

Dedicated they are! Policy advisory for water management for agriculture in the ACP countries. By Keron Bascombe for the Advisory Committee on Science, Technology & Innovation (ST&I) for ACP Agricultural and Rural Development

Truly dedicated! As part of the GCARD2 event, the CTA in partnership with the Wageningen University hosted a Think Tank Meeting for agricultural policy recommendations. Participants consisted of members of the Advisory Committee on Science, Technology & Innovation (ST&I) for ACP Agricultural and Rural Development. The committee contributes to enhancing food security and rural prosperity and the sustainable development of ACP countries in general.



With an eventful day of discussion filled with insightful presentations, the meeting provided expertise in the Management of Water for Agriculture and Food. As per its objective all examples were centered on the ACP countries.

Firstly, Mr. Jochen Froebrich of Wageningen University presented on the Greening Rural Development and Growth in Sub Sahara Africa. His entire focus was in the realization that a great opportunity exists in utilizing green economic growth as an opportunity to focus on setting new impulses for innovation, true participation of rural communities, and to avoid overconsumption of resources.

He explains that these areas are necessary for integrating agribusiness innovation & capacity building for sustainable growth within the Sub Sahara region. To achieve such a state, building blocks are needed. These are:

- The Knowledge Sector (Universities, and research institutions)
- Enterprises and the private sector (Local Farmers)
- Government

Mr. Jochen Froebrich concluded: “The way towards agribusiness innovation lies in an open innovation processes rather than vertical value chain extensions alone. Focus should be placed on branding of special products for niche markets that are removed from the local setting. Also consideration should be placed towards a balance in the use of resources in order to achieve this focus i.e. sustainable production”

As proper resource management is imperative for sustainable agricultural production, the subsequent presentation by Mr. Adrian Trotman of the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology, fit perfectly into the discussion. His piece is entitled: Toward Efficient Water Management for Agriculture in a Changing Climate: The Caribbean Context.

He began: “Agriculture is still a large employer of the Caribbean and as a result there is a role for meteorologists and climatologist to play in the region’s agriculture. Within these diasporas building partnership allows for innovation however the process is long and fraught with difficulties.

Regardless Mr. Trotman pointed out that the Caribbean Water Initiative and the Caribbean Agro-meteorological Initiative was established, providing information that is relevant to water management. In addition decision tools as a result of these partnership initiatives (National Water information Systems and the Caribbean Drought & Precipitation Network) were created and function!

Examples of the ground level benefits of these programmes were illustrated. After which he concluded “With Respect to Food Security both nationally and regionally a comprehensive/integrated approach is required”

Switching over to the issue of gender bias in agriculture Ms. Olivia Mchaju Liwewe shared her piece on Women And Youth: the untapped Agents for Sustainable Water Resource Management in the Green Economy

After a brief highlight of The Africa Water Vision for 2025 and the Malawi National Water Policy Ms. Liwewe concisely spoke of the fact that Malawi women on the basis of gender roles do not participate in water management or rather they are not allowed!

As primary water collectors and users, women and youth have made specific observations and practices that could unlock the key to sustainable water management in the country, which is not being tapped.

Hence she called for the immediate and deliberate inclusion of women and youth at all levels with respect to water management and agriculture as they hold untapped indigenous knowledge despite lack of formal education

“Women and youth could be the desired platform for the green economy that will result in improved well being and social equity while significantly reducing environmental risks in water management and ecological scarcity” - Ms. Olivia Mchaju Liwewe

In keeping with the trend of “simple changes BIG results” was Dr. Norman Uphoff of Cornell University, who presented on Integrated agro-ecological management: The SRI experience

SRI International is an independent, nonprofit research institute conducting client-sponsored research and development for government agencies, commercial businesses, foundations, and other organizations. The doctor provided a fascinating presentation with many examples of positive results, leading to fruitful discussion.

He postulates simple agro-ecological methodology: Fewer seeds/plants, avoid flooding, more fertilizer, promote soil aeration leads to excellent plant growth with existing varieties of a

multitude of crops, all according to SRI research. However this is difficult to apply due to resistance to change at the ground level. Much of his examples of the SRI experience were bursting with partnerships in Asia and Africa. This goes hand in hand with the GCARD 2 Conference theme of Partnerships. In this scenario the benefits are overwhelming.

