



(Left photo) Mr Appolo Segawa, Managing Director, CURAD (R) presents products developed by his incubatees to Dr Siambi (L) and other conference participants. (Right photo) Visitors at an incubatee's stall.

Agribusiness set to revitalize agriculture in Africa

Agribusiness is poised to unlock the potential of agriculture to drive economic growth and reduce poverty in Africa. This was showcased at the first ever African Agribusiness Incubation Conference organized under the umbrella of African Agribusiness Incubator Network (AAIN). The conference also created a platform to promote successful agribusiness ventures, majority of which are run by women and youth in Africa.

According to a World Bank report, Africa now earns an average of 24% of its annual revenues from its farmers and their crops. The report projected that if public and private sectors were to work together to link farmers with consumers in what the report referred to as “an increasingly urbanized Africa”, agriculture in Africa is likely to be worth US\$1 trillion by 2030.

Mrs Sicily Kariuki, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Kenya, noted that the role of agriculture in Kenya and Africa at large is of immense value as it remains the main source of livelihoods. “The key to transforming agriculture in Africa depends on how Africa prioritizes and treats agriculture as a business as opposed to treating it as a way of life,” she said. She added that a shift towards commercialization of agriculture should be the new narrative and reiterated the

importance of the conference in showcasing the new platform for both the public and private sectors.

Dr Yemi Akinbamijo, Executive Director, Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), informed that FARA had established six agribusiness incubators in Kenya, Mali, Ghana, Uganda and Zambia under AAIN.

Major achievements of the FARA-Universities, Business and Research for Agricultural Innovation (UniBRAIN) incubator initiative are:

- Creating more than 10,000 jobs in five African countries
- Supported 23,500 households
- 884 students taken through internship and industrial attachment
- Facilitated business development for 200 enterprises at local and international markets
- Supported 140 start-up incubatees
- Commercialized 72 agro-technologies

Reiterating ICRISAT’s commitment to support agribusiness ventures that are key for transformation of agriculture in Africa, Dr Moses Siambi, ICRISAT Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa, in his remarks at opening ceremony said, “The key barriers to successful commercialization of innovative products by small agribusinesses in Africa, particularly by the youth, are high

costs of commercialization, lack of human and financial capital, and poor knowledge of markets.”

“Product development typically requires large capital investments, and thus access to capital/financial markets is critical to the success of commercialization of new technology,” he said, adding that raising sufficient capital is a major challenge for African entrepreneurs, particularly the youth.

The team from ICRISAT conducted a two-day training program on business incubator sustainability and management for agencies interested in setting up agribusiness incubators in the continent. The team also facilitated the AAIN Elevator Pitch Program, which had 19 start-ups presenting their ventures to the jury. Two categories of awards were presented: Best Agribusiness Incubator and Best Agribusiness Incubatee.

“In Africa, agribusiness has the potential to reduce poverty and drive economic growth and incubation has emerged as a successful mechanism for launching new enterprises by creating an environment where start-ups can be nurtured and allowed to flourish,” said Mr Karuppanchetty during the panel discussion on Agribusiness Incubation Models.

One of the major side events of the conference was the business-to-business (B2B) meetings wherein start-ups got a platform to interact with private sector players regarding their product and business development. The meetings were facilitated by Mr Ambrose Bugaari, Consultant, ICRISAT-ABI.

The Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) Program of ICRISAT, is a key partner for the UniBRAIN project since late 2011, and

was entrusted with the task of handholding and mentoring the six Agribusiness Innovation Incubator Consortia (AIIC), and help UniBRAIN scale up the incubator model to other countries within Africa. ABI provided hands-on training in: managing operations, handling client enquiries and services, developing business plans and standard operating procedures for each incubator, technology database development, organizing promotional events, and guidance in infrastructure and systems. ICRISAT helped in developing the AAIN by providing strategic advisory inputs and facilitated its implementation.

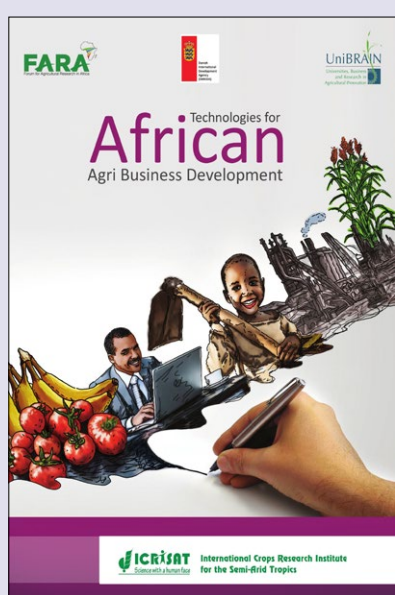
The ABI program, is the implementing agency for setting up five Food Processing Business Incubation Centres in Africa, a project of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (Government of India). ICRISAT plays a vital role in the sustainability of two AIICs selected for this project.

