

Bibliothèque UA/SAFGRAD  
01 BP. 1783 Ouagadougou 01  
Tél. 30 - 60 - 71/31 - 15 - 98  
Burkina Faso

**D R A F T**

***OAU Vision and Mechanisms for Harmonizing Agricultural  
and Food Policy Research Efforts in Africa***

*Professor Johnson A. Ekpere and Dr. Taye Bezuneh\**

338.1  
EKP

---

*\* Executive Secretary, OAU/STRC, Lagos, Nigeria and International  
Coordinator, OAU/STRC-SAFGRAD, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso respectively*

*presented*  
Paper prepared for SPAAR 17TH Plenary Session 16-21 February, 1997, Bamako, Mali  
*at*

338.1  
EKP-1T

## List of Acronyms

AAFRADA:	African Agricultural and Food Policy Research And Development Agency
ADB:	African Development Bank
AMTA:	Agricultural Management Training Programme for Africa
AMU:	Arab Mahgreb Union
ASARECA:	Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa
CCD:	Convention to Combat Desertification
CGIAR:	Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research
CILSS:	Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel
COMESA:	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CORAF:	Conférence des Responsables de la Recherche Agronomique Africains
ECCAS:	The Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS:	Economic Community of West African States
FAO:	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IAPSC:	Inter-African Phytosanitary Council
IARCs:	International Agricultural Research Centres
IBAR:	Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources
ICRISAT:	International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid and Tropics
IITA:	International Institute for tropical Agriculture
ILRI:	International Livestock Research Institute
INSAH:	Institut du Sahel
ISNAR:	International Service for National Agricultural Research
NARS:	National Agricultural Research System
OAU:	Organization of African Unity
SACCAR:	Southern African Center for Agricultural and Natural Resources Research and Training
SADC:	Southern African Development Coordination Conference
SAFGRAD:	Semi Arid Food Grain Research and Development
SSA:	Sub-Saharan Africa
STRC:	Scientific, Technical and Research Commission
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP:	United Nations Environment Programme
WACCAR:	West African Centre for Cooperation in Agricultural and Natural Resource Research

Bibliothèque UA/SAFGRAD  
 01 BP. 1783 Ouagadougou 01  
 Tél. 30 - 60 - 71/31 - 15 - 98  
 Burkina Faso

## T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

I.	<i>Background</i>	1
II.	<i>OAU Affiliated Agricultural Research Coordinated Institutions.</i>	2
III.	<i>Linkages and Cooperation with International Organizations.</i>	3
IV.	<i>Reorientation of Agricultural Research from OAU Perspectives.</i>	4
V.	<i>Some Areas of Research Collaborations.</i>	8

Bibliothèque UA/SAFGRAD  
01 BP. 1783 Ouagadougou 01  
Tél. 30 - 60 - 71/31 - 15 - 98  
Burkina Faso

*D R A F T*

***OAU Vision and Mechanisms for Harmonizing Agricultural and Food Policy Research Efforts in Africa***

*Professor Johnson A. Ekpere and Dr. Taye Bezuneh\**

***I. Background***

African countries depend largely on agriculture as a source of employment, income and health. Failure of agriculture to grow by at least 4 to 5 per cent annually is noted to adversely affect prospects for food security which, in turn, will exacerbate the incidence of poverty.

The diversity of African agriculture also has given rise, over time, to a wide variety of human activities which seek to exploit local and regional specificities to assure food security and sufficiency. As a result, contrasting systems involving shifting cultivation, intensive agriculture, organic fertiliser, intercropping, mixed farming, hill side, wetland and dry plains cultivation, water harvesting and irrigation, soil and forest conservation, and nomadic and transhumance pastoralism, are an established part of the traditional production systems of African communities.

The challenge facing African countries relates to how best to achieve overall growth and reduction in the level of poverty while maintaining the ecological integrity of the resource base. The key to meeting this challenge lies in a process of rapid agricultural growth, which through intersectoral linkages in consumption and production, leads to expansion of employment, and reduction in poverty. For this process to be successful, the magnitude and pattern of agricultural production must improve, natural resources must be managed better, environmental information and the awareness and participation of rural people in environmental matters must be improved, and last but not least, population growth must be slowed. Meeting these challenges will require a number of new orientations that requires moving away from the old practice of treating each issue or sector separately and towards dealing with the issues of poverty, food insecurity, and environmental degradation, in a holistic way. Furthermore, emphasis should also be made on new agricultural practices and systems that focus as much on people as they do on technology, as much on resources as on production, and as much on the long-term as on the short-term.

