

Organization of African Unity Organisation de l'Unité Africaine

COORDINATION OFFICE
OAU/STRC JP 31 SAFGRAD
B.P. 1783
OUAGADOUGOU,
Telephone : 333-58
332-27



BURKINA FASO

BUREAU DE COORDINATION
CSTR/OUA PC 31 SAFGRAD
B.P. 1783
OUAGADOUGOU
Téléphone : 333-58
332-27

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FRAMEWORK FOR THE LONG TERM PLANNING OF SAFGRAD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

(From SAFGRAD Consultants Report)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

I. THE GENERAL SETTING OF THE SAFGRAD PROGRAMME AND ITS OBJECTIVES.

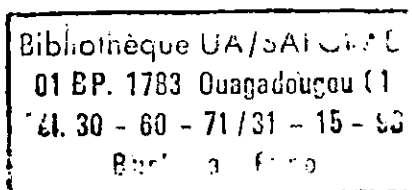
The Semi-Arid Zones of Africa form major production areas for food and livestock products of the continent. However, the production potentials of this huge area are far from being realized; even worse, the resource base is subject to serious and continuous degradation as a result of recent droughts and rapidly growing populations. While the former has directly enhanced the desertification processes in the lowest rainfall zones, the latter leads indirectly to the same process under higher rainfall through overcultivation of a fragile resource base. While local farming technologies are often extremely sophisticated and contain valuable components for farming under high risk environments, these technologies also require important modifications to cope with the problem of sustained production under an increasingly permanent farming system (as compared to the earlier fallow systems).

For most African countries, these problems are compounded by poor infrastructures and marketing systems as well as weak (in terms of trained manpower, facilities and funding) National Research programmes and Extension Services, which are receiving relatively little support from their Governments.

The increased international awareness of Africa's food problems has caused a drastic expansion of foreign aid over the last decade. A multitude of funding and implementing agencies operating at national and/or regional levels through bilateral and multilateral agreements, have subsequently become active. While these developments certainly have had positive effects, they have also contributed to increased fragmentation of national research

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efforts and to a large degree of overlap and duplication. Moreover there will often be crucial differences between national programme research priorities and the priorities of international and/or regional, often commodity oriented, research institutes and donors.

It was against this complicated background that SAFGRAD was created in 1977 as an OAU/STRC Project with mainly USAID support to reinforce and coordinate agricultural research and development for major staple food crops (maize, sorghum, millet, cowpea and groundnuts) on a regional basis; the ultimate goal being to increase the quantity and quality of these food crops available to the increasing populations of semi-arid sub-saharan Africa.

II. THE SAFGRAD MANDATE.

Because of the geographical vastness of the area and the complexity associated with agricultural production in physically and politically very diverse environments, a clear definition of the SAFGRAD mandate is important. Moreover, because of the large degree of fragmentation in research as a result of many externally funded projects, an overall coordination effort from a wide research and development perspective is considered essential for SAFGRAD.

R.1 - Consequently the following mandate areas were defined and recommended:

1. The geographical mandate of SAFGRAD covers the Semi-Arid zones of Africa and in particular the current 26 SAFGRAD member countries in West, Central, East and Southern Africa.

2. Being an OAU organization, SAFGRAD would provide technical feedback information to the OAU, and member country governments, on agricultural production, development and research to influence and to support the formulation and implementation of regional and national policies in these areas.
3. SAFGRAD would contribute to strengthening National Programmes through the identification of gaps in research and development efforts on a national and regional scale and to filling these gaps by -
 - i) providing specific support;
 - ii) ensuring greater complementarity between programmes and projects; and
 - iii) by stimulating exchange of information.
4. Specifically, SAFGRAD would contribute to strengthening the national technology transfer capacity (through its ACPO and FSR programmes) with a view to overcoming the common institutional barriers within National Programmes between various Research Departments (e.g. Agriculture, Forestry Livestock) and between Research and Extension.
5. SAFGRAD carries a major responsibility for information exchange between individual member countries and between the various African regions through workshops, conferences, symposia, monitoring/study tours, etc., and the dissemination of research results through regular publications.

6. SAFGRAD's training responsibilities would involve the systematic identification of long term training needs for various disciplines at various levels in the member countries, the identification and the coordination among various training opportunities.