The conference titled “Catalyzing sustainable transformation of Africa’s agriculture through agribusiness incubation: towards job and wealth creation, food security and poverty reduction” took place from 28-30 September at Nairobi, Kenya. It was organized by the UniBRAIN project, FARA and ICRISAT Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP). The conference brought together innovators, start-ups, SMEs, incubators, researchers, academics, industries, development agencies and investors across sub-Saharan Africa.

With UniBRAIN coming to a close by December 2015, the next stage in the journey of transforming agribusiness sector in Africa has already begun with the formation of AAIN. Mr Alex Ariho, UniBRAIN Facility Coordinator from FARA, and who will be the Coordinator for AAIN, summed it up: “Basically we are looking at nurturing incubators in Africa to respond to the needs of agribusiness in Africa and aid in job and wealth creation.” The next edition of the conference will be held during 12-14 September 2016 at Accra, Ghana. ■

‘Technologies for African Agri-Business Development’ a compendium developed by ICRISAT-ABI in collaboration with the six agribusiness incubators was released during the conference.

This compendium features a diverse range of 26 ready-for-commercialization technologies sourced from the partners and represents different sectors such as crop production and improvement (sorghum, banana, cassava and vegetables), livestock and poultry, food and feed processing, value-addition protocols etc. Interested entrepreneurs in Africa can access these technologies through the incubators. (<http://oar.icrisat.org/9064/>)



Project: Universities, Business and Research for Agricultural Innovation (UniBRAIN)
Investor: Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA)
Lead agency: Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA)
Partners: African Network for Agriculture, Agro Forestry and Natural Resources Education (ANAFE); Pan African Agri-Business Consortium (PanACC); ICRISAT-Agribusiness Incubation (ABI) Program; Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA); Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa (CCARDESA); and West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF/WECARD)
Incubators: Consortium for Enhancing University Responsiveness to Agribusiness Development (CURAD), Uganda; Afri-Banana Products (ABP) Limited, Uganda; Creating Competitive Livestock Entrepreneurs in Agribusiness (CCLEAr), Ghana; Agri-Business Incubation Trust (AgBIT); Sorghum Value Chain Development Consortium (SVDCDC), Kenya; West Africa Agribusiness Resource Incubator (WAARI), Mali

GENNOVATE – A global study on gender norms and innovations



Dr Kamanzi interacts with participants at the GENNOVATE methodology workshop.

Incorporating gender in agricultural research is a key strategy for successful interventions. This was demonstrated at a workshop of the GENNOVATE methodology. The methodology was specifically developed to improvise qualitative research by addressing hidden norms within societies, particularly in the field of gender and agriculture. It explores differences in women's and men's capacities to access, adopt, and benefit from innovations in agriculture and natural resource management.

Developed by the CGIAR Gender Research Agriculture Network, the GENNOVATE methodology is being piloted across 11 CGIAR Research Programs and involves more than 20 gender and social science specialists. The cases chosen for the study cover a wide range of target regions, environments, crops and cultures, or crop production systems. Data from each of the global cases, collected using a standardized field methods, will be entered into a shared, global database for a comparative global analysis.

Dr Kamanzi, a development practitioner and scientist from the Institute of Rural Development and Planning, Tanzania, conducted the training for the South Asia team. According to him, "Behind what people practice or do, are norms. Using qualitative data collected through the Gennovate methodology, the norms that govern the gender issues will be unveiled, so people can innovate."

In South Asia, three cases have been chosen under CGIAR Research Programs Dryland Cereals and Grain Legumes for 2015. They are:

1. JC Agraharam village, Andhra Pradesh, India.
Crop: Sorghum
2. Kalman village, Solapur district, Maharashtra.
Crop: Sorghum
3. Kanzara village, Akola district, Maharashtra.
Crop: Pigeonpea

The objectives for this research are twofold:

- Provide robust empirical evidence on the relationship between gender norms, agency and agricultural innovation, and how these interactions support or hinder

achievement of Intermediate Development Objectives (IDO) across varied contexts.

- Inform CGIAR Research Program theories of change and related research portfolios by identifying gender-based constraints that need to be overcome in different contexts in order to achieve lasting and equitable improvements in agricultural and natural resource management outcomes.

