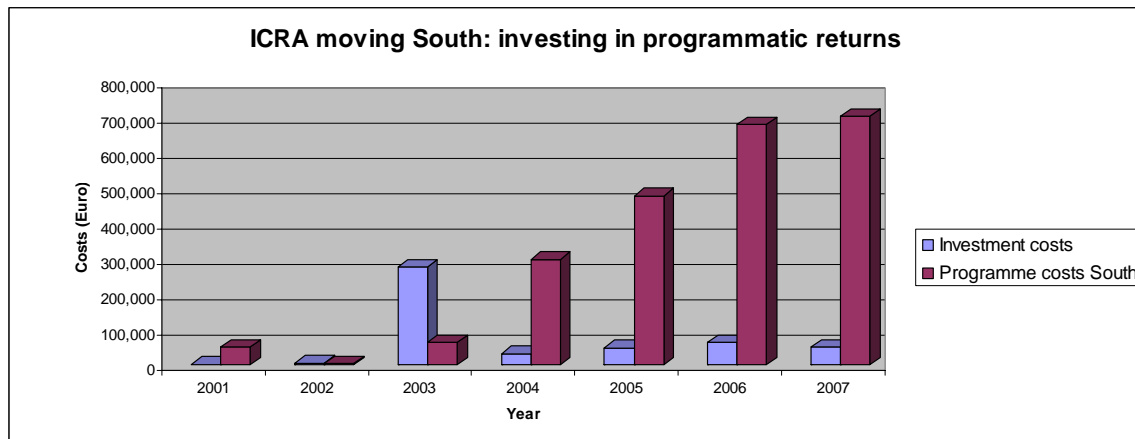
In the view of the panel with these changes ICRA has positioned itself well for the coming decades during which agriculture and in particular, rural and small-holder agricultural innovation will be on top of the international agenda.

Achievement, outcomes and impact

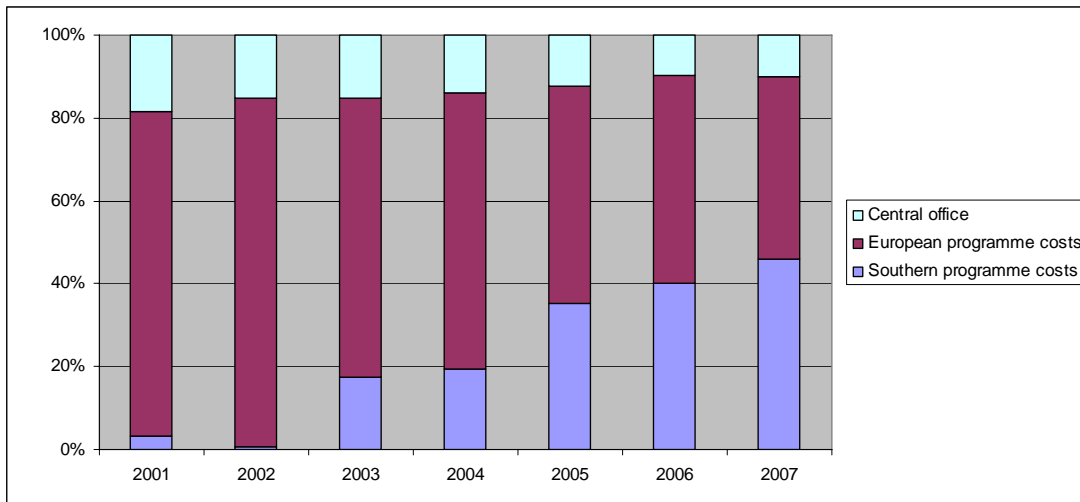
Move to the South

As we have seen above, the key strength of ICRA and its approach and methodology is that it works to complement and complete the initiatives taken already by national and local actors. It doesn't replace but strengthens coordination between relevant stakeholders; it doesn't impose a rigid *ARD model* but offers an *ARD learning process* including a variety of perspectives to insert reflexive research and development practice firmly in the local and national political, economical, social and cultural context and to stimulate multi-stakeholder exchange of knowledge and experience systematically.

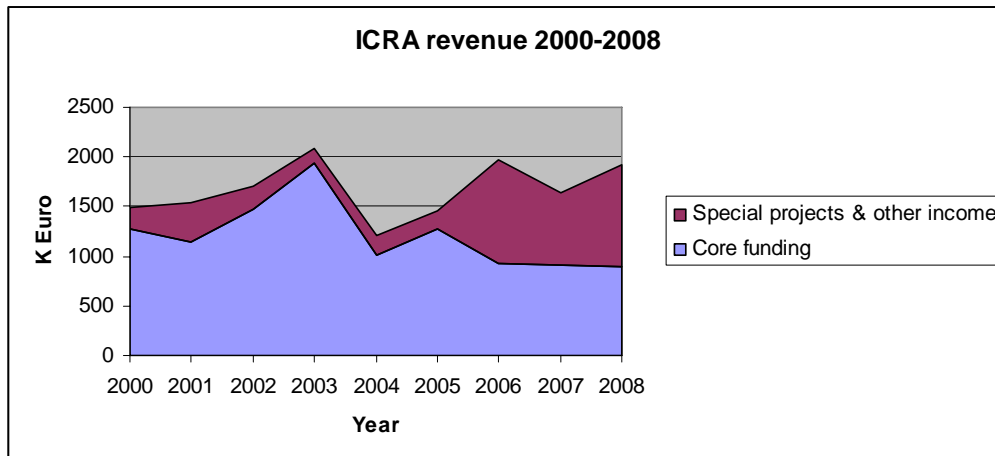
As evident from the chart below, it took ICRA some 2-3 years to fundamentally re-orient its strategy and partnership approach and to allow it to scale up and embed its activities within broader multi-stakeholder partnerships for rural innovation in the South. A substantial investment in new partnerships in 2003 – amongst which a successful international workshop with future partners – produced a spectacular increase in its partnership activities in the South from 2004 onwards.



In terms of total expenditures this means that by 2007 more than half of ICRA's activities have been transferred to its partnerships in the South – see chart below.



This trend towards partnership activities in the South also shows in the international travel of its personnel: travel to the South of core staff and Europe-based associates increased 251% from an average of 242 days/year (2001-03) to 606 (2004-07). As ICRA also started basing Regional Representatives in the South from end of 2004, the total number of staff days spent in the south increased to an average of 872/year during 2004-07, an increase of 360% over 2001-03.



As recommended by the EPMR 2000, at the same time ICRA took measures to develop a marketing strategy, to increase its visibility and, to diversify its funding base (see chart above). However, before these measures really kicked in one important institutional donor – Germany – withdrew its support. It made the ICRA annual budget peak to about 2 m Euro in 2003 and then take a fall of 40% to 1.2 m Euro in 2004. Upon the foundation of its new partnership approach, ICRA has been able to recuperate gradually since then, returning to its 2003 turnover in 2006. This was thanks to a marked increase in special projects – see chart. The proportion of core funding then starts to stabilise around half of the annual budget, a drop from around 82% in the early years of the Millennium. By all means this is a remarkable turnaround.

However, this process of increased project funding does not represent a diversification of European donors as recommended by the EPMR 2000 in priority recommendation 4.2. From the initial 6 who supported ICRA’s establishment, only four – France, Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK – remain present today. The UK significantly increased its core grant

from 2004, while ICRA obtained more financial support for its partnership programmes from the Netherlands through different types of project funding. Besides, the EC delegation in Madagascar, EDULINK and IFAD are new project donors. As a result, ICRA not so much diversified its funding, but has been forced to enter in more diverse funding relationships with mostly the same donors. This has meant a shift from a consolidated budget and accounting system in 1995 to an administrative system that needs to specify separate accounts to five different donors now. With all the administrative detail that such requires.

From the above, one has to conclude that ICRA clearly shifted its activities to partnerships in the South, particularly in Africa and Latin America. Its centre of gravity definitely shifted southward. As a result, most programmatic activities are now organized in close partnership with colleagues and organizations in the South. Instead of training ARD researchers ICRA now focuses on facilitating multi-stakeholder learning for rural innovation processes in specific regions in the South. Instead of ARD training as such, it now embeds training in its contributions to mainstreaming ARD in regional, national and international rural innovation processes in the South. At least half of its program costs are now allocated in the South, as compared to less than 10% in 2001. And as of 2004 ICRA has depended increasingly on (jointly acquired) project funding.

Outcomes of partnerships

As shown, ICRA achieved a spectacular increase in the partnership activities in the South, in particular since 2004. Currently it maintains active partnerships in 9 African countries, of which 5 are Anglophone and 4 Francophone: Republic of South Africa, Madagascar, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Benin, Mali, Senegal, Ghana; and one in Latin America that covers three countries: Venezuela, Cuba, Mexico. The evolution of the partnerships of course differs from country to country, but generally alumni of ICRA play a lead role in creating awareness and mobilizing support for ICRA to contribute to national and local processes. Also, ARD training for facilitators and/or researchers is normally the first activity ICRA engages in when a partnership is established. From 2004 onwards, training was gradually complemented with other activities and outcomes as defined in the new partnership strategy implemented by ICRA. In order to assess the success of ICRA's new partnership strategy, the panel has looked at three indicators in particular: (1) the amount of training delivered; (2) to what extent the partnership has evolved beyond researchers and research institutions to include a variety of other stakeholders and (3) to what extent ICRA effectively worked towards generating the entire range of outcomes defined in its LOMPS framework.

Delivery of ARD training

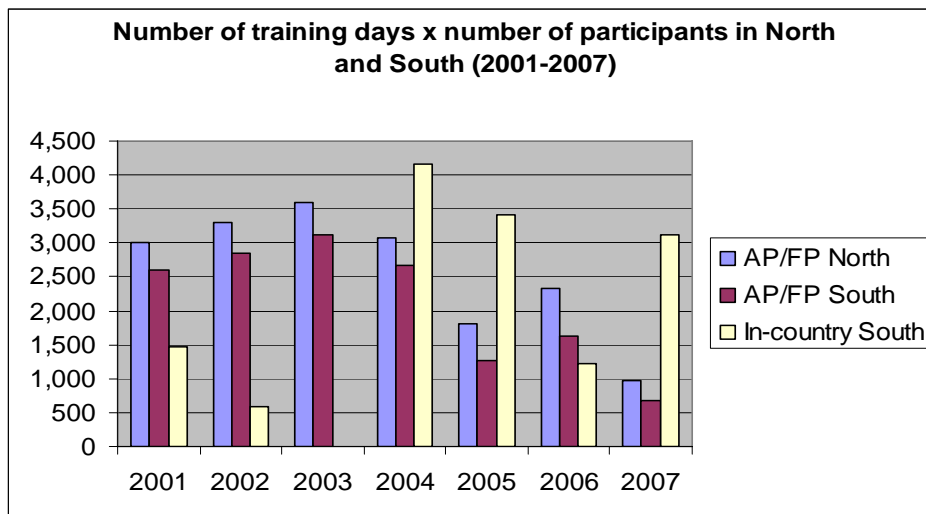
Since 2001, ICRA has organized over seventy trainings and workshops: 13 long courses (Anglo/Francophone) of which 5 were for core country teams; 11 in-country, in-service learning cycles; and 48 short tailor-made in-country workshops, of which 12 for ARD teams. 238 participants took part in classroom and field training in the long Anglophone and Francophone programmes, for a total training effort of 18,110 [training days x participants]¹¹ in the North and 14,670 [training days x participants] in the South. At the same time a total of 1209 participants received in-country training, adding up to a training effort of 16,943 [training days x participants], demonstrating a decisive move to the South. Besides, it represents an enormous increase in the number of participants over the last 7 years as well as in the training effort delivered. The focus of ARD training was clearly on Africa and in particular, Sub-Saharan Africa. 78% of the training effort was delivered to Africans, of which 86% were from Sub-Saharan Africa. 16% of the ARD training efforts was delivered to

¹¹ In order to quantify training output, the length of each training in days was multiplied by the number of participants in that training to arrive at a quantity [training days x participants] that allows adding up and comparing efforts over the years and geographical areas.

participants from Latin America and the Caribbean. Within Africa, 49% of the participants were from East & South Africa, 22% West Africa, 23% Madagascar and 6% from North Africa.

ICRA's strong move southward is confirmed when one looks at the trends in the yearly training effort, i.e. the number of training days times the number of participants. In-country training in the South more than doubled from 2001 to 2007, with important 'dips' in 2002 and 2003, the early 'transition period' for ICRA. At the same time the number of training days x participants of the long AP/FP training course in the North has been reduced to a third of what it was in 2001 and that in the South to one quarter. In the meantime, the average of the total number of training days x participants delivered in the South (in-country training plus Southern component of AP/FP) has been fluctuating around an average of 4000 over the entire period. The conclusion is that ICRA's 'move to the South' with respect to training was not simply an increase in training delivered in the South but a strategic move towards increasing in-country, in-service training in the South as part of its new partnership strategy.

This move however was accompanied with greater dependence on project funding, which proves a double-edged sword - see below. Whereas the in-country training efforts in the South more than doubled since 2004, the figures also show large fluctuations, as does ICRA's yearly income. Clearly, the highs and lows in in-country training are related mostly to the timely acquisition or not, of adequate funding, pointing at a large degree of unpredictability regarding ICRA's output on its core business, ARD training.



