



Issue 5- February 2008

Introduction

“Sustainable rural development, involving as it does many sectors and areas of policy, does not fit into the straight jacket of a sectoral approach.” This was the conclusion of the Second European Forum on Sustainable Rural Development which has published the proceedings of their high level discussions in June. A multi-sectoral approach is also reflected in the work of the Future Agricultures Consortium, which was the subject of a mid term review through the LRC last year. Both reports are featured in this issue of the e-bulletin. A number of other resources and reports are also included and all will be available on the LRC [website](#) along with details on [how to commission](#) the LRC.

Future Agricultures Consortium



The [Future Agricultures Consortium](#) (FAC) aims to improve the quality of public policy towards agriculture in low income Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) countries. FAC is a collaboration between UK research institutions ([IDS](#), [ODI](#), [SOAS](#)) and partner country coordinators in selected focal point countries, Ethiopia, Kenya and Malawi. As the major funder of the consortium, DFID recently conducted a Mid Term Review. One of the authors of this report, [Frank Ellis](#), gives an update on progress.

FAC operates at the intersection of knowledge and policy. This is a difficult intersection at which to work. On the one hand, the knowledge side of this interaction may be incomplete, contested, and complex to the extent that

straightforward messages are difficult to formulate and convey on the other hand, policy often represents a considerable dead weight of past practice, entrenched organisations and interests, and unwillingness to reorder priorities. Moreover, the personal and political interests that make some policy options more attractive than others to public decision-makers can be exceedingly difficult to decipher or anticipate. FAC opens up this policy space so that information and options can circulate more freely, and good ideas stand a better chance of being taken up. FAC’s relative success in achieving this objective under resource constraints was emphasised by the review.

The work of FAC up to the end of the current phase has been built around three key themes:

- Growth and social protection: demonstrating the synergies between achieving agricultural growth and forms of social protection that contribute to, rather than defeat, productive engagement (for example, the [Malawi fertilizer subsidy](#) as a focus for policy debate).
- Commercialisation: encouraging rising market engagement on the part of small farmers, but also looking to the growth in high value markets (e.g. growing urban populations) and participation in domestic and international value chains (supermarkets, horticultural exports).
- Policy process: how to influence strategic policy priorities (for example into PRSPs),

but also to encourage responsiveness to new policy ideas in ministries of agriculture.

To this must be added a fourth theme in the second phase:

- Technology options: new technologies are becoming available all the time, often originating in the private rather than public sector. A very considerable policy challenge lies in how best to make these technologies available to small poor farmers.

FAC has had particular successes in engagement with international efforts to revitalise agriculture in Africa (including valuable inputs into the [World Development Report 2008](#)); in policy process work in Ethiopian regions towards influencing the country's PRSP ([PASDEP](#)); in work in Malawi on the government's input subsidy programme; and in beginning to understand policy processes in ministries of agriculture and how to influence them (especially in Kenya).

The review concluded that FAC should be enabled to take up its fourth strategic theme and expand into West Africa in order to better represent the African continent as a whole. Particular emphasis was placed in the review on continuing to strike an effective balance between investigatory and policy process engagement type activities and in interfacing with African institutional frameworks ([CAADP](#), [ReSAKSS](#)) in order to influence the direction and effectiveness of such initiatives rather than working outside and in parallel to them.

The Second European Forum on Sustainable Development- Final Report

The [Second European Forum](#) has published the Final Report on discussions it held in June 2007. The Forum looked at five areas:

- Rural Livelihoods in Africa in the face of globalisation
- Environmental Issues in rural development
- Economic and Political Reforms required to support rural development in Africa
- Regional Integration in Africa and its implication for rural development
- Aid effectiveness, harmonisation and alignment

The report concludes: "It was generally agreed that sustainable rural development, involving as it does many sectors and areas of policy, does not fit into the straight jacket of a sectoral approach. Sustainable agriculture and rural agriculture needs a broad platform for international, regional, national and local discussion, involving different stakeholder groups that range from finance ministers to local advocacy organisations and from small scale farmers to large international agrobusiness. Agriculture is, above all, a private sector activity, and this fact needs greater recognition in the design of development strategies."

Resources

Online Technical Support for Rural Development and Agriculture Advisers

A new service for Agricultural Advisers and Food Supply Assessors has been formed as a spin out company by staff at the University of Wales. [AA International](#) offers an online eAdvisory service [TechTalk](#). The service will be a one-stop-shop, web-based advisory service for an annual subscription and available to project and programme managers, field-based technicians, farmers, foresters, horticulturalists, conservationists and others involved in food security, natural resources development, rural livelihoods and land management in developing countries.

CAADP Launches Events Calendar

The [Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme](#) has launched a [calendar](#) with the latest details on all CAADP events for 2008 as well as related contact and logistical information. CAADP addresses policy and capacity issues across the entire agricultural sector and across the entire African continent and is a valuable mechanism to reduce hunger and poverty.

Are there lessons for Africa from China's Success Against Poverty?

At the outset of China's reform period, the country had a far higher poverty rate than for Africa as a whole. Within five years that was no longer true. This paper tries to explain how China escaped from a situation in which extreme poverty persisted due to failed and unpopular policies. While acknowledging that Africa faces constraints that China did not, and that context matters, two lessons stand out. The first is the importance of productivity growth in smallholder agriculture, which will require both market-based incentives and public support. The second is the role played by strong leadership and a capable public administration at all levels of government.

[World Bank Policy Research Paper](#), January 2008

[OECD/ DAC will be holding a conference on this subject on 21 February](#)

Bio Fuels

The Biofuels debate continues with the publication of [Sustainable biofuels: prospects and challenges](#) by the [Royal Society](#). The report concludes that biofuels are an important factor in future development but that each potential biofuel has to be considered separately with the costs and benefits of each analysed on its own merits both economically and environmentally. In addition widespread deployment of biofuels will have major implications for land use, with associated environmental, social and economic impacts that must in turn be assessed. Here, in particular, unintended consequences may reduce or override the expected benefits. Finally, the assessments must address the global and regional impacts, not just local ones.

UNCCD Global Mechanism: Innovative Financing Opportunities for Sustainable Land Management

Through its [Market Access & Trade](#) (MAT) strategic programme, the UNCCD [Global Mechanism](#) (GM) is exploring ways of mobilising resources and increasing investment in Sustainable Land Management by developing markets for and supporting trade in dryland products. An example of this work is the recent national workshop held in Mali in November which focused on [the potential of gum arabic](#) as both a solution to food insecurity and to combat land degradation.

The Growing Demand for Livestock

As global demand for meat and milk increases, many policies focus on promoting international trade in livestock and livestock products. How does this affect the community-based livestock services that poor people use, and who will benefit from the expanding global markets for meat and milk?

id21 insights reports in plain-English, on [livestock policy research findings](#), examines some of the implications and suggests how the livestock sector can focus on 'pro-poor' development.

Events & Training

[Imperial College](#), London is running a five day training course on [Climate Change, Science, Impacts & Resources](#) on 14th – 18th April 2008. It is primarily aimed at anyone who has organisational responsibility for Climate Change and Impact policy.

The LRC: The Bigger Picture & Contacts

The [Livelihoods Resource Centre](#) is managed by [HTSPE](#) in association with [IDS](#), [ODG](#) and [Coffey](#). The LRC provides services in two areas: specialised **commissioned services** for DFID Advisers and **core resources** posted on the website and eBulletin.

Contacts

For comments or suggestions on content, please email: [Jessica Riordan](#)

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