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SAFGRAD

REPORT

on

Accomplishment of Programmes and Activities

(2003-2007)

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Semi-arid Africa Agricultural Research for Development (SAFGRAD)

Report on Accomplishment of Programmes and Activities (2003-2007)

1 Background

The 2003-2005 reporting period could be split into two segments. The first is the 2003-2004 segment covering the time until AU/REA's strategic plan was finalised and approved. The second segment covers the 2005-2007 period in which detailed plans of actions strictly guided the implementation of programmes and activities in line with the strategic plan.

Much of the activities during the first period was focussed on (a) 'building an identity for SAFGRAD within the AU Commission' and contributing in the process of preparation of Strategic Plan of AU/DREA; and (b) initiation and implementation of projects. The projects that were being initiated and/or implemented were (i) the Africa Striga Research and Control Project that was started in 1998; (ii) Enhancing Rainwater and Nutrient Use Efficiency for Improved Crop Production, Farm Income and Rural Livelihood, which was initiated in 2004; and (iii) Promotion of Sustainable Agricultural Farming Systems to combat desertification in Africa, which was launched in 2004. Accomplishment of implementation of these projects will be summarized in Section 3 below. Four other projects were ending during same period; these are (i) Sustainable Agricultural Development Program for the Intensification of Food Grain Production in Semi-Arid Africa; (ii) Production Support and Financial Services Project; (iii) The West-Africa Small Grants Program-Nigeria; and (iv) Micro-Nutrient Enhancement in Maize, Sorghum and Millet based Staple Foods in Burkina Faso and Ghana.

Implementation of programmes and activities during the second segment are linked with SAFGRAD's activity plans that were drawn from the strategic plan of AU/REA for the period. This is only natural since SAFGRAD's *raison d'être*, as one of the technical agencies of AU/REA, is to directly contribute towards the achievement of the latter's goals and missions. In addition to guiding actions for the achievement of set goals, the strategic plan was also to serve as an instrument of transformation for SAFGRAD to become a lead agency of the AU/REA in promoting semi-arid agricultural research for development in Africa.

The main thrust of SAFGRAD activities was centred on the following inter-related strategic roles. These constitute:

- advocacy, sensitisation and harmonisation;
- facilitation and coordination of the dissemination of proven agricultural technologies and approaches;
- knowledge management, knowledge sharing, and promotion of learning opportunities, and
- capacity building and strengthening.

It is noteworthy to note that such strategic roles are consistent with AU/REA's overall mandate. Accordingly, a number of important initiatives were conceived along these roles. These include:

- a) Promotion of strategies, policies and technologies for sustainable production systems and increased food security in semi-arid zones of Africa with objectives to promote/facilitate:
 - the development and harmonization of policies and strategies for agricultural development and increased food security;
 - the sustainable agricultural farming systems in the context of combating desertification;
 - sharing of information on best practices for small scale irrigation and improved water use management in semi-arid areas
 - the development, widespread transfer and dissemination of improved and sustainable agricultural production technologies in semi-arid zones.
- b) Promotion of agricultural post-harvest, processing technologies and marketing for semi-arid crops which has an objective to:
 - facilitate the development, widespread transfer and dissemination of improved agricultural post-harvest and processing technologies in semi-arid zones;
- c) Promotion, facilitation and coordination of regional efforts to improve agricultural production support and financial services and institutions with an objective to:
 - facilitate and coordinate regional efforts to improve production, distribution and access to agricultural inputs in semi arid zones.

While plan of actions were prepared to guide implementation of action lines, amendments and adaptations had to continually be made as part of the exercise to come to terms with the conceptual and resource gaps between initial assumptions/expectations held when the strategic plan was prepared on the one hand, and the realities obtaining on the ground on the other hand. For example, there was a high expectation that member states of the African Union would put their heavy budgetary weight (through contribution to 'solidarity fund') behind implementation of DREA's various programmes in which SAFGRAD's initiatives were subsumed. That the commitments fell short of expectations did surface when actual pledges were not forthcoming until the middle of 2006. Similarly, it was expected that development partners would rally their support in terms of actual commitments behind AU's programmes including CAADP/NEPAD. It took some time before realising that expectations were in fact farfetched compared with actual commitments. These naturally necessitated amendments to be made while preparing the annual implementation plans to reflect realities on the ground and adapting to changed circumstances.