During the five-day workshop, the initial three days were spent on familiarizing with the study methodology, concepts and instruments. Day 4 was spent in Aurepalle village, piloting the main study instruments. Two interesting methodologies were pre-tested: (a) the ladder of life (focus on movement/trajectories out of poverty) conducted with men's group and (b) the ladder of power and freedom (focus on empowerment pathways) conducted with women's group. The last day was spent discussing the field experience, pilot issues and preparing for the fieldwork/data collection phase that began on 6 October in Kalman village in Maharashtra and JC Agraharam village in Andhra Pradesh.

The training program was held from 24-29 September at ICRISAT headquarters, attended by 13 participants. ■



Participants from the workshop interacting with women at Aurepalle village, Telangana.

Genotyping-by-sequencing workshops in Ethiopia and Nairobi

Technicians and scientists from Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) participated in the hands-on molecular biology workshops organized at Ethiopia and Nairobi. The training focused on preparation of samples for genotyping-by-sequencing (GBS) and on how to analyze GBS data. Participants included those already submitting plant samples for GBS, or planning to do so in the near future.

The workshops, organized by ICRISAT-ESA genomics team in collaboration with Cornell University, was facilitated by Christine Diepenbrock and Karl Kremling, PhD students from Cornell University. In addition to imparting technical details of GBS, they also shared some tips leading to better results and shorter turn-around time.

The Ethiopia workshop was held from 15-17 September at the ILRI campus, and 10 young scientists from collaborating institutions of the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) (Holetta, Debre-Zeit and Melkassa Stations) and Addis Ababa University participated in the training.



Photo: ICRISAT

Ethiopian participants at the molecular biology workshop.

The Nairobi workshop held from 21-25 September, at the Biosciences eastern and central Africa (BecA) – ILRI hub, saw ICRISAT and BecA-ILRI hub staff participate in the training. ■

New publication

Consumer demand for sorghum and millets in eastern and southern Africa: Priorities for the CGIAR Research Programme for Dryland Cereals

Authors: Gierend A and Orr A

Published: 2015. Socioeconomics Discussion Paper Series 35.

Abstract: The report summarizes current information on consumer demand for sorghum and millets in ESA, with particular reference to Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Ethiopia. Results showed that consumption estimates from

the surveys were inconsistent with the data on production and availability of sorghum and millets reported in national statistics. Adjusted results from the household expenditure surveys to match the production and population estimates for each country allowed comparisons across the four countries for 2013. Information on price and income elasticities was obtained from secondary literature, such as the World Bank and FAO data sets on commodity markets and prices. Consumer demand for sorghum and millets in ESA is driven by population growth, urbanization, income and price. (<http://oar.icrisat.org/9013/>) ■

Readers' comments

It is commendable that per unit area income is raised in arid zones of India by choice of crops and use of technology like limited water use and maximizing use of solar energy. Farmers especially women are empowered and their income raised to a minimum standard of living level. The plight of farm labor is not considered. Lower wages and long working hours keep them in poverty with lower purchasing power. Costs of health care and education are unaffordable. I will appreciate if ICRISAT can launch a project with the objective of optimum utilization of natural resources of the region to enhance the purchasing power of farm labor as well.

– Prof KV Peter

Director, World Noni Research Foundation,
Chennai, Tamil Nadu

Congratulations for including finger millet to ICRISAT's mandate crops. It's an important health-food. It is widely grown in the Himalayan hills where the soils are poor and rained. A very useful addition to our mandate.

– DS Bisht

ICRISAT-Alumni

Congrats! ICRISAT. This is indeed a good news [inclusion of finger millet as ICRISAT's mandate crop]. Many Ethiopian farmers survived of this crop for thousands of years. It is a hardy, climate-resilient, low input crop thriving wider environments in Ethiopia. It is a good food crop, and nice local alcoholic drink is made of it. The straw is highly palatable for cattle, and it also used for plastering walls of local houses. Of course, innovations are needed on issues like threshing, blasts etc.

– Fentahun Mengistu

Director General, Ethiopian Institute
of Agricultural Research (EIAR)

It's a laudable effort and a step forward for promoting nutritional security. Long ago, ICAR planned to open a National Research Center for minor millets in Bangalore, but somehow it did not materialize. Thanks to ICRISAT, for declaring finger millet as one of the mandate crops. I hope foxtail millet and other minor millets are included besides finger millet.

– Dr MS Basu

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Federation of India (NACOF), New Delhi, India