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**Semi-Arid Food Grain Research And Development
Recherche et Développement des Cultures Vivrières dans les Zones Semi-Arides**

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**REORIENTATION
OF THE OAU/STRC-SAFGRAD PROGRAMME:
FOR ENHANCING INTER-REGIONAL
RESEARCH COLLABORATION IN AGRICULTURE
AND FOOD POLICY**

Working document

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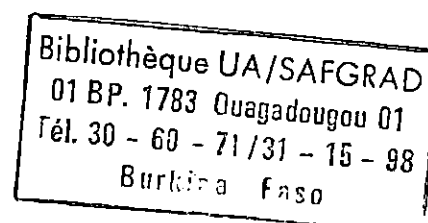
INTRODUCTION

In response to the agricultural crisis experienced in the 1970's and in recognition of the urgent need for a concerted regional effort, African Heads of state created the Semi-Arid Food Grain Research and Development (SAFGRAD) Project in 1977. The first phase of SAFGRAD resulted in the generation of technologies targeted to improve the productivity of major staple food crops: sorghum, maize, millet, cowpea and groundnuts. A follow-up phase, SAFGRAD II, linked regional research efforts such as those of IARCs (IITA, CIMMYT, ICRISAT, ILCA, CIRAD, ICRAF) to national systems.

The overall objective of SAFGRAD has been to improve the quality and quantity of the major food grains (sorghum, maize, millet and cowpea), as well as the resource base of productive agriculture in the semi-arid regions of sub-Saharan Africa. SAFGRAD's specific objectives are to:

- i) coordinate agricultural research activities among Member States in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts and to mobilize resources to foster dynamic, inter-African research cooperation at regional and sub-regional levels;
- ii) promote and facilitate the dissemination and exchange of improved germ-plasm and technical information through regional trials, workshops, symposia and monitoring tours;
- iii) strengthen national agricultural research systems through short-and long-term training with special attention being given to enhancing indigenous research capabilities of Member States;
- iv) promote the dissemination and transfer of technologies adapted to the small farmer and thus strengthen institutional links between research and extension agencies at the national level; and
- v) enhance resource management research through its farming systems project activities.

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1.0. Current Institutional Framework of SAFGRAD

There have been substantial changes in the SAFGRAD programme activities to enable it respond better to regional research and technology application needs. Consequently, its management entities also evolved to conform to programme and strategic changes. For example, the shift from resident research in SAFGRAD I to collaborative research networks, as central focus in SAFGRAD II, enhanced the participation of NARS managers and scientists in directly managing SAFGRAD.

The Council of National Agricultural Research Directors has been the policy-making organ during SAFGRAD II. The 26 member Council met every two years to review common agricultural research problems and to provide guide-lines on policy issues and resolve outstanding issues referred to it by the SCO and its Oversight Committee.

The management unit of SAFGRAD has been the Oversight Committee (OC) that was established by the Council of National Agricultural Research Directors. The seven-member Oversight Committee, elected by the Council, oversees the administrative, technical and financial affairs of SCO and monitors the performance of SAFGRAD networks. The OC met at least once a year (or as necessary) and attended to broad issues. These included:

- i) improving the effectiveness of networks;
- ii) streamlining programme activities;
- iii) institutionalization of SAFGRAD, where OC members and peer NARS scientists made the study.

This study was followed by an internal OAU meeting on SAFGRAD from 17-19 September, 1991, at the OAU general secretariat in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. A recommendation was made to gradually transform SAFGRAD into an institution to advise, elaborate, and implement food and agriculture research policy in Africa.

Each of the networks was managed by a Steering Committee of seven members consisting of the Network Coordinator and six elected members representing NARS scientists actively engaged in research on that crop commodity.

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The SAFGRAD Coordination Office of the OAU/STRC has served as an administrative technical coordination unit and secretariat to the Council of National Agricultural Research Directors, the Oversight Committee and the Steering Committees of the respective networks. It facilitated the identification of research constraints and priorities, as well as monitoring the implementation of network activities. Using its OAU umbrella, the SCO facilitated the movement of germplasm, scientists, research supplies and equipment among countries and also provided administrative and financial services to other networks not included within the SAFGRAD project. The SCO also played a catalytic role in broadening research support to NARS as well as in bringing together scientific talent in the use of research infrastructures in tackling problems related to food grain production.

2.0. The Emerging Programme Priorities of OAU/STRC - SAFGRAD

Considering the institutional evolution that is taking place in Africa, particularly at the various sub-regional levels, there is need to modify the current mandate and programmes of SAFGRAD in order to enhance OAU/STRC's capabilities for coordinating research in agriculture, food policy and security.

