

Year of CfP: 2007

Project No: 07036 Completed

Project title: Learning, Producing and Sharing Workshop (*Apprentissage, Production et Partage d'Innovations (Atelier APPRI)*): what tools can be used to strengthen capacity, accompanying measures, collective construction and the sustainable implementation of innovations in dry rural zones in Africa?

Unit managing the project: AGAP (Genetic improvement and Plant adaptation) (CIRAD, INRA, Montpellier SupAgro)

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Countries involved in the project: Burkina Faso, Senegal, Brazil

Research units from the Foundation's scientific network involved: Innovation LSTM, SYSTEM

Subthematic axes: IPB-1 (Integrative Plant Biology 1: *Genetics and genomics, plant breeding, ecophysiology*), STDI-1 (Socio-Technical Dynamics of Innovation 1: *Agri-environmental innovations, agri-ecosystems, resources management*), STDI-3 (Socio-Technical Dynamics of Innovation 3: *Innovation processes, social management of innovations*)

Objectives:

The FAO 2006 annual report highlights the fact that sub-Saharan Africa pays the heaviest tribute to hunger. The number of poorly fed people had increased from 169 to 206 million in 10 years, with a concentration of hunger in rural zones with the stagnation of farming and especially food crops.

The classification arid to dry sub-humid applies to 45% of the area of Africa. The region is particularly strongly affected by climate changes and recurrent drought. In spite of these difficult conditions, the small farms that form more than 90% of holdings are still the pivot of the economies of most African countries as they provide nearly 60% of jobs and GNP.

We propose to organise a colloquy to consider the conditions and actions that would improve the pertinence and impact of agricultural innovations in the context of the sustainability of the kinds of small farming observed in Africa. The colloquy will be held in French-speaking Sahelian Africa and will be aimed at identifying the need for research and the subjects to be addressed by research in multi-stakeholder participation.

The main expected results are:

- better stakeholder awareness of participatory approaches for the improvement of the results of African agriculture in dry zones;
- thanks to contacts with the farming universities in the Nordeste in Brazil, building a conceptual framework for a multi-stakeholder discussion able to formulate, design, monitor and evaluate agricultural projects in these zones.

Action carried-out and results obtained:

The APPRI2008 workshop was a CIRAD initiative, in collaboration with IRD, INERA and CPF (*Confédération Paysanne du Faso*) with financial support from *Agropolis Fondation*, CTA and the French Embassy. It was attended by 50 participants from Burkina, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sudan, Tanzania, Kenya and Brazil. They came from professional farmer organizations, NGOs, and research and training organizations operating in the drylands of Africa.

The main aim was to analyse conditions for implementing alternative action-research practices in partnership for development, taking into account the difficulties of "official" research and of the rural world, faced with the major challenges of sustainable development in the South. One originality of APPRI2008 was to compare experiences in the rural zones of Africa, presented during the workshop, with those of the UNICAMPO Peasants' University set up 10 years ago in the Brazilian Nordeste, a semi-arid region where farms exhibit some major similarities with those in the drylands of Africa.

The "**Peasants' University**" concept was unanimously chosen as a place to unify partnership initiatives bringing together research, rural development officers, farmer organizations and producer groups, and rural communities and municipalities. These **Peasants' Universities** will be places of learning where a common vision is shared for implementing development and environmental improvement activities, particularly intended for small family farms.

The APPRI2008 group unanimously accepted that technical and institutional innovation in partnership is paramount. It needs to be co-constructed from local know-how and scientific and technical knowledge. Information and communication between all those involved in development needs to be revised and strengthened, in order to be more interactive and more efficient. The aim is not only to improve agricultural production but also to contribute to cultural recognition and participate in the social and economic transformation of rural communities.

The action to be promoted through these universities is intended to enable rural African communities to take on board innovations, notably through:

- the construction of **exchange networks based on a core of APPRI2008 resource-persons made up from the stakeholders present**,
- strengthening of capacities and training for all innovation stakeholders, including researchers,
- co-learning for researchers, developers, farmers and rural populations,
- drawing up of the content and dissemination of appropriate scientific documentation and information that is decentralized and combined with local know-how.

The Peasant's University is construed as a social innovation, a place for the convergence of know-how, using an "**innovation caravan**" as the central strategy for mobilizing local, national and international solidarity, exchanges and capitalization of know-how. The tools to be developed by the caravan will notably be:

- identification of active and operational rural groups,
- assistance in formulating and expressing needs, and gathering proposals,
- collective drafting of a charter listing the principles for implementing concrete projects,
- discussions about projects, difficulties encountered and strategies adopted locally,
- thoughts about project monitoring-evaluation systems,
- dialogue with local, traditional, municipal and national authorities,
- proposed actions for exchanges, adding value and education: exhibitions, forums, itinerant, open and remote training.

Total Agropolis Fondation funding: € 40,000 (communication costs, travel expenses, accommodation costs, conference room rental fee)

Funding categorie(s): Agropolis Fondation small grants (support for the organisation of high-level scientific events (conferences, seminars)

Project duration: January 2 2008 – December 31 2008

Keywords: dry lands – arid lands – conference – climate changes