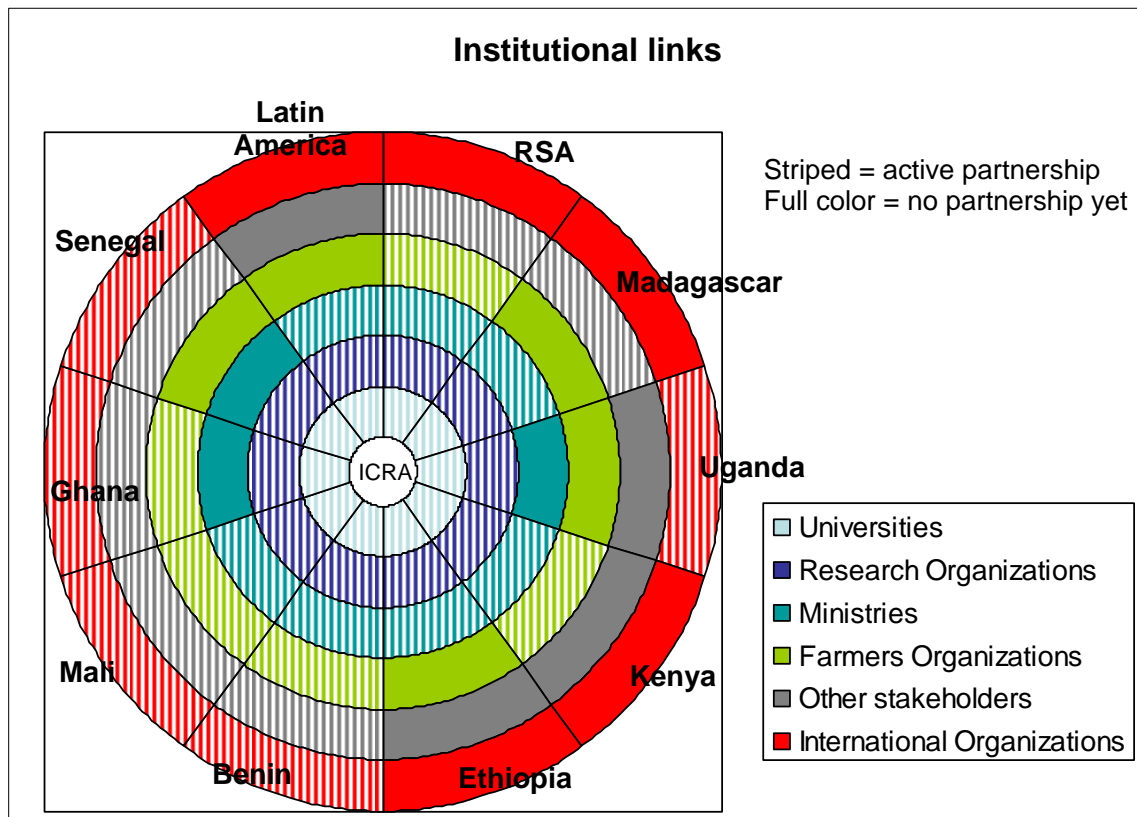
A detailed analysis of the costs of the trainings organised by ICRA during the period 2001-2007 shows that the cost per participant in the long Anglophone/Francophone course including stays in Wageningen and Montpellier fell from around 30,000 Euro in 2001 to 20,000 Euros in 2007 by gradually reducing the ICRA staff time input and the duration of the time spent in Europe. In-country training programmes were budgeted at 8,000 to 11,500 Euros per participant. This underlines the cost effectiveness of in-country training and the need to justify training that takes place (partly) in Europe.

The extent to which partnerships evolved beyond research

The figure below provides insight into *the extent to which the partnerships have been opened up to other, non-research institutions*. It depicts the current composition of the partnerships in terms of institutional links of ICRA with different types of stakeholders in each country. It shows that the Mali and Benin partnerships, in terms of coverage of relevant stakeholders are

most developed, with South Africa and Ghana following suit. In South Africa the link with international organizations is less intense; in Ghana it is the link to government institutions. On the other hand the Ugandan and Ethiopian partnerships show relatively little inclusiveness in terms of relevant stakeholders. It is mostly universities and research organizations, with links to government in the case of Ethiopia.

The general picture shows that while ICRA has made substantial progress on forging partnership relations with relevant national institutions and organizations, the actual composition of the partnerships varies from country to country. This is due in part to particular circumstances in each country, such as the availability of active ICRA alumni or more generally the history of the partnership; the enabling institutional and policy environment for ARD. It illustrates how country specific the ICRA partnerships are and how it takes time and effort to establish more comprehensive partnerships for innovation, including all relevant stakeholders in one country.



However, it also reflects some of ICRA's own limitations such as: the lack of a permanent presence in the country may cause discontinuities due to lack of immediate follow-up to activities and commitments; available sources of funding generally focus on one or perhaps two categories of relevant stakeholders; and unpredictability of funding may affect the consistency with which ICRA applies its strategy, multi-stakeholder approach and process orientation. This latter point is not to be taken lightly. It has happened that ICRA had to postpone its activities for two years in a row due to lack of funding for the external ICRA components of the partnership, even though the partnership as a whole had been agreed upon between national and local partners and those were able to pay for themselves.

The extent to which ICRA worked towards generating the entire range of partnership outcomes

In order to study the *partnership activities and outcomes beyond ARD training*, we take the activities and outcomes as defined by ICRA as our reference. Using the LOMPS framework, activities (in *italics*) and desired outcomes within partnerships have been defined as follows:

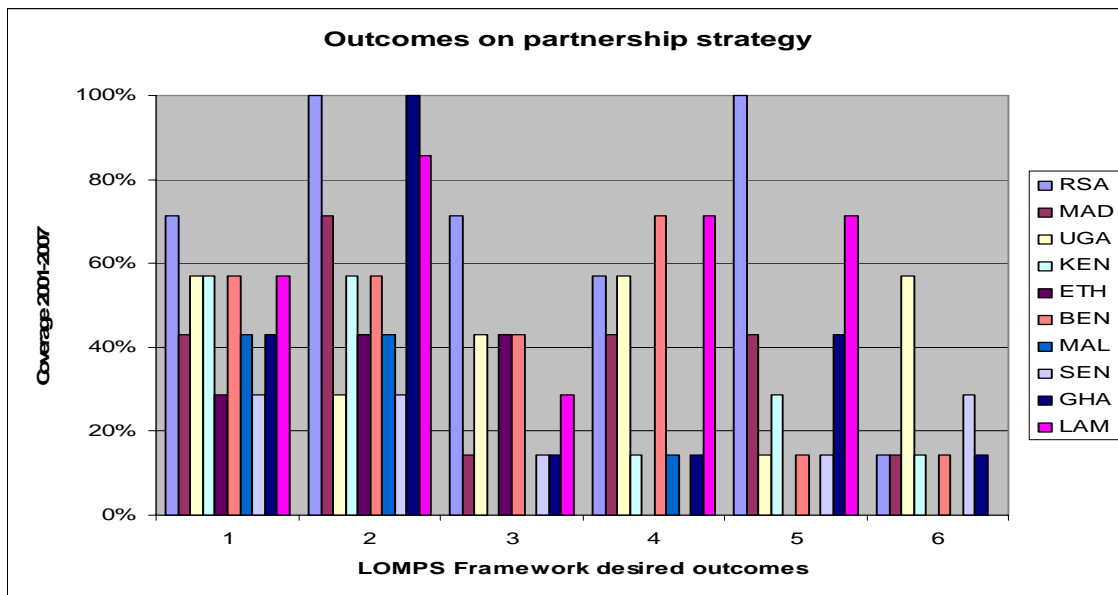
1. *Vision, strategy and plan development*: National partners develop a collective vision for and promote ARD¹².
2. *Training of ARD facilitators*: A critical mass of ARD facilitators drawn from different institutions, promotes ARD, designs, implements and evaluates in-service and tertiary (education) learning opportunities.
3. *In-service ARD learning cycles*: Agencies involved in rural innovation enhance their capacity to work collectively, facilitate interaction between different actors and integrate different perspectives of complex development challenges.
4. *Mentoring ARD mainstreaming*: ARD learning teams both participate in and facilitate multi-stakeholder interaction at local, national and international level, to integrate different perspectives, negotiate common interests and take coordinated action to address complex development challenges.
5. *Change in university programmes*: Higher (tertiary) educational organizations produce alumni (both retooled professionals and students) who are well equipped to work in teams and partnerships formed to deal with complex issues in rural innovation.
6. *Exchange of experience and learning*: Partnerships exchange experiences (both positive and negative) with and learn from other partnerships with similar initiatives elsewhere.

Using this same enumeration the chart below summarizes the ‘intensity’¹³ with which the partnerships have dedicated themselves to each category of activities during the period 2001-2007; and the degree to which these may have produced the desired outcomes.

The period includes the first 2-3 years that ICRA needed to re-orient its strategy and for its new partnership approach to become fully operational. Therefore, an intensity of 100% points at ‘early and sustained partnerships’ while intensities around 50-60% generally indicate a good partnership as well, but of a more recent nature, for example, being intensified over the last 3-4 years. Again, in many partnerships the central importance of training ARD facilitators as a ‘trigger mechanism’ for the partnership is evident, although in South Africa, Ethiopia, Benin and Uganda in-service learning cycles seem equally important. The intensity of categories 4-6 seems to show a rather accidental pattern that converges with observations from ICRA reports: for partnerships to engage effectively in ARD mainstreaming, redesigning university curricula and exchange of experiences and knowledge with others, the partnership has to achieve a certain level of maturity; the policy environment must be favorable and, not the least, funds must have been ensured.

¹² In line with the strategy an ad-hoc gathering or committee has not been counted as ‘vision development and promotion’. Only when the committee or task force became more permanent, it was counted as such (PE).

¹³ ‘Intensity’ is expressed as the number of years out of the total 7-year period (2001-2007) in which activities were actually undertaken in a particular category of activities that can be expected to have led to progress towards that particular outcome.



The general picture that emerges from this analysis is quite consistent with what the panel members found in the field: partnerships are a matter of long term engagement; they have to be built gradually over time from activity to activity, while the partners learn to work together and trust each other. Also, specific activities are often contingent upon specific sources of funding. In day-to-day practice this ‘hunting for external funds to finance ICRA’s international input’ puts serious challenges to progress in partnerships. In the best possible scenario it may eventually lead to the partner country paying for (part of) ICRA international input itself but only after severe delays – as was the case in South Africa since 2004; in the worst case it may lead to stagnation and a (temporary) end to partnership activities – as was the case in Latin America in 2004. Again, obtaining external funds is more likely to happen for in-service training at one single institution than for broadening the scope of activities towards multi-stakeholder processes and multi-faceted cooperation for innovation.

The multiplier effect

From the evidence presented here, it seems plausible that ICRA has achieved a considerable ‘multiplier’ or ‘mushrooming’ effect in the South. As we have seen above the yearly training effort, i.e. the number of [training days x number of participants] in the South has more than doubled to over three thousand per year in 2007. The persons trained on average are much better linked to local, national and regional innovation processes, while in-country learning may be expected to provide a more effective input into local learning and innovation dynamics. In various countries a core group of ARD facilitators has been established that is actively promoting a joint vision and multi-stakeholder collaboration for rural innovation. ICRA has also brought specific elements into its training and learning events, such as the new content on value chains brought into the training in Ghana. At the same time, several universities are incorporating ARD content into their curricula. Also, the number of multi-stakeholder committees and platforms facilitated by ICRA bode well for its influence on mainstreaming ARD through partnerships.

However, this remains a rather one-sided, linear way of reasoning and hides significant complications of the concept of ‘multiplication’ vis-à-vis innovation processes. While all the above is true, mushrooming cannot happen without a strong and coordinated effort on the part of the ICRA partners themselves in their country. In other words, ICRA interventions in complex innovation systems environments, however well prepared, designed or implemented, cannot lead to effective multiplication of skills, practices, lessons learned or processes of

collaboration and institutional change unless national or regional partners are able to create what has been labeled an enabling environment to make it happen and to sustain it over time. In other words, the success of ICRA's partnership approach is contingent upon synergies among its partners: upon their invitation ICRA can hook onto the process and contribute substantially, it cannot own or lead it. As a result, the particular outcomes of such a partnership process evidently are only partly due to presence and/or excellence on ICRA's part: it is mostly an emergent characteristic of the dynamics that take place between ICRA's partners in a particular country, or context, mediated to some degree by the facilitation effort of ICRA.

The support ICRA was able to provide to improving the rural innovation system in Limpopo Province is a case in point – see Annex II for more detail. ICRA's intervention there was requested by Provincial actors who understood exactly which niche needed to be filled in their institutional innovation process and how ICRA was equipped to do so successfully. Their understanding was rooted in long term experience in developing agriculture and agricultural research in their country, as well as, for some, from taking part in an earlier ICRA course. So they identified ICRA as a 'niche' partner. In hindsight, this could only happen because of a combination of factors: (a) an effective network of alumni of ICRA in South Africa; (b) an already existing long term engagement of ICRA with the Agricultural Research Council of South Africa; (c) strong leadership from provincial agricultural authorities based on an acute understanding of the importance of small-holder agriculture for poverty reduction and economic growth in the region; (d) NGOs and other donors that had facilitated work on several complementary elements of the innovation system already, and (d) University staff and students that were open to new ideas because they realized that ARD could be a niche for their (Provincial) University as well. As a result, the synergies between stakeholders in rural innovation and hence, the 'multiplier effect' of ICRA in Limpopo Province can be rated very positively. Yet the importance of the above factors in determining this multiplier effect can not be overrated, particularly not when one looks at other regions in South Africa where the above synergies are significantly different or have yet to be achieved.

In short, wherever ICRA intervenes its success will be contingent upon the already existing knowledge and experience of national and local actors in dealing with complex innovation processes their own way. Part of this knowledge may have been acquired through participation in ICRA courses in the past; underlining once more the importance of the ICRA alumni networks. But to a large degree too, such knowledge and experience is contingent upon national and local experience, insights acquired due to the implementation of particular policies and practices, some supported by the government, some by donors, others by NGOs and others purely home-grown. A deeper multi-stakeholder analysis of such experiences, and the dynamics that condition innovative practice, such as incentives, relationships and the roles played by institutions should therefore be part and parcel of ICRA's approach, much more explicitly than currently seems the case.