A new thrust of SAFGRAD programmes would also respond to changing priorities of funding agencies and also enhance the commitment of Member State funds to research and technology adoption and utilization. The major thrust of SAFGRAD Programmes includes:

- i) The Food Grain Production Technology Verification Project. Currently, operational in eight countries, it would be expanded to other six countries by the year 1996.
- ii) Networks:
 - a) Maize Network - SAFGRAD would liaise with IITA, CIMMYT and CORAF to promote collaborative research and to enhance the adoption of maize production technologies.
 - b) Sorghum and millet networks in West and Central Africa - would liaise with ICRISAT and INSAH to promote research and diffusion of technologies.
 - c) The West African Farming Systems Research Network - managed by SAFGRAD - would enhance the development of its resource management research activities. Negotiations with donors to obtain funds are in progress.

- d) The Semi-Arid Lowlands Agroforestry Network collaborates with ICRAF. SCO has continued to provide administrative and financial management services to this network.
- iii) Integrated Sustainable Agricultural Development. Future self-reliance and sufficiency in food, shelter and energy will depend very much on integrating production systems, while concurrently improving the environment. The project would have 6 to 10 country-level pilot projects in integrating crop/livestock and agroforestry systems, etc. to enhance the development of sustainable agriculture by preventing degradation of the resource base, while building the fertility of the soil through recycling of renewable resources between sub-systems of production. This project is being developed as an OAU and ECA joint venture. Project elaboration will be completed in August 1994.
- iv) Strengthening the Technology Transfer and Adoption Process of Participating Countries. The development of this project is based on SAFGRAD experiences in the implementation of the Accelerated Crop Production (ACPO) Programme (in five countries) and Farming Systems Research Projects, in the past decade. Project preparation completion date, November 1994.
- v) Training and Workshop activities in 1994

	<u>Approximate period</u>
a) Training in farming systems research methodology	April 1994
b) Researchers/farmers/extension NGOs - seminar on technology needs and diffusion	May/June 1994
c) FSR - symposium	June 1994
d) Scientific writing, in collaboration with WARDA	October 1994
e) Network Steering Committee meetings and workshops	1994

vi) Filling the Gap for the Coordination and Revitalizing of Agriculture and Food Policy Research at Regional Level

Several institutes within the five sub-regional economic and political groups indicated in Table 1. and depicted in Fig. 1 conduct considerable research in agriculture, food policy and resource management. While the interaction between institutions and research scientists between North and South (external to Africa) has been sustained, institutional collaboration and technical exchange between the sub-region, (within Africa) is virtually lacking.

Since the last four years, SPAAR is filling the gap in the coordination and revitalizing agricultural research in the sub-regions. The OAU/STRC will play a key role in promoting inter-African research cooperation through facilitating technical and institutional interactions among sub-regional economic and political groupings in order to enhance the use of science and technology in the realization of the African Economic Community within the next three decades.

Other than the NARS themselves, the key players to bring about institutional changes and development at regional and national levels are SPAAR and those IARCs operating in Africa. Although donors have appreciated OAU's partnership (through SAFGRAD) in strengthening national research in the past 15 years, they have, however, been expecting the institutionalization of SAFGRAD as a permanent agency for the coordination and promotion of agricultural and food policy research in sub-Saharan Africa.

Feedback from national systems indicates that the role of OAU/STRC as a continental scientific organization vis-à-vis SPAAR, IARCs is not well articulated. There is a consensus, however, that OAU/STRC should serve as the focal institution for SPAAR, donors and other regional agencies involved in the development of agricultural research systems in Africa.

While SPAAR's major effort has been to revitalize national agricultural research systems through the coordination of donor support, that of OAU/STRC (through SAFGRAD) has been to mobilize the resources of NARS and IARCs for the development of agricultural research networks, in general, and food grain research and production, in particular.

The partnership of OAU/STRC and SPAAR in the revitalization of agricultural research and in instigating institutional reorganization and policy reforms is crucial. Thus far, OAU/STRC has not been a key partner to the World Bank's initiative (through SPAAR) to enhance agricultural research capacity building in Africa. To provide effective services to various sub-regional and national institutions in agriculture and food policy research, OAU/STRC is reforming itself in order to evolve institutions and programmes that could meet contemporary and future challenges of science and technology development in agriculture, food and natural resource management.

A mechanism for enhancing research collaboration at regional and continental level within OAU/STRC system is proposed.

