TAP featured at side event of the Committee on World Food Security (October 2019)

On October 17th at FAO, the Tropical Agriculture Platform (TAP) organized a side event at the Committee on World Food Security (CFS 46) entitled “Strengthening Agricultural Innovation Systems for Family Farming: Multi-stakeholder processes to develop capacities to innovate for food and nutrition security”. The event focused on innovation as the driving force that can transform food systems and lift family farmers out of poverty to help the world achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It looked at the crucial role of multi-stakeholder processes in fostering innovation at the local, national and global levels.

This side event showcased and discussed evidence from success stories, emphasizing the contributions of research and extension and rural advisory services among other innovation actors. It highlighted strategies for assessing and strengthening capacities to innovate and engage in multi-stakeholder processes for agricultural innovation. During the session, TAP Chair Judith Francis presented the TAP approach and experience, including concepts of the TAP Common Framework and the knowledge hub TAPipedia (www.tapipedia.org). Selvaraju Ramasamy, Head, FAO Research and Extension Unit, gave an overview of FAO’s role in strengthening agricultural innovation systems for family farmers. The other panellists were from the Rural Development, Food Security and Nutrition Unit, DG DEVCO, European Commission, the World Farmers’ Organization (WFO) and the University of Évora (as coordinator of the HORIZON 2020 research project SALSA).

The report of the event is available at https://tapipedia.org/content/report-strengthening-agricultural-innovation-systems-family-farming-multi-stakeholder
Opportunities for collaboration between European and African universities

“Collaboration between European and African Agricultural and Life Science Universities for a Sustainable Future” was the topic of the 9th annual ICA Rectors and Deans Forum held in October 2019. The Forum looked ahead to 2030 and explored opportunities for collaboration between European and African agricultural and life science universities to strengthen their engagement for mutual gain, and to address the challenges of developing a sustainable future against the backdrop of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Forum was attended by leaders who are responsible for strategic decision making in universities and faculties of Agricultural and Life Sciences (Rectors, Deans, senior management) and comprised 58 participants from 23 European and 6 African countries.

The ICA Forum was jointly organized by the Association for European Life Science Universities (ICA, www.ica-europe.info) and the European Alliance on Agricultural Knowledge for Development (Agrinatura, https://agrinatura-eu.eu/) with the support of CIRAD (French Agricultural Research Centre for International Cooperation, www.cirad.fr/en).

The summary of the outcomes and the presentations are available on the ICA website. The summary lists what needs to be achieved to develop successful long-lasting collaborations with impact between European and African universities.

Value Chain Analysis for Development

Value Chain Analysis for Development (VCA4D) is a partnership between the European Union and Agrinatura to undertake 50 value chain studies through a methodology elaborated by DG DEVCO. VCA4D is currently celebrating the launch of its 35th study whilst conducting a number of stakeholder workshops across Africa and Central America to connect and discuss the results with partners. More information on the project can be found here: https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/value-chain-analysis-for-development-vca4d-
Education projects funded by Erasmus+

Agrinatura is currently involved in the following educational projects funded by the EC Erasmus+ program: Master of Science in Food Security and Climate Change (FSCC), Participatory and Integrative Support for Agricultural Initiative (PISAI), Master in European Innovations for a Sustainable Management of Albania Territories, Rural Areas and Agriculture (SmartAI), Support of International Platform Merging Labour and Education (SIMPLE), and Master in Agriculture Environment and Climate Economics (Master ACT). More information on each of these can be found at https://agrinatura-eu.eu/.

Agreenium in France's International Strategy for Food Security, Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture

The Department of Globalization, Culture, Education and International Development of the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs published in November 2019 a report on "France's International Strategy for Food Security, Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture". This report constitutes a strategic roadmap for all the French ministries involved in these subjects, including the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. The report quotes Agreenium as one of the "assets France has at its disposal to promote its values", particularly because it constitutes "an interface for developing common strategies for research, education and international cooperation for development".

Among the three strategic topics - food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture - Agreenium mainly focuses its actions on the design and dissemination of knowledge with the support of experts.

For instance, an agreement has been signed with FAO to promote knowledge in the field of life sciences, including an annual cycle of conferences and debates from 2020; a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) is under development with support of seven of its members and international institutions on food systems for healthy nutrition. Another agreement is being developed between the World Food Programme (WFP) Regional Centre of Excellence against Hunger and Malnutrition (CERFAM), Côte d'Ivoire and Agreenium to set up a network of actors for the dissemination of knowledge through virtual and in-the-field trainings.

For more information, see: https://en.agreenium.fr/actualites/agreenium-asset-service-frances-international-strategy-food-security-nutrition-and
3rd summer school of the MS-FSCC: successful experience sharing

The 3rd summer school of the Master of Science for Food Security and Climate Change (MS FSCC), organized by 4 universities in Southeast Asia and Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) around the theme "Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems in Vulnerable Areas", ended on 31 July 2019.

More than 40 participants from 17 European countries and Southeast Asia gathered at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) during the first week and then at Camarine Sur (southern Luzon Island) for a second week of a diagnostic exercise. During the closing ceremony, the students presented the results of their study to the partners they met during the diagnosis: farmers, processors, cooperatives, local authorities.

Dr. Edna A. Aguilar, Director of the Institute of Crop Sciences, College of Agriculture and Food Science, UPLB, organizer of the summer school said: "Today we are in globalized food systems, these exchanges allow us to better understand where the levers are to promote the integration of our farmers into this market, by ensuring them a fair remuneration, this is an issue for us today, and I believe that the summer school has allowed students to touch this reality".