Besides, this again points at the need to engage long term and in a predictable way in ARD partnerships. When Ghanaian partners point at the lack of specific follow-up or lack of strength of alumni networks, what they in fact point out is that ICRA by offering a solid, field-tested approach, a unique methodology and proven instruments, promotes alternative thinking and doing – a paradigm shift as some call it – that requires sustained nurturing in order to embed these new perspectives and ways of working into the day-to-day practice of institutions that are accustomed to working very differently. Experience, not only by ICRA but anywhere one looks, shows that institutional change takes time and a sustained effort to be successful. ICRA as an organization, its management, Board and staff and, the resources at its disposal should reflect this.

Organisation, management and quality

Effectiveness of leadership

ICRA remains a small organization with a dedicated staff of 5 salaried positions seconded by European member states (4 by the Dutch and 1 by the French donor, totalling 4.2 full time equivalents or FTEs); two seconded staff members whose salaries are paid by ICRA and consultants who are co-opted as needed. Over the period under review, ICRA continued to be governed by a Board of Trustees made up of representatives from DFID, EIARD, LNV, SDC, Inwent, MAP, Montpellier Host Environment (Agropolis/IRC), Wageningen Host Environment (WUR/WI), and Board appointed nominees. The Director acts as Secretary to the Board. ICRA alumni from the South were included on the Board from 2003 - 2006. A high turnover in Board representatives from the five donor countries was noted during the period with Germany ceasing to be represented as of 2006 and the UK in 2007. Germany also stopped providing core funding to ICRA. The representative from Wageningen Host Environment/WI did not attend meetings for the period 2001 – 2006 but resumed participation in 2007. In 2000, the Programme Advisory Committee was disbanded and a decision taken in 2001, to appoint a technical adviser on contract.

Two levels of leadership are considered in the ICRA context; that provided by the Board of Trustees and the other by the management, specifically the director and deputy director. Within, the framework of the workings of the Board of Trustees, it can be concluded that the BOT provided guidance and oversight on financial matters to facilitate the operations including reviewing and approving the annual work programme of ICRA. However, the BOT had difficulty in taking key strategic decisions, such as approving the release of reserve funds; delayed implementation of the New ICRA strategy until 2004 and constrained ICRA's management from timely operationalizing the new strategy. The BOT acknowledged the complexities of managing an organization with staff employed under different legal contractual arrangements and although this impacted on the operations of ICRA, especially with respect to hiring new staff such as the deputy director, which was considered crucial to reducing the workload of the ICRA director, until late 2007 the BOT seemed constrained to act. The BOT was not very instrumental in supporting ICRA to secure core funding from other EU donors, although it recognized that failure to act could result in ICRA becoming a consultancy body. Lobbying for additional core and other funding was seen as a responsibility for ICRA management (BOT, 2005). It would appear that the composition of the Board and the ambit of its terms of reference limit it in its capacity to take and implement strategic decisions regarding the governance of ICRA.

At the level of management and staff, leadership is clearly demonstrated in the success achieved in moving the centre of gravity of ICRA to the south; attracting supplementary funds and charting and implementing a new strategy for ICRA. The training course and programmes for monitoring and evaluating ICRA's programmes in the north and the south have evolved in response to requests/observations of the BOT, demands from the south and changing paradigms on AR4D. The director and his team have been successful in expanding partnerships in the North and the South and keeping the staff highly motivated although their individual positions and that of the organization itself were not very secure given the funding situation and status.

Serious institutional challenges ahead

The successful application of the new partnership strategy has brought profound changes in the work ICRA undertakes. For ICRA as an organisation these meant on the one hand, moving away further and further from centrally organised training and closer and closer to long term engagement with decentralised processes of multi-stakeholder institutional change,

its in-service training capability remaining a key asset. This has allowed ICRA to up-scale its capacity development efforts from training ARD researchers; to training the ARD (research management) trainers; to facilitating learning in multi-stakeholder rural innovation processes in the South, for increased impact; and from training for ARD to mainstreaming ARD in regional, national and international multi-stakeholder innovation processes in the South. However, its funding situation obliged ICRA to become more and more project driven as well, picking up funding in a de-centralised way to ensure its engagement in the South. As a result it became more and more project driven, conditioned in the application of its partnership strategy by 'effective demand', i.e. demand for its services accompanied by (jointly acquired) project funding.

In the view of the panel, these developments have laid bare two principal limitations of ICRA in its current form:

ICRA is at risk of losing its European roots

ICRA is at risk of losing its anchors in the European research and higher education organizations that have helped found it. Germany withdrew its support as of 2006. Dutch support through special projects is increasing, but the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries has signaled that the current period of three-year core support might well be the last. Dutch support of course is in kind, through secondment of personnel that was formerly staff of a department of the Ministry itself, but was later transferred to the DLO – part of Wageningen University and Research centre – when this Ministry department was transferred from the Ministry to DLO, a private organisation. The WUR itself has also indicated that it is not willing to carry the cost of the secondment itself. The consequences of the current lack of clarity on Dutch core funding include for example, an actual cut in the value of the Dutch core contribution for 2008 of around 10% and a chronic understaffing of the ICRA core team in the period 2006-2007. In Montpellier, in terms of the integration of ICRA with the existing research institutes the situation currently doesn't appear much better. However, the Director of the new *Institut des Régions Chaudes* (IRC), who knows ICRA very well, has expressed a strong interest for closer collaboration, in a very complementary manner.

ICRA would become even more marginal if it were to give up its Anglo- and Francophone training Programmes in Europe (AP/FP). Those working with ICRA and its alumni have consistently expressed their strong appreciation of the relationship with WUR/Wageningen International and the new organization for research and high education in Montpellier, SupAgro/IRC. A complicating issue is that, now ICRA is moving substantially towards the South its competition with European research centres for European donor funds increases as well, while the European institutions that ICRA relates to are engaged in what they themselves perceive as similar development and training activities. Even if the unique expertise and the networks that ICRA has built up over time make direct competition unlikely in practice, it means that staff seconded to ICRA may be easily re-integrated into the host institutions. As a result, ICRA is rather becoming the 'odd animal' in the Wageningen or Montpellier 'zoos' rather than a project that brings European research partners together in a joint European effort aimed at capacity building in the South.

At this particular point in time the Board and management of ICRA and the leadership of its founding institutions need to seriously wonder whether European research institutions working on agricultural development in the South should abandon the field-tested, proven research and innovation capacity development vehicle that ICRA provides them with.

1. The first reason is the global food crisis and renewed interest in agricultural development, which calls for a vigorous and coordinated approach by industrialized

- countries to improve global small-holder agriculture through strengthening local and national innovation systems and national, regional and international trade. It is exactly in this arena that ICRA has proven its worth.
2. The second are the dynamics in the European Union that aim at mainstreaming the EU Code of Conduct on Division of Labor, in response to the Paris Declaration on harmonization and alignment signed in 2005. The Code of Conduct requires EU governments and institutions to work in a complementary manner and to divide tasks among themselves. The September 2008 Accra High Level Summit will certainly adopt the Accra Agenda for Action that will amongst other things, most probably extend the need for more country ownership, harmonization and alignment to private and non-governmental development organizations as well. To abandon at this very moment one of the few tested instruments Europe has at its disposal to provide capacity development support to its Southern partners in a more coordinated and complementary manner, would seem to run squarely against the current trend and EU Council policies since 2005.
 3. The third reason is that ICRA enables EU governments and research bodies to continue to take an active part in the intended changes in agricultural research and education institutions at the global level. May be sometimes ICRA upsets established organizations, which prefer to confine the work of ICRA to the South, but with adequate backing from EU institutions, it could be a remarkably effective tool for promoting informal and wide spread linkages between stakeholders in rural innovation processes world-wide, including Europe as well. For that however, it has to become a full-fledged knowledge institution and should not be confined to service delivery alone.

ICRA as an organisation is too light for the weight of its punches

ICRA has been established as a non-employing organisation. Core staff is on secondment from European research and education organisations, the rest of the work force are employed as associates/consultants. In order to safeguard continuity, consultants are often maintained on the payroll for many years in a row. Over the period 2001-2007 the core staff formation of ICRA remained relatively stable, around 4-5 persons. With the move to the South, the number of associates/consultants rose from 2-3 during the first three years to 6 in 2006-2007. From 2004 onwards, associates were more and more based in the South; in 2007, two out of six associates/consultants were. The travelling of core staff to the South increased also, from around 140 days per year in 2001, via close to 400 days a year during 2004-2005, to some 350 days per year in 2007. It means that ICRA staff and associates/consultants now travel 80-100 days a year on average to sustain the move of activities to the South.

ICRA has maintained a relatively light and simple financial and administrative system as a non-employing organisation. However, to depend more and more on project funding causes a proliferation of administrative duties. It means for example that while employment conditions of core staff, on secondment of their respective organisations, are generally very good, ICRA associates that coordinate the partnerships at the country level are generally on annual contracts that are renewed every year, employment depending on the particular project available at any time. Project funding also means that at the moment ICRA has to administer five or more different lines of funding at any one time with separate reporting and auditing requirements attached to each – indeed not a good example of EU donor harmonisation, in the sense of the Paris Declaration and the EU Code of Conduct. As ICRA's administration has not been strengthened, administering the funds becomes more complex and time consuming for ICRA core staff, currently drawing away 0.35 FTE/year of senior staff time from work on ARD in the partnerships.

Another development implied in the above is that next to administrative duties ICRA core staff together with its partners from developing countries – who have often little experience in doing this – spends more and more time on fund raising and/or competitive bidding in order to continue the implementation of its partnership strategy and are able to spend less and less time on maintaining ICRA's European roots and networks; on developing the fundamentals and theoretical underpinning of ARD; on capitalization of experiences and insights to improve future interventions; and on research. In short, due to its current dependency on project funding ICRA is at risk of gradually becoming a consultancy firm. The key issue here is clearly the balance between being demand-driven – which is necessary – and being project-driven, which implies a risk. This is on the one hand because project funding doesn't necessarily guarantee a demand drive, as the ones who represent the demand – the southern partners – are not the same people as the ones that allocate the project funding – the donor agencies. On the other hand, it is because the reliance on small individual projects may affect the application of a well-designed multi-stakeholder partnership program negatively, for example when funding doesn't ensure the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders because it is directed at one single sector, education for example.

As a strategy-based organization, ICRA then runs the risk of being torn apart between programs tailored to the needs of many different constituencies and their respective donors and to gradually lose the overall ARD vision, approach and methodology that ICRA core business is founded upon. This runs counter to what has been ICRA's success formula: to respond to demands emanating from its southern partners, but in a reflexive – critical – manner, engaging in long term collaboration with its partners respecting their ownership and using an approach and methodology that focuses on multi-stakeholder rural innovation and institutional change, the ICRA trade mark.

Conclusions

ICRA was founded at the initiative of European members of the CGIAR as an independent foundation with the support of a number of European donors. It was meant to provide an answer to the perceived lack of capacity of mainstream research organisations - notably the CGIAR – to effectively address the research needs of those small family farms that didn't fit 'commoditized' Green Revolution thinking. ICRA became part of the efforts of these donors to promote pro-poor agricultural research and institutional change in the international agricultural research system and in the NARS in the South.

During the 25 years of its existence, ICRA managed to carve out a niche for itself and develop a methodological approach to research as well as a training package that on various occasions was judged as extremely valuable to helping agricultural researchers to adapt agricultural research to the complex challenges that small family farms face, particularly, but not exclusively in rain-fed areas. In accordance with its mission, ICRA focused on the development of research methodology and the training of individual researchers from mainstream agricultural research institutions. Recognising the institutional dimensions that a change in actual research practice involves, ICRA gradually evolved more and more towards institutional partnerships with agricultural research organisations, in order to embed its services in wider institutional change processes.

The EPMP 2008 was asked to evaluate the implementation of the priority recommendations of the EPMP of 2000; to assess progress in terms of ICRA's ARD partnerships in the South and to evaluate the performance of ICRA's Board, management and staff, and current organisational arrangement and human and other resources to maintain its relevance to

partners, clients and donors and to ensure the quality, sustainability and integrity of its services. On the basis of the evidence gathered during the review, in the following section the 10 detailed evaluation questions specified in the Terms of Reference will be addressed.

Mission and strategy

1 Has ICRA adequately redefined its mission and strategy in response to the previous EPMR's priority recommendations, especially in terms of "moving its centre of gravity South" in partnership with organisations in South and North and creating a multiplier effect?

ICRA has effectively redefined its mission and strategy in response to the priority recommendations of the EPMR 2000. And subsequently, it has implemented its new ARD partnership strategy with great success.

During 2001-2003 ICRA fundamentally re-thought its strategy and approach, prepared an ARD partnership strategy and invested in establishing relationships with future partners. From 2004 onwards ICRA then made a spectacular move southward developing 9 partnerships in Africa and one three-country partnership in Latin America, while respecting ownership on the part of southern partners. ICRA also gradually widened its scope from ARD training to mainstreaming ARD in multi-stakeholder rural innovation processes in the South, focusing on institutional change. In the process ICRA became significantly more demand-driven and increased the proportion of project funding in its budget to almost half. This however has contributed to less predictability in its follow-up to strategic demands and ongoing activities with partners.

Notwithstanding the abovementioned changes, ICRA core business has remained remarkably stable over the years: to help improve the contribution of agricultural research to agricultural and rural development, providing adequate agricultural research answers to the complexities faced by the millions of rural farm families, many of them female-headed, who in 2008 still represent 70% of the world's poor. The change has been in a gradual up-scaling: from training individual researchers in Wageningen and Montpellier; to jointly organising training courses with research institutions in the South; to facilitating training and learning in multi-stakeholder partnerships for rural innovation in selected developing countries. This coincided with a gradually widening of the scope of partnerships, to include besides research organisations, (regional) government agencies, education institutions, farmers' organisations, international organisations and other stakeholders relevant to the rural innovation process. It is reasonable to expect that the gradual up-scaling and widening of scope of the partnerships has impacted positively on the multiplier effect that ICRA has achieved through its activities.