Establishment of a Permanent Regional Committee for the Coordination of Agriculture and Food Policy Research (PRCAFPR)

The establishment of a permanent committee of OAU to coordinate agricultural research at regional level is necessary. Sub-regional political and economic units in sub-Saharan Africa include IGADD, CILSS, ECOWAS, CEEAC and SADCC. The deliberations of the Committee could enable OAU/STRC to harmonize inter-regional research cooperation and minimize duplication of efforts at sub-regional level.

a) Function

Enable OAU/STRC to coordinate and rationalize research and development programmes and efforts of sub-regional (SADCC, CEEAC, ECOWAS, CILSS, IGADD, etc.) and national organizations working on agriculture and food policy research;

Identify inter-regional collaborative programmes such as thematic conferences, training, staff exchange, etc. that could be facilitated by OAU/STRC institutions at regional and national levels;

Harmonize OAU/STRC-SPAAR partnership in the promotion and revitalization of agricultural research in Africa;

Develop common programmes and advise OAU/STRC to facilitate the exchange of African researchers between sub-regional economic groups;

Facilitate the flow of technical information for the maintenance of a database in human resources in Africa by OAU/STRC;

Review sub-regional research activities and issues of common regional interest and promote productive agriculture and food policy research in Africa.

b) Composition

The members of the committee will come from the five sub-regional economic and political grouping as follows:

- OAU/STRC - Executive Secretary, Chairman
- ECOWAS - Representatives for Agric. Research
- SADCC - Director - SACCAR
- IGADD - Director of Research
- CILSS - Director General, INSAH
- CEEAC - Representative for Agric. Research

In addition, the committee will include two prominent university professors and three eminent national research scientists. OAU/STRC-SAFGRAD will serve as the secretariat. The committee is expected to meet once a year.

3.0. Institutional and Mandate Issues

a) Mandate Ecology and crops.

Option one - to retain the same ecological mandate and crops, since the success of SAFGRAD project has been partially due to its focus in addressing climatic and biotic constraints to the production of food grains in the semi-arid ecology.

Option two - The present mandate should be expanded to include all regions of sub-Saharan Africa where the mandate crops are grown.

Option three - While maintaining the semi-arid mandate ecology, but include all basic staple food crops, livestock agroforestry etc. to enhance the development of sustainable agriculture.

To promote inter-African research cooperation (under OAU/STRC) at regional and sub-regional levels, mandate covers all the sub-Saharan African region;

Promoting and facilitating research in resource management with major emphasis towards enhancing the development of sustainable agriculture.

b) Management and Coordinating Mechanisms of SAFGRAD

SAFGRAD, under OAU/STRC, is one of the few African organizations with more than a decade of acclaimed experience in both research and collaborative network coordination, involving major food crops and 26 Member States in the four sub-regions of sub-Saharan Africa (West, Central, East and Southern). As a result of this unique situation, SAFGRAD has acquired certain attributes, characteristics, and logistical support facilities that are prerequisite for Africa-wide food crop research and development coordination. SAFGRAD has:

- i) Developed efficient channels of research communication with scientists, research managers and policymakers among its member countries and the IARCs through the activities of the collaborative networks of Farming Systems, Maize, Cowpea and Sorghum in West and Central Africa, and the Regional Network for Sorghum and Millets in Eastern Africa; and the Semi-Arid Lowlands Agroforestry Network in West Africa.
- ii) Developed effective means of facilitating movement of materials, germplasm and scientists from one country to another and between IARCs and NARS.
- iii) Acquired long experience in the coordination, management and implementation of agricultural research and development projects.
- iv) Effectively facilitated the development of suitable technologies in crop production, soil-water management, pest and disease control and improved agronomic techniques currently utilized by farmers in semi-arid regions of sub-Saharan Africa.

- v) Developed a modern financial management capacity which has reinforced more donor confidence as evidenced by requests to SAFGRAD to operate network resources on behalf of donor agencies.

As discussed earlier, there have been substantial changes in the SAFGRAD programme activities to enable it respond better to regional research and technology application needs. Consequently, the management entities also need to evolve to conform to current programmes and strategic changes.

SAFGRAD as a project has been managed by OAU/STRC in the past 15 years. NARS involvement in the management of SAFGRAD has been the Council of National Agricultural Research Directors, the Oversight Committee and the Steering Committees of the respective networks. Considering the apparent changes of programmes, the institutional evolutions that have taken place at various sub-regional levels, there is need to modify and restructure the management entities of SAFGRAD.

Until such time that the new structure and orientation in science and technology of OAU/STRC mechanism is put into place, SAFGRAD would assist in enhancing coordination of research efforts being pursued on agriculture and food policy in order to facilitate the exchange of information between sub-regional agencies, NARS of Members States, international agricultural research institutions and similar organizations. Furthermore, due to budgetary limitations, it is not feasible to retain the existing management entities.

