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Enhancing research impact for food security:

Strengthening knowledge co-creation and research uptake

Report on the Food & Business Applied Research Fund (ARF) First Call projects and Competitive Research Fund (CRF) projects workshop
Thursday 1st – Saturday 3rd October, 2015
Imperial Botanical Beach Hotel, Entebbe, Uganda
and Makarere University Agricultural Research Institute, Kampala, Uganda

March 2016

Paul Nampala and Henry Massa Makuma (RUFORUM), Pieter Windmeijer and Vanessa Nigten (F&BKP), and Cora Govers (NWO-WOTRO)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Food & Business Applied Research Fund (ARF, NWO-WOTRO) First Call projects and Competitive Research Fund (CRF, PAEPARD[1]) projects workshop held at Entebbe, Uganda was jointly organized by the Office of the Food & Business Knowledge Platform and NWO-WOTRO in collaboration with PAEPARD, RUFORUM[2] and AgriProFocus Uganda. The main theme of the workshop was to enhance research impact for food security by strengthening knowledge co-creation and research uptake.

The three-day workshop held October 1-3, 2015 in Entebbe, Uganda was divided into two parts. One part of the workshop (1 and 3 October) aimed at sharing experiences (successes and challenges) and lessons learned from the different ARF and CRF project teams by exploring ways of: improving co-creation; integrating stakeholder interests and ambitions in research from inception to completion and; identifying possibilities for collaboration among the projects. This part of the workshop attracted 40 representatives from the 15 ARF and four CRF projects invited. The programme was organized to stimulate discussions through pitch presentations, speed dating, working groups, plenary discussions and visits to incubators and field experimentation and learning. Best-bet mechanisms for stakeholder engagement mapping, knowledge sharing and research uptake were deliberately discussed in interactive sessions at an Agribusiness Incubation Centre (CURAD) hosted at the Makerere University Agricultural Research Institute Kabanyoro (MUARIK). In the afternoon of 3 October, participants visited exhibitions that showcased innovative products by both AfriBanana (folders, badges, bags and clocks made from banana fibres) and CURAD incubates (juices and liquor from coffee). During the field visits, CURAD incubatees shared their experiences of how they were supported in setting up a business and starting careers as entrepreneurs.

One day of the workshop (2 October) was dedicated to a public seminar that focused on the role of SMEs in enhancing food security. In addition to the ARF and CRF projects participants, 25 external stakeholders participated in the public seminar through presentations, discussions and panel discussions.

The key issues that emerged from the workshop included:

The ARF - CRF learning workshop

- There is no simple blueprint for dealing with knowledge co-creation. Rather project teams need to share their experiences of what worked and what didn't work and the reasons why.
- It is important for all project teams to conduct a stakeholder analysis to improve stakeholder engagement in the research process and knowledge sharing and research uptake.
- The workshop was an eye opener for many participants. It was suggested as part of orientation to organize such a workshop for newly awarded and future projects earlier, before implementation commences.
- The workshop served as a mechanism to explore and share experiences, to learn and improve knowledge co-creation and give feedback to project teams which enabled all consortia to contribute and discover together what the most appropriate collaboration looks like.
- The workshop created added value by linking ARF and CRF projects for more collaboration on related topics, or as network to share experiences.

The seminar on the role of SMEs in enhancing food security

- SMEs have a huge role to play in the food security and commercialization of knowledge.
- The slow transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture remains a large challenge to commercializing research outputs in Africa.
- Policy support and protection are crucial to SMEs' growth and development and to enhance economic growth and food security.
- Governance issues that affect the SMEs eventually trickle down to the primary level of any given value chain.
- SMEs are part of a very complex and dynamic system and this complexity needs to be taken into account in research and innovation activities and policy recommendations.
- Engaging policy makers in research and development actions is imperative for stimulating an enabling environment for SMEs' growth as well as economic development.

[1] Platform for Africa European Partnership in Agricultural Research for Development
[2] Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2
TABLE OF CONTENTS 3
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS 4
1. INTRODUCTION AND WORKSHOP AND REPORT ORGANIZATION 5
1.1 Background 5
1.2 The ARF – CRF learning workshop 5
1.3 The public seminar 6
1.4 The workshop activities and methods 6
2. THE ARF – CRF LEARNING WORKSHOP 7
2.1 Introduction and getting to know each other 7
2.1.1 Welcome remarks from the workshop organizers and officials 7
2.1.2 Experiences and progress made by ARF programme 7
2.1.3 Getting to know each other: pitch presentations of the ARF and CRF projects 9
2.1.4 Getting to know each other: speed dating ARF and CRF partners 9
2.2 Knowledge co-creation 10
2.2.1 Introduction on knowledge, knowledge co-creation and approaches used 10
2.2.2 Group work on problems and challenges encountered in the process of knowledge co-creation 11
2.2.3 Synthesis of the lessons and solutions emerging from plenary presentations 12
2.3 Enhancing Knowledge Sharing and Research Uptake 13
2.3.1 Introductions on enhancing knowledge sharing and research uptake 13
2.3.2 Group work: stakeholder engagement applying the alignment interest and influence matrix (AIIM) 14
2.3.3 Interactive session on ideas for research uptake and knowledge activities jointly with stakeholders 15
2.3.4 Exhibitions and field visits 16
2.4 Wrap-up: impressions for the workshop and what has been learned 17
3 PUBLIC SEMINAR “THE ROLE OF SMEs IN ENHANCING FOOD SECURITY” 18
3.1 Welcome remarks from the workshop organizers and officials 18
3.2 Keynotes on the role of SMEs in economic development for food security 19
3.3 Initiatives focusing on strengthening SMEs 19
3.4 Challenges faced by SMEs 20
3.5 Challenges of creating an enabling environment for SMEs 21
3.6 Policy panel discussion and conclusions 22

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	Africa Agribusiness Academy
AIIM	Alignment, Interest and Influence Matrix
APF	AgriProFocus
ARD	Agricultural Research for Development
ARF	Food & Business Applied Research Fund
ASARECA	Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CRF	Competitive Research Fund
CURAD	Consortium for Enhancing University Responsiveness to Agribusiness Development
EAC	East African Community
EAYL	Earn As You Learn
EC	European Commission
F&BKP	Food & Business Knowledge Platform
F&BR	Food & Business Research
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FARA	Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa
GCP	Food & Business Global Challenges Fund
ICRA	International Centre for Development Oriented Research in Agriculture
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
LMICs	Low and Medium Income Countries
NECPA	North East Chili Producers Organisation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NWO	Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research
NWO-WOTRO	WOTRO Science for Global Development Department
PAEPARD	Platform for African European Partnership on Agricultural Research for Development
Q&A	Question and Answer
RUFORUM	Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
VAT	Value Added Tax

1. INTRODUCTION AND WORKSHOP AND REPORT ORGANIZATION

1.1 Background

This is the report of the regional Food & Business Applied Research Fund (ARF) First Call projects and Competitive Research Fund (CRF) projects workshop. The workshop is the first of its kind and other launching and learning workshops will be organized for the ARF projects related to the specific calls for proposals published by NWO-WOTRO. The workshop was organized by the Office of the Food & Business Knowledge Platform (F&BKP) and NWO-WOTRO Science for Global Development in collaboration with the Platform for African European Partnership on Agricultural Research for Development (PAEPARD), the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) and AgriProFocus Uganda.