The ICRA alumni network has played an active role in the spread and implementation of ICRA's new ARD partnership strategy, ensuring in-country localized acceptance and multiplier effect. However, ICRA has not been pro-active enough in fostering international exchange and reflection on multi-stakeholder innovation dynamics involving research and education institutions. Yet it is evident that through its new partnership strategy, its demand drive, its practical approach and alumni network, ICRA consistently works to increase its multiplier effect.

2 Has ICRA adequately adapted its mission and strategy in the light of important changes in its external environment since the previous review?

ICRA has adequately adapted its mission and strategy in the light of key changes in its external environment.

ICRA has developed a strong ARD position with regard to enabling multi-stakeholder innovation processes, framing ARD both conceptually and operationally. What ICRA offers on ARD is not totally original anymore but well defined and strongly grounded in recent research and experience. One of its main features is its precise focus on stimulating pro-poor agricultural research and institutional development. This feature makes ICRA extremely pertinent to support donor interventions that aim at rural productive development, food security and resilience in the face of climate change, and other environmental challenges. Also ICRA has developed a modern, didactically sound and well-packaged approach to embedding its support to ARD in national and local dynamics, which allows it to articulate relevant stakeholders into rural innovation processes in developing countries.

ICRA promotes new ways of participatory research and capacity development involving a wide range of stakeholders in rural innovation that respond to the latest research and policy insights. In line with the lessons learned in development policy, ICRA recognises that institutional change is needed for new perspectives, practices, program designs and partnership building to become sustainable and it has developed and continues to develop practical ways and means to help facilitate such change, in particular in research and education organisations.

In the field of agricultural research for development ICRA represents a unique and successful European example of how European member states can implement the 2007 EU Code of Conduct on Division of Labour in Development Policy. ICRA grounded, shaped, tested and packaged its ARD approach and methodology in such a way that it can play a key role in the required global shift from 'national agricultural research systems' to 'national agricultural innovation systems', in the South as well as in the North.

<p>3 <i>Are the current mission and strategy of the centre appropriate to ensure its continued relevance to partners, considering the likely changes in ICRA's external environment in the near future?</i></p>

The evidence gathered during its inquiry has convinced the EP MR team of the continued relevance of what ICRA has to offer to agricultural research and innovation processes in the south. ICRA does face increasing competition from EU national organizations as they too move to the south.

ICRA has adjusted and enriched its offering in line with the principal changes that occurred in the international development context. Its strong performance in 'moving South', developing ARD partnerships that cover a dozen (leading) developing countries over the last 3-4 years, speaks for itself. However, ICRA operates in an increasingly competitive environment with a growing number of organizations offering similar expertise. ICRA will have to continue developing its approach if it wants to keep ahead of the pack.

ICRA's mission, strategy, approach and methodology, its practical understanding of multi-stakeholder innovation processes, its European roots and international networks, and its alumni network are its greatest assets. These have been continuously updated to keep up with recent policy and practical insights; and partners (existing and prospective) highly appreciate this. The rising food prices and the crisis in food security resulting from it; the renewed attention for rural and agricultural development on the part of national governments, international and bilateral donors; the interest in pro-poor development through agriculture, trade and innovation, are some of the main reasons why the role of agricultural research and

education in innovating small-holder farming will be on top of the development agenda in the years ahead.

Hence, there is no doubt that what ICRA has to offer is and will remain relevant to partners for many years to come; the institutional change processes ICRA and its partners work on are long term processes of many years and require consistent support and are recognised widely as one of the main keys to successful rural development. ICRA's European foundation and networks, bridging the Francophone/Anglophone/Hispanic divide, and its long experience in working in partnership to create multi-stakeholder platforms for innovation in the South, puts ICRA in a unique position to advance a truly European agenda and approach to ARD that applies in practice the key principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the EU Code of Conduct on Division of Labour. As such, ICRA partnerships could become systematic components of the EU's regional cooperation strategies on agriculture and rural development. The same could be the case under the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, in close collaboration with and very complementary to CTA, and in the collaboration with Africa through NEPAD.

In order to remain relevant however, ICRA will have to make the most of its unique status as a joint EU instrument operating between Wageningen en Montpellier and should significantly step up its research activities as well as its role in facilitating international exchange of knowledge and information with regard to the role of ARD in rural innovation. It will have to manage its alumni networks more pro-actively and become more strategic in its fundraising for programmes and projects.

Achievements, outcomes and impact

<p>4 <i>What progress have ICRA's ARD partnerships made towards their desired outcomes since their beginnings in 2004/05/06?</i></p>
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ICRA has achieved a spectacular increase in ICRA partnership activities in the South; currently, ICRA maintains active partnerships with stakeholders in 5 Anglophone, 4 Francophone and 3 Latin American countries. The EPMR team was duly impressed by the progress made on expected outcomes, with South Africa, Benin, Ethiopia and Uganda making most headway on in-service learning cycles.

The main focus of ICRA ARD training was on Africa and in particular, Sub-Saharan Africa. Almost 80% of all training efforts were targeted at participants from Africa and in-service training in the South became the dominant ARD training form once the new partnerships strategy kicked in. The ICRA partnerships in the South have effectively extended beyond research and research institutions, incorporating provincial governments, higher education institutions, and farmers' organisations and other stakeholders. The degree to which this occurs may vary from country to country and from period to period.

ICRA partnerships in the South generally direct their efforts towards all 6 outcomes defined in the ICRA LOMPS framework. Frequently, requests for ARD (in-service) training provide entry points to other types of activities; in how far complementary types of activities are taken up quickly varies from country to country and from region to region.

Progress regarding the application of ICRA's ARD partnership strategy in any one country or region depends on various factors, including how supportive the relevant policy environment is; the interest and commitment of relevant stakeholders and, given the current funding model of ICRA, is always contingent upon finding adequate and timely sources of complementary funding.

ICRA has been careful to respect ownership on the part of its partners and to align itself with the context and processes of institutional change in the partner country. This has sometimes led to under-spending on its budget. However, it cannot be emphasised enough that such under-spending is and has to be a characteristic of a small organisation that is willing and able to respect the ownership and the rhythm and timing of institutional change that is particular to the country in which it operates.

5 *What are major achievements of ICRA in this respect? How effective has ICRA's support to these ARD partnerships been in achieving these outcomes?*

ICRA's main achievement is (a) having developed, packaged and successfully implemented a partnership strategy, practical approach and inspiring methodology for improving the role and contribution of agricultural research and higher education in rural development; (b) that its approach is recognised by its southern partners for its quality and effectiveness and (c) seen as complementary to their own efforts to improve rural innovation systems. Moreover ICRA has been able to ground its approach and methodology in recent research and practical experience.

It can be plausibly argued that given its relatively small budget ICRA has achieved impact over the years, in terms of its alumni network, its contributions to national and international ARD training, and its inputs to rethinking localized and national approaches to pro-poor agricultural research, education and innovation in partnership with national stakeholders. Besides, ICRA has achieved a strong buy-in from its partners. Its multiplier effect is expected to be significant, because ICRA consistently tries to tailor its activities to the demands expressed by national stakeholders and to link its programmes to ongoing national, regional or international initiatives and embed its activities into local dynamics, allowing for strong ownership on the part of national partners.

Also ICRA has successfully integrated different European approaches – the Anglophone, Francophone and Hispanic traditions – developing a truly European perspective on, and approach to ARD which has been shaped in consultation with southern partners. This is a unique feature that is greatly appreciated by southern partners and researchers.

In general ICRA is perceived by its partners as a very effective operator. When criticism is formulated it is often related to delays or limitations regarding follow up on joint plans and/or activities; or lack of support for more intensive alumni networking and exchange. In response, ICRA staff often refer to the difficulties they experience in raising adequate and timely funding for such complementary activities.

6 *What lessons can be drawn from this experience to enhance ICRA's future impact?*

ICRA has learned that partnerships require core funding, long term engagement and a consistent strategy and approach including supplementary funding for follow-up activities in order to be successful in promoting institutional change. Unfortunately, due to insecurity about funding, its ability to commit to such a long term engagement has been eroding.

Together with its partners, ICRA will need to step up joint research, particularly directed at a better understanding of multi-stakeholder partnerships and rural innovation dynamics and the role of agricultural research and higher education in the process. ICRA will need to invest more in systematising/capitalising upon its own experiences; in stimulating international,

national and regional exchange of knowledge and experience and, hopefully, formulating insights useful to policy makers.

ICRA can speed up capacity development with its partners by accessing more long term, less restricted sources of institutional funding, generating more predictable revenues to be able to plan support to country partnerships more strategically and follow up more diligently. However it will have to continue respecting national ownership and dynamics of institutional change.

In-country ARD training is more cost effective than training that requires (prolonged) stays in Europe. It also creates opportunities for the participants to link the training with their daily work; however, planning and implementing such a link effectively in practice is not without difficulties and needs to be learned. ICRA has learned that it will have to continue strengthening in-country learning cycles, find solutions for the practical problems that are encountered and step up international exchange of knowledge and experience.

However, seminars and training courses (partly based) in Europe remain strategically important as they serve more purposes than just training. In the first place they expose participants to European models that are operating effectively in addition to taking them out of their daily activities and as such tend to make them more receptive to new ideas and perspectives. Such events also oblige them to take some distance from their cultural, political, professional environment and daily routine. Besides, novel configurations for interactions and learning experiences among ARD practitioners from different continents are created and people are brought together for some time in a novel place, abroad for all of them. Finally, when well organised, it creates a platform function facilitating contacts with a wide range of European research and higher education professionals, not just as professors but as peers. By the way, the above is valid to Southern participants from a variety of countries coming to Europe as much as it is for participants from different European countries going to the South. However, for the above to work and be cost effective the content and participants for such seminars or courses have to be selected carefully so as to ensure maximum benefit from the above.

Hence, ARD training that includes a (prolonged) stay in Europe needs to be justified on other grounds than those required for preparing a team for in-country work. It seems that training in Europe should be targeted to groups of participants or individuals who benefit from (1) international exchange of knowledge and experience; (2) networking with colleagues from European (host) institutions built into their programme; and/or (3) studying European policies/experiences that are relevant to their work. Possible target groups that comply with these criteria are: research/ARD managers; ARD trainers; provincial and national policy/decision makers; university professors.

Organisation, management and quality

7 <i>What has been the effectiveness of leadership and the performance of ICRA's Board of Trustees, management and staff? How can these be enhanced?</i>
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ICRA has successfully increased the proportion of project funding in its annual income to just about half. However, this process of increased project funding in fact does not represent a diversification of European donors. From the initial 6 who supported ICRA's establishment, just four – France, Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK – remain present today. ICRA has succeeded to increase project funding for (components of) its partnership programmes with the Netherlands through third parties (i.e. NUFFIC, IFDC). It has also successfully approached the EC delegation in Madagascar and IFAD. As a result, however, ICRA not so

much diversified its European funding base, obtaining support from more European member states, but it entered in more diverse funding relationships through third parties with mostly the same European donors. This has meant a shift from core funding and a consolidated budget and accounting system in 1995 to an administrative system that needs to specify separate accounts to five different donors at any time now. With all the administrative detail that such requires.

The Board of Trustees provided guidance and oversight on work plans and financial matters but was at first less energetic in supporting the implementation of ICRA's new partnership strategy. The Board of Trustees recognised the complexities of managing an organisation with staff employed under different legal contractual obligations, but was unable to resolve the matter of the replacement of the Deputy Director for two years. The Board of Trustees recognised that failure to act decisively on obtaining core funding from other European donors would imply serious risks for ICRA, its continuity, its European roots and its character as an independent foundation. Nonetheless, the Board doesn't appear to have played a decisive role in securing core funding from other European Member States and the Commission, as recommended by the EPMR 2000. It seems to have left fundraising to the Director and staff of ICRA. The Board of Trustees may have to re-assess the functionality of its composition and terms of reference in the light of the conclusions and recommendations made by this EPMR.

The management and staff of ICRA can be commended for the way in which they designed and implemented the new partnership strategy, resulting in a spectacular evolution of ICRA partnership activities in the South; the way in which they interacted with their partners, monitored and learned from their results and, diversified the range of training courses, tailor-made workshops and learning cycles to adjust to the demands of their various partners. They were also instrumental in ensuring funds for training and other partnership activities; however, they didn't succeed in linking up other European member states to ICRA's efforts. Also, from the delays in implementation and the limitations suffered because of funding it is clear that securing timely and opportune funding for a comprehensive partnership approach as it is implemented so successfully by ICRA, is not an easy task and requires dedication. The Director must be commended for keeping the staff highly motivated and operating as a team in circumstances where individual positions and that of the organisation itself were quite insecure.

8 *Is ICRA's institutional form as an independent non-employing organisation, working with a small number of scattered staff and consultants, adequate to perform its mission efficiently and effectively? Are there feasible alternative organisational arrangements that are more efficient and effective?*

The institutional set up of ICRA as a non-employing organization is unsustainable and undesirable. It leads to an employment situation that is dysfunctional and often, unfair to all involved. It hampers team building and working as one entity. Leadership, while extremely participatory and hence, effective under the current circumstances, is structurally affected in its scope and influence by these institutional limitations. Job insecurity, lack of common institutional incentives, inability to optimize institutional (memory) development, affect the working culture of ICRA staff and associates directly. Excellent leadership and cautious management so far have made up for some of these institutional limitations, but the drain on ICRA's vitality and human resources shows.

It also brings ICRA to rely more and more on consultants some of whom are based in the South. Without a strong centre to document, integrate and direct their efforts, to stimulate

knowledge exchange and learning, to undertake joint research and monitor partnership relations, this will eventually cause ICRA to loose out on its fundamentals, European roots and successful, tested approach to mainstreaming ARD in regional, national and international innovation processes.