The impetus to continually review and amend the plan of actions was also informed by the need to embrace new developments that emerged as a result of evolution of institutions that are embarked on seemingly over-lapping mandates with that of SAFGRAD. For instance, the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) has over-lapping mandates with SAFGRAD in areas where the latter is supposed to be a key player (semi-arid areas). FARA's roles/mandates correspond with that of SAFGRAD's (advocacy, dissemination, capacity

strengthening). FARA has formally entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the African Union Commission and has been at the forefront in playing the role of AU/NEPAD 'technical wing' for implementation of NEPAD/CAADP Pillar #4. Similarly TerrAfrique has been working with NEPAD Secretariat as a lead agency for implementation of CAADP Pillar #2, particularly the land management component. These are but few of the examples of important developments that have been taking place depicting some of the dynamics in the configuration of institutional mandates and roles that have a bearing on redefining and refining SAFGRAD's niche.

The various DREA departmental meetings also served as invaluable updating resources and learning opportunities in the process of adapting the plans of action.

The remaining sections of the report are organised as follows: Section 2 provides a summary description of the programme action lines. This is followed by section 3 in which progresses and accomplishments made through implementation of the action lines are outlined. Section 4 summarises the report by way of outlining the major challenges encountered and suggestions for the way forward.

2 A Brief Description of the Programme Action Lines

The following programme lines constituted SAFGRAD's major areas of focus for intervention consistent with its mandates during the reporting period.

2.1 *The African Striga Research and Control Project – in semi-arid zones.*

This collaborative initiative, bringing national agricultural research and training institutions, international agricultural research centers, key development partners and other actors has the purpose of enhancing food security, improving farm income and boosting crop production through reduction of yield losses caused by *Striga hermonthica*; therefore increasing the profitability of crop production and improving the livelihood of farming households. Financial resources have been jointly made available by AUC and the government of the Republic of Korea. The initiative aims to achieve its purpose through:

- verification of on-farm striga control technology packages for countries in different sub-regions of semi-arid Africa;
- scaling up and scaling out of packages of proven striga control and management technologies in areas where the technologies have demonstrated noticeable socio-economic advantages and therefore is acceptable to farmers;
- production and promotion of seeds of improved striga tolerant resistant crop varieties and legume trap crops;
- communication and outreach activities to reach out more beneficiaries of the technologies as well as policy makers with a view to further widening deepening the impact of the project; and
- capacity building and strengthening activities.

2.2 *Promotion of Sustainable Agricultural Farming Systems in the Context of Combating Desertification in Africa (TPN6/RAP/UNCCD).*

This is an initiative within the framework of the African Regional Action Programme (RAP) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). AU/SAFGRAD has been designated as the institutional focal point for coordinating TPN6 activities. The programme was launched in November 2004 with the following expected outcomes:

- enhanced efficiency of national, sub-regional and regional programmes related to sustainable agricultural farming systems through promotion of demand driven strategies for the development and use of innovations, promotion and dissemination of knowledge and know-how in the field of sustainable agricultural farming systems, addressing the concerns of different stakeholders involved in sustainable agricultural farming systems, and information sharing and dissemination of experience and knowledge;
- facilitation of ongoing strategies and initiatives for coherence and common purpose through better coordination of ongoing and newly introduced farming systems initiatives for reduced vulnerability of the poor to various shocks and for a significant improvement in their adaptation to climate change, and encouraging and facilitating regular communication and exchange of information and experiences between and among key stakeholders;
- revitalised agricultural sector based on good local governance aimed at benefiting local people through improvement of local governance by enhancing documentation and dissemination of successful approaches, building capacity of local institutions, scaling up successful and innovative approaches at national, sub-regional and regional levels and forging critical partnerships.

2.3 *Enhancing Rainwater and Nutrient Use Efficiency for Improved Crop Production, Farm Income and Rural Livelihood*

This initiative is a collaborative undertaking in the framework of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) Challenge Programme on Water and Food (CPW&F): Enhancing Rainwater and Nutrient use Efficiency for improved crop productivity, farm incomes and rural livelihood in the Volta Basin. AU/SAFGRAD collaborates with international (e.g., ICRISAT, CIAT) and national agricultural research institutions in Burkina Faso (INERA) and Ghana (SARI). The initiative has the following objectives:

- develop, evaluate and adapt, in partnership with farmers, integrated technology options that improve water and nutrient use efficiency and increase crop yields in the Volta Basin;
- develop and validate methodologies, approaches and modern tools (GIS, models, farmer participatory approaches) for evaluating and promoting promising water, nutrient and crop management technology options;
- improve market opportunities for small holder farmers and pastoralists, identify and assess market institutional innovations that provide incentives for the adoption of improved water, nutrient and crop management technologies that

benefit different categories of farmers, especially women and other marginalized groups of farmers;

- build the capacities of farmers and rural communities to make effective demands to research and development organizations, and influence policies that promote the adoption of sustainable water and nutrient use technologies; and
- promote the scaling up and scaling out of best bet crop, water and nutrient management strategies through more efficient information and methodology dissemination mechanism.