The three-day workshop held from October 1-3, 2015 in Entebbe, Uganda was divided into two different parts. One part of the workshop (1 and 3 October) was a learning exercise aimed at sharing experiences (successes and challenges) and lessons learned from the different ARF and CRF project teams by exploring ways of: improving co-creation; integrating stakeholder interests and ambitions in research from inception to completion and; identifying possibilities for collaboration among the projects. This part of the workshop attracted 40 representatives from the 15 ARF and four CRF projects invited. The programme was organized to stimulate discussions through pitch presentations, speed dating, working groups, plenary discussions and visits to incubators and field experimentation and learning. Best-bet mechanisms for stakeholder engagement mapping, knowledge sharing and research uptake were deliberately discussed in interactive sessions at an Agribusiness Incubation Centre (CURAD) hosted at the Makerere University Agricultural Research Institute Kabanyolo (MUARIK). In the afternoon of 3 October, participants visited exhibitions that showcased innovative products by both AfriBanana (folders, badges, bags and clocks made from banana fibres) and CURAD incubates (juices and liquor from coffee). During the field visits, CURAD incubatees shared their experiences of how they were supported in setting up a business and starting careers as entrepreneurs.

One day of the workshop (2 October) was dedicated to a more public seminar that focused on the role of SMEs in enhancing food security. In addition to the ARF and CRF projects participants, 25 external stakeholders participated in the public seminar through presentations, discussions and panel discussions. For the details of the full programme, please download the background information for the workshop in PDF. Overall, the workshop attracted 71 participants (see the Participants List in PDF) and was facilitated by Cora Govers (NWO-WOTRO) and Julia Ekong (PAEPARD).

The ARF and CRF learning workshop (Thursday 1 and Saturday 3 October) focused on three major themes: 1) strengthening knowledge co-creation; 2) the role of SMEs in enhancing food security and; 3) enhancing knowledge sharing and research uptake.

1.2 The ARF – CRF learning workshop

The learning workshop was organized in various sessions throughout 1 and 3 October. The sessions on 1 October were organized around the theme “Strengthening knowledge co-creation”. The session on 3 October was organized around the theme “Enhancing knowledge sharing and research uptake”. Although separated in time, these two parts of the workshop are combined in this report in Section 2.

The objectives of these sessions can be summarized as:

- Sharing, exchanging and getting to know each other and the projects. The workshop was about learning from each other and to create an ambiance of open discussion and collaboration.
- Improving co-creation within ARF and CRF projects by sharing experiences, challenges and best practices. Working with partners from various backgrounds means that efforts have to be made to work together, understand each other and clarify goals, ideas and research methods.
- The aim to provide better insight into the various possible components of knowledge sharing and research uptake, and to inspire the participants to come up with ideas for knowledge sharing and research uptake that they can further develop with their research team and others.

1.3 The public seminar

Most of the ARF and CRF projects work in a multi-stakeholder setting and environment and ARF has a specific focus on the special role of SMEs in economic development. A one-day seminar was organized on 2 October to address the role of SMEs and the activities and results of this part of the workshop are reported in Section 3.

The objective of the public seminar **"**The Role of SMEs in Enhancing Food Security: strengthening the performance of SMEs by strengthening the collaboration, interactions, information and knowledge exchange between researchers, practitioners, NGOs, and policy makers" was:

"to critically reflect on how the performance of SMEs can be enhanced. The performance of SMEs is influenced by many factors which are beyond their direct sphere of influence. Main focus of the workshop will be on strengthening the collaboration, interactions, information exchange and adaption of existing knowledge and co-creation of new knowledge by and between the different stakeholders involved in the value chain".

1.4 The workshop activities and methods

The following activities were accomplished to realize the set objectives of the workshop:

- Distribution of workshop reference materials including the workshop programme.
- Scene setting through presentations and plenary discussions.
- Facilitating a public seminar filled with strategic keynote speeches and discussions.
- Brainstorming on recommendations on possible research uptake activities by projects and best practices of collaboration.

2. THE ARF – CRF LEARNING WORKSHOP

2.1 Introduction and getting to know each other

2.1.1 Welcome remarks from the workshop organizers and officials

Cora Govers (NWO-WOTRO) welcomed all the participants on behalf of the workshop organizers and introduced the following objectives of the three-day workshop:

- Defining knowledge co-creation and how the process of knowledge co-creation can be improved.
- Modalities of ensuring continuous collaboration within ARF and CRF projects.
- Sharing knowledge between each other and learning from one another.
- Modalities of giving feedback from applied research into different line ministries to inform policy and practice.
- To include a seminar to facilitate in-depth discussion among active stakeholders within the agro-food chains and to brainstorm on the role of SMEs in ensuring food security and commercialization of knowledge.

Jonas Mugabe (PAEPARD) welcomed the participants and he made the following remarks:

- PAEPARD's strives to create consortia that engages African and European research initiatives hinged on balanced partnerships. However, sustaining consortia requires funds thus PAEPARD organizes write workshops aimed at developing fundable proposals.
- ARF is one of the calls that matches the strategic objectives and aspirations of PAEPARD very well.
- PAEPARD looks forward to learning from the 15 ARF project experiences.

In his welcome address, Pieter Windmeijer (F&BKP) highlighted that:

- The F&BKP collaborates with a number of partners including the Ministries, knowledge institutions, private sector, organizations from civil societies and other parties that are interested in partnerships and networks.
- The work is organized around three pillars: information sharing; connect, share, deepen, translate and co-create knowledge (intended to support networks) and; strengthen research, co-creation and knowledge uptake.
- Co-organizing the ARF – CRF learning workshop fits well within the mandate of F&BKP as it is about building bridges between networks, sharing information to enhance the role of SMEs and drawing lessons by joint learning.