Besides, the current set up and the apparent lack of interest of the traditional backers of ICRA to do something about it, contributes to more and more invisibility in Europe now ICRA is moving to the South; some of the employing institutions have also indicated that it is not in their institutional interest to continue this type of pay-rolling support to ICRA. The reason seems simple: these institutions are executing agencies like ICRA – albeit much larger – and they are not donors; it is not in their brief to transfer their budget to other independent organisations. Besides, the fact that staff is employed by these executing agencies in some cases makes it more difficult for ICRA to obtain core funding from their back donors. This limits ICRA's possibilities to participate directly in the normal policy dialogues that take place between executing and donor agencies in the margin of their (institutional) funding relations.

Finally, ICRA Board members are generally representatives from technical ministries and research agencies, the same ones that (in some cases reluctantly) second their staff to ICRA; in general they are not representing donor agencies. This representation on the Board seems adequate for maintaining ICRA's European networks with research and education institutions, but it is less obvious for ensuring long-term institutional funding. For that a truly independent Board or a Board with strong connections to donor agencies would seem more effective.

In short, on the basis of the evidence collected the EPMR team concludes that ICRA has enormous assets, potential and opportunity, but in its current institutional form it will not be able to make full use of these and might not even survive. ICRA's status as a non-employing organisation creates impediments that hinder its functioning as an independent centre; its institutional development and growth and creates unnecessary complications with regard to fundraising. As a result, ICRA is hard put to live up fully to the rightful expectations of its partners and to realise the full potential of its partnership strategy, unique European and international networks, ARD approach and, training and multi-stakeholder learning methodology. ICRA needs to become a truly independent organisation, the sooner the better.

<p>9 <i>Is ICRA adequately resourced to ensure sustainability and integrity of its support to national ARD partnerships in the South and are these resources effectively and efficiently managed? What changes are needed in this respect?</i></p>
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ICRA manages its resources very well. Monitoring of outputs and outcomes is done in detail and consistently, perhaps even in too much detail. The reporting format while susceptible to sudden changes of format provides transparency. Staff morale is good, also of those working in the field even though employment conditions are complex and the future outlook confusing. The main problem of ICRA does not seem a lack of resources but rather the ways in which it has to raise them.

The panel draws the conclusion that ICRA in its present form doesn't have the organisation or the type of resources to realise its full potential or even survive. For it to punch according to the weight of its mandate and strategy and respond to the increasing demand from the south, more predictable revenues are needed; to strengthen ICRA's own research and networking activities and to provide a solid basis for long term engagements in partnerships in the South.

10 Does ICRA adequately ensure quality and relevance? How can the mechanisms to ensure quality and relevance be improved?

The findings of the panel underscore that ICRA management, staff, working methods, monitoring and internal learning processes actively and adequately ensure quality and relevance. The quality of ICRA's partnership approach and methodology is praised by its partners and competitors. At the moment, quality and relevance seem to be the least of ICRA's challenges. Continuity, internal efficiency, capacity and resources to follow up on successful partnership initiatives, resolving the staff employment situation and to review the functionality of the Board, seem to be more urgent matters right now.

Recommendations

1. **Focus on the windows of opportunity that have opened in the global development policy context**

As ICRA's partnership approach clearly answers to the renewed interest for strengthening ARD and rural innovation among development actors – created by a combination of global agricultural challenges, recent changes in European development policy thinking, regional initiatives on rural innovation in developing countries and new funding opportunities – ICRA should maximise its use of the windows of opportunity that open up as a result.

- 1.1. The global development context has changed significantly over the last few years. Without being exhaustive, one may point at a renewed, strong interest in agricultural development and food security; increased demands for multi-stakeholder collaboration on rural and agricultural innovation; and a shared understanding that small and medium entrepreneurs, amongst which small farmers, play a crucial if not decisive role in 'making poverty history'. The WDR 2008 and the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) debates have put agriculture – and the international impacts of the Common Agricultural Policy and Rural Development Policy of the EU – squarely back on the economic development agenda. The current global food crisis serves as a dramatic reminder. *The ICRA partnership approach emerges as an unmistakable asset to anyone who takes up these new agricultural and rural development challenges.*
- 1.2. EU development policy and practice is changing. A strong emphasis on defining issues of common interest, donor coordination and division of labour since the adoption of the EU Consensus on Development, the EU Code of Conduct and the Africa EU Joint Strategy for Development. All of these required a re-appraisal of EU cooperation on agricultural development and agricultural research. The EU and its partners are looking for harmonization of the many fragmented bilateral efforts currently existing between individual European and southern research institutes and universities; joint European capacity development and, alignment of EU capacity development instruments with regional and national initiatives of southern partners. One of the Accra High Level Summit roundtables in September will address 'ownership and capacity development' specifically. *ICRA has developed a uniquely inspiring, practical approach and methodology of how this can work in practice for ARD.*

- 1.3. FARA and by extension other regional entities have taken the lead in strengthening capacity for ARD within Africa through the provision of both pedagogy and field work that result in publications in scientific / referenced journals and impact on agricultural and economic performance and reduction in rural poverty. At the same time, demand is growing for strengthening ARD in selected target countries to address agricultural productivity improvements through collaborative research to impact on rural poverty, building on the strengths of various national and regional organizations. Capacity building in ARD in developing countries focuses on field experience in managing and implementing collaborative ARD projects within an innovations systems perspective and demonstrates impact through shared learning. *What ICRA has to offer squarely fits this bill.*
- 1.4. Mobilizing financing for ARD is again on the international agenda, however, there is increasing emphasis on increasing the capacity of southern partners in managing the funds e.g. EC funding for FARA and SROs and through the joint EU/ACP programme EDULINK for funding networking among EU and southern higher education institutions. There are also other international players operating e.g. the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, China and Brazil that are working directly with southern partners. Through its partnership and international networking approach, *ICRA is uniquely positioned to build capacity and support southern partners in documenting lessons on ARD and rural innovation processes. ICRA should seek long-term institutional financing rather than project funding for capacity building on ARD through project proposal submissions together with its national and international partners.*

2. Increase investment in the key assets that set ICRA apart

ICRA should continue to invest in the characteristics that set it apart: its role as a joint EU instrument that sets a standard for joint EU programming and implementation on ARD capacity development and support; its up-scaling towards multi-stakeholder innovation and institutional change; its European roots and international networks; in addition, it should significantly expand its research activities on rural innovation systems and how to facilitate their enhancement.

- 2.1. *Recognise ICRA more explicitly as a joint EU instrument: by means of its partnership strategy and approach, ICRA has set a standard and gained valuable practical experience with joint EU programming and implementation fully in line with modern thinking on ownership, partnership, complementarity and division of labour in the European Union. It provides a unique platform to integrate the specificities of the ARD approaches of the different EU member states and to link it up to Southern owned national and regional initiatives. This has been recognised already by 12 developing countries, 5 Anglophone, 4 Francophone and 3 Hispanic speaking. EU Member States and EU Institutions need to be informed about this.*
- 2.2. *Continue to invest in up-scaling activities towards multi-stakeholder institutional change in the south. ICRA has achieved a specific and well established niche and, methodological and training offering to support agricultural research and education to improve their contribution to rural innovation in small-holder farming areas. This has met with growing recognition by leading developing countries such as South Africa, Ghana, Uganda, Mexico and Venezuela who have engaged ICRA to support their*

institutional change for agricultural innovation programmes. ICRA needs to continue to build on this growing recognition on the part of its partners.

- 2.3. *Continue to invest in developing strong international networks* through its alumni, many of whom are in key government and private positions now; through active participation in relevant international and regional fora, such as GFAR, EFARD, FARA, ERA-ARD, and through its roots in a variety of European research and education institutions. The role ICRA plays in these networks is appreciated by European and southern researchers alike. One key reason why ICRA can play this role is because it combines in-country and in-service training in developing countries with providing a European international platform through its seminars and courses in Montpellier and Wageningen. *This complementary European presence should be maintained.*
- 2.4. *Invest significantly in research on the dynamics of rural innovation systems in support of pro-poor development; building upon the understanding (theoretical and practical) that ICRA has gained on how to facilitate these and making this knowledge widely available.* So far, this asset has hardly been documented and remains mostly tacit knowledge confined to the brains and bodies of ICRA staff and consultants. By engaging more systematically in innovation systems research, international exchange of knowledge and experience and by playing a strategic role in documenting and sharing relevant lessons learned, ICRA could generate invaluable inputs into the growing global debate on how to improve rural innovation systems in practice.

3. Build on ICRA's niche and strengthen its unique role

ICRA should continue to build upon its niche by recognising and strengthening its unique European role in response of southern demands; by further strengthening its partnership strategy and continuing its 'move to the south'; by developing a clear rationale for applying its different seminars, training and learning cycles to achieve maximum impact; by intensifying its contribution to southern universities' curricula; and being more proactive in activating knowledge exchange in its national and international alumni networks. Besides, ICRA should develop a research programme to strengthen its core business and anticipate on challenges ahead.

- 3.1. *Make ICRA's assets work for the EU, its southern partners and ARD:* ICRA, its Board Members, management and staff and, its founding institutions have an important responsibility to recognise what has been built up over the past years and to try to connect these assets to the obvious opportunities and southern demands emanating from renewed global attention for agricultural and rural development and ARD.
- 3.2. *Continue to strengthen the implementation of the ICRA partnership strategy and programme:* continue moving the 'centre of gravity' of ICRA training and learning cycles to the South. Increase in-service tailor-made training, in-country learning cycles and seminars with its partners in the South to make the training more cost effective.
- 3.3. *Develop a clear rationale for using different types of seminars and training in a complementary manner:* ICRA should not abandon Europe-based courses and seminars entirely. Rather, ICRA needs to develop a much clearer rationale for using

different type of training and seminars in a more complementary manner – Europe-based tailor-made training courses and field-based in-service learning cycles and ad-hoc seminars – and differentiate more clearly which participants are to be trained in what, where and why. This might include for example, bringing Southern ARD research managers and policy makers to Europe for 2-3 weeks or allowing (would-be) European ARD researchers to participate in courses in the South to receive in situ ARD application training in ICRA's southern partnership programmes.

- 3.4. *Intensify the work with Southern and some interested European universities* to develop strong ARD learning components – i.e. promote the ICRA formula of combining theory and practice – in strategically chosen, relevant Masters' programmes e.g. build on experiences with KNUST in Ghana.
- 3.5. *Be more pro-active in mobilising the ICRA alumni networks*: Annual or biennial seminars or workshop with alumni and colleagues from EU will contribute to a long-term process of relationship building to contribute to building a global community of practice between South and North, sharing experiences and generating lessons learned on improving the role of agricultural research and education in rural innovation.
- 3.6. *Engage systematically in research, documentation and exchange on ICRA core business*: ICRA needs to complement its reflexive action with documentation and research so that the lessons it learns with its partners on improving rural innovation can be identified and shared more easily and timely with other practitioners, researchers and policy makers.

4. Urgently deal with main institutional challenges

ICRA Board and management should urgently deal with the main institutional challenges that stand in the way of its continuity and growth as an independent European institution: its status as a non-employing organisation; its fundraising strategy and lack of visibility in Europe; the role and composition of its Board; and policy backing by European donor institutions.

- 4.1. *Board, supporting institutions and management should negotiate an end to ICRA's status of a non-employing organisation*: In order to deal with the challenges ahead, ICRA needs to become an autonomous organisation, so it can develop into a strong institution able to respond to the enormous demands and opportunities ahead, ensure its own fundraising and employ its own people, by free selection on the basis of objective criteria and creating the right incentives for them to keep investing in ICRA's development.
- 4.2. *Board and management should articulate a renewed fundraising strategy* that aims at securing a solid basis of multi-annual institutional funding to ensure further development and consolidation of ICRA as an independent centre in accordance with abovementioned recommendations. For this purpose, ICRA's visibility among European research institutions, research networks and donor agencies needs to be improved.
- 4.3. *The Board should review its composition* in terms of its functionality for securing institutional and financial continuity of ICRA as an organisation

- 4.4. *The Board and supporting institutions should ensure policy backing at the EU donor level to ensure the success of ICRA institutional fundraising and to enable it to respond to the challenges in the global agricultural and rural development arena.*
- 4.5. *The Board and management should consider focusing the ICRA partnership strategy more on regions and countries that face serious MDG challenges if that helps to ensure successful fundraising.*
- 4.6. *The Board should play an active role in facilitating the organisational transition process to a truly independent organisation and in developing new, more professional links with interested European research and education institutes.*

5. Ensure the sustainability of the ICRA partnership strategy

ICRA, and in particular its Board and supporting institutions, should ensure the sustainability of its partnership strategy by bringing EU donor support in line with modern European donor thinking on complementarity and division of labour; by developing closer ties with European donor agencies and by inviting the European Commission to take a stake in ICRA as a genuine EU instrument.

- 5.1. *ICRA Board and management should bring financial support for ICRA in line with modern donor thinking:* Financial support for ICRA needs to be brought in line with modern thinking on complementarity and division of labour in Europe, ownership and alignment with partner priorities. This requires more predictable financial support and less restricted regarding the (sub) sector in which it can be spent. For a small independent foundation, ad-hoc project funding can be complementary to more long term strategic funding but it can't replace it. It causes too many discontinuities in ongoing partnership programmes.
- 5.2. *The Board and supporting institutions should ensure the continuity of ICRA as an original EU instrument:* ICRA has developed an instrument that has proven its value to improving innovation systems for rural and agricultural development in the South. EU member states should be involved in ensuring continuity.
- 5.3. *The European Commission – Aid Co/DG Development/DG Research – are to be invited to take a more active stake in ICRA:* ICRA has developed a role model, and gained valuable experience with EU collaboration and division of labour in development. The European Commission as EU lead agency on the implementation of the Paris Declaration and the EU Code of Conduct on Division of Labour must therefore be invited to take a more active stake in ICRA and its proven partnership strategy, both financially and in terms of technical support.
- 5.4. *ICRA needs to develop closer links with European donor agencies:* ICRA should disentangle its relationships with technical ministries and executing agencies while expanding its links with donor agencies. The first are very important to enable ICRA to play its articulating role in creating a European approach to ARD, but are restricted in their ability to fund ICRA. The latter can fund ICRA and engage with ICRA in policy dialogue on their role in development, but can not ensure ICRA's European network and role. ICRA should review how both types of agencies and ministries can complement each other in supporting its mandate and strategy.