SAFGRAD is the lead agency in implementing the last component/objective (i.e., promotion of scaling up/out...best crop, water and nutrient management strategies through efficient information and management dissemination mechanism).

2.4 *Linking Knowledge with Action for a Maximum Development Impact: Enhancing Africa's Capacity for Sustainable Agricultural Research for Development in Semi-Arid Areas.*

The purpose of this capacity enhancement initiative, focussing on semi-arid zones, is to develop and reinforce the capabilities of African institutions and their human resources in priority areas as will be defined through a thorough situation analysis and consultative processes. It is intended to accomplish the enhancement of the capacity of institutional and human factors to solve the immediate and pressing developmental problems but also and most importantly aspire for higher level goals. Hence its goal is to enhance African capacity to be driven by a virtuous cycle of knowledge generation, accumulation, utilisation and sharing for the betterment of its people working and living in the semi-arid areas. By successfully implementing this programme AU/SAFGRAD aspires to:

- identify, prioritise, investigate and resolve on a continuous basis the crucial agricultural/rural developmental problems faced by Africans living in semi-arid regions of the continent;
- develop a number of relevant and quality training curricula and modules that churn tens of thousands of African cadre of researchers, trainers, and development practitioners - fruitfully integrated into becoming change agents;
- ensure that these cadre of change agents, by working together in a multitude of teams, come up with numerous researchable developmental problems and subsequently act upon them in an innovative manner that solve real problems;
- see continuous and unhampered flows and exchange of ideas, expertise, experiences and good practices among fellow Africans, and these put into mutually beneficial purposes, hence contributing towards integration of Africans; and ultimately
- see knowledge fundamentally transforming Africa's agriculture and rural development.

2.5 *Transforming Rural Livelihood and Enhancing Competitiveness of African Agriculture in Semi-arid areas through integrating rural producers with markets and creating/expanding productive employment opportunities.*

The purpose of this initiative is to contribute towards the efforts aimed at boosting the competitiveness of rural producers and suppliers in semi-arid Africa, thus reducing poverty through promotion and coordination of strategies, policies, approaches, and interventions for integrating rural producers with remunerative markets and enhance creation and expansion of productive employment opportunities. Specific objectives are to strengthen capacity in African countries, at different levels, for:

- promoting economic diversification of the production and export base from low value-added to high value-added agricultural production and rural non-farm economic activities;
- promoting the creation and strengthening of the enabling environment in which productive enterprise takes place, including promotion of strategies, policies and practices that are aimed at correcting incentive structures for rural producers so that production for market will be remunerative;
- formulating and pursuing well-focused, socially inclusive, pro-poor economic growth that promotes trade and investment activities for productive employment and market access, and develop guidelines by which to design strategies that anchor the creation and expansion of employment opportunities as a useful parameter by which to gauge performance;
- promoting technological change for higher productivity and job creation and improved standards of living;
- strengthening food safety and product quality control systems.
- ensuring effective use of the new global 'trading' opportunities; including the development of entrepreneurship and employability by improving knowledge and skills;
- developing local markets, micro and small enterprises and networks of groups (producers, suppliers, consumers, etc.) - with special emphasis on women and youth.

2.6 *Improving Farm Productivity and Rural Incomes through Biological Control of Insects (on Mango)*

The purpose of this new initiative is to reduce rural poverty and strengthen food security through implementing a biological control of mango insects. The project is started in Burkina Faso with financial support from the African Development Bank, but its effectiveness will depend on the extent to which similar efforts are exerted at a regional level. The role of SAFGRAD within this initiative is

- to bring together and facilitate exchange of regional expertise and other resources for a successful implementation of the project in Burkina Faso, and
- to facilitate and coordinate regional efforts aimed at scaling out the initiative among neighbouring countries.

3 Accomplishments: Progresses Made in Implementation of Action Lines

The progresses made in implementation of action lines are outlined below.