2.1.2 Experiences and progress made by ARF programme

Cora Govers (NWO-WOTRO) highlighted the role of WOTRO in managing the ARF programme, and to enhance cross-project learning to stimulate knowledge co-creation and research uptake. She explained that:

- ARF connects the Dutch Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Economic Affairs.
- NWO sets the agenda for ARF and WOTRO conducts independent evaluation of the submitted project proposals.
- There are two complementary research instruments: 1) the Global Challenge Programme (GCP) which focuses on more fundamental research and; 2) ARF which focuses on applied research and innovations. However, the two instruments are similar in that they both focus on co-creation by transdisciplinary consortia, knowledge sharing and research uptake.

The objective of ARF is to promote research supported innovations that contribute to food security and private sector development in the 15 partner countries of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The proposed research has to be oriented to four different pillars:

- Pillar 1: Increasing sustainable agricultural production
- Pillar 2: Ensuring equitable access to better nutrition
- Pillar 3: Improving inclusive access to markets
- Pillar 4: Enabling a better business climate

Some lessons learned from the first and second call for proposals published the following:

- 20 projects have been approved for funding in eight different countries. Uganda is ranked first with five projects approved.
- Most projects focus on Pillar 1 (47%), Pillar 4 was addressed in only 19% of the projects. The importance of Pillar 4 will be increased in next call for proposals.
- Very few consortia have a public policy partner on board and this presents a challenge for the preparation of the next call.
- All project teams were engaged in different activities and demonstrated expertise and full understanding of their research foci.

For more details, please download the PowerPoint presentation (in PDF) of Cora Govers, NWO-WOTRO, here.

Her presentation encouraged a positive debate within the participants by raising many questions and issues for clarification as summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of plenary discussions on experiences and progress made by ARF programme

Question/Comment	**Response**
Why was ARF set up with the requirement of a 20% contribution by partners?	WOTRO acknowledges that this requirement may be a limiting factor. It was, however, intended to generate commitment from the partners as they invest also their own resources in the research project.
Regarding the third call, is there a possibility for existing projects to apply for a scale-up?	It has not yet been part of the initial discussions of the third call but this has been taken note of. However, there are many instruments within the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs which could support an up-scaling of existing projects.
Is there a possibility to support projects that are focusing on cross linking on-going projects to increase visibility? We can have one or two projects that makes an inventory of what is coming from which projects so we can know who is doing what and where.	Within the Food & Business Knowledge Platform (F&BKP), there is a small budget that can support projects that are aiming at learning from the total of the projects. Besides, the Platform can facilitate cross-linkages among on-going projects and other actors active within the F&BKP.
Most consortia who developed proposals did not submit because they failed in getting Dutch partners. Many Dutch partners could not get involved because they feared that their operational expenses for participation could not be refunded by ARF. Has this challenge been addressed?	Officially this funding challenge has not yet been solved however it is on the agenda and a proposal for having a lump-sum to cover the operational cost of Dutch partners was submitted to WOTRO. This is likely to been handled under the third call.
How has the setup of the ARF been organized to avoid its preparation and implementation being viewed as a top-down approach based on entirely a Dutch Agenda rather than as a participatory process?	The main ARF foci is derived from the Dutch Agenda however the advisers on which Projects to be funded (Pool of International Experts (Evaluators) - PIE) are selected from all over the world. All have a background in food security and a wide experience in agricultural research. The PIE is mostly drawn from Africa, followed by Asia and the Netherlands. There is also a PIE committee composed of two members from Africa and three from the Netherlands. It is this committee that puts together all the projects that have been submitted.
How many rounds for submitting proposals are scheduled under the third call, and what will be the budget for this call?	This is not yet definite however judging from the 1st and 2nd call, the third call will also have two rounds. The budget will be maintained at €4 million.

2.1.3 Getting to know each other: pitch presentations of the ARF and CRF projects

All project representatives were given two minutes to pitch their projects that were focused on the main objectives, expected impact, activities implemented and preliminary results, and opportunities/ challenges.

During the pitching exercise, participants were required to listen and note questions or issues for further classification as to contribute to the speed dating exercise.

A total of 18 pitches were made, out of which 13 key messages were drawn:

1) In Africa many indigenous vegetables are produced and consumed. There is one special product, Cleome Gynandra (African cabbage), that can only be grown in arid conditions. This constitutes two thirds of Africa's conditions.
2) In Benin, traditional weaning foods is commonly a cereal-based thin porridge which is deficient in nutritional benefits. Thus, there is a need for developing improved, safe, nutritious and affordable infant foods from local resources for urban and rural consumer communities. This will contribute to healthy infant development with increased resilience to child mortality.
3) In Burundi, 58% of children suffer malnutrition and 98% of the population live on fragmented lands. Increased land productivity and subsequent better yields are critical and need to be addressed.
4) In Ghana, local markets generate 10 tons of waste that eventually end up in a landfill. This can be harnessed for compost production to increase food production and enhance food and nutrition security.
5) The weather forecast is critical for efficient farm-level decision making, as well as agricultural insurance and finance.
6) Taking the case study of cashew nuts, improving available varieties and adapting new varieties to local conditions is critical to effective agricultural productivity and poverty alleviation.
7) Integration of research-derived-technologies with farmers practices can help to enhance technology uptake.
8) It should be remembered that not only the poor suffer from malnutrition.
9) Empowering local vulnerable communities in land governance negotiations provides promising alternatives for sustainable and inclusive development and food security.
10) Building on innovations from farmers is a better approach in sustaining food production.
11) The typical journey of vegetables from the field to the plate leaves a lot to be desired. There is a need to understand better and efficient delivery pathways for value added indigenous vegetables to the end-users.
12) Micronutrient fortification is instrumental in improving nutrition.
13) Aflatoxin waste along the ground nut chain is a big contributor to stunting in Malawi, which needs urgent attention.

These 13 key messages can be combined into two conclusions:

- A large number of pitched projects focused on improving nutrition and income security through collaborative research on indigenous vegetables. This can provide leverage for establishing sub-regional Communities of Practice (CoP) that are anchored on values chains such as indigenous vegetables.
- Most of the proposed projects were coordinated by NGOs, indicating NWO-WOTRO's commitment to applied research and local demand articulation.

2.1.4 Getting to know each other: speed dating ARF and CRF partners

The speed dating process was intended for the participants to share what is being done under each project, the lessons heard from each pitch and to establish possibilities for collaboration. During the speed dating exercise, all the "pitchers" sat on one side of the table and the other participants were given five minutes to interact with each pitcher before moving on to the next.

Speed dating exercise

2.2 Knowledge co-creation

2.2.1 Introduction on knowledge, knowledge co-creation and approaches used

The discussions and interactions on approaches and lessons learned in the working groups was introduced by a keynote presentation and two project presentations.