---

*\* Executive Secretary, OAU/STRC, Lagos, Nigeria and International Coordinator, OAU/STRC-SAFGRAD, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso respectively*

## ***II. OAU-Affiliated Research Co-ordinating Institutions***

Three decades ago, the Scientific, Technical and Research Commission (STRC) of the organization of African Unity was created in order to promote inter-African cooperation in scientific research.

Among the major operational mandates of STRC include, the collaboration with regional and international organizations in order to enhance the development of science and technology; to facilitate the realization and application of scientific and technological policies and to promote science based agricultural development.

Taking into account the key role that agriculture plays in the economic well-being of the African population; STRC programmes thrust have been towards improving animal health and production, enhancing the generation, transfer and adoption of food grain production technologies; regulation of plant quarantine and crop protection, as well as, the development of sustainable farming systems.

Regardless of the efforts of various stakeholders engaged in strengthening capacity of NARS, in general, and the development of the agriculture sector in particular, Africa faces serious food insecurity and poverty problems; which are socially, environmentally and financially unsustainable.

To promote Agricultural Research and Natural Resource Management, OAU did establish a number of regional bureau and programmes under the Scientific, Technical and Research Commission, which is headquartered in Lagos, Nigeria. These include the Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (IBAR), which is based in Nairobi, Kenya. IBAR mandate is the eradication of animal diseases, such as rinderpest, tick and tickborne diseases, the improvement of livestock production and nutrition throughout sub-saharan Africa.

The Semi-Arid Food Grain Research and Development (SAFGRAD) programme, which you are fully aware has the mandate to facilitate the improvement, production and utilization of food grains; the development of sustainable farming systems, technology verification and transfer in rural Africa. The other programmes of STRC include the Inter-African Phyto-Sanitary Council, based in Yaounde, Cameroon, facilitates plant quarantine measures. The Fouta-Djallon Project based in Guinea, coordinates studies on water shed management and natural resources assessment of the eco-system in the sub-region.

### ***III. Linkages and Cooperation with International Organizations***

#### ***1) Collaboration with CGIAR Institutions***

STRC has collaborated with a number of CGIAR institutions either to initiate and assist the implementation of number of projects. Among the collaborative programmes include:

- i) The project of the African-wide Biological Control of Cassava Pest (Mealybug and green spider mites) has been initiated jointly with IITA, which implemented the project. OAU did facilitate this work in 35 Member States. The project has been successful and have benefited several million farmers in SSA. Training through this project has strengthening biological control programme in several NARS.
- ii) The Semi-Arid Food Grain Research and Development Project (SAFGRAD) has been implemented in collaboration with ICRISAT for the improvement of sorghum and millets; In collaboration with IITA for the improvement of maize and cowpea. Farming Systems Technology Verification ~~and~~ Transfer and Natural Resource Management, of SAFGRAD were developed in several NARS through technical backstopping of IITA, ICRAF, ILRI etc.
- iii) The Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (IBAR) based in Nairobi collaborates with ILRAD and ILCA (now ILRI) in eradication animal diseases (such as rinderpest and bovine pleuro-pneumonia) vaccine production.

#### ***2) Collaboration with UN bodies***

- i) The Inter-African Phyto-Sanitary Council (IAPSC) programmes are implemented in close cooperation with FAO and IARCs to strengthen national plant quarantine/protection agencies.
- ii) The Fouta-Djallon Highland Integrated Development Project based in Guinea Conakry have collaborated with FAO, CCD, etc. in watershed management, and conservation of natural resources.
- iii) In collaboration with the Secretariat of the United nations Conventions to Combat Desertification (CCD), OAU is coordinating the implementation of the Agenda 21 at regional and continental level in those African countries or sub-regions experiencing serious drought and desertification.

### ***3) Inter-African Scientific Committees***

In addition to regional research institutions and projects, such as IBAR and SAFGRAD respectively, OAU/STRC have facilitated inter-African technical fora through regular meetings of the inter-African committees on: Soils and Fertilisers, Forestry, Medicinal Plants, Natural Resources, Health sciences, renewable sources of Energy, and Agricultural and Oceanography and Fisheries. These continental committees have discussed scientific and research issues in respective fields of sub-regional and continental interest through regular workshops, expert meetings and seminars.