3.1 *The African Striga Research and Control programme – in semi-arid zones;*

Activities envisaged	Accomplishments and current status of implementation
<p>a) <i>Ensuring the continuation of the project and deepening its impacts in participation countries</i></p>	<p>The project continued to be implemented in the seven countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali and Nigeria).</p> <p>SAFGRAD has been facilitating mutual and experiential learning opportunities among actors including scientists from various countries working on Striga management and control endeavors by offering a regular forum (annually) for them to exchange their views, experiences, aspirations and challenges.</p>
<p>b) <i>Expanding program activities to other sub-regions in semi-arid Africa</i></p>	<p>SAFGRAD has secured an increase in project support from the hitherto amount of USD100,000 per annum to USD200,000 from the Government of the Republic of Korea for it to be able to expand the project coverage to Central, Eastern and Southern African countries where the problem of Striga is manifest.</p> <p>A consultation meeting scheduled to take place in March 2007 will engage participants from those regions for a possible commencement of the project during the current planting season.</p>
<p>c) <i>Develop learning modules for striga management</i></p>	<p>Consistent with its capacity strengthening role, SAFGRAD undertook a task to develop a training module on striga management. To this effect, a draft document entitled '<i>Training Module for Participatory Striga Management in Africa</i>' is prepared.</p> <p>The draft document will be presented and enhanced at a validation workshop scheduled to take place towards end of March 2007 in which experts in the field as well as key actors will participate.</p> <p>The training programme will be launched in August 2007 in collaboration with training institutions.</p>

Activities envisaged	Accomplishments and current status of implementation
<p>d) <i>Initiate a Consortium of Actors on Striga control and management (to make it an Africa-wide Campaign)</i></p>	<p>A comprehensive assessment of the status of Striga Research and Control in Africa is currently being undertaken by consultants, and draft report should be in by end of February, 2007. The assessment will document existing regional and sub-regional striga control and management initiatives and outlines their areas of focus, geographical coverage, institutional networks, approaches used and outcomes – also suggests possible areas and mechanisms of cooperation.</p> <p>Once the assessment report is ready, relevant institutions will be sensitized and possible collaboration could materialize to make Striga control an Africa-wide Campaign with better synergy and impact.</p> <p>In the meantime, some of the key institutions that could be strategic partners in Striga control & management have already been consulted (e.g., FARA, AATF, IITA, CYMMIT, FAO) and have demonstrated interest to work with SAFGRAD in this endeavor.</p>

3.2 Promotion of Sustainable Agricultural Farming Systems in the Context of Combating Desertification in Africa (TPN6/RAP/UNCCD)

Activities envisaged	Accomplishments and current status of implementation
<p>e) <i>In collaboration with the UNCCD and the African RCU, formally launch the Thematic Programme Network (TPN6)</i></p>	<p>SAFGRAD was designated to be one of the six institutional focal points entrusted with the task of coordinating the thematic network programmes through which the African Regional Action Programmes of combating desertification had to be implemented.</p> <p>Despite the fact that such a designation was made in 1999 at the 3rd African Preparatory Regional Conference to COP3 held in Nairobi, it was only in November 2004 that TPN6 was formally launched.</p>

Activities envisaged	Accomplishments and current status of implementation
<p>f) <i>Liaise with the Regional Coordination Unit/UNCCD and other partners (UNEP/GEF, NEPAD, FARA) for collaboration in programme implementation</i></p>	<p>In collaboration with the RCU/UNCCD, sensitisation of the network programme among affected parties was done using various UNCCD fora (such as CRIC, COP).</p> <p>Detailed action plan including budgets were prepared and submitted to the RCU in 2005; but because the current arrangement at the RCU was found to be inadequately situated to provide for an effective workable institutional mechanism to facilitate implementation of African regional action plan to combat desertification, SAFGRAD took initiative to engage NEPAD through the TerrAfrica initiative so that TPN6 (and the Africa regional action programme in general) could be incorporated within the SIP/SLM NEPAD/TerrAfrica initiative.</p> <p>To this effect, a proposal was prepared on <i>'Strengthening African Institutions for Mainstreaming and Scaling up Sustainable Land Management in Sub-Saharan Africa'</i> and submitted to NEPAD/TerrAfrica initiative in 2006. Component activities to achieve the objectives outlined in the proposal focus on strengthening AU/SAFGRAD's institutional capacity to deliver products and services in five key areas: (1) <i>Facilitation of Knowledge and Innovation Systems for SLM</i>; (2) <i>Facilitation for Scaling Up and Dissemination of Successful SLM Approaches at Country, Sub-regional and Regional levels</i>; (3) <i>Coalition Building and Advocacy for SLM at all Levels</i>; (4) <i>Regional Harmonization</i>; (5) <i>Provide capacity building support for tracking progress and promotion of continuous learning experiences.</i></p> <p>A successful completion of the consultation between AU/REA, NEPAD and TerrAfrica is expected to facilitate and expedite timely implementation of the proposed initiative.</p> <p>Agreement has been reached with the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) to collaborate on implementing this programme, and a joint action plan is being prepared.</p>