In her keynote address, Julia Ekong presented concepts of knowledge, knowledge co-creation and innovation. She presented the knowledge pyramid with the different kinds of knowledge, from data through information, and knowledge to wisdom. She addressed issues as being "explicit" and "tacit" knowledge, and the differences between "positivism" and "constructivism". She concluded her presentation with the link between innovation and co-creation of knowledge with a statement from Mandivamba Rukuni (former Dean, University of Zimbabwe's Faculty of Agriculture): "Innovation is not about diffusion of knowledge, but about co-creation of knowledge at the point of action". For more details, please download the PowerPoint presentation (in PDF) of Julia Ekong here.

The keynote was followed by two project presentations that highlighted the approaches applied within the projects as to enhance the co-creation of knowledge. Geoff Andrews presented the co-creation approach applied within the ARF project "Building on Fertile Ground" (For more details, please download the presentation (in PDF) of Geoff Andrews here.) François Stepman presented the topic of private-public partnership as developed for basis of co-creation of knowledge of the CRF project titled "Effects of organic amendments enriched with *Trichoderma sp.* applied to market garden produces in the Sub-Saharan region".

Dr. Julia Ekong addressing participants

The presentations and discussions revealed the following:

1) Knowledge is actionable information and information becomes knowledge when it leads to some form of action. Thus, information connects information to action.
2) Knowledge is context specific. However for the positivists, knowledge is independent of the context and for the constructivists, knowledge is sensitive to context. Thus innovation is both a learning and social process.
3) Innovation is not about diffusion of knowledge. Rather it is about co-creation of knowledge at the point of action.
4) The main challenge to co-creation is: ensuring that the research outcomes positively impact small scale farmers; are accepted by the research community; adapted by government extension services and; externally financed.
5) Pilot projects never fail but pilots never scale. Africa has been flooded with pilot projects and initiatives, a business as usual situation, which Africa needs to eliminate.
6) Success factors include: local knowledge; local ownership; being valued by each partner and; engagement of government, research and extension services.

2.2.2 Group work on problems and challenges encountered in the process of knowledge co-creation

Two rounds of group work were organized. The first round focused on the challenges encountered in the process of knowledge co-creation by the different project teams. The second round focused on the lessons learned and suggestions to improve the knowledge co-creation process within applied research and innovation projects. The groups were asked to base their reflections and discussions on the three presentations and their own experiences within the ARF and CRF projects.

The participants were divided into four groups (red, green, blue and gold). Each group had a facilitator from either PAEPARD, F&BKP, NWO-WOTRO or RUFORUM. Each group was requested to appoint a chairperson to note the emerging issues (one idea per card) and also present keys lessons and suggestions to improve knowledge co-creation in projects to the plenary. After intense brainstorming, the four groups re-joined the plenary and gave their presentations.

The first round of presentations on challenges encountered in the process of knowledge co-creation revealed the following key challenges from the four groups:

1) The private sector is not yet enthusiastic about knowledge sharing. This because open access information is a dis-incentive to private partners as open access products cannot be commercialized.
2) Imbalanced partnership/engagement between local and European partners has an ultimately a negative effect on the research process.
3) An underestimation of existing problems, which makes knowledge co-creation difficult.
4) Difficulty of leading and coordinating trans-boundary multi-stakeholder projects composed of partners with varied expectations. There have been cases of this impacting the project implementation and resource sharing negatively.
5) Too much donor focus on project impacts which poses a challenge of creating a balance between research and dissemination.
6) The process of identifying and engaging stakeholders takes a very long and tedious.
7) Building leadership, rapport, trust and buy-in with different stakeholders is overly engaging.
8) Developing local context specific research results is a challenge as most end users/local communities are not active partners.
9) It is very difficult to raise co-funding among the different stakeholders.
10) There is a lack of finances to scale up research results.
11) It is challenging to translate scientific research findings into local languages for wider uptake.
12) There is a lack of harmonized research agendas between different organizations which leads conflicting messages in the dissemination stage.
13) Lack of information slows down mapping of different stakeholders.
14) It is difficult to maintain commitment of consortia members over the entire project life.
15) Dependency syndrome among the communities poses a challenge of sustainability of projects.
16) Bureaucracy is present in some institutions.
17) There are language barriers among local, national and international partners.
18) There is a lack of budget lines in coordinating and organizing meetings among project partners.

19) Some partners demand for frequent communication updates which sometimes requires using expensive communication channels like Skype.
20) Official documents are written in different languages which may not necessarily be native to all partners hence the communication gap.
21) There are no policy frameworks to guide knowledge co-creation.
22) Consortia are project-based with a timeframe of about 2-3 years which quite often is not enough time to complete the entire project cycle from planning to completion.

The second round of presentations on lessons learned and solutions to knowledge co-creation challenges, specifically on what an effective knowledge co-creation process entails, revealed the following:
1) To be transparent by giving regular feedback to partners as this helps build trust and commitment.
2) Link research projects to big strategic goals. This enhances their chances to inform policy.
3) Seek out a lot of publicity by providing opportunities to non-consortia partners to amplify consortia research outputs.
4) Build a network with a diverse range of actors outside a given consortium.
5) Clarify roles, responsibilities and expectations of all the partners during the inception phase.
6) Identify the right partners and ensure that their missions are aligned before they join the consortia.
7) Utilize locally available opportunities and resources (infrastructural facilities and expertise).
8) Identify consortia leaders with the right skills and competences.
9) Have an understanding of involved partners' culture and work ethics.

The many challenges to knowledge co-creation could be mitigated by:
1) Designing creative budgets that allow for flexible allocations within budget lines.
2) Running of a successful pilot to build trust and include end-users in tests to validate project hypotheses. Including others and end-users in project activities enhances time management efficiency.
3) Using local language voice communications as delivered by trusted community personalities. This enhances uptake of messages.
4) Conducting a complete stakeholder mapping as validated with experts, coupled with identification of actors' interests to ensure that the project adds value to each actor. However, there is need in allowing adequate time for all stakeholders to make sound engagement decisions based on a clear definition of partnership goals.
5) Effectively aligning different views and interests of stakeholders through co-planning and co-sharing throughout the project life cycle.
6) Allowing room for modification of project research assumptions.
7) Setting aside a partnership development fund within consortia for capacity development.
8) Providing orientation opportunities for winning proposal teams before implementation commences. This gives the opportunity and enables the environment for joint learning.
9) Involving local organizations in project consortia.
10) Breaking the ice of cultural practices to encourage women's engagement in farming and agribusiness.