To conclude, Dr. Uphoff left the following key messages:

- To achieve higher crop productivity and greater water productivity:
 - Focus on growth/function of root system
 - Use of soil organic matter and enhanced green water (water in the soil)
- Avoid the 'technology transfer' label focus on participatory approach
- Need for a paradigm shift replacing Geocentrism (the concept that the earth is the centre of the universe) with a better understanding and utilization of plant soil microbial/nutrients



Continuing the sharing of expertise was Dr Leslie A. Simpson, Natural Resources Management Specialist at the Caribbean agricultural research and development institute (CARDI) He offered insight into Innovative on-farm water management for increased Food Production in Jamaica

According to CARDI's research frequently high levels of drought are expected in the Caribbean therefore there is a need for better on farm water management. He recapped all forms of water management practices in Jamaica those of which include mulching, drip irrigation, water truck use and the most recent practice of small scale irrigation and rainwater harvesting (a project of the Food and Agriculture Organization – FAO)

Results of these activities include: higher yields, reduced work load, access to larger amounts of water. His final points were:

- Rainwater harvesting combined with drip irrigation can contribute to a successful, efficient on-farm water management system for small holder farmers.
- Local, national, regional and international organisations can successfully partner to develop and execute an integrated water management programme that benefits rural communities.
- The approach and technology can be scaled up to benefit other communities and areas.

And lastly Mr. Viliamu Iese Research Fellow, the University of the South Pacific (USP) presented: Green Growth, Climate change, Food Security and Water in the Pacific Island

Countries. As the one of the few representatives from that region his presentation captured the full attention of the participants.

Taking the Pacific Region constraints (inclement weather due to climate change, natural disasters, economies of scale, climate change) into consideration Mr. Iese highlighted the agroecosystem diversity that exists among the various islands. Emphasis was placed on indigenous agricultural systems that hold high levels of resilience to the issues which face the region. This lends to the level of food security that exists in the region however this is heavily threatened due to climate change

Lastly as a member of the USP community he touched on how the university uses Research and Capacity Building work to build resilience of their communities



He ended: “Pacific Island countries are very vulnerable to adverse impacts of climate change and climate variability. We need to establish, strengthen our collaboration (exchange schemes), networking, technology transfer, and capacity building efforts. There is no one solution but a “holistic approach”

The meeting itself was a new experience for this social reporter. Understanding is now ever present as to the usefulness of policy advisory. By consolidating the expertise and sharing experiences countries across the ACP regions can benefit immensely. For a full recap of the

Think tank meeting visit the facebook page for the Advisory Committee at Knowledge for development. You can also find the committee on twitter @Knowledge4Dev

Gender bias by Gender role? – Contributions to Water management in the ACP by Keron Bascombe

Shouldn't we strengthen the existing roles of both males and females of Malawi, rather than focus on defining new roles/empowering women and youth?

This was the most thought provoking question asked at the Think Tank Meeting for the Advisory Committee on Science, Technology & Innovation (ST&I) for ACP Agricultural and Rural Development

After an invigorating presentation by Malawi native and gender specialist, Ms. Olivia Mchaju Liwewe Lively and expressive discussion took center stage at the meeting. Ms. Liwewe shared her piece on Women and Youth: the untapped Agents for Sustainable Water Resource Management in the Green Economy

After a brief highlight of The Africa Water Vision for 2025 and the Malawi National Water Policy Ms. Liwewe concisely spoke of the fact that Malawi women on the basis of gender roles do not participate in water management or rather they are not allowed!

She explained that due to gender roles women are not able to contribute to water management decisions within the agricultural sector. However it is precisely due to this state of affairs as major water collectors and users that women and youth have made specific observations and practices that could unlock the key to sustainable water management in the country, which is not being tapped.

Following this the aforementioned question was poised; that there is no need to empower women into different roles but that their current roles are just as good. However Ms. Liwewe stood her ground and reiterated these very roles bar women from making viable contributions and taking certain actions, simply because it is not their job. These roles are limiting and they are barriers to women. They are not empowering and therefore they should not be strengthened

She concluded that “Women and youth, due to their knowledge could be the desired platform for the green economy that will result in improved well being and social equity while significantly reducing environmental risks in water management and ecological scarcity”