Activities envisaged	Accomplishments and current status of implementation
<p>g) <i>Initiating a Forum for the Development of Semi-Arid Rural Livelihoods'</i></p>	<p>Consistent with its mandates of advocacy, sensitization and coordination of multi-country, continental initiatives with a focus on semi-arid agricultural and rural development, SAFGRAD in collaboration with the UNDP/DDC took up an initiative to establish a '<i>Forum for Development of Dryland Areas</i>'.</p> <p>A working document is being prepared (draft to be received by the end of February, 2007) that will analyse the vision, relevance, the building blocks and strategies for SAFGRAD to effectively play its role as a forum for development of semi-arid areas agricultural research for development.</p> <p>The Forum will be launched during the 'African Conference on Development of Semi-Arid Livelihood' which SAFGRAD is going to host during the month of May 2007. Preparations to organize the said conference are underway.</p>

3.3 *Enhancing Rainwater and Nutrient Use Efficiency for Improved Crop Production, Farm Income and Rural Livelihood*

Activities envisaged	Accomplishments and current status of implementation
<p><i>h) Formulation of an efficient and effective information and methodology of dissemination mechanisms to promote the scaling up and scaling out improved crop, water and nutrient management strategies</i></p>	<p>SAFGRAD has been collaborating with its partners and stakeholders in documenting and analyzing the progresses of the first few phases of the pilot project (in the Volta Basin involving Burkina Faso and Ghana) with a view to jointly formulating an effective dissemination mechanisms and approaches for scaling up and scaling out beyond Volta-Basin semi-arid areas.</p> <p>It has also contributed to capacity strengthening of key actors (NARES, farmers, CSOs) through organizing a series of training and reflection workshops for experiential learning and effectiveness.</p> <p>The project has now entered into its 3rd year of implementation.</p>
<p><i>i) Develop a strategy and action plan for the dissemination of technologies for improved water harvesting and management in semi-arid areas</i></p>	<p>SAFGRAD has planned to develop, during 2007, a programme document that (a) compiles an inventory of existing sub-regional and regional initiatives, salient features, geographic distributions, approaches used, institutions involved, outcomes achieved, (b) analyses strengthes and weaknesses, and (c) identify and develop a niche for SAFGRAD to strategically address as well as outline options and mechanisms for effeciveness in addressing the strategic issues.</p>

3.4 *Linking Knowledge with Action for a Maximum Development Impact: Enhancing Africa's Capacity for Sustainable Agricultural Research for Development in Semi-Arid Areas*

Activities envisaged	Accomplishments and current status of implementation
<p>j) <i>Development of a program document on the basis of which agreement on critical areas would be identified through a consultation process leading to identification of centers of excellence and Identification of their capacity gaps through a thorough institutional assessment, and identification of needs, design of strategies to address those gaps in a comprehensive manner; and engage in consultation with development partners for a possible support of the programme</i></p>	<p>Concept note has been developed and shared among key partners.</p> <p>An agreement has been reached with FARA to collaborate on implementation of this programme; and a joint plan of action and budget is being prepared;</p> <p>A Project Proposal has been developed for Funding Consideration under the African Capacity Building Foundation</p> <p>Possibilities are being explored to solicit collaborative partnership with the AfDB.</p>

3.5 *Transforming Rural Livelihood and Enhancing Competitiveness of African Agriculture in Semi-arid Areas through Integrating rural producers with markets, and creating/expanding productive employment opportunities.*

Activities envisaged	Accomplishments and current status of implementation
<p><i>k) Develop a comprehensive programme document and develop project proposals</i></p>	<p>Concept notes have been developed entitled (a) <i>Enhancing Competitiveness of African Agriculture and Poverty Reduction through Creating/ Expanding Productive Employment Opportunities</i> (which was shared with ILO through AU/DREA); and (b) <i>Making Markets Work for the Rural Poor in semi-arid Africa: Raising Agricultural Value-Added and Rural Incomes through Linking Small holder Agricultural Producers with Markets.</i></p> <p>However this initiative is suspended following the directive given by DREA that SAFGRAD had better concentrate on its niches rather than over-stretches its efforts in many spheres.</p>