2.2.3 Synthesis of the lessons and solutions emerging from plenary presentations

Synthesis of emerging lessons and solutions from the plenary presentations revealed the following as best practices:
1) Clarity and commitment to partnership roles and responsibilities as well as stipulated financial and non-financial expectations right from project inception to completion is critical.
2) Scientists should change and adapt their way of doing science for the local contexts. This will help to bridge the gap between the scientists, private sector, civil society organizations and farming communities.
3) The private sector's perspective and interest should be emphasized as to enable full understanding and adequate response to consumer tastes and preferences. This is because commitment of the private sector is a more functional route to sustainable scaling up.
4) Working in consortia adds value in terms of knowledge and sustainability of project successes.
5) Actor and stakeholder mapping is an on-going process throughout the consortia life cycle.
6) Many consortia engage with diverse partners however little emphasis is given to involvement and active participation of end-users which undermines sense of ownership, uptake and sustainability of research outputs.
7) Involvement of public policy makers provides leverage for sustainable scale-up and mainstreaming of project gains into government policies and programmes.

2.3 Enhancing Knowledge Sharing and Research Uptake

The participants of the workshop were welcomed to CURAD and the Coffee Value Chain Incubation Facility by Moses Kata, the Head of the SME section of CURAD, for the workshop session "Knowledge sharing and research uptake".

CURAD, the Consortium for Enhancing University Responsiveness to Agribusiness Development is a public-private partnership initiative that is being promoted by Makerere University, the National Union of Coffee Agribusinesses and Farm Enterprises Limited (NUCAFE), and National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO), the University of Copenhagen (UC) and NIRAS International. CURAD is one of the six agribusiness incubators in Africa that is supported by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa under the UniBRAIN facility.

With the awareness that plans for knowledge sharing and research uptake are an integral part for ARF and CRF research projects, and that these plans should make knowledge work for practitioners and policy makers, the session aimed at providing better insights into the various possible components of knowledge sharing and research uptake. This session was also used to inspire participants to come up with ideas for knowledge sharing and research uptake that could be further developed within their own research team.

2.3.1 Introductions on enhancing knowledge sharing and research uptake

Several approaches were presented at the session with this awareness in mind. These served as inputs for the working groups.

Vanessa Nigten, Senior Knowledge Broker at the F&BKP, presented the knowledge sharing and research uptake approach as advocated by NWO-WOTRO and the F&BKP within the ARF programme. Please download her full PowerPoint presentation (in PDF) here. A few main issues from her presentation include:

- Research uptake includes all activities that facilitate and contribute to the use of research evidence by policy makers, practitioners and other development actors.
- In the research-development continuum, the focus has changed from research valorization or dissemination (linear model) to research uptake (more inclusive model).
- Adopted from DFID, the F&BKP/NWO-WOTRO framework consists of four main components of knowledge sharing and research uptake: 1) stakeholder engagement; 2) capacity building; 3) communication and; 4) monitoring and evaluation.
- There is no simple blueprint for an effective research uptake pathway thus multi-stakeholder groups should be strategic and prepared to adapt to the local situation and challenges.

Jonas Mugabe, Africa Co-Manager of PAEPARD, presented PAEPARDs' Users' Led Process, the new brokerage partnership mechanism. Please download his full PowerPoint presentation (in PDF) here, however he noted that:

- The User's Led Process is a six step approach with the following steps:
  - Federating Theme: involves definition of topics of interest by multi-stakeholder research teams
  - Desk review: to understand what is happening around each theme
  - Induction workshop: Nomination of Agriculture Innovation Facilitators for induction to PAEPARD process
  - Multi-stakeholder research question (MSHRQ) Workshop: to allow for researchers and non-researchers to speak the same language
  - Concept Note Development: a small core group of 5 to 7 people are selected from each MSHRQ to develop a concept note
  - Full proposal development
- The User's Led Process gives time to partners to reflect on their innovation processes and avoid a top-down approach.

Apollo Segawa, Managing Director of CURAD, presented the Business Incubator Approach of the Consortium of Enhancing University Responsiveness to Agribusiness Development. Please download his complete PowerPoint presentation (in PDF) here. The key issues he raised are:

- The business approach of research uptake is striving to facilitate the commercialization of knowledge and innovations.
- The Business Incubator Approach is hinged on entrepreneurship.
- As a typical Business Incubator, CURAD's key outputs are:
  - commercialization of agribusiness innovations

- creation of agribusiness graduates with the potential to become effective entrepreneurs (under the Earn As You Learn Programme (EAYL))
- innovative outputs, experiences and practices shared and up-scaled

After the presentations, a number of questions were raised as described in the table below.

Table 2: Q&A session on enhancing knowledge sharing and research uptake

Question	Response
Who is professionally prepared to implement research uptake? Can this be included in academic curricula?	Independent institutes for knowledge brokering strategically placed to facilitate knowledge sharing between researchers, private sectors and farmers can play an important role in supporting professionals that work on knowledge activities to improve research uptake. Incorporation of this into curricula would be a plus.
Do you have an IP protection policy? How do you fund incubation activities considering that banks are not prepared to finance start-ups? Innovation and IP protection are contradictory; therefore, let us opt for innovation.	CURAD has an IP policy however the interest is to have the innovation working and get it fully commercialized. About financing, CURAD recieved a seed grant to get all programmes running. CURAD hopes to have more support from development partners and the government. For incubates, after three years of the programme running and being established, the banks can be included.
As long as the public institutions are not part of research groups, policy and advocacy will still remain a challenge.	It would be good to involve them from the beginning to also learn from them, especially with what they are struggling on.
How do you finance the many processes under User's Led Process and how do you manage expectations?	All the steps are facilitated by projects, however sustaining the management of a consortium is challenging.
Does CURAD have plans for sharing their model for replication with other countries?	Under the Africa Agribusiness Incubator Network, it is all about sharing so yes, the plan for replication of models is possible.

2.3.2 Group work: stakeholder engagement applying the alignment interest and influence matrix (AIIM)

Although four components for knowledge sharing and research uptake are distinguished, stakeholder engagement in applied research and innovation projects is crucial in enhancing knowledge sharing and research uptake. Highly interested stakeholders are easily vertically and horizontally integrated into the research project and provide even more opportunities to learn from.