Didier Pillot, project coordinator for Montpellier SupAgro said: "The summer school has two objectives, to work with students and to immerse them in an international context. In this respect, this summer school was a perfect example of success, as exchanges between students were encouraged, as well as contacts with farmers, particularly with their stay with local residents. It went very well and everyone came out satisfied. Nevertheless, with a group of 44 students, it was more difficult for the organizers to put them in a situation of complete autonomy with regard to the analysis methods envisaged. But the students’ confrontation in the field was already a major challenge and I think it was well met". The interviews to the students are available here https://en.agreenium.fr/sites/default/files/actu2_msfscc_avec_intro_vd.pdf. For more information on the MS-FSCC project, see: https://en.agreenium.fr/page/ms-fscc. The page of the event is available at: https://www.agreenium.fr/page/3e-ecole-dete-du-master-science-food-security-and-climate-change-15-31-juillet-2019

25 MOOCs have been produced by Agreenium in the field of life sciences

The "Bees and environment" Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) coordinated by Agreenium broke all records. Out of the 13,000 registered, 20% followed the entire MOOC against an average of 7%. As early as 2015, Agreenium participated in the creation of the FUN-MOOC "GIP". Four years later, 25 MOOCs were produced, accompanied and/or coordinated by Agreenium and its members, bringing together more than 65,000 people. Supported by l'Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (INRA), a member of Agreenium, in collaboration with other schools and research institutes, in partnership with professional actors and companies, the MOOC is an open and free online course that brings together a wide audience around general public or specialised themes.
Among the most followed, apart from the “Bees and environment” MOOC, which recorded more than 13,000 registrations, were the Vines and Wine MOOC and the Bio MOOC, with more than 10,000 registrations at each session. For more information concerning all MOOCs: https://www.fun-mooc.fr/universities/Agreenium/

**CATAS**

- **Series of international publications by CATAS scientists, including on new plant species**

The CATAS research team headed by Dr. Liu Guodao has found, named and published records of 85 new plant species in international journals, with 11 new species endemic to Hainan and 11 new in China
https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201911/15/WS5dce56e1a310cf3e35577b07.html

CATAS scientists also published:
- *Musa balbisiana* genome reveals subgenome evolution and functional divergence” in Nature Plants described the detailed genome map of the wild banana species Pisang Klutuk Wulung (BB genome), cooperating with BGI, CIRAD, Bioversity International and others: https://www.nature.xilesou.top/articles/s41477-019-0452-6
- “The chromosome-scale reference genome of black pepper provides insight into piperine biosynthesis” in Nature Communications provided the fine genomic map of “Reyin No.1”, a cultivated species of pepper in China: https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-019-12607-6

- **Forum to strengthen scientific and technological exchange among tropical countries**

The Second Belt and Road Forum on Tropical Agricultural Science and Technology Cooperation coorganized by CATAS, CIAT, Bioversity International, CATIE and International Society for Tropical Root Crops - Asia Branch (ISTRC-AB) was held in Haikou, capital of Hainan province, on 11 September 2019, aiming to strengthen scientific and technological exchange among tropical countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative and build an agricultural “scientific community” and “innovative community” that highlight equal, open, trust and win-win principles. The forum attracted more than 300 officials and experts from 31 countries and regions. The CATAS-CIAT Joint Laboratory for Tropical Agriculture in Asia-Pacific was established in the forum.
CATAS-CIAT-Bioversity Cooperation

CATAS, CIAT and Bioversity organized a Workshop & International Scientific and Technological Innovation Cooperation Seminar on Regional Tropical Agriculture which was held at CATAS for discussing cooperation themes and key projects of China-Asia Pacific countries and international organizations in the fields of tropical agricultural science and technology innovation cooperation, joint R&D platform construction, international technology transfer and personnel exchanges and visits.

CATAS-CIAT-Bioversity Cooperation Workshop held in 2019 at CATAS.

CATAS confirmed as FAO Reference Center for Tropical Agriculture

CATAS was redesignated by FAO as an FAO Reference Center for Tropical Agriculture Research and Training in the 10th Anniversary of the FAO-China South-South Cooperation Programme and Future Perspectives for South-South and Triangular Cooperation event held on 25 November in Kampala, Uganda.
Support of tropical agriculture by CATAS

CATAS has held 7 international training courses on tropical agriculture technology for 382 participants and 40 domestic training courses for 4000 Chinese farmers in the fields of tropical cash crops, tropical food crops, winter melon and vegetables, tropical forage and animal husbandry.

Developing Capacity to innovate in support of Value Chain Development in Pacific Island States

The four-year project “Promoting Nutritious Food Systems in the Pacific Islands” (https://innov4agpacific.pipso.org/fj/), that is co-funded by CTA and IFAD, has been building capacity at individual, organisational and institutional level, to enhance the performance of Pacific farmers’ organizations in support of the development of local food crops and fisheries value chains for improved nutrition and incomes in Pacific Island States. The project operates in Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu.
Seven national farmer leaders and experts received international training on the ‘Optimising the Performance of Producer Organisations (OPPO)’ approach ([https://images.agri-profocus.nl/upload/event/36_01_2019_OPPO1540905242.pdf](https://images.agri-profocus.nl/upload/event/36_01_2019_OPPO1540905242.pdf)) at the Wageningen University and Research - Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI) in the Netherlands. They were exposed to several tools and facilitation techniques to empower farmers and their organisations; key actors in agri-food sector transformation to analyse value chains, profile and categorise the actors and jointly design strategies to improve governