

Aide Memoire

A high-level meeting of leaders from African NARES, regional and sub-regional organizations, universities, development partners and CGIAR Genetic Innovation took place on 28-29 October 2024 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. This was the **Third Leadership Consultation Meeting hosted by Genetic Innovation focused on SSA**, following on the ones held: 27-28 June 2022 in Nairobi, Kenya and 26 October 2023 in Marrakesh, Morocco. There was an additional consultation focused on CWANA held in 13-15th December 2022 in Istanbul, Türkiye.

The Dubai meeting took stock of progress made between 2022 and 2024, discussed and advised on how to further (i) shape, refine and strengthen partnership quality and mainstream good practices within collaborative CGIAR crop breeding networks, (ii) improve the collaboration with universities and local seed companies. The meeting provided a place for networking and integrating diverse viewpoints for a stronger pathway forward.

Starting 1 January 2025, this work will continue within the CGIAR Breeding for Tomorrow (B4T) and Genebanks Program. B4T is one of eight Science Programs, one Scaling-for-Impact Program and three Accelerators including one focused on capacity sharing of the revised 2025-2030 Portfolio of CGIAR. It will continue the work of Genetic Innovation which has been implemented between 1 January 2022 and 31 December 2024. B4T will include an expanded portfolio including trees, vegetables and other opportunity crops that have not been traditionally addressed by the CGIAR.

1. **Building on the insights of previous meetings:** Important insights of previous meetings were reemphasized, in particular the need for (i) co-design and joint priority setting; (ii) joint decision making; (iii) transparency of decision-making (including but not limited to: approaches taken, members' roles and responsibilities, reports, and others); (iv) augmenting the role of local partners, (v) fair attribution; (vi) systematically and objectively assessing the evolution of the partnership quality, and (vii) human and institutional capacity development.
2. **Recognizing progress made:** Participants acknowledged progress made since 2022:
 - 2.1. In every network, there are examples of the results of our collaboration, more impactful varieties being developed more rapidly and moved more purposefully towards farmers' fields, addressing climate change and food security challenges.
 - 2.2. Together with local stakeholders, national partners defined the requirements for future impactful varieties, through approximately 400 national Target Product Profiles. They were used in 12 regional meetings to update subregional and regional network breeding priorities for 15 crops.
 - 2.3. A total of 98 assessments defined strengths and improvement ambitions of national breeding programs, and their ability to take a greater role in (sub-)regional breeding networks. As a result, 12 networks were able to clarify and amplify the roles of partners.
 - 2.4. Several networks progressed towards more standardized network membership agreements to better define the commitments of, and benefits to all parties involved. They enable greater national contributions to generating breeding materials for other members' use, in addition to continued and wider support in the space of the variety evaluation.

- 2.5. Implementing for the first time two formal and standardized partnership surveys to assess and track the evolution of CGIAR-NARES partnership quality, from the perspectives of NARES and CGIAR.
3. **Capturing insights through standardized surveys:** The survey questions were derived from discussions at the Marrakesh meeting and also based on GFAIR's Partnership Principles. They were reviewed and endorsed by the Core Technical Team (CCT), consisting of NARES, SRO and CGIAR members. The survey assessed (i) national and strategic alignment, (ii) co-creation and priority setting, (iii) joint ownership and decision making, (iv) augmenting NARES roles in regional breeding networks, (v) transparency of decision-making (including but not limited to: approaches taken, members' roles and responsibilities, funding, opportunities, reports, and others); (vi) attribution, and (vii) human capacity development and linkages with regional universities. Sub-regional organizations (CORAF, CCARDESA, ASARECA) deployed the survey to national program leadership in their respective member countries.
- 3.1. In the case of the NARES survey, 94 responses were received from crop leads (61), Directors General (5), and Directors of Research (28), including 31 countries and 20 crops; 22% of the responses came from women, 78% from men.
- 3.2. In the case of CGIAR, input was received from 12 CGIAR breeding leads representing 14 crops.
4. **Insights from the NARES survey:** the survey documented significant progress and recognized that further improvement is needed regarding co-creation and co-design and joint decision making. Survey results highlighted opportunities for:
- 4.1. Finding ways to more effectively align CGIAR country activities with national development plans and institutional strategic plans.
- 4.2. Further mainstreaming effective approaches (target product profile and market segment definition, joint advancement meetings, breeding program assessments, network agreements, steering committees) beyond those currently reached – at this stage ranging between 35% - 70% of members implementing or benefiting from these approaches.
- 4.3. Supporting the implementation of NARES breeding program improvement plans arising from independent program assessments.
- 4.4. Achieving full involvement of NARES in proposal development and decision making.
- 4.5. Improved coordination of national and regional variety advancement decisions
- 4.6. Involving more NARES scientists in joint publications and post-graduate training. The need for more capacity development is high.
- 4.7. Generating greater clarity for how funds are being allocated and how NARES and CGIAR investments can be designed to synergize better and in a sustainable manner - Survey results documented that 70% of the respondents received operational budget support from the CGIAR which on average represented 41% of their total operational budgets.
- 4.8. The CGIAR to leverage and strengthen good work of NARES.
- 4.9. Timely financial contributions need to be in balance with the scope of work agreed with NARES.

5. **Insights from the CGIAR survey:** the survey captured greater trust, collegiality, technical interactions, sharing of market intelligence and national priorities; clearer definition of roles and responsibilities, with partners playing a bigger role; more joint decision making in product advancement and network investment; wider use of shared services; and development of formal network agreements. Survey results highlighted opportunities for:
 - 5.1. Receiving faster and wider feedback to proposals, publications, and data return.
 - 5.2. Given resource constraints, finding ways of coming together and creating synergies between the CGIAR and NARES, with equal ownership by all parties involved.
 - 5.3. Jointly mobilizing resources, seeking complementarity and minimizing duplicative efforts.
 - 5.4. Acknowledging CGIAR contributions of breeding materials, capacity development, funding and regional coordination.
 - 5.5. Generating greater clarity that CGIAR funding and network membership requires that data, germplasm and protocols are shared, so all network members can benefit.
6. **Clarifications from in-depth discussions:** Group discussions provided further insight to the survey feedback, including:
 - 6.1. **The need for ownership, transparency and better communication:** network membership terms and conditions; resource allocation criteria; post graduate and other capacity sharing opportunities.
 - 6.2. **The need to overcome competition:** All network partners should have an equal voice and opportunities to lead proposal development according to comparative strengths.
 - 6.2.1. NARES representatives expressed commitment to proactively lead in their own countries and as part of the networks. Timeliness of reporting and communication are key for equitable participation.
 - 6.2.2. CGIAR representatives expressed commitment to engage network partners at all levels of responsibilities in regional breeding networks.
 - 6.3. **The need to better align with regional, sub-regional and countries' national action plans:**
 - 6.3.1. The B4T and Genebanks program should work with FARA, SROs and NARES leadership to improve alignment with regional, sub-regional, national and institutional action plans and document such alignment.
 - 6.3.2. CGIAR should work to formalize networks and agreements across crops at institutional and national leadership levels (DGs, Ministers of Agriculture) and improve regular communication.
 - 6.3.3. Need to discuss and document how crop breeding contributes to national agricultural development plans.
 - 6.4. **Fundraising** Participants agreed on the need to advocate strongly for increased investment in agricultural research and infrastructure from different sources and for increased transparency regarding the allocation of CGIAR funding. NARES should be involved in co-design and co-creation from the beginning.

- 6.5. **The need for increased investment in postgraduate training as part of all network projects with innovative solutions to support postgraduate training:**
- 6.6. **The appreciation of various collaborative efforts:** market segment and target product profile definition and the better alignment of CGIAR and NARES priorities and strategies; implementing systematic advancement meetings; the inclusion of opportunity crops in the portfolio, the provision of equipment, funding, breeding program assessments, and Visiting Scientist placements; the standardization of network agreements; improved institutional arrangements that foster co-governance, joint proposal development and reduce the number of meetings; access to genotyping services, better breeding analytics and molecular breeding approaches.
- 6.7. **The need to keep technical improvements (modern breeding approaches, human capacity development, faster variety turnover and deployment) at the forefront of improved partnerships.**
- 6.8. **The value of conducting an annual partnership survey providing adequate time for full responses and feedback from leadership and technical staff.**
- 6.9. **The value of doing joint monitoring against standards and indicators to ensure that progress is effectively made.**
7. **The roles of breeding networks and involving a wider range of partners:**
- 7.1. **Definition of breeding networks:** a group of institutions working together to develop and test products for one or more market segments.
- 7.2. **Country prioritization within networks** is a function of crop production area, national income levels according to the World Bank and existing collaboration and participation in regional networks. It distinguishes between Level 1, Level 2, and spill-over country members.
- 7.2.1. Level 1 and 2 countries are lower and lower-middle income countries (as per World Bank classification) with at least 1 million (Level 1) or 200,000 (Level 2) hectares for a particular cereal and legume crop, respectively; or at least 300,000 (Level 1) or 60,000 (Level 2) hectares for a particular root, tuber and banana (RTB) crop, respectively.
- 7.2.2. The rationale for this prioritization, which will be regularly reviewed, is that investments are more likely sustainable and impactful where the crop is important. Countries with smaller areas may benefit from breeding activities in countries with larger areas, provided member countries make breeding materials and data developed with network resources available to all members.
- 7.2.3. The benefits to all network members should be made transparent
- 7.3. **Potential network partners** can include NARES, universities, seed companies, and other stakeholders. Each network member should have a defined role and responsibility that leverages its comparative advantage. Ensuring complementarity of network member efforts will ensure common goals are achieved more effectively.
- 7.4. **Universities** have mandates including student education, research, community engagement and outreach, amongst others. They provide potential for cross-disciplinary approaches, may have state-of-the-art laboratories, and a wide range of experts and backgrounds.