3.6 *Improving Farm Productivity and Rural Incomes through Biological Control of Insects (on Mango)*

Activities envisaged	Accomplishments and current status of implementation
<p><i>l) Assist in installation of an insectarium facility equipped with cold rooms and a laboratory destined to elimination of parasites;</i></p> <p><i>m) Provide advisory service to producers to enhance and facilitate their access to improved technologies,</i></p> <p><i>n) strengthen the value-chain through support of actors who play the role of interface between those who promote increased production and markets.</i></p> <p><i>o) Promote regional harmonization</i></p>	<p>MOU has been developed and shared with project partners;</p> <p>Key institutional partners have been identified and resource persons assigned;</p> <p>Project document is being developed concretizing SAFGRAD's contribution in the project and the resource estimates to undertaking the task.</p>

3.7 Strengthening SAFGRAD Institutional Capacity

Activities envisaged	Accomplishments and current status of implementation
<p>p) <i>Convening Steering Committee Meeting</i></p>	<p>The SC has been reconstituted in such away as to represent key actors and strategic partners. The first Steering Committee Meeting was conducted. Second meeting is scheduled for April 2007.</p> <p>Members of the Steering Committee, having appreciated the content of SAFGRAD's programmes and its modus operandi, confirmed the relevance of SAFGRAD's programmes to the functions of their respective institutions, and expressed their willingness to collaborate with SAFGRAD in implementation of the programmes. The Steering Committee has also put together a number of recommendations to enhance programme formulation and implementation.</p>
<p>q) <i>Forging and strengthening institutional partnership</i></p>	<p>Building strategic partners with key actors and stakeholders has been facilitated first and foremost through institutionalized engagement; i.e., through their membership into Steering Committee. SAFGRAD's Steering Committee members are representatives of RECs, Regional/sub-regional actors (FARA, CILSS), development partners (FAO, UNDP, UNEP, UNCCD), IARCs (IITA) etc. Their membership into the Steering Committee not only facilitated consultation and awareness on SAFGRAD roles and programmes, but also for soliciting their inputs/advises as to how best it can achieve its goals. They serve as the focal units within their respective institutions as far as SAFGRAD's programmes are concerned.</p> <p>SAFGRAD has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with CILSS to collaborate on each others programmes; and is engaging CILSS to concretize their collaborative endeavors.</p> <p>Using the MOU that was entered between AUC and FARA, SAFGRAD took the initiative to concretize collaborative endeavors with FARA. A framework of collaboration was developed based on which a joint action plan is being developed to implement action lines that have been mutually identified as requiring complementary engagements.</p>

Activities envisaged	Accomplishments and current status of implementation
<p>r) <i>Staff Development and Recruitment</i></p>	<p>Three staff members received training based on an assessment of needs;</p> <p>An Information and Outreach Officer had been recruited; however he chose to resign from his post after only three months of stay at SAFGRAD.</p> <p>An agreement was reached with RCU/UNCCD to get the service of a network specialist on a short-term basis, but this could not materialize thus far.</p>
<p>s) <i>Upgrading infrastructural facilities and the work environment</i></p>	<p>The facilities (office premise, equipment and furniture) that were available to SAFGRAD were too inadequate and inappropriate to provide a congenial and conducive environment for a productive undertaking. In fact, it did not conform to the good image of the African Union that it represents. Hence, concerted effort was made to improve the situation.</p> <p>Thanks to the support provided by the Government of Burkina Faso, SAFGRAD has moved to a 'new' office premise that can adequately and appropriately house its staff and services.</p> <p>Renovation of the newly acquired office premise, as well as replacement of the furniture and equipment were made in effect upgrading the quality of facilities available to SAFGRAD staff and its collaborators.</p> <p>Document has been prepared and submitted to AUC as part of the preparatory work to install video-conferencing facilities and upgrade the ITC system at SAFGRAD.</p>