### ***4) Initiation for Establishing Specialized Institutions in Africa***

OAU has initiated the establishment of number of regional training and research institutions based on the demand and priorities of Member Countries. Among the major institutions include: The Inter-African School of Science and Veterinary Medicine in Dakar, Senegal; The School of Forestry Engineering in Bouake, Côte d'Ivoire; The Nouadhibu Community Fishing School in Mogadishu, Mauritania; The Wildlife School at Nweka, Tanzania; The African Centre for Fertilizer Development in Harare, Zimbabwe; The African Centre for Research in Phyto-Sanitary Training in Dschang, Cameroon; The School of Engineering in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire; The Agricultural Management Training Programme for Africa (AM/TA) which is managed by ADB at Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

## ***IV. Reorientations of Agricultural Research from OAU Perspectives***

At the threshold of the 21st century, the challenge for improving agricultural production and productivity are immense. Science based agriculture, is therefore, the way out to meet Africa's demand for food and shelter, as well as, to improve its competitiveness in recapturing external markets.

The new emphasis in agricultural research from OAU perspective is to enhance the development of the agricultural sector of the African Economic Community.

Alternative scenarios have arrived to the same conclusion in that the food insecurity situation in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) will worsen in that import of cereals are projected to increase at the rate of 3.5% per year, from 9 millions tons in 1990, to almost 30 million tons by the year 2025, unless current level production and productivity improve at least by two to three fold.

Over the past two decades, two important contemporary tasks of OAU have emerged. These are: 1) The Establishment of the African Economic Community, which has been ratified by Member States of the OAU and ii) Conflict Prevention and Management. These two major tasks of OAU go together and are in separate phenomena. Thus, one of the major effort of OAU has been to sensitise Member Countries, donors and development partners "to take cognizance of the need to include measures aimed at preventing conflicts as determinants of short and long-term development programmes."

The time has come for new partnership in agricultural research and natural resource management between OAU institutions, the CGIAR Systems, UN bodies, such as, FAO, UNDP, UNEP, etc. and the World Bank, such as SPAAR, etc. to accelerate agricultural development.

In the last 30 years, Sub-regional Economic Communities that have gradually evolved include: The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC); The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU).

Even though, agriculture provides a third of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), two third of employment of labour forces and most of foreign exchange in several countries of Africa, the above sub-regional economic groups have yet to give priority and serious political and financial commitment to the development of this sector.

To effectively provide institutional support for the realisation of African Economic Community, the restructuring exercise of OAU is in its final phase.

The restructuring exercises that has taken place also looked into revitalizing the institutions and mechanisms for research coordination and harmonization efforts. This has become necessary: first, to re-align OAU coordination efforts with existing and newly established research coordination units at sub-regional economic levels; and second, to cater technical services of OAU and sub-regional economic groups towards the realisation of the African Economic Community.

Furthermore, Article 46 of the African Economic Community Treaty calls "for Member States to cooperate and harmonize efforts in the development of agriculture, forestry, livestock and fisheries, to ensure food security, increase production and productivity and improve conditions of work and generate employment opportunities in rural areas". This article, also calls for the "harmonization of agricultural development strategies and policies at regional and community levels, in particular, in so far as they related to production, trade and marketing of



major agricultural products and inputs".

Considering the institutional reforms that are taking place in Africa, OAU has reorganized its institutions to effectively respond to changing priorities of agricultural development, natural resource management and food security issues. Since the last ten years, external organizations, such, the Special Programme for African Agricultural Research (SPAAR) of the World Bank and International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCs) operating in Africa have been the key players to bring about institutional changes in research and development at regional and national levels.

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 will 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.

Current institutional reforms and sub-regional research coordination activities have required, to put in place an OAU-led coordinating mechanism at continental level, in order to facilitate consultation among all stakeholders pertaining to research in agriculture, food policy and natural resource management. This mechanism is perceived to evolve from revitalized and reformed institutions at levels of sub-regional economic groups and within OAU.

OAU through its STRC will, therefore, promote the application of Science and Technology (among Member States) as an instrument for establishing a vibrant African Economic Community and it will also play pivotal role to put in place the enabling environment for science based agricultural development. Being aware of contemporary institutional changes and in compliance with the decision of the OAU Advisory Committee, and The Council of Ministers, the STRC Task Force, have proposed the realization of an African Agricultural and Food Policy Research and Development Agency (AAFRADA).

As depicted in Fig. 1, AAFRADA, under the auspices of STRC would have direct linkage to the OAU policy making bodies, such as the General Secretariat and the Council of Ministers etc....

