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COMMENTS ON CONSULTANT'S REPORT
PERTAINING TO OAU/STRC-SAFGRAD

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01 BP. 1783 Ouagadougou 01
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I. Background

At the time SAFGRAD was established most of African countries inherited agricultural research establishments of colonial era. As soon as several African countries asserted their independence research services provided by colonialists collapsed. OAU, established SAFGRAD to enhance the rebuilding of NARS and the evolution of sub-regional research organizations at RECS level.

Within OAU institutional framework, the research, training technology development, transfer programs have benefited almost 30 countries across the continent of semi-arid Africa transcending sub-regions, boundaries and linguistic barriers covering west, Central, Eastern and Southern Africa.

II The Consultant's Report:

Due to shortage of time and in completeness of the term of reference, the review on STRC restructuring exercise:

- ◇ Did not address the issues and needs of STRC clients, for example, sub regional research organizations (SROS) at RECS level in order to propose appropriate mechanism for effective coordination of research and development efforts at continental level.
- ◇ Attaining food security and mitigating environmental degradation are twin goals at both regional and continental levels. There is need for critical review of STRC systems in order to evolve mechanism to efficiently harmonize RECS and national efforts and to establish linkage mechanisms for attaining above twin goals. The review did not put special emphasis on agricultural research and the environment.
- ◇ Furthermore, the study is not fully aware of current evolution of sub-regional organizations and networks at RECS level, which OAU participation is crucial, to enhance the development of the agricultural sector of the African Economic community.

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The reshaping of sub-regional and national agricultural research as summarized below has taken place. Although fully aware of the institutional changes that have taken place in SSA, OAU/STRC was not, however, partner of the research reform process. Some of the sub-regional research organizations coordinated by SPAAR (Special Program for African Agricultural Research) of the world Bank, donors and other partners include:

- ⇒ The Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) was established in 1966 to intensify research collaboration among the following countries.
Members: Rwanda, Eritrea, Burundi, Madagascar, Uganda, D.R. Congo, Ethiopia, Zaire, Tanzania, Kenya, Sudan.
- ⇒ The Southern African Center for Cooperation in Agricultural Research, Natural Resource Management and Training (SACCAR) was established in 1983. Its current members include Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
- ⇒ CORAF- Conference for African Agronomic Research. It coordinates agricultural research among 22 countries in West and Central Africa.
- ⇒ SAFGRAD- facilitated research collaboration, technology transfer across sub-regions. While the evolution of above SROS is driven by donors and SPAAR of the World Bank, the involvement of STRC has been marginal. The efforts of these regional and international agricultural research and development organizations would have tangible impact and sustainability if their programmes are better focused and coordinated with OAU efforts in solving food security and environmental problems in Africa. In view of this, through its STRC, OAU could play a vital role in the coordination and harmonization of agricultural and food policy research and development at continental level. The decentralized institutions of STRC will liaise and interact with both sub-regional and international organizations to harmonize research and development efforts in order to meet the new and imperative demands for technological progress and sustainable economic improvement in Africa.

What should be the role of OAU for harmonizing agricultural research and development efforts?

To effectively facilitate science led agricultural development in all subregions, there is a need to put in place an OAU led coordinating mechanism for research and development in agriculture and natural resource management.

Concurrent with the evolution of sub-regional research organization of the (SROS's) at RECS level and to enable OAU harmonize agricultural and development efforts at continental level and taking the comparative advantage that exists with in SAFGRAD, the study of the consultants did not appreciate the felt need of an OAU led mechanism:

- ⇒ To serve as a focal institution for harmonizing agricultural research and development efforts among subregional economic development communities and to accelerate food security attainment by Member States.
- ⇒ To house and provide a scientific fora in agriculture, food policy research and natural resource management at the continental level.
- ⇒ To promote continental agricultural research and development initiatives and the development of professional scientific associations in Africa and to promote research and training cooperation between North and South of Sahara.

◇ Globalization of Science including Agricultural Research.

The globalization of science including agricultural research has increasingly become a reality. It was anticipated that OAU established mechanism will enable Africa to cope with technological obsolescence in the face of rapid changes in global science and technology; to enhance stronger integration and scientific coalition of RECS to become active players in the globalization of agricultural research; to improve capacity for translating global science based agricultural technology into practical use through adaptive research and to collectively build scientific capacity, political will and commitments to optimize science led agricultural development.

The globalization of agricultural technology can certainly affect Africa's ability to meet its challenges of food security, alleviation of poverty and to mitigate environmental degradation. What would be the role of OAU through its STRC to cope with globalization of science and technology in Africa?

III Issues for Institutionalizing SAFGRAD

3.1 The scope of SAFGRAD activities, being pan-African in its operative covered across sub-regions (i.e. West, Central, Eastern and part of Southern Africa). Since the gradual evolution of sub-regional research organizations, such as SACCAR, in 1996 in Eastern and Central Africa, SAFGRAD facilitated trans regional research cooperation and exchange of technical information between and among RECS. Its comparative advantage, therefore, lies to harmonize agricultural research and technology transfer efforts at continental level.