4 The Challenges and the Way Forward

4.1 *The Challenges*

Perhaps the most important challenge that had to be encountered while implementing the programmes and activities during the reporting period has been that of effectively ‘selling’ SAFGRAD among stakeholders and partners in its new out-fits and mandates as opposed to the traditional representation by which it used to be known since its establishment. Part of the reason has to do with the burden of *historical legacy*. It is to be noted that SAFGRAD retained its **brand-name** despite the fact that its mandate has been changed significantly – i.e., from ‘**semi-arid food grains research and development**’ to ‘**semi-arid Africa agricultural research for development**’. There are advantages as well as disadvantages associated with maintaining the SAFGRAD brand. One of the advantages could be that since SAFGRAD is an already known brand (notably in western Africa) it might facilitate building on what already exists rather than starting everything anew. But the pitfall of this is that SAFGRAD continues to be viewed by many in terms of its traditional representation, and even worse still as a donor-driven project (which is what it had been for a long period of time before 2003 when it was institutionalised within the AU/DREA). As we have observed it, this has been counter-productive particularly in its engagement with partners as well as with other players in the field. Related to this, SAFGRAD was also viewed as an agency whose mandate is limited within a **sub-regional** (west-African) context – this is because traditionally SAFGRAD’s activities were concentrated in the west-African sub-region. One of the activities over the last 4 years has been directed at making concerted efforts towards correcting that misconception. In this regard, helping strategic partners un-learn their ‘knowledge’, of what traditional SAFGRAD used to be, has been an up-hill struggle before even beginning to educate them about the ‘new’ SAFGRAD.

The second challenge is linked with strengthening SAFGRAD’s institutional capacity, in particular its substantive human resource capacity. Back in 2003 when it was institutionalised within AU/DREA, SAFGRAD used to have one Programmes and Research Officer, an Administration and Finance Officer and an International Coordinator. An Information and Outreach Officer was recruited and joined SAFGRAD in September 2006, but had unfortunately decided to quit after only three months of stay at SAFGRAD. Thus, presently, in 2007, the number of professional staff remains exactly the same as it used to be in 2003 – the only difference being the position of International Coordinator was changed to Director. Clearly, this has imposed its own limits, and may continue to do so, on the extent to which SAFGRAD could accomplish its far-reaching tasks.

The third set of challenges has to do with managing the sensitive concerns and anxieties of some of the key partners and actors – especially those whose mandates tend to be similar to that of SAFGRAD’s and whose very survival is highly dependent on availability of donors funding. There exists an observed tendency to ‘defend’ one’s ‘territory’ and a sense of uneasiness to freely engage SAFGRAD in collaborative endeavours with a spirit of complementing each others efforts and impacts. Obviously what SAFGRAD aspires to accomplish is identify and fill certain gaps within the domain of its mandates with a view to synchronising and avoiding duplication of efforts – in effect reinforcing their effectiveness.

The fourth is somewhat related to the above three in a sense that SAFGRAD's ability to mobilise necessary and adequate resources (financial, technical, etc.) for implementation of the action lines is getting difficult in the face of mounting competition among various 'actors' for resources that are essentially coming from major 'traditional' development partners, who also in turn tend to sustain their traditional 'customers-cum-partners' loyalty line instead of venturing into new spaces and opportunities.

4.2 Lessons Learnt and Suggestions for Way Forward

SAFGRAD aspires to play a leading role in promoting innovative approaches to agricultural research for development in semi-arid zones of Africa. Precisely the various initiatives formulated are informed by and designed to respond to such necessities. And as the journey is just begun, there are valuable lessons to be drawn as learning opportunities for the way forward.

- a) There is a need for amendment of relevant provisions in the decision providing for its establishment (Maputo 2003) including correction in its name (Semi-Arid Africa Agricultural Research for Development instead of Semi-Arid Food Grains Research and Development) as well as its Steering Committee composition and terms of reference. The actual practice has outlived the relevant provisions in that decision.
- b) There is a need for a thorough review of its mandates, structure and human-power requirements (what vision for SAFGRAD in the context of existence of several actors along the contour, donor confusion/fatigue to deal with all these, etc.).
- c) As part of the exercise in (b) there is a need to thoroughly define how SAFGRAD should link its initiatives with other relevant continental initiatives. Since AU's role is perceived as more political than technical, there is a tendency to perceive SAFGRAD's role in terms of political perspective. This has rendered SAFGRAD to negotiate partnership frameworks in implementing its programmes with other actors often from a position that is not so comfortable. The fact, however is that SAFGRAD remains a technical agency of the AU/DREA. For example, development partners are required to rally their support behind implementation of CAADP. As is known Pillar #4 of CAADP (on technology development, transfer and dissemination) has been led by FARA. Whereas promotion of agricultural research for development in semi-arid zones of Africa (functions of dissemination, advocacy, facilitation, coordination, etc.) is SAFGRAD's mandate, the latter however did not get into the picture until very late. This was made very clear during SAFGRAD's recent attempt to engage FARA in a partnership framework – with the implication that implementation of SAFGRAD's programmes would be either through FARA's framework or by sub-contracting specific projects from FARA – clearly this undermines SAFGRAD's visibility. In this regard, the recent engagement of AU/DREA with NEPAD and RECs in the context of moving Africa's agricultural agenda forward provides an excellent framework to streamline respective roles and defines areas of collaboration among various actors, and therefore should be further enhanced to associate institutions (such as SAFGRAD) with specific programmes.
- d) Clearly RECs are the building blocks of AU; but at operational level it may be necessary to define the building blocks for SAFGRAD – at sub-regional and regional levels, and streamline/institutionalise linkages with strategic actors. Of course, SAFGRAD also has