At continental level, AAFRADA will liaise and coordinate inter-African research efforts in agriculture, food policy and natural resource management with sub-regional research organizations. On the other hand,

it will liaise cooperation efforts in agriculture and food policy research and capacity building of NARS in cooperation with international agricultural research centres, SPAAR, donors, UN agencies, such as FAO, UNDP. As much as possible, the thrust of AAFRADA will be on facilitating the consolidation of agricultural research efforts.

### ***Mandate***

One of the important functions of AAFRADA is to provide forum for scientific consultations at continental level, as well as to link the sub-regional research coordination efforts to policy decision making bodies of the OAU.

AAFRADA will coordinate agriculture and food policy research including natural resource management in all agro-ecological zones of Africa. Its commodity mandate include major crops of Africa and related agricultural production activities which enhance the development of sustainable agriculture and the environment. AAFRADA will harmonize and facilitate inter-African research cooperation and also liaise with the activities of international agricultural research institutes in order to influence their research agenda towards the needs of African farmers (Fig.1).

### ***Functions***

The functions of AAFRADA include:

- To enable OAU harmonize agricultural research and development efforts among sub-regional organizations (AMU, CEEAC, CILSS, ECOWAS, IGADD and SADC) and to accelerate food security attainment by Member States;
- To liaise and facilitate inter-regional research collaboration in agriculture, food policy and natural resource management;
- To facilitate linkages to the policy making bodies of OAU, to enhance reforms in agricultural and food policy research, as well as, the utilization of natural resources.
- To provide scientific forum for Agricultural and Food Policy Research and Natural Resource Management at continental level;
- To facilitate collaboration between OAU and International Agricultural Research Centres, the World Bank (for example with SPAAR) and UN-Agencies, such as FAO, UNDP, UNEP, etc.
- In collaboration with other institutions and stakeholders, to facilitate the involvement of OAU in raising funds for agricultural research, training and infrastructure development.

- \_ To occasionally convene and sponsor technical seminars, symposia, training, conferences, special studies and themes of inter-regional importance.
- \_ To promote continental agricultural research and development initiatives and professional scientific associations in Africa.

The research institutions of the five sub-regional economic and political groupings, which AAFRADA will harmonize to enhance inter-African cooperation are listed in Annex 1. These institutions coordinate research in agriculture, food policy and resource management at sub-regional levels. While linkages of these institutions and research scientists between North and South (external to Africa) has been sustained, institutional collaboration and technical exchange between the sub-regions (in Africa) has been very weak. In the last eight years or so, the Special Programme for African Agriculture Research (SPAAR) of the World Bank has revitalized research programmes and linkages among sub-regional organizations. Agriculture being the backbone for economic development . OAU through AAFRADA will sensitize policy reforms to improve political and financial commitments for agriculture. This could include in the allocation more funds from national budget, establishing trust funds, putting tax levees on commodities, through private sector participation and voluntary contributions.

## ***V. Some Areas of Agricultural Research Collaborations***

### ***1.0 Sustainable Food Security/Production***

- 1.1 Promote technology generation and transfer to particularly attain food security.
- 1.2 Support programmes for better utilization of rangelands and livestock productivity.

### ***2.0 Strengthening Sub-Regional Agricultural Research Coordination Organizations***

OAU/STRC commends the efforts of SPAAR in revitalizing the NARS and of sub-regional research organizations programmes over the past ten years. We would like to stress, however, that there is need for SPAAR and OAU/STRC to work together not only to minimize duplication due to overlapping mandates, but also liaise OAU efforts with that of World Bank and other international organizations. Furthermore, policy reforms at continental and regional levels combined with technological transformation would require the cooperation of these two organizations to exert tangible impacts and sustainability.

OAU attaches great importance in strengthening sub-regional research coordinating institution in agriculture and natural resource management. Within each sub-regional economic development groups, for example, in West and Central Africa, OAU supports the establishment of the West African Centre for Cooperation in Agricultural and Natural Resource Research (WACCAR) under ECOWAS (Economic Community of West Africa). This arrangement will provide both political validity and financial resources for core coordination activities of WACCAR.

Until such time, the Economic Community of Central African States is fully operational, WACCAR, could coordinate and promote agricultural research involving some of the countries in the sub-region similar to services of ASARECA.

### ***3.0 Facilitating North-South Collaboration in Agricultural Research and Capacity Building***

3.1 Within the African Continent, collaboration in agricultural research between North and South of Sahara would be promoted. For example, the exchange of experience in arid and semi-arid agriculture and in the control of the desertification between the above regions would be useful. Formal institutional linkages among research and training institutions would also be enhanced.