III. PRESENT SAFGRAD ACTIVITIES.

The actual SAFGRAD programme covers the following major activities;

1. Support to regional technical research programmes of ICRISAT (sorghum and millet in East and West Africa) and IITA (maize and cowpea for West Africa) with a major emphasis on crop improvement aspects; as well as soil and water management (ICRISAT's till 1984; presently IITA).
2. Farming Systems Research in support of National Programmes (Burkina Faso; Cameroon and Benin); Farming Systems Research by the Purdue University team in Burkina Faso will be terminated in 1986.
3. Linkage of Research and Extension through the ACPO programme in five West African countries, namely Burkina Faso, Mali, Togo, Cameroon and Senegal.
4. Training for higher degrees and short term in-service training through ICRISAT and IITA programmes.
On-the-job training through monitoring tours.
5. Information exchange through organisation of annual workshops on maize-cowpea, sorghum-millet and FSR; organisation of specific conferences (e.g. on drought, in 1986).

IV. IMPLICATIONS OF MANDATE FOR LONG TERM PLANNING OF SAFGRAD.

Based on various discussions, the mission has arrived at the following major conclusions and recommendations for SAFGRAD orientations in its long term development.

1. General.

The mission feels that there is a major discrepancy between the ambitious SAFGRAD mandate and its currently available resources in manpower and funds, its organisational structure and its technical capabilities, to handle this mandate effectively. The following conclusions and recommendations will attempt to indicate how the SAFGRAD organization could be strengthened gradually over the next few years, and how the focus of the various technical programmes, of training and of inter-african coordination and collaboration could be improved.

2. Organization and management of SAFGRAD.

a) On the African development scene, which is characterized by a multitude of mostly temporary, foreign aid supported projects, there is a definitive need for a permanent African institution or agency to coordinate food crops research and development.

R.2 - Consequently it is recommended that the present project status of SAFGRAD be altered towards a permanent SAFGRAD Agency, under the umbrella of the Organisation of African Unity, Scientific, Technical and Research Commission. This Agency should develop the ability to provide technical information and advice to the OAU and its member countries on policy matters related to agricultural research and production. It should be a strictly technical organisation completely devoid of political influence.

- b) In order to deal with its coordinating responsibilities for technical subjects and training aspects across 26 member countries, SAFGRAD will require a considerable strengthening of:
- the main coordinating office in Ouagadougou which will also serve as the regional office for West and Central African countries;
 - the regional office in Nairobi to serve the East and Southern African countries;
 - links to high level national contact persons (preferably the Director of the National Agricultural Research Programme or his Deputy) in each SAFGRAD member country.
- c) Strengthening the overall SAFGRAD organisation is recommended as follows:
- R.3 - The Ouagadougou Coordination Office/West and Central African regional office should require the following additional personnel:
- Director for Training and Information
 - Senior Administrator
 - Liaison Officer for West and Central Africa
 - Research Officer on Resource Management and Crop Production
 - Research Officer on Farming Systems Research and Research-Extension linkages.
- R.4 - The Regional Office for East and Southern Africa would require :
- Liaison Officer for the region
 - Administrative Officer
 - Officer in charge of regional training and information exchange (workshops, publications, etc.).

The two regional Liaison Officers would work directly under the International Coordinator. The two Research Officers are required to strengthen the technical capabilities of the central SAFGRAD organization and would work under the Director of Research.

R.5 - Strengthening of the Ouagadougou Coordination Office and the regional offices should be phased over a 3-year period.

3. Technical aspects of SAFGRAD programme.

The mission concluded that the SAFGRAD research programmes as well as most National Programmes are overly focussed on crop improvement and crop variety testing. As a result, scarce resources for research and training are drawn away from urgently required programmes on "Resource management Research" to address the pressing problem of resource degradation. This research would involve long term experimentation on land-water-fertility management, agro-forestry and crop-livestock interactions.

R.6 - Consequently the mission recommends the creation of an interdisciplinary Unit on Resource Management Research (including the disciplines, land and water management, soil fertility management, ecology/plant physiology/cropping systems agronomy, socio-economics/ anthropology) for the Sudanian zone to complement the activities by the ICRISAT Sahelian team in Niamey.

The mission has noticed that in spite of the many aid programmes in the region frequent gaps occur between various programmes. Research gaps also occur due to frequent institutional barriers which interfere with an integrated approach to solving agricultural problems. Through its FSR-IFAD funded project, SAFGRAD is making an important contribution in filling such research gaps.

R.7 - It is recommended that this part of the SAFGRAD activity be strengthened further, and that increased emphasis is placed on sociological/anthropological reasons, behind adoption or rejection of improved technologies. Recently it was agreed in principle that the coordination office (2 people) of the West African-FSR network would be located at SAFGRAD-Ouagadougou. This development could contribute considerably to SAFGRAD's competence in this critical research area.