Universities could engage in local breeding activities, implement training and education, facilitate research collaborations, engage in policy advocacy, and work with communities. Universities are open to a wide range of partnerships. They can contribute to subject areas where they have expertise. They can drive in-region post-graduate student training through "sandwich programs" with NARES and CGIAR. They train both upstream (eg trait discovery) and last-mile delivery professionals and can provide respective linkages. They enhance demand-pull by engaging other actors in respective value chains and targeting young people. They generate evidence for increased investments.

7.4.1. Universities and individual researchers and educators within universities vary in their capacities and the roles and responsibilities they can contribute in regional networks. There is a need to assess and map the capacities of universities.

7.4.2. Potential roles for Universities include attaching research students at NARES and CGIAR; and conducting specific research where capacity is weak or does not exist with NARES or CGIAR (eg food science, agribusiness development, consumer studies, foresight analysis)

7.4.3. To improve coordination and harmonization scope exists for increased collaboration by NARES and CGIAR researchers contributing to curriculum development, teaching, co-supervision of students and joint research..

7.5. Private sector Engagement:

7.5.1. CGIAR signed MoUs with the International Seed Federation and Asian-Pacific Seed Association to streamline linkages with the large number of seed companies that are interested to use public sector germplasm. Similar MoUs are planned with continental partners such as the African Union and AGRA.

7.5.2. We need to better coordinate efforts with the private sector. The private sector pursues opportunities for seed production and dissemination, and creates local employment. Seed business approaches are often crop-specific because business dynamics differ among crops.

7.5.3. In addition to streamlining hand-over (including national licensing) approaches with the private sector, the public sector can help with seed production research, improving the effectiveness and quality of early generation seed production, building local seed business capacity or tracking the use and feedback of varieties by women and men farmers.

7.5.4. It is desirable for local private sector to be involved early in the breeding process, providing input to market segment and target product profile definitions, and participating in advancement meetings and on-farm verification.

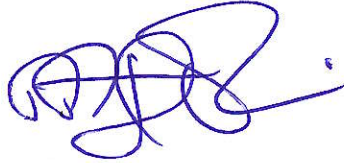
7.5.5. **Additional view-points from participants:** NARES and CGIAR need licensing templates and training in licensing. Early generation seed production is still an important bottleneck, emphasizing the need for clearly defined road maps, and crop-specific strategies. Joint training efforts between private - public universities are needed, including for farmer seed producers that can be contracted by seed companies. Joint advocacy to strengthen the seed sector should be considered. Large companies can also be investors in networks such as for developing new traits.

- 7.6. Role of other private sector: they can provide specialized services for genotyping - often at lower cost than the public sector - or be involved in network training activities where they provide relevant expertise.
- 7.7. **Other viewpoints:** The number of crop improvement networks needs to be rationalized. There are differences between crops, but the partnership principles and successful approaches should be shared.
8. GFAiR shared Partnership Principles that could be useful in guiding improved partnerships and the recommendations of the HLAP report on how to better partner with the Global South.
9. Increased investment in CapSha: CGIAR increases its investment and focus on Capacity Sharing through an "Accelerator" in its 2025-2030 portfolio. It seeks to attract more opportunities for young scientists and leaders, and South-South collaboration.
10. The **Coordination Technical Team (CTT)**, tasked with leading the technical agenda, includes the following membership:
- CGIAR, 4 reps: Bish Das, Michael Quinn, Clare Mukankusi, John Derera
 - NARES, 4 reps: Godfrey Asea: East Africa, Purity Mazibuko: Southern Africa, Maxwell Asante: West Africa, Hortense Mafouasson: Central Africa
 - SRO, 3 reps: Ousmane Ndoeye: CORAF, Ben Ilakut: ASARECA, Barthlomew Chataika: CCARDESA
11. In future consideration should be given to inclusion of a University representation on the CTT
- Networking at all levels and scaling out:** All participants are requested to represent the spirit and action points arising from this meeting (i) within their organizations, (ii) with other programs, (iii) with national, regional and international policy makers and (iv) as part of other NARES – SRO – FARA GFAiR - CGIAR interactions, recognizing that transformation towards stronger and more effective partnerships needs the combined efforts and contributions at all levels.