#### **3.2 North-South Collaboration**

SPAAR, ISNAR and IARCs operating from Africa have provided the research and training links in agriculture between Africa and Europe or the Americas. OAU/STRC will facilitate the work of these organisations and UN-bodies such as FAO, UNEP, etc. pertaining to agricultural research technology transfer and training.

### ***4.0 STRC and the IARCs Collaborations***

One of the original objectives of the International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCs) was to assist in strengthening the capabilities of the NARS of developing countries. In fact, it was originally expected that after this mission had been accomplished, the Centres would become regional NARS centres catering for the needs of the group of countries in which the Centres were located.

Again, one should be fully aware of the fact that, as part of their mission, IARCs are expected to complement, the efforts of African sub-regional and regional research organizations support to strengthen national research systems. STRC-IARC collaboration has existed in the past; it only needs to be reinforced and strengthened. For example, STRC contributed substantially in the establishment of the cassava biological

control programme at the IITA/Benin Station. STRC-IARC collaboration can be achieved through:

a) Establishment of MOUs

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) can be signed between STRC and any of the Africa-based IARCs, spelling out the kind of collaboration desired by each partner.

b) Identification of Donor Funding

The CGIAR and even individual IARCs have established special fund raising services to search for financial assistance. STRC, though OAU can also use its political clout either in assisting IARCs, especially for raising funding aimed at projects of regional importance in Africa. Such projects can be implemented directly by the IARC or jointly with one of STRC's regional offices (IBAR, IAPSC or SAFGRAD).

c) Participation in IARC Meetings

Participation in IARC's meetings would update STRC on current changes in IARC programmes. This will enable STRC to better streamline the programme of its regional offices so that they and IARCs, both based and operating on the same continent, can collaborate and avoid unnecessary duplication and maximize the use of continuously shrinking financial resources.

**5.0 Possible Areas of Collaboration with SPAAR**

Instead of limiting itself just to the coordination of donor efforts in funding agricultural research, SPAAR has gone further to develop strategies of reinvigorating African agricultural research systems. The effort is highly commendable.

a) Establishing Formal Contacts

There do not appear to be any formal meetings between SPAAR and the Executive Secretariat of STRC or the OAU Headquarters. Aware of the significance importance of agricultural research as an instrument for the attainment of food security (Ref. Lagos Plan of Action) in Africa, these two organizations should work closely to coordinate their efforts for strengthening NARS capacity for technology development and transfer.

b) Co-organization of Meetings/Workshops

One of the concerns of SPAAR has been to sensitize African policy-makers regarding their role in supporting agricultural research. A joint OAU-SPAAR (World Bank) workshop/conference for African Ministers in-charge of science and technology could be organized, either at regional or continental level