R.8 - The mission recommends early implementation of this West African FSR Network.

In nearly all member countries, institutional barriers between Research and Extension stand in the way of efficient utilization of research results and farmer feed-back to research. The SAFGRAD response to this problem through the ACPO programme was valued highly by the representatives of various countries.

R.9 - The mission recommends the expansion of the ACPO Programme preferably in combination with FSR activities as a focal point for future SAFGRAD programmes. However, this expansion should take place in close consultation with National Programmes and IARCs. Standardisation of ACPO programmes was considered undesirable in view of the wide diversity of the operational modalities in the different national programmes. ACPO programmes should be designed to fit particular national systems.

The mission considers the ACPO approach as an initial response to improve research-extension communications. In most cases this should be followed however by a further expansion in on-farm research through multidisciplinary FSR teams.

R.10 - In the latter event, it is recommended that ACPO responsibilities be redefined and may be focussed increasingly on assistance to Extension services in the organisation of seed multiplication programmes and training of extension agents.

4. Training and information dissemination.

The mission felt that systematic identification of national training needs, based on an analysis of national resources of trained manpower and future needs was required under SAFGRAD II. Without such analysis the bias towards crop improvement programmes, at the expense of other disciplines, may continue to grow. The Training and Information component of SAFGRAD should be formalised, and with the following major activities:

- Training (technical and degree programmes) should occur as much as possible through African educational institutions and should be focussed on problems specific to African agriculture, emphasizing the linkage between research and development.
- SAFGRAD information on research gaps in various National Programmes should contribute to a better focussing of both training requirements and training programmes, thereby contributing to a strengthening of National Training Programmes and facilities.
- SAFGRAD's Training and Information programme should contribute to improving regional and interregional dissemination of research results for semi-arid Africa through organisation or co-sponsoring of workshops, conferences and the publication of a regular journal for applied agricultural research.

R.11 - It is recommended that SAFGRAD explores sources of funding for the publication of this African Agricultural Research Journal.

SAFGRAD should seek a collaboration with IARCs and other regional institutions (INSAH, SADCC) in publishing research results in the form of regional bulletins to further enhance the dissemination of these results over a wider audience.

5. Linkages.

R.12 - In its capacity as the coordinating African agency of OAU/STRC, SAFGRAD should continue to strengthen its linkages to:

- a) National Programmes of member countries (see recommendations under II):
- b) IARCs (IITA, ICRISAT, ILCA, ICRAF) as well as CIRAD, ORSTOM and AGRHYMET as sources of research information and for backstopping. SAFGRAD's FSR and ACPO programmes should be utilized as important feedback channels to these institutions.
- c) Major regional programmes such as INSAH/CILSS and SADCC/SACCAR. Complementarity between SAFGRAD efforts and those of regional organisations is vital for both parties. As a coordinating agency SAFGRAD should take the lead in establishing regular contacts to achieve collaboration and complementarity between programmes.

Eventually SAFGRAD should, through these linkages, be able to fulfill a mediating role between National Programmes and various regional and international research and development institutions, thereby aiding in the reconciliation of common differences in research priorities between National Programmes and the often single commodity orientation of regional and international collaborators.

6. Networks

The mission has been amazed about the number of "networks" (commodity, discipline or programme oriented) in the region, that are operational or in preparation. Given the weakness of many National Programmes in terms of trained manpower, an excessive number of frequently overlapping networks would tie up the scarce National research resources and may well become counter-productive.

R.13 - The mission therefore recommends that SAFGRAD seeks to strengthen existing networks on commodities and FSR by co-sponsoring these on the basis of mutually agreed conditions.

It is recommended that the ACPOs participate fully in various FSR networks.

7. SAFGRAD priorities and phasing.

The implementation of SAFGRAD programmes covering its wide mandate will have to be a gradual process, covering several years and requiring support from a group of donors, and the OAU.

R.14 - The mission therefore recommends the following priorities and phasing:

- From a regional perspective, strengthening the capacity of the Ouagadougou coordinating and regional office (for West and Central Africa) would take priority over a strengthening of the Nairobi regional office for East and Southern Africa.
- Among the various technical programmes, formalisation of SAFGRAD Training and Information component and the creation of a regional "Resource Management Research Unit" focussed on the Sudanian Savanna zone are greater priorities than further expansion of crop

- There is a widespread need across Africa for stronger Research-Extension linkages through FSR and ACPO support. These are typically National Programme activities which however may have to be initiated through SAFGRAD support (technical and training) and funding to awaken the National interest over an initial 5-year period. Subsequently these programmes should preferably become the responsibility of the National programmes.



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