Third Leadership Consultation Meeting hosted by Genetic Innovation, Dubai 28-29 October 2024
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This Aide Memoire is an accurate record of the conclusions of this meeting. Witnessed and signed by:

- 1. Witness by CGIAR Representative - Dr. John Derera , Senior Director of Breeding and Pre-Breeding, CGIAR representative**



- 2. Witnessed by NARES Representative - Dr. Zelia Menete, DG IIAM, NARES representative**



- 3. Witnessed by SRO Representative - Dr. Barthlomew Chataika (CCARDESA), SRO representative**



Dubai, 29 October 2024

Annex A. List of participants

#	Name	Gender	Institution	Type of participation	Country
1	Swidiq Mugerwa	Male	NARO	On site	Uganda
2	Drissa Sereme	Male	INERA	Online	Burkina Faso
3	Fanna Maina Assane	Female	INRAN	On site	Niger
4	Richard Kombat	Male	FARA	On site	Ghana
5	Hildegard Lingnau	Female	GFAIR	On site	France
6	Barthlomew Chataika	Male	CCARDESA	On site	Botswana
7	Benjamin Kivuva	Male	KALRO	On site	Kenya
8	Bassirou Sine	Male	CERAAS/ISRA/RCE	On site	Senegal
9	Kalifa Traore	Male	IER	On site	Mali
10	Godfrey Asea	Male	NARO	On site	Uganda
11	Francis Kusi	Male	CSIR	On site	Ghana
12	Lawrent Pungulani	Male	DARS	On site	Malawi
13	Zelia Menete	Female	IIAM	On site	Mozambique
14	Deusdedith Rugaihukamu Mbanzibwa	Male	TARI	On site	Tanzania
15	Hortense Mafouasson	Female	IRAD	On site	Cameroon
16	Imane Thanmi Alami	Female	INRA	Online	Morocco
17	Ousmane Ndoeye	Male	CORAF	On site	Senegal
18	Rufaro Madakadze	Female	AGRA	On site	Kenya
19	Young Wha Lee	Female	BMGF	On site	USA
20	Julia Sibiya	Female	UKZN-ACCI	On site	South Africa
21	Patrick Okori	Male	RUFORUM	Online	Uganda
22	Purity Mazibuko	Female	DR&SS	On site	Zimbabwe
23	Pearl Abu	Female	WACCI	On site	Ghana
24	Viviane Raharinivo	Female	FOFIFA	On site	Madagascar
25	Joe Onyeka	Male	NRCRI	Online	Nigeria
26	Ben Ilakut	Male	ASARECA	On site	Uganda
27	Michael Quinn	Male	CGIAR	On site	Australia
28	Marianne Banziger	Female	CGIAR	Online	Switzerland
29	Neena Jacob	Female	CGIAR	On site	Kenya
30	Dorcus Gemenet	Female	CGIAR	On site	Kenya
31	Bish Das	Male	CGIAR	On site	Kenya
32	Peter Coaldrake	Male	CGIAR	On site	USA
33	Julie Puech	Female	CGIAR	On site	France
34	Eng Hwa	Male	CGIAR	On site	Philippines
35	Sharifah Syed	Female	CGIAR	On site	Malaysia
36	John Derera	Male	CGIAR	On site	Nigeria
37	Kevin Pixley	Male	CIMMYT	On site	Mexico
38	Harish Gandhi	Male	CIMMYT	On site	Kenya
39	Maria Fernanda Alvarez	Female	CIAT	On site	Colombia
40	Hapson Mushoriwa	Male	IITA	On site	Nigeria
41	Sanjay Katiyar	Male	Africa Rice	On site	Ivory Coast
42	Sean Mayes	Male	ICRISAT	On site	India

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43	Hans Raj Bhardwaj	Male	IRRI	On site	Philippines
44	Sankalp Bhosale	Male	IRRI	On site	Philippines
45	Lennin Musundire	Male	CGIAR	On site	Kenya
46	Dragan Milic	Male	CGIAR	On site	Kenya
47	Ian Barker	Male	CGIAR	On site	United Kingdom
48	Chris Ojiewo	Male	CGIAR	On site	Kenya
49	Vish Banda	Male	IITA	On site	Nigeria
50	Charles Kleinermann	Male	CGIAR	On site	Morocco