Annexes

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Independent External Programme and Management Review (EPMR) of the International Centre for development oriented Research in Agriculture (ICRA)

1 Background on ICRA

ICRA is a capacity building organisation. It facilitates innovation by strengthening the competencies of people and organisations in the rural sector, research and education to collaborate as equal partners and learn from each other. These competencies make partners more effective, as a group, in achieving innovation in technology, markets, policies and social organisation to reduce poverty, enhance competitiveness of product chains and small-scale enterprises and ensure sustainable use of natural resources.

ICRA strengthens these competencies by:

- Catalysing and nurturing collaboration between organisations in South and North in national and regional partnerships
- Promoting changes in member organisations that enable collaboration between them and learning from each other
- Building national teams that can facilitate learning between partners in rural development and develop academic learning programmes
- Learning from experience and diffusing good practices to improve rural innovation.

ICRA was established in 1981 at the initiative of European members of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). The founders of ICRA felt that the progressive specialisation of agricultural research and training by commodity and discipline reduced researchers' capability of meeting the needs of the complex diversified small-scale enterprises predominant in the South. They felt that researchers therefore needed post-academic training and professional experience that could help them apply their specialised knowledge within a wider understanding of the rationale of these complex enterprises and the conditions under which they operate, and hence conduct more relevant and effective research.

ICRA is an autonomous, not-for-profit foundation ("*stichting*") with full juridical personality under the laws of the Netherlands and an international remit. It is governed by an independent Board of Trustees and managed by a Director. ICRA is a non-employing organisation. People working at ICRA are either on secondment from other organisations or on consultancy contracts. The small staff is dispersed between offices in Wageningen and Montpellier, and regional representations in Southern Africa and Latin America, whereas some work from their homes elsewhere.

2 Developments in ICRA and its strategy

For more than two decades, the main function of ICRA has been the annual provision of 28-week post-academic learning programmes for mid-career professionals involved in rural research and development in the South, including a 13-week "field study" in a country in the South. Initially this programme was only provided in English in Wageningen. Since 1991, a parallel learning programme is provided in French in Montpellier and between 1997 and 2000

four such programmes were offered in Spanish in Puebla, Mexico. ICRA's programmes have changed continually and considerably over time, both in content, structure, type of learning materials, approach to learning, institutional diversity of participants and mix of nationals from the South and Europe. Although the envisaged learning outcomes also evolved over time, the constant and most distinguishing characteristic of ICRA's programmes has always been its focus on the knowledge, skills and mindset changes needed for interactive learning between participants and resource persons of different disciplines and types of organisation, and between them and local actors at the fieldwork locations.

In recent years, ICRA has substantially revised its strategy in response to recommendations from an EPMP conducted in 2000 and to demand from partner organisations in the South. ICRA is now working in partnership with organisations in South and North to strengthen national capacity in the South to build capacity for ARD (see Box 1) and to mainstream the use of ARD in rural innovation. This engages ICRA with national innovation partnerships or platforms in the South, representing farmer and private sector organisations, development organisations, NGOs, research organisations and universities. ICRA's role in these partnerships is to bring them together and stimulate the development of a common vision and strategy to promote ARD. ICRA also strengthens the capacity of national capacity strengthening teams (NCSTs) that can facilitate learning between partners in rural innovation and develop and deliver academic learning programmes for students. The Anglo- and Francophone programmes in Wageningen and Montpellier have been redesigned to form an instrument to build the capacity of NCSTs. With members of the NCSTs, ICRA staff are involved in co-designing and co-facilitating national learning programmes in ARD for local multi-stakeholder teams and for university students.

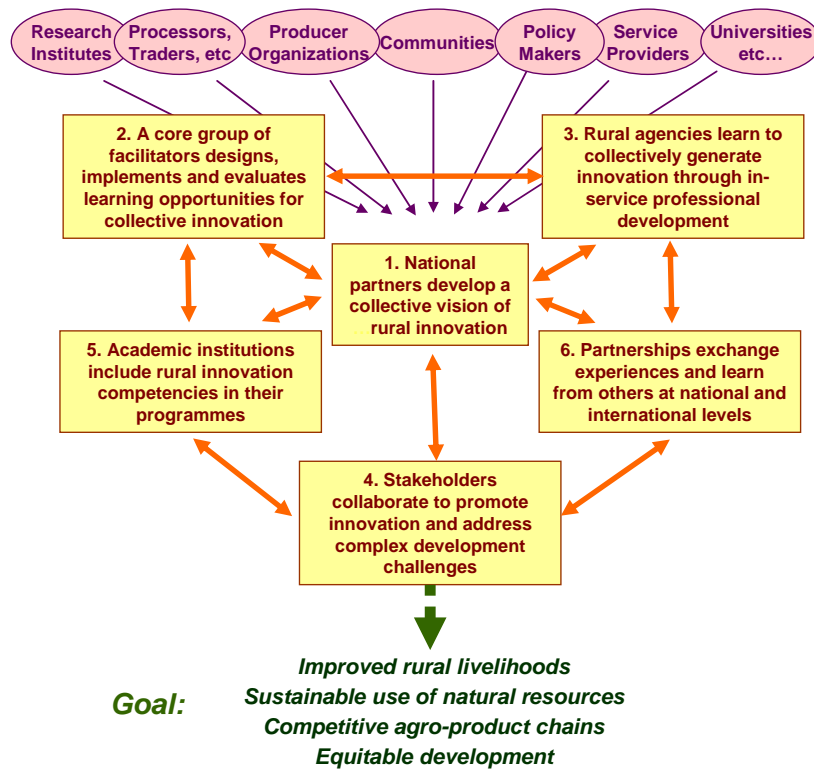
Box 1 – Common elements of ARD

1. Deals with complex issues – cutting across sectors and scales (improving livelihoods, competitiveness, sustainability)
2. Integrates disciplinary perspectives – systems concepts (different scales, holistic integration of components, interacting with environment)
3. Integrates actions within a development strategy (technology-policy-institutional-market innovation)
4. Accommodates alternative future scenarios (markets, policies, institutions, climate, demography)
5. Involves a broad range of stakeholders in collective innovation systems (mutual learning, joint planning, M&E and impact assessment)
6. Uses a comprehensive range of criteria for evaluation of (potential) outcomes. Natural, physical, financial, human, social capital.

Inspired by the outcome mapping approach promoted by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada, ICRA defines the desired outcomes from its involvement in the national ARD partnerships in terms of changed behaviour of its partners. The six generic outcomes that ICRA's new strategy hopes to promote (in varying combinations) in its various partnerships are illustrated by Figure 1. For each outcome specific indicators are defined to monitor progress over time.

Facing a situation of abruptly reduced core funding from 2004, the implementation of the new strategy allowed ICRA to demonstrate its potential to partners, donors and clients and to gradually increase its income, staff and volume of activities over the past 2-3 years. In this period it has evolved from almost entire dependence on its core donors in Europe to a situation in which more than 50% of its income comes from other sources.

Figure 1 – Interrelated outcomes of ICRA partnerships



Despite these initial successes, ICRA faces important challenges in the further implementation of the new strategy. One challenge is to maintain the capacity to implement an integral strategy and operate as a catalyst and “nurturing” partner in what are by necessity long-term change processes in educational and R&D institutions while ICRA becomes more and more dependent on project funding and service contracts. Another challenge is finding the right balance between initiating new partnerships and strengthening the capacity of new NCSTs, which has to date generated most external income for ICRA, on the one hand, and providing more support to the work of trained NCSTs in-country and nurturing national partnerships to keep them together, promote organisational change and institutionalise ARD, for which the external income so far has been harder to find and is at best covering the costs, on the other hand. A third challenge, which previous EPMRs have struggled with, but not resolved, is the question of the appropriateness of ICRA’s status as a small independent and non-employed organisation. The management and resourcing of ICRA’s involvement in national partnerships in a dozen countries speaking three different world languages while using a very small staff that is geographically dispersed and many of whom are part-time consultants puts a heavy burden on the small central office in Wageningen.

As a small organisation open to learning, ICRA needs a fresh look from outsiders to help it address these challenges through the implementation of a short EPMR in 2007. The EPMR should assess ICRA’s past performance, achievement, outcomes and impact as well as make recommendations to help ICRA face the challenges of its changing future environment.

3 Period covered by the review

The review concerns the period from 2001 to 2007. The first three years of this period were used to explore ways of implementing the strategic changes recommended by the EPMR of 2000. These required ICRA to diversify from a core-funded “single-activity organisation” into a broader range of activities requiring new sources of income. During these years ICRA developed the current partnership strategy in consultation with potential partners. The implementation of this strategy was gradually phased in from 2004 and took full effect with changes in the Anglophone programme from 2005 and in the Francophone programme from 2006/07.

4 Purpose of the review

Against this background, the purpose of the review is to:

- Evaluate ICRA’s implementation of the priority recommendations of the EPMR of 2000 and the continued relevance of its mission and strategy in its changing environment.
- Assess ICRA’s impact in terms of the progress that ICRA’s ARD partnerships in the South have made towards their desired outcomes and evaluate ICRA’s performance in terms of the effectiveness of its support to the achievement of these outcomes.
- Evaluate the performance of ICRA’s Board, management and staff and the adequacy of current organisational arrangements and human and other resources to maintain its relevance to partners, clients and donors and ensure the quality sustainability and integrity of its services.

5 Specification of terms

Mission and strategy

- 1 Has ICRA adequately redefined its mission and strategy in response to the previous EPMR’s priority recommendations, especially in terms of “moving its centre of gravity South” in partnership with organisations in South and North and creating a multiplier effect?
- 2 Has ICRA adequately adapted its mission and strategy in the light of important changes in its external environment since the previous review?
- 3 Are the current mission and strategy of the centre appropriate to ensure its continued relevance to partners, considering the likely changes in ICRA’s external environment in the near future?

Achievements, outcomes and impact

- 4 What progress have ICRA’s ARD partnerships made towards their desired outcomes since their beginnings in 2004/05/06?
- 5 What are major achievements of ICRA in this respect? How effective has ICRA’s support to these ARD partnerships been in achieving these outcomes?
- 6 What lessons can be drawn from this experience to enhance ICRA’s future impact?

Organisation, management and quality

- 7 What has been the effectiveness of leadership and the performance of ICRA’s Board of Trustees, management and staff? How can these be enhanced?

- 8 Is ICRA's institutional form as an independent non-employing organisation, working with a small number of scattered staff and consultants, adequate to perform its mission efficiently and effectively? Are there feasible alternative organisational arrangements that are more efficient and effective?
- 9 Is ICRA adequately resourced to ensure sustainability and integrity of its support to national ARD partnerships in the South and are these resources effectively and efficiently managed? What changes are needed in this respect?
- 10 Does ICRA adequately ensure quality and relevance? How can the mechanisms to ensure quality and relevance be improved?

6 Output of the review

The EPMR should result in a short report in English with an executive summary of not more than 5 pages and a main report of 20-25 pages clearly arguing the objective justification for the assessments and recommendations.

7 Composition of the review team

The team will be composed of three members, including a mix of genders, nationals from European and Southern countries, and institutional backgrounds (such as research/education, development organisations, private sector and farmer organisations, NGOs/CSOs, donors). All team members will have extensive knowledge of the international environment of ARD in which ICRA operates and experience in rural innovation. Collectively, the team will comprise adequate knowledge of changing funding mechanisms and expertise in capacity development, institutional change, management and participatory monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment. At least one of the team members will be bilingual English-French.

8 Timetable of the review

The review team members will each put in 20 days of work. The team leader will put in an additional 3 days to finalise the report.

28 January – 1 February	Briefing of the team by Board Chair and another Board member The full team works together in Wageningen to initiate the review and plan their activities
3 February – 16 May	Team members conduct individual activities and exchange with each other by email as needed This can include a visit to a partnership country, telephone interviews, etc.
19 – 23 May	The full team works together in Wageningen to finalise their conclusions and the report Debriefing session with ICRA management and Board representation on major conclusions and recommendations
6 June 2008	Submission of draft review report
13 June	Preparation of ICRA management's response to the review
18 June	Extraordinary Board meeting, discussion of Board's response to the review team's analysis and recommendations
18 July	Submission of final review report

Annex 2: List of people contacted

During the review, the EPMR team spoke at length with ICRA Board members Jean Luc Khalfaoui (EC), Sander van Opstal (Dutch MoANF) and with ICRA management and staff in Wageningen, Montpellier and South Africa. The draft report was presented and discussed with the full ICRA Board on June 18. In addition, in Wageningen, Montpellier and during country visits to South Africa and Ghana, the team contacted a number of strategically chosen Alumni and individual experts from partner organisations listed below.

Partner Organisations

Montpellier Agricultural pole representatives: Henri Carsalade (Président Agropolis International); Etienne Landais (Directeur SupAgro Montpellier) ; Fabrice Dreyfus (Directeur IRC, Institut des Régions Chaudes)

Wageningen University & Research representatives: Dr Bram Huisman, Director Wageningen International; brief check with: Prof Dr Rudy Rabbinge, currently also Chair Scientific Committee CGIAR

AISSA: Dr. Victor Clottey, IFDC Coordinator, Agricultural Intensification Sub-Saharan Africa

FARA: Dr. Adewale Adekunle, Programme Coordinator, Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Programme; Ralph Von-Kaufmann

Agricultural Research Council - SA: Thembi Ngcobo,

University of Limpopo, School of Agriculture - SA: Prof. Mashela, Entomology and Nematology, Land Bank Chair in Agriculture; Mr. Koke, *Centre for Rural Community Empowerment*.