been attempting to forge strategic partnerships with some of those actors on a case by case basis (e.g., FARA, CILSS, etc.) but this will be enhanced by defining and broadening the institutional assignment – among other things this will improve regular engagement with those actors ensuring continuity.

- e) There seems to exist a need to take a lead in overall coordination of the regional action programme for Africa in combating desertification (in the context of UNCCD) – it is to be noted that the institutional focal points for coordinating two of the six thematic network programmes (TPNs), namely TPN3 and TPN6 are the two technical offices of AU/DREA (IBAR and SAFGRAD respectively). The Regional Coordinating Unit based at AfDB in Tunis has been suffering from a serious shortage of human and financial resources and therefore has not proved to be effective in terms of facilitating the implementation of the TPNs, thus seriously undermining the implementation of the African regional action programme. It was noted during the COP7 meeting held in Nairobi (October, 2005) that the proposal to institutionalize Regional Coordination Units within the UNCCD was met with strong resistance from the developed country parties (EU, USA, Canada, Japan, etc.). The controversy wasn't as much more on the importance and relevance of RCUs than on questioning the appropriateness of institutionalizing it within the UNCCD structure. There was a push for considering other alternative mechanisms (e.g., where Africa is concerned they were referring to options such as the AU, NEPAD, etc.) for playing regional coordination function. It is high time that DREA considers taking the initiative to take over this responsibility which opens an opportunity for it to contribute towards fighting desertification through filling in this gap.



INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

To: SAFGRAD
IAPSC
IBAR
FOUTA DJALLON
PANVAC
PATTEC
File No.: COM/REA

Through: *Date:* 03 February 2007

From: Dr. Babagana Ahmadu
Rural Economy and
Agriculture
Tel. Ext: 190

Subject: Balance Sheet for DREA activities 2003 - 2007

As you are aware, the current strategic plan period 2003 – 2007 for the AUC will be coming to an end in July 2007 and we are expected to prepare a comprehensive report on the accomplishment of programmes and activities during the period July 2003 to July 2007.

Your are therefore requested to forward the following reports to my office :

1. **By February 9:** Work Programme and Missions up to September, 2007, including an analysis of Decisions adopted by the 08th Ordinary Session of the Assembly held last month as well as the modalities for their implementation;
2. **By February 20:** Provisional evaluation of your offices/activities commencing form July 2003 to September 2007; this will constitute a draft of handing over note of services at the end of the current Commission's mandate,

Please give this matter your most URGENT PRIORITY and attention. All missions are suspended until the above requirements are prepared.

Thank you.

CC : Commissioner - REA



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Semi-Arid Africa Agricultural Research and Development
Recherche et Développement Agricoles dans les Zones Semi-Arides de l'Afrique

Date : February 21, 2007

TO: H.E. Rosebud Kurwijila
Commissioner, Rural Economy and Agriculture
African Union Commission
Addis Ababa

From: Abebe Haile Gabriel
Director, SAFGRAD
Ouagadougou

RE :- Balance Sheet for DREA Activities (2003-2007)

Your Excellency,

Reference is made to a memo (COM/REA, dated 03 February 2007), which we received from Dr. Babagana Ahmadu, Director of REA requesting us to prepare a 'provisional evaluation of our activities commencing from July 2003 to September 2007' as part of the preparation of a comprehensive report on the accomplishment of DREA's programmes and activities during the stated period.

Accordingly, Mme. Commissioner, we are submitting herewith our Report on SAFGRAD's accomplishments of programmes and activities during the period under consideration.

With kind regards

C.c.

- Dr. Babagana Ahmadu, Director, REA

2007-02

REPORT on Accomplishment of Programmes and Activities (2003-2007)

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