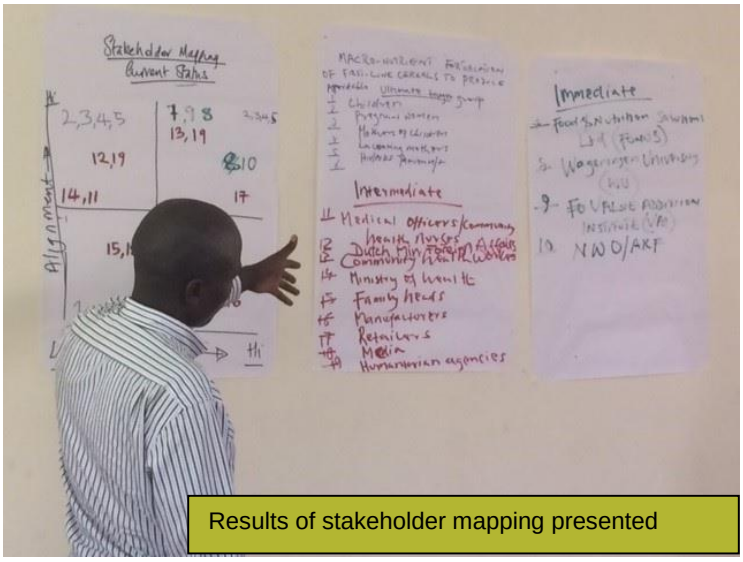
Group work on stakeholder mapping

This exercise was intended for empowering participants in stakeholder mapping and prioritization according to their level of alignment and interest in the research project (the Alignment Interest Influence Matrix) and developing stakeholder engagement strategies. The Uganda ARF projects were used as case studies. Participants were divided into four groups (red, blue, green and gold).

To set the scene for the exercise and bring everyone on board, the facilitator circulated guiding questions (see the presentation of Vanessa Nigten). After the group sessions, each of the groups reported back to the plenary.

Key lessons selected from the group work exercise on stakeholder mapping and prioritization include:

1) It is imperative to exhaust the entire list of possible stakeholders per category (ultimate, intermediate and ultimate target groups).
2) A given group of stakeholders within a given stakeholder category can exhibit different levels of alignment and interest which underscores the need for stakeholder prioritization.
3) Ultimate groups do not necessarily have high interest and alignment.
4) The AIIM tool is very useful in stakeholder mapping and prioritization.
5) In most cases, policy instruments make government agencies fully interested in food security research, however, these instruments do not enhance their alignment.
6) It is possible to stimulate and enhance the level of interest and alignment for different stakeholders through lobbying, exposures visits, demonstrations, workshops and media.
7) In stakeholder mapping, it is important to look at the location specific context.



Results of stakeholder mapping presented

Reactions during the plenary group on stakeholder mapping include:

- Regular feedback is still missing in many research oriented projects.
- Research should be ultimate target driven and focused. However, quite often the ultimate target may not know how to articulate what they want so there is need to guide them.
- Experience has shown that linkages to markets enhance success.
- Researchers should refrain from promises they cannot deliver.
- Farmers know their situations best, but there is a need translate their development problem into a research question.

2.3.3 Interactive session on ideas for research uptake and knowledge activities jointly with stakeholders

During the interactive session on how the knowledge sharing and research uptake activities can be enhanced within individual projects and through collaboration between projects, a number of observations were made including:

- The role of the F&BKP is to support ARF projects on knowledge uptake.
- From ARF and CRF projects, there are themes that are of high interest such as vegetables. Since F&BKP is a platform of networks, there is a possibility for support to thematic/value chain-based networks.
- ARF is intended to build capacity and trust to facilitate establishment of long-term partnerships.
- There is need for increased interaction (online and physical) between CRF and ARF projects.
- There is value to bringing together many teams, but resources are limited. It would be advisable for F&BKP to finance write workshops under the third call.
- F&BKP will develop a small questionnaire to stimulate more ideas on how to better facilitate research uptake and intensify collaborations.

2.3.4 Exhibitions and field visits

In conclusion to the learning workshop, participants visited exhibitions that showcased innovative products by both AfriBanana (folders, badges, bags and clocks made from banana fibres) and CURAD incubates (juices and liquor from coffee). During the field visits, a few CURAD incubatees shared their experiences of how they were supported in setting up a business and starting careers as agricultural entrepreneurs.

Participants testing coffee juices in the exhibition tent

Package of coffee liqueur by CURAD-supported entrepreneur

Exhibition of banana fibre based products by AfriBanana Incubatees

CURAD -supported incubate establishing a chilli business

CURAD -supported incubate establishing a ginger business

2.4 Wrap-up: impressions for the workshop and what has been learned

The wrap-up was intended to highlight what had been learned from the experiences of all the ARF and CRF projects. It was also intended for the participants to give their impressions of the workshop. The following were noted:

- The workshop was an eye opener for many participants. It was suggested to organize such a workshop for newly awarded and future projects earlier and before implementation commences.
- The workshop provided lots of opportunity for networking. There is an emerging topic of interest which is food safety and standards.
- The workshop created added value by linking WOTRO projects. For example, the project on using organic waste in Ghana and building on fertile ground in Burundi should be linked as this linkage would lead to increased compost production.
- Finally, participants were given homework to explore possible relationships with other projects and possible products when linking the projects.

3 PUBLIC SEMINAR "THE ROLE OF SMEs IN ENHANCING FOOD SECURITY"

The theme of the seminar was "The role of SMEs in enhancing food security: strengthening the performance of SMEs by strengthening the collaboration, interactions, interactions, information and knowledge exchange between researchers, practitioners, NGOs, and policy makers".

It is a known fact that international development policies allocate an important role to businesses in tapping the agricultural potential for sustainable economic turnaround in Sub-Saharan Africa. Indeed, inclusive growth can be achieved by linking producers to regional, national and international markets, an important role that SMEs do and will continue to play. It additionally creates jobs. With the awareness that the performance of SMEs is a function of many factors which are beyond the direct sphere of influence, the seminar sought to critically reflect on how their performance can be enhanced. This was intended to identify mechanisms for strengthening collaborations, interactions, information exchange and adaptation of existing knowledge and co-creation of new knowledge by and between the different stakeholders involved in the agro-food value chain. The public seminar was organized by the F&BKP, NWO-WOTRO, PAEPARD, APF and RUFORUM. Participation was from an array of stakeholders active in the agro-food sector including the private sector, farmer organizations, researchers, practitioners and policy makers.

3.1 Welcome remarks from the workshop organizers and officials

The organization partners all gave a short presentation on their organization, how the topic of the seminar aligns with the objectives of their organization and summarized their objectives. In summary, it was stipulated that the objective of the seminar was to enable stakeholders to engage in a participatory discussion to provide answers to the following questions:

- What is the role of SMEs in enhancing food security?
- What is expected from the research and development organizations and policy makers?
- What are the multi-stakeholder innovations environments that need to be developed?
- How do we improve the enabling environment?