Limpopo Department of Agriculture - SA: Prof. Nesamvunie, General Manager Research Services; Jeff Mkhari

Alumni

IFDC ICRA 2007: Osman Gyasi – Team Leader & IFDC Agribusiness Cluster Advisor, Tamale (Formerly CSIR); Joseph Sakuur Bapule – Farmers Organization, CSIR Marketing Officer ; Amadu Alhassan – NGO - Opportunities Industrial Centre / IFDC School Feeding; Joseph Nketiah – Lecturer, Agribusiness, Methodist University College, Ghana (Faculty of Agriculture); Richard Yeboah – Lecturer Agribusiness, University for Development Studies (Faculty of Agriculture)

KNUST ICRA Alumni 2004 & Beyond: Steve Duku – Research Fellow, Agricultural Research Station; K. Ohene- Yanloyeru – Lecturer, Agriculture Economics & Agribusiness; Sampson E. Edusah – Senior Research Fellow – BIRD & NPT Coordinator

Wageningen: Laurent Glin, from Benin, OBPAM (Organisation Béninoise pour la Promotion de l'Agriculture Biologique), francophone program in 2006-2007, now a Wageningen doctorate student; and two of the recent 2008 AP students.

ICRA 2008 Anlophone Programme participants in Wageningen

Armine Avagyan, Gareg Hambarzumyan, Nara Yaralyan (Armenia team); Maria Bertorelli Ortiz, Iraida Rodriguez (Venezuela team); Wongiwe Hashe, Jason Mafuma, Simphiwe Mngomezulu, David Norris, Precious Senyolo, Carin van Zijl (South Africa team).

Annex 3: ICRA partnerships in Africa – composition, leadership and purpose

(Main partners, announced goals, main institutional partners from the North and funding; leading partner organization(s) of the project in the South are marked yellow)

Country (start)	Farmers assoc.	Ministries	Research bodies	Univ.	Training org.	Private Cies	NGOs	Misc.	Goals	Instit. partners & Funding
South Africa (2004)	NAFU	NDag, ND S&T, 7 Prov. Dept Ag	ARC	5	MFTI TSF TI		PROLINNOVA		R&D prof, Univ, acad curr Trainers capacities Strengthen linkages agric. Innov. syst.	NPT (NUFFIC) (2006-09) (WUR, WI) ARC (2004, 05, 07)
Madagascar (2005)		Prov Dpt Ag, Ed Yo	(FOFIFA, CNRE)	3			Aide et Action Reg. Civil Soc Platf. Fiantso	CEDII FORMGED Prog (EU)	Civil soc/devel MSkh platforms Trainers training prog. development	EU/EDF (2005-08) (FORMGED)
Uganda (2004)			Nat Ag Res org (NARO)	1 *				Af Highland Initiative (AHI)	Cap building of trainers (IAR4D) + Zonal R&D teams	Local (2004-05) EU-ACP EduLink (2008-10)
Kenya (2005)	K Nat Fed Ag Prod	Min Ag, Min Liv & Fish	K Ag Res Inst (KARI)	4				IA4RD Task team (all partners)	R&D prof (IAR4D) Univ. staff, acad. curr.	NFP (2006) EU-ACP EduLink (2008-10) (links Uganda)
Ethiopia (2007)		Min Ag** & Rur Dev	Et Inst Ag Res Am Reg Ag Res I	1	MMATVET				Cap building of training teams Formulate nat. Action Plan for innov. syst.	NFP (2007-08) Local 2008-?)
Benin (2006)	Féd Union Prod	Min Ag, El, Pêche	INRA B	1	EPAC		OBP Agri Bio	IFDC	Cap building for MSkh platforms Increase	IFDC, NPT (2006-10) (WI, WUR,

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Country (start)	Farmers assoc.	Ministries	Research bodies	Univ.	Training org.	Private Cies	NGOs	Misc.	Goals	Instit. partners & Funding
									relevance of Univ. res. & educ.	VHLC)
Mali (2005)	AOPP, AOPFA APCA Mali	Dir Nat Ag	IER	1 (IPR K)		Fed Nat Transf agro-alim	AME DD	ADAF-CREDO IFDC	Cap building for MSkh platforms (IFDC)	IFDC (2006-09)
Ghana (2005)	Apex FO G		Sav Ag Res Inst	3 (1 Ag)		G Ag Bus IC Opp Indust Centers		+ IFDC	R&D prof + MSkh platform Univ. staff	NPT (2005-08) (Tropenbos, Univ. Amsterdam, WI) + IFDC (2006-09)
Burkina (2007)	Fed Prof Ag B			1		Assoc intrants Fed Nat Ind transf		Rés Caisses pop IFDC	Cap building for MSkh platforms	IFDC (2007-09)
Senegal (2006)			(ISRA-BAM)	ISE (UCAD)	FRAO ARED		ENDA-GRAF USE	IED-Afrique	R&D prof, IFAD project staff, Test new learning appr., acad curr.	IFAD (2006-08) (CIAT)

Legend: R&D prof: Research & Development professionals; Acad curr: academic curricula; MSkh: multi-stakeholders; agr innov syst: agricultural innovation systems

* NARO is leading the initiative started in 2004, while Makerere univ. leads the Edulink project.

** While MMATVET plays the main role in the NFP project, MoARD is leading the national initiative

Annex 4: ICRA provides the right piece of the puzzle at the right time – Limpopo Province, South Africa

Value added by ICRA to ongoing process in Limpopo Province

To understand the added value of ICRA in Limpopo Province one has to go back to 1994 when the democratic South African Government committed its agricultural services to supporting resource-poor farmers to lift themselves out of poverty by taking part in the national economy¹⁴. Agriculture is one of the three main productive sectors of Limpopo Province, next to mining and tourism. And small-scale family agriculture is one of its dominant features. Before 1994 agricultural services had been directed mostly to support the so-called 'First Economy' of commercial farmers. The challenge of the Provincial Department of Agriculture was therefore first and foremost to equip its services with the means to work with those family small-holders of the 'Second Economy'. Apart from a strong backing by the National Government, it obtained support from the German GTZ to undertake the necessary organisational and methodological changes, and train its staff to be able to take up this challenge. The University of Limpopo, with support of GRET, a French NGO, established a Centre for Community Empowerment, as an outreach towards small-holders and their communities. With the support of GTZ, the PDA started training its extension staff in participatory extension methods, and promoted engaging much more pro-actively with small farmers on a range of services including demand articulation, production planning, marketing and technical advice instead of just providing technical advice and only if asked. The Centre for Community Empowerment, relying heavily on graduate students for its field work in the meantime also started to develop a feel for the demands of small-holders and their communities by engaging actively in needs assessment, community organisation, etc.

As a result, when ARC proposed the ICRA partnership on ARD, both institutions were already acutely aware of the severe limitations of their research and academic staff in addressing the needs of small-holders effectively. The ICRA partnership provided them with an opportunity to extend to the research staff what had gradually been achieved with the extension/outreach staff: to learn how to engage effectively with small-holder farmers. The subsequent participation of a number of key people in the 6-month ICRA training course confirmed to them that what ICRA had to offer was indeed an effective knowledge and skills training package that could help them overcome some of the traditional limitations of their staff.

With the benefit of hindsight, such limitations were formulated presently as follows:

1. Lack of awareness of the socio-economic situation of the small-holders; their basic needs and ambitions.
2. Lack of awareness of their assets: indigenous knowledge, skills and resources that may be mobilised to create new market opportunities.
3. Lack of soft skills, communication, relational and team work abilities in order to engage with small-holders and achieve a comprehensive understanding of their situation.

¹⁴ By the Limpopo institutions, this predominantly black group of farmers (male and female) is alternatively referred to as resource-poor farmers; family small-holders or, farmers of the 'second economy' – in contrast to the commercial farmers of the 'first economy'.

4. Lack of conceptual tools and skills to integrate different disciplinary perspectives into identifying, studying and proposing (technical or other) solutions to the problems and opportunities faced by small-holders.
5. Lack of research design and methodological skills to adapt academic research to produce outcomes that cater to the needs and possibilities of small-holders.

All of these had not been perceived as necessary before, when relatively straightforward scientific research and advisory services were required just for commercial, mostly white farmers with higher education, long-time marketing experience and clearly committed to a commodity-based approach. In the words of Prof. (...): “What were best practices for the first economy were not necessarily best practices for the farmers of the second economy”. Working with small-holder farmers required completely different knowledge, skills and research practices, and after carefully evaluating its ‘package’, the ICRA partnership was seen as a good basis for their staff to acquire such competencies.

And the results have been impressive: Strong leadership of PDA; ownership on the part of University Faculty; official recognition for small-holder agriculture as one of the two main ‘niches’ of Limpopo University; accreditation of all academic staff involved by the National Science Foundation; and a MSc on Rural Development in the making.

Annex 5: Country report Ghana

Title: Mission Report Ghana May 26 - 30 – EPMR ICRA

Submitted by: Judith Francis, EPMR Team Member 2008

Date: June 01, 2008

Background

During the period May 26 – 30, J. Francis undertook a mission to Ghana to obtain firsthand feedback from ICRA alumni to support the assessment of ICRA based on the TOR for the 2008 EPMR. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with groups of Alumni and individual experts from key strategic organizations.

Main Findings & Recommendations

ICRA has moved its centre of gravity to the South (Ghana) and is valued by its partners who consider that it offers a unique product. However, the high cost of its programme and inability to provide adequate follow-up support to strengthen its Alumni in-country teams are major limitations.

- ✓ ICRA needs to introduce mechanisms to strengthen the in-country network of ICRA Alumni so that they can contribute to ensuring that ICRA's goal of improved rural livelihoods, sustainable use of natural resources, competitive agro-food chains and equitable development are achieved.
- ✓ ICRA also needs to review the cost structure for its courses and should consider offering (i) more training content in the South to reduce the cost for maintaining southern experts in Europe; (ii) distance learning modules to reduce the time that southern professionals may have to be away from their jobs (once adequate facilities exist) and (iii) reduced number of weeks (1-2) spent at international centres in Wageningen and Montpellier which exposes the experts to advanced ARD systems. This proposal if feasible and cost effective may allow ICRA to respond to the high demand from its partners.

A summary of the reports of the interviews follow:

1.0 Summary of Discussions – IFDC ICRA Alumni 2007

1.1 Names of Team Members Interviewed

Osman Gyasi – Team Leader & IFDC Agribusiness Cluster Advisor, Tamale (Formerly CSIR)

Joseph Sakuur Bapule – Farmers Organization, CSIR Marketing Officer

Amadu Alhassan – NGO - Opportunities Industrial Centre / IFDC School Feeding

Joseph Nketiah – Lecturer, Agribusiness, Methodist University College, Ghana (Faculty of Agriculture)

Richard Yeboah – Lecturer Agribusiness, University for Development Studies (Faculty of Agriculture) (narteyrwn@hotmail.com)

1.2 Reflections on Training (Wageningen & In Country Fieldwork)

- i. Intensive programme with novel training approach.
- ii. High in praise of the Anglophone coordinator.
- iii. Provided opportunity for experiential learning in an international context among intercultural and multi-disciplinary teams. Noted that it would be difficult to undertake similar training in home country because of demands from their organizations. This posed a challenge in the implementation of the follow-up field work.
- iv. Benefitted from exposure to Dutch farmers, researchers and agri-business sector – noted and was impressed with the businesslike approach to agriculture.
- v. Benefitted from being trained in teams – team impact is more significant than individual impact.
- vi. Continuous evaluation during the programme including self-evaluation and encouraging feedback from peers and from ICRA and the community ensured quality of the programme was maintained.
- vii. New knowledge and skills gained were shared within their organizations and other stakeholders and applied it in their field work.
- viii. Believed that they benefitted from an upgraded programme with new content e.g. value chain.
- ix. Targeting mid-level professionals should be maintained. However, there is need to sensitize senior managers to achieve a policy shift and for the concept to be mainstreamed at a faster pace.
- x. Noted that to achieve significant outcomes in multi-stakeholder processes, partnerships and funding are needed.
- xi. Achieved change in mindset – a different way of teaching and learning.

1.3 Meaning of ARD

Team said “thinking and acting differently”- different approach to analyzing issues and allowing discovery learning. Research in ARD means “Discovery”.

1.4 Uniqueness of ICRA ARD Product

Opens mind to complexity of agricultural development and how to bring about innovation and change through a continuous cycle of learning, empowerment and ownership of the process.

Innovation Platforms (local, national and NSC)

The IFDC team has set up local innovation platforms for maize, pepper and soya. They analyze and plan together and recognize the importance of documenting and publishing their observations on the process and outcomes. Partners are learning and farmers are seeing the value of sharing ideas and knowledge and are benefitting. Circumstantial evidence was provided – e.g. increased productivity; improved linkages among actors. Experiences are being used as case studies in university teaching. The team suggests that there is need to support this process for 3 – 5 years for it to be sustainable and have long-term impact. The IFDC funding supports capacity building.

There is no link between the National Capacity Steering Committee (NCST) Tamale team and the ICRA KNUST alumni. The IFDC team is in the process of setting up a farmer-led steering committee under the IFDC “Thousands to Million” project, which will identify

feasible business plans for IFDC support and for monitoring and evaluating the fieldwork. This committee is part of NCST.

1.5 Mushrooming Effect

ICRA material e.g. on value chains, forward and backward linkages in agric-business, is incorporated into existing teaching programmes in universities. National partners are training others and facilitating innovation processes. Ministry of Agriculture and other international organizations are applying similar approaches to develop agricultural sector. Methodist University would like to develop an alliance with ICRA so that ARD approach is mainstreamed into the new agriculture BSc programme. OIC would also like to build partnership with ICRA to offer training courses on ARD and enterprise development.

1.6 Challenges to Mainstreaming ARD Approach

- i. Long time frame to achieve results – farmers still need support
- ii. Increased demand from students and stakeholders
- iii. Need a critical mass of ERD experts. ICRA alumni are scattered and facilitating linkages with other ICRA alumni in Ghana e.g. KNUST would help.
- iv. ICRA needs to continue reinventing itself as national e.g. Methodist university and international organizations are beginning to offer similar programmes.