Proposal

Option one: To retain the structure and name of the current Oversight Committee. As discussed earlier, this committee is comprised of seven members elected by the Council of National Agricultural Directors. The OC members include one representative each from Eastern, Central and Southern Africa, two representatives from West Africa and two academics representing Faculties of Agriculture of member country universities. Since there are no immediate plans to call the Conference of National Agricultural Research Directors, an alternative mechanism for installing new members of the committee would be necessary.

Option two: To establish a new Technical Advisory and Management Committee (TAMC) of OAU/STRC-SAFGRAD. Members of this committee could consist of representatives from Western, Central, Eastern and Southern Africa. TAMC could replace both the Oversight Committee and the NARS Directors Council for the next two years or until the on going reform of the OAU/STRC is completed.

Function

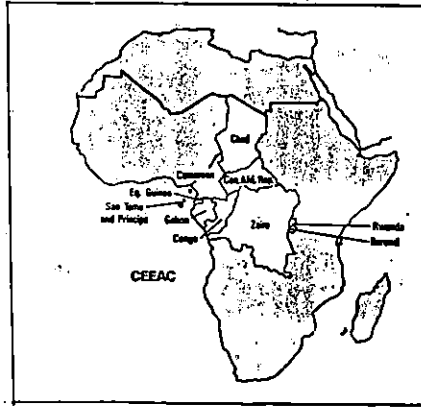
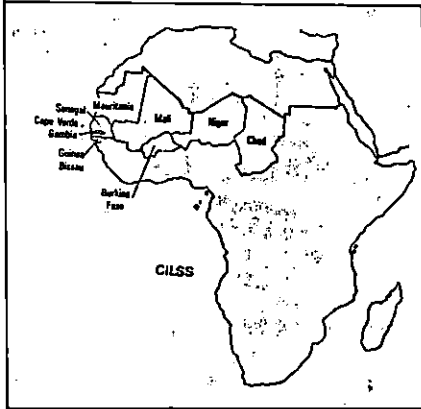
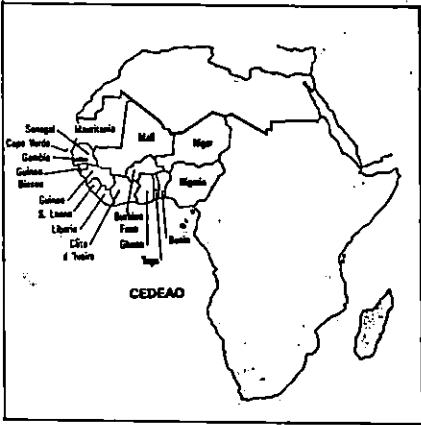
The Management Committee may have the following functions:

- i) Review and approve SAFGRAD work plans and advise on better ways of providing efficient technical and other assistance to NARS of member countries.
- ii) Undertake an annual review of project activities and recommend appropriate changes.
- iii) Assist the SAFGRAD Coordination Office (SCO), occasionally, in the formulation and elaboration of projects.
- iv) Review management issues (SCO) and recommend ways of providing efficient solutions.

Table 1. Sub-regional economic and political groupings and their agricultural research coordinating agencies.

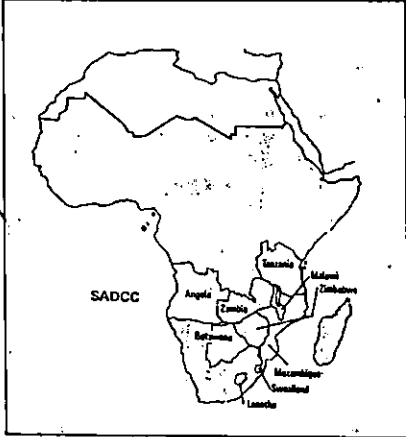
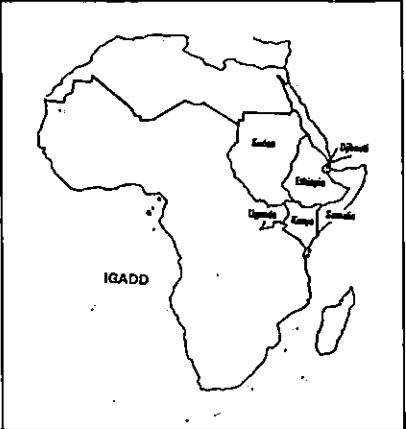
Regional economic and political grouping	Number of countries	Research coordinating agency	Year established
i) SADCC	9	SACCAR	1984
ii) CILSS	9	INSAH	1976
iii) ECOWAS	16	Evolving	1975
iv) CEEAC	10	Evolving	1983
v) IGADD	6	Evolving	1986
vi) OAU/STRC-SAFGRAD	26	SCO	1977

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