In his welcome address, Henry Gerner, Coordinator Agricultural and Economic Cooperation of the Netherlands Embassy, raised a number of very important issues for the discussions to follow:

- SMEs are crucial because of the delivery of their products and services and the provision of employment. They are also a safety network for millions of people.
- For SMEs, research is not merely producing publications rather it should stimulate relevant action. However, it is the SMEs that define if the action as even necessary. Therefore, the SMEs should influence the applied research agenda. To achieve this however there is a need to create an enabling environment for SMEs. In the case of Uganda, major business licensing reforms could provide a good starting point in this regard (over 50% of business/trade licenses need to rewritten and/or aggregated to minimize licensing corruption and time wastage). These cannot be reformed from only the food and business perceptive.
- Access to finance (Capital and Machinery) is the most limiting factor to SMEs' business development. There are differences between credit and agricultural finance policies among African, Latin American and Asian countries. The challenge at hand is to "think outside the box" (business unusual) and come up with more innovative ways of providing agricultural finances as learned from Latin America and Asia.
- In Uganda, SMEs are rather more of SMBs (small and medium businesses) that are heavily dependent on family labour and resources. This makes it imperative for researchers to contextualize their research to SMBs instead of SMEs.
- Action is necessary but there is a need for more discussion in determining if research is necessary.

Henry Gerner, Dutch Embassy

3.2 Keynotes on the role of SMEs in economic development for food security

The first keynote address was presented by Kimani Muturi from AfriBanana, UniBRAIN, addressing the commercialization of innovations and research outcomes. The following important points were raised:

- AfriBanana uses the FARA UniBRAIN Incubation Model to commercialize research outputs which is AfriBanana mandate.
- Commercialization of research outputs is an effective engine for economic development through: 1) creation of employment opportunities; 2) accelerated technology transfer; 3) creation of sinks for producer outputs and; 4) wealth creation.
- The main challenge to commercialization of research outputs is slow progress from subsistence to commercial agriculture due to limited opportunities for linking "islands of success".
- Challenges can be addressed through conducting research "outside the box" to generate and disseminate Technologies, Innovations and Management Practices (TIMPs) through various uptake pathways, including incubators, extensions, farmers and linking enterprises and farmers to the industrial sector.
- Over the last four years, AfriBanana has generated 2253 jobs, successfully commercialized seven technologies, and with 18 technologies in the commercialization process. The banana fibre has been successfully commercialized. Issues remain however regarding how to move the fibre from the craft level to an industrial level.
- There is a need to create incentives for youth to engage in agribusiness through innovations commercialization along value chains.

Please download Kimani Muturi's PowerPoint presentation (in PDF) here.

In his keynote address, Apollo Segawa, CURAD Executive Director, briefed the audience on the Africa Agribusiness Center Network conference. He shared that:

- FARA was coming up with mechanisms (Re-engineering Africa's Future) to expand the UniBRAIN model across Africa and beyond the six original partner countries.
- CURAD has emerged as the best incubator, followed by AfriBanana.
- Segawa has called upon all researchers to join the Uganda network of incubators to increase the chances that research outputs will be used.

Please download Apollo Segawa's PowerPoint presentation (in PDF) here.

Following both presentations, a number of issues for clarification (Table 3) were raised in a plenary discussion.

Table 3: Summary of plenary discussion on innovations and research commercialization

Question/comment	Response

What is your business model and is it sustainable?	Incubation is a social investment intended to create impact. Sustainability is ensured through:
	• Private sector involvement and funding
	  • Grants from development partners including FARA
	  • Fees charged from participating incubatees

Most of the incubators are focused on processed foods. Have you looked at the demand side and do you support policies that encourage local consumptions?	Both CURAD and AfriBanana encourage the establishment of mechanisms to stimulate local consumption. They also encourage producers to produce certified products that meet both local and international standards.

3.3 Initiatives focusing on strengthening SMEs

Karama Farid, Director of the Africa Agribusiness Academy (AAA), started by giving an overview about the Africa Agribusiness Academy, including their: mandate, objectives, principles and foci; organization management and approach; membership criteria; knowledge networks; challenges, lessons learned and success stories and; the platform's ambition beyond 2015. The idea of the academy is to stimulate entrepreneurship to increase food security in Africa, thus AAA:

- Works through knowledge networks of entrepreneurs
- Creates linkages between SMEs and between SMEs and farmers to enhance market opportunities
- Empowers entrepreneurs with skills such as writing their own business plans. AAA believes that no one understands a business better than the business owner.

Please download Karama Farid's PowerPoint presentation (in PDF) here.

Following his presentation, a number of issues for clarification (Table 4) were raised in a plenary discussion.

Table 4: Summary of plenary discussion on the initiatives focusing on strengthening SMEs

Question/ comment	Response
What is AAA's business model and is it sustainable?	To ensure sustainability, AAA writes fundable proposals, facilitates paid trainings in addition to collecting subscriptions and annual memberships fees
Have you considered a "junior" AAA?	It is a pilot project in Uganda and based on lessons learned, other partner countries can adopt it.
Is there a possibility for more countries like Benin to come on board?	By mid-2016, AAA will be in Benin. However, entry into some countries is at times slowed down by existing policy frameworks.
Do you handle country specific challenges in each member country and how often do business clubs meet?	Business clubs handle country specific challenges and club meetings are held every month.
Your membership could be bettered if it was left open and was more inclusive because in the Netherlands, they do not invest tax payers' money into non-inclusive platforms.	In Uganda, challenges of interested parties to get a nomination to become member have not yet been reported. Membership by nomination was a guideline from the Dutch sponsors of the AAA project.
As we are innovating, do we think about intellectual property rights?	This will be adequately handled under policy discussions.

3.4 Challenges faced by SMEs

To stimulate adequate debate, two presentations focusing on day-to-day experiences by SMEs were made. The first presentation was made by Meg Jaquay, Managing Director of Jakana Foods, Juices and Dried Fruits in Uganda (download his full PowerPoint presentation (in PDF) here). The second case was presented by Hellen Acham, Executive Director of North East Chili Producers Organisations (NECPA) in Uganda (download her full PowerPoint presentation (in PDF) here).

The following issues emerged as the key challenges and observations from both presentations:

1) There is a lack of good policies to support bilateral trade. For example, Uganda is not allowed to export any powdered milk through South Africa, yet most of the powered milk consumed in Uganda is imported from South Africa. Additionally, taxation policies encourage consumption of imported products, which is making it difficult for local SMEs to compete with importers.
2) Government budgets always have negative tax consequences (VAT on inputs) in the agriculture sector.
3) Poor added value inputs on policy increases the cost of agricultural processed products.
4) It is expensive to employ sufficient staff due to a poor Employment Act (2007). This explains why many SMEs are still operating informally.
5) There is a high cost on agricultural credit (commercial bank loan interest rates up to 32%). There is no policy to regulate lending rates by commercial banks. Additionally, there is no deliberate source for funds to support SMEs business development.
6) There is a lack of laws to protect the supplier.
7) There is also a high volatility of the Ugandan Shilling against international currencies.
8) Uganda's unique selling proposition has the second highest number of organic certified farmers of 200,000 people; only second to India.
9) Challenges are just opportunities in disguise thus there is a need to be more competitive on the world market with an agricultural policy that protects the whole value chain.
10) The world market is there but we cannot get to it without addressing the major challenges. Proposed solutions include: equity financing**;** tariffs and taxes waiver scheme and; policy review on taxes.