1.7 ICRA's Added Value & Partnership

Added value is seen at two levels:

- ✓ Individual – CVs and new job opportunities
- ✓ Organizational – Enhanced collaboration with other organizations

ICRA is seen as a credible partner; keeps its promises, shows interest, monitors alumni, shares information on new opportunities – Partners' success is ICRA's success

1.8 Sustainability

IFDC Alumni believe that ICRA manages its financial resources effectively and efficiently given the control measures that are in place but it needs core funding to support training in Wageningen. Project funding is necessary for in-country follow-up and southern partners have the capacity to submit and implement winning proposals in collaboration with ICRA. The potential exists to upscale results but ICRA continued support is needed. In addition, linking ICRA alumni would help to build a critical mass.

Conclusion

IFDC alumni consider the ICRA programme unique and are confident that they benefitted personally from the hands-on, interactive, multi-disciplinary training approach. Their personal achievements since participating in the programme have extended to their own organizations, partners and rural farming communities. However, they believe that the spin-off effect achieved to-date was realized because of available IFDC funding support to apply their new knowledge and skills. However, sustainability of the interventions requires more long-term funding post-training. They are of the view that the international training component of the

ICRA programme should remain in The Netherlands despite the high cost; the intangible benefits outweigh the costs.

2.0 Summary of Discussions – KNUST ICRA Alumni 2004 & Beyond

2.1 Names of Team Members Interviewed

Steve Duku – Research Fellow, Agricultural Research Station

K. Ohene- Yanloyeru – Lecturer, Agriculture Economics & Agribusiness

Sampson E. Edusah – Senior Research Fellow – BIRD & NPT Coordinator

2.2 Reflections on Training (Wageningen & In Country Fieldwork)

- i. 2003 ICRA alumni attached to Technoserve established the contact between ICRA and KNUST.
- ii. In 2004, KNUST was in the process of setting up an MSc programme on interdisciplinary research and two (2) KNUST staff members received fellowships to participate in the ICRA training as a way to support the development of the postgraduate programme.
- iii. In 2005, 6 staff members benefited from ICRA training and returned to form the core group for the NPT programme at CANR, KNUST.
- iv. The six (6) month intensive training programme in Wageningen was beneficial but the field research projects in The Netherlands were not considered relevant to Ghanaian agricultural sector.
- v. In-country field work was useful as it helped to reinforce the team work and was linked to cassava project managed by Technoserv. However, there has not been any follow-up beyond the end of the project.
- vi. University contributed staff time and made no additional demands on staff while they were on training.
- vii. ICRA should move the Wageningen training to the south to enable them to train more students. It would be more cost effective and teams of students from Africa and Europe could be trained at the same time. However, core funding must be made available to support the students.

2.3 Meaning of ARD

ARD is a process that brings together individuals with different competencies and allows for interaction with a wide group of stakeholders in identifying problems and implementing solutions so that there is ownership of the process for achieving positive change. It involves scenario building and systems thinking.

2.4 Uniqueness of ICRA Training

- i. Departure from conventional method of imparting knowledge.
- ii. Increased ability to work in teams to identify and solve problems.
- iii. Brings together different stakeholders with varying perspectives.
- iv. Joint ownership of the product – higher probability of success.
- v. Provides tools for achieving substantial change but there is need for support post training.

2.5 Innovation Platforms (local, national and NSC)

KNUST alumni have been able to set up a platform among themselves and have extended it to a wider university network (7 core alumni but 25 faculty members are now involved). Initial progress has been made in linking with forestry and fisheries departments of government ministries as a direct result of the NPT pilot programme of short courses but this is new and would need to be nurtured. The KNUST alumni anticipate that forming national innovation platforms will be problematic.

2.6 Mushrooming Effect

- i. KNUST alumni were able to use material in existing training courses and improve their teaching methods which are appreciated by students.
- ii. KNUST alumni were able to sensitize colleagues on ARD concept and in collaboration with ICRA, Tropenbos and University of Amsterdam were able to win an NPT project which led to widening involvement of KNUST staff (25) in developing course modules and serving as facilitators in training programmes; pilot short courses of two (2) week duration for Ghanaian professionals and trans-disciplinary three (3) month programmes for Dutch and Ghanaian students.
- iii. The needs assessment which formed part of the NPT project allowed KNUST alumni to network with other stakeholders beyond the university environment.
- iv. The MSc programme is evolving with the input of stakeholders although the process for achieving accreditation within the university system is long.

2.7 Challenges to Mainstreaming ARD Approach

It is difficult to change mindset given inherent structural problems e.g. university matriculation requirements for individual submission of thesis. There is need to build a critical mass of ARD specialist but accessing funding to train others is limited and several have not been able to access training.

2.8 ICRA's Added Value & Partnership

- i. As a result of the training, the team has been able to effect changes within the university system e.g. Pro-Vice-chancellor and Provost have bought into the concept.
- ii. Alumni are very happy with the partnership with ICRA but feels more can be done post-training to support alumni in building partnerships with other ICRA alumni (e.g. Tamale team) and beyond Ghana.
- iii. ICRA has a role to play internationally and in the south but must be able to move beyond offering training programmes to deliver more sustainable impact. "What facilities can KNUST rely on from ICRA to assist the South in writing winnable projects for sustaining training impact beyond end of the course?" If the KNUST alumni had not had the benefit of the NPT project, then the linkages and multiplier effect experienced would not have been achieved.

2.9 Sustainability

Institutionalizing ARD requires sustained support and ICRA must continue to build on work that has started with KNUST and other alumni in Ghana to make greater impact on rural livelihoods.

Conclusion

ICRA alumni and KNUST have benefitted from the ICRA training. KNUST alumni share ICRA's vision and strategy and have made some progress towards strengthening capacity of nationals on ARD and in providing tailored training programmes. They have also introduced rural innovation competencies into their academic and outreach programmes but the impact of these interventions cannot be evaluated at this point. ICRA offers a unique product targeting mid-level professionals which could be more cost effective and sustainable if ICRA has continued access to core funding to support follow-up activities with alumni. Post training support through project financing is needed for mainstreaming the ARD approach and it is too early to judge whether the team has been able to impact on livelihoods, natural resource management, equitable development and agro-product chains. An enhanced and multiplier effect can be achieved if ICRA moves its centre of gravity to the South such that its international programme is offered in the South. This should be more cost effective.

3.0 Summary of Discussions - Dr. Victor Clottey, IFDC Coordinator, Agricultural Intensification Sub-Saharan Africa (AISSA)

Dr. Clottey coordinates the DGIS funded project "Thousands to Millions" which spans seven (7) countries in West Africa – Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Togo and three (3) countries in East Africa – Burundi, DR Congo and Rwanda. The project includes a capacity building component for all actors in the agro-food production chain and public and private sector representatives of development services including research, extension, universities and NGOs. The initial intention of IFDC was to train 12-15 members of each country team representing a wide range of actors and development service providers at all levels; senior, middle and junior level. However, the cost per individual of the ICRA training (Euro 20,000 – 30, 000) and the time taken for training prevented IFDC from realizing this ambitious goal, although convinced of the usefulness of the teams.

IFDC has gained useful lessons from the field work that teams conducted on maize and pepper. ICRA alumni brought the tools that were needed for the agribusiness clusters and value chains. Consequently relations among actors have improved and the next stage is to build trust for successful agri-business enterprises. Two types of research are being conducted; technology development and monitoring and evaluation of the strategies and processes. Some theses dissertations have been done on documenting the processes.

3.1 Uniqueness

ICRA is continuously evolving, responding to global trends. A paradigm shift has been noted since 2003. ARD has been deepened to become more useful. It is not only theoretical, builds capacity of in-country teams and brings actors together in practical situations.

3.2 Value Added

ICRA programme addresses value chain, market development and managerial science. It opens the eyes of scientists and complements the science with theoretical and practical knowledge and skills based on a market oriented approach. "ARD is becoming more useful. ICRA alumni perform much better than the teams who were not trained

3.3 Challenges to Mainstreaming ARD

The high cost of training which limits the participation of several candidates from the south and the lack of a coach / mentor for the alumni who can provide follow-up and monitor progress. Consequently, ICRA should consider offering the core course in the south, some components by Distance Learning and 1 – 2 week in The Netherlands or Montpellier which focuses on field experience and exposure to advanced agri-business systems and research.

Conclusion

ICRA offers a unique product which adds value to IFDC's work. However, the high cost for individual training and the length of time for having team members trained given the life of the project hinders IFDC from achieving the multiplier effect and as such are obstacles to mainstreaming ARD in the IFDC programme. However, it has been noted that the.

p.s. Dr. Clotey noted that a Dutch organization was now advertising a training course that had been previously run in The Netherlands in Ghana at a very low cost, thus proving that shifting the ICRA training to the south can be done.

4.0 Summary of Discussions - Dr. Adewale Adekunle, Programme Coordinator, Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Programme, FARA

Dr. Adekunle advised that ICRA has a strong working relationship with FARA since the inception phase of the Sub-Sahara Challenge programme. ICRA had been selected as one of the two service providers for providing capacity building and monitoring and evaluation. However, the invoice submitted by ICRA for training the nine (9) teams (three teams of 15 each per pilot learning site) was too high (Euro 750,000). However, given the high opinion of the ICRA programme and staff, FARA has continued to collaborate with ICRA through an IFDC project at one of the SSA-CP pilot learning sites in Nigeria.

Dr. Adekunle noted that the ICRA/IFDC team is the most advanced team and is expected to deliver results on the ground within 6 – 12 months. FARA has also approached ICRA for assistance in documenting the process of implementing the IAR4D in SSA-CP. FARA is awaiting ICRA proposal on this issue.

4.1 Uniqueness

Dr. Adekunle advised that ARD (ICRA) and IAR4D as promoted by FARA are the same and goes beyond research as it incorporates markets and promotes team work and stakeholder involvement in research. It is relevant and continuously evolving to meet the needs of the agricultural sector in the South.

4.2 Added Value

ICRA gives practical orientation to current thinking.

4.3 Challenges to Mainstreaming ARD

Improving the cost effectiveness of the ICRA training and adopting strategies to multiply itself to deliver capacity training in the south were identified as challenges for ICRA in mainstreaming ARD. ICRA also needs to facilitate strengthening partnerships among ICRA alumni in the South as FARA is not aware of the existing capacity e.g. in Ghana.

Conclusion

ICRA is well appreciated and considered capable and relevant to FARA's efforts to improve agricultural performance in Africa through the enhancement of the performance of research systems, which respond to innovation processes, involve all actors and address market development issues. However, the high cost for ICRA's services is a limiting factor to greater utilization.

5.0 Personal Communication R. Von-Kaufmann, FARA May 25, 2008

I appreciated Jon Daane's contribution to the development of the SSA CP. I also appreciated their plan-do-review, plan-do-review, approach to action learning, which I thought was very appropriate to the SSA CP.

I had anticipated that ICRA African alumni would be available in all the SSA CP case study areas to embed in the task forces to lead the action-learning processes. I am not sure why that did not happen because I have not been involved in the SSA CP since it was approved for funding. The only reason I have been given is that there was a change in plan so that ICRA staff would lead the training and that may have been thought too expensive. There were also problems with agreeing on a proof of concept with the CGIAR Science Council which disrupted all the programming and research activities until virtually the end of 2007 and this may have prevented the conclusion of an agreement with ICRA.

That said, the SSA CP should acknowledge that ICRA has been very instrumental in internalising and up-scaling the concepts of Integrated Agricultural Research for Development (IAR4D) which is a product of the SSA CP Programme Development Workshop that was convened by FARA in Accra and which Jon attended. The courses in IAR4D which ICRA has given since then have been instrumental in spreading understanding of IAR4D and, for example, catalysing the conference on IAR4D that was held in Kampala. In that way ICRA has proven to be a very effective boundary partner for the SSA CP and FARA.

ICRA did not emerge as a capacity strengthening provider for SCARDA. Despite the number of alumni it did not feature in the reports of the scoping studies. However, I am not too surprised at that because the essence of SCARDA is that the capacity strengthening will be provided to weaker African institutions by stronger African institutions with Greenwich University/NRI available for technical backstopping if required. However, I believe that ICRA alumni will be amongst the Africans from the stronger institutions that will be providing the capacity building services.

You are aware that Jon Daane has contributed significantly to the development of the concepts on which the BASIC proposal has been developed. The provision of training in soft skills is a core cross-cutting element of BASIC and it is an area in which ICRA has had the

lead. Jon has demonstrated remarkable patience with BASIC in which he has invested quite a lot of time. I would not have been surprised if he had lost hope by now because getting funding for it has been akin to seeking the foot of the rainbow - we keep thinking we are getting nearer but we have not actually got there. I have taken advantage of the annual ACP meeting at CTA to keep him informed of what we have been doing to get BASIC funded. I am not sure if he still believes that we will succeed because we have not had a BASIC Interim Committee Meeting for a long time. We have neither had the funds for such a meeting nor anything tangible to report or discuss.

That said, I can re-confirm from the RUFORUM-NATURA meeting, which I am attending while I write this, that the concepts of BASIC have been re-confirmed and that ANAFE has been encouraged to focus on improving on graduate education while RUFORUM focuses on MSc and PhD levels. The meeting also confirmed the need for cross-cutting training in soft-skills, which is recognised as a high priority.

I remain confident that BASIC will be funded. When funding is realised ICRA will certainly be included amongst the potential capacity strengthening providers that will be encouraged to tender for providing the kinds of training that they specialise in.

I have a very positive overall impression of ICRA gained through meetings with Jon Daane, meeting with their alumni and participating in an ICRA workshop and I look forward to working with them.

I hope this is helpful but I will be pleased to provide any further information you may require.

Best regards,

Ralph