3.2 The Evolution of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA). The SROS of the RECS officially launched in Bamako in 1997 FARA to cope with the globalization of agricultural research and technology. The SROS of the RECS believe that FARA should have OAU's institutional and political support to harmonize agricultural research and development efforts at continental level. FARA's role as Africa's voice on the Global Forum is important. With the assumption that OAU will play key role at continental level for harmonizing agricultural research and policy efforts among RECS, SAFGRAD has the comparative advantage for housing FARA in addition to its regular programs.

The consultants review did not address these recent developments to propose mechanisms for OAU participation and partnership.

3.3 Comparative Advantages

The consolidation of 20 years SAFGRAD experience have developed comparative advantages in the coordination and harmonization of agricultural research and technology development and transfer and its technical services cut across sub-regions and institution as briefly discussed above.

3.4 The institutional framework of SAFGRAD

SAFGRAD was created by the OAU over 20 years ago. The OAU umbrella through its STRC has facilitated the coalition and research cooperation among Member States to resolve common problems of agricultural production. Furthermore, the OAU umbrella and institutional support has attracted to raise donors fund up to 48 million dollars over the past 17 years, which OAU contribution on behalf African Member Countries was about 2% of the total fund.

3.5 Can donors fund coordination and Administrative costs to SAFGRAD?

Our experience showed that the scenario recommended by the consultants that donors should assume administrative cost does not work specially during this decade when resources are extremely limited. Donors have changed their policy not to provide funding for programs or project activities unless the beneficiary institution provide financial, and institutional support for coordination, management and implementation. For example, because of limited financial support of OAU to SAFGRAD over the past years, some donors of SAFGRAD withdrew their funding support in 1992. The revitalization of SAFGRAD programs combined with OAU financial and institutional support (legal and administrative) have re-started to attract funding of donors for project activities.

3.6 SAFGAD Affiliation with OAU

SAFGRAD being an OAU project cannot operate with out its legal, financial contribution and institutional support. The OAU umbrella through its STRC can not be valued in monetary terms and it is more than that. It brings together and forges partnership and cooperation of Member States; facilitate the transcend of technical cooperation beyond sub-regions, etc. To conclude, the OAU umbrella through its scientific institution is crucial and imperative for continuity of SAFGRAD.

IV Adjustments to the Proposal

4.1 The purpose of this proposal is to strengthen the OAU capacity for harmonizing and coordinating agricultural research and development efforts of RECS; to promote science led agricultural growth and to enable Africa cope with globalizaton of agricultural research and technology that influences attainment of food security; alleviation of poverty, and the efficient management of natural resources.

The following options may be considered for institutionalizing of SAFGRAD:

Option one: Integration of SAFGRAD as permanent unit of OAU to coordinate and harmonize agricultural research between and among RECS. It could also house the Forum for agricultural research in Africa (FARA) discussed above to enable Africa cope with the globalization of agricultural research and technology.

Option two: Status quo: to transform SAFGRAD into an OAU Agency for coordinating agricultural research. Mandate will include current programs such as the promotion and application of agricultural technology to improve the livelihoods of millions of households in Africa.

- SAFGRAD could serve as OAU Coordination office for harmonizing research efforts of the SROS at the RECS level.

4.2 The need for Establishing the Department of Science and Technology Commission.

For effective harmonization of RECs efforts on the application of science and technological research, as well as, to improve the efficiency and output of the OAU specialized institutions, OAU through its Science and Technology Commission, should play key role to cope with the globalization of Science and Technology in Africa.

The consultants recommendation should be revisited to enable OAU effectively promote the development of appropriate policies, the application of Science and Technology at RECs, national and continental levels. In order to realize science and technology as an instrument for economic development, there is urgent need to establish the Science and Technology Commission at the level of Department within the OAU Secretariat in Addis Ababa.

Among the proposed mandates of the Science and Technology Commission (STC) include:

- ◊ To serve as hub for processing, initiation and implementation of scientific and economic development policies that may emanate from OAU Units (i.e. Council of Ministries, Scientific Council for Africa, Sub-regional economic development communities, the relevant departments of the OAU Secretariat, etc).
- ◊ Harmonization and coordination of scientific and economic development research among sub-regional economic development communities, Member States, regional and international organizations and UN-Agencies, etc. to promote economic growth, and improve the livelihood of millions of households in Africa.

- ◇ To promote, among member countries research in traditional medicine, natural resource management, agriculture and forestry, environment science and management, health, economic development research, etc.
- ◇ Coordinate "Legislation" and protocols in Science and Technology involving Member States and Sub-Regional Economic Communities.
- ◇ Provide fora for scientific and technological exchange; to serve as secretariat for various inter-African Committees on Science and Technology; the Scientific Council for Africa and Professional Scientific Associations.
- ◇ Assist in the articulation of protocols, scientific and technical issues of the Treaty Establishing the AEC; facilitate and monitoring the exploitation of biotechnology of genetic resources in Africa.
- ◇ Facilitate scientific research and cooperation in all fields between North and South of Sahara and linkages and flow of technical information between OAU/AEC Secretariat and the five Sub-regional Economic Development Communities on Science and Technology and Socio-economic Development Research.

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