11) Private sector needs better policy support by means of better rules and regulations. Research on production and technologies is not an urgent issue. Research is needed on effectiveness of enabling policies.

The two presentations stimulated a fruitful plenary discussion and the issues that emerged are summarized in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Summary of plenary discussion on challenges faced by SMEs

Question/Comment	Response
How can policy protection support SMEs? Where can researchers take action in this regard?	The policy needs to protect the different assets available in the country (e.g., organic and conventional seed). Research is needed to show that handouts like free inputs distort the agribusiness sector. Also the agricultural policy needs to protect authentic SMEs as well as consumers from adulteration. We need to move away from defining agriculture as a social activity and culminate a culture of viewing agriculture as a business.
Uganda has a number of policies. However, policy implementation remains a challenge. Is the one-stop-centre really working? This also presents another good research area.	
In agriculture, money is made in two extremes (supply of inputs before the farm and the value addition extreme). In both extremes, farmers are not the primary actors, so where does this leave the primary producer? How can a typical farmer be helped? Is vertical integration possible since SMEs clog the chain and do not necessarily target helping farmers?	We need farmers as the co-owners of the chain but it requires farmers to invest in production and value addition in all value chains targeted by SMEs. This will enable all actors in the value chain to equal benefits and calls for honesty and integrity by all actors. There is a need to streamline value chain process that are supported by adequate policy frameworks
When talking about the private sector, are farmer associations included? Based on Uganda's experience, how have these been integrated?	

3.5 Challenges of creating an enabling environment for SMEs

As input for the policy panel discussion, Michael Waithaka, Manager of the Policy Analysis and Advocacy programme of ASARECA, delivered a keynote on what is in place and what needs to be in place to create an enabling environment for SMEs. From his presentation, the following emerged as key issues:

- SMEs are a source of income and employment (twice in the formal sector), serve felt needs and are more so preferred for cost, divisibility and convenience.
- SMEs still have a limited contribution to agricultural growth.
- An enabling environment for SMEs can be improved by:
    - Supporting institutional innovations for vertical and horizontal coordination around value chains with a special focus on the youth
    - Enhancing access to information and capacity development at primary levels
    - Creating strong private public partnerships as facilitated SPS compliance
    - Integrating the informal sector into the global supply chain
    - Applying commercialized supply of training and certification by using a BDS approach
- SMES are a certain way out of poverty and fuel economic growth if barriers to small-scale trade are removed.
- To thrive, SMEs need support to access knowledge and information, be organized, and have a voice in policy making.

After his presentation (please download the complete version (in PDF) here), there was a plenary question and answer session (Table 6) during which the following issues for clarification were raised.

Table 6: Summary of plenary discussion on what knowledge needs to be in place to facilitate an enabling environment for SMEs

Question/ Comment	Response
How can we support agribusiness thinking and principles into primary education? The presentations and discussions have not considered the media. There is a need to harness and take advantage of our media.	The media can help in this regard as that messages published via media can influence policy discussions.
What is the ideal service delivery system for knowledge and what needs to be in place in terms of institutional setting?	We need a combination of things, including senior experts, extension as well as NGOs. The policy frameworks can also help to streamline the knowledge delivery systems.
Access to finance schemes has been an effective approach piloted by SMEs. This a very imported avenue in strengthening SMEs.	
What could be the benefit for research to partner with SMEs?	Partnerships with SMEs ease identification of research priorities and scale up research outputs as well as co-finance of research activities.
There are so many trade licenses, 40% of which are obsolete. What is being done here? How do you narrow the gap between policy and SMEs?	A body has been set up to review the 700+ trade licenses and to determine which ones will be dropped or aggregated. For any policy to succeed, there is a need for policy champions so SMEs should work together through creation of an apex body for effective advocacy. In addition, engagement in inclusive research could further narrow the gap between policy and SMEs.

3.6 Policy panel discussion and conclusions

The meeting engaged extracting modalities for enhancing the performance of SMEs. The policy panel discussion was facilitated by Julia Ekong (ICRA). The panellists were drawn from ASARECA, Uganda Agribusiness Alliances, Uganda investment Authority and the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs.

Policy panel discussants

The following issues were raised:

1) Most SMEs are not well organized which limits their political power to be heard by policy makers. On the other hand, trust needs to be built between SMEs and producers of the primary products.
2) A well-managed supply chain is crucial to sustainable agribusiness development. Therefore, all agro-based SMEs should put more focus on the input supply actors as to ensure adequate productivity and quality at the farm level.
3) Agricultural finance does not have a home at a policy level which underscores the need for SMEs to collaborate and aggregate their voice in policy making. This calls for empowering the private sector to undertake advocacy as to challenge boundaries and processes. However, the SMEs as part of the private sector should clearly define their commitments.
4) Policy reviews often lead to strategic choices and help in adequately informing the selection of agriculture sector development foci.
5) Every good initiative has to be demand-led.
6) Without business, the agriculture sector cannot function appropriately.
7) Research processes that adequately influence policy are those that involve government officials as active partners right from inception and through to completion. This allows for governments to adequately identify areas for policy inclusion or reform.
8) SME policies can be greatly informed by what is already known in other countries. These countries have learned lessons over the years. All that is needed is to adopt and /or adapt the lessons from elsewhere to suit local contexts. There is no more need to “reinvent the wheel” so partnering with other mirror organizations is imperative.
9) Regarding the sub-regional economic blocks like the EAC and COMESA, once they become too political they slow down in their implementation of policies.

10) There is a need for synchronizing what is happening within the Ugandan agricultural sector. Thus, there is a proposal for establishing a national agricultural forum as a coordinating body to ensure quality and certification.

Four main conclusions as a synthesis of the day's seminar and the key observations were:

1) Policy support and protection are crucial to SMEs growth and development and to enhance economic growth and food security.
2) Governance issues that affect the SMEs eventually trickle down to the primary level of any given value chain.
3) SMEs are part of a very complex and dynamic system, and this complexity needs to be taken into account with research and innovation activities and policy recommendations.
4) Engaging policy makers in research and development actions is imperative for stimulating an enabling environment for SMEs' growth as well as economic development.

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