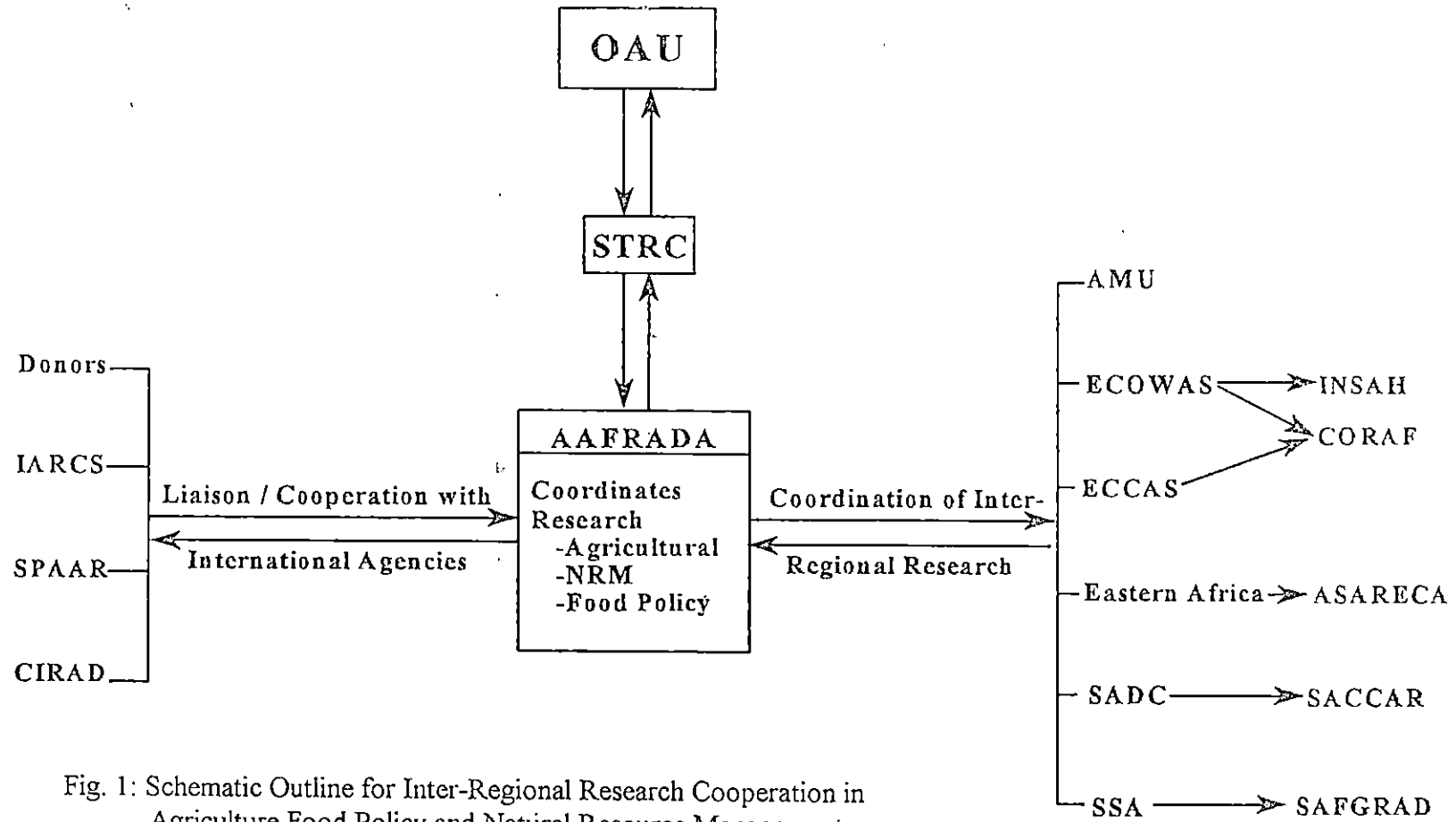


Fig. 1: Schematic Outline for Inter-Regional Research Cooperation in Agriculture Food Policy and Natural Resource Management

AAFRADA: African Agricultural and Food Policy Research And Development Agency  
 ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States  
 AMU: Arab Maghreb Union  
 ECCAS: The Economic Community of Central African States  
 SADC: Southern African Development Coordination Conference  
 SAFGRAD: Semi Arid Food Grain development and research  
 SSA: Sub-Saharan Africa

INSAH: Institut du Sahel  
 CORAF: Conference des Responsables de la Recherche Agronomique Africains  
 ASARECA: Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa  
 SACCAR: Southern African Center for Agricultural and Natural Resources Research and Training

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

Regional Economic political grouping	Number of countries	Research Agency	Year established
I. SADC	10	SACCAR	1984
II. AMU	6	-	-
III. CILSS	9	INSAH	1976
IV. ECOWAS	16	Evolving	1975
V. ECCAS	10	Evolving	1983
VI. Eastern, Central Africa Oceanic Countries	11	ASARECA	1994
VII. OAU	28	STRC-SAFGRAD	1977
VIII. West and Central Africa (CORAF)	24	Evolving	1987

ASARECA	Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa.
INSAH	Institut du Sahel.
CORAF	Conférence des Responsables de Recherche Agronomique Africains.
AMU	Arab Maghreb Union.
COMESA	Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa.
CILSS	Comité Permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel/Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel.
ECCAS	The Economic Community of Central African States.
SADC	Southern African Development Community.
SACCAR	Southern African Centre for Cooperation in Agricultural and Natural Resources Research and Training.
STRC	Scientific, Technical and Research Commission of the OAU.
SAFGRAD	Semi-Arid Food Grain Research and Development Agency.

**AFRICAN UNION UNION AFRICAINE**

**African Union Common Repository**

**<http://archives.au.int>**

---

Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA)

African Union Specialized Technical Office on Research and Development

---

1997

# OAU Vision and Mechanisms for Harmonizing Agriculture and Food Policy Research Efforts in Africa

Taye Bezuneh

Taye Bezuneh

---

<http://archives.au.int/handle/123456789/1797>

*Downloaded from African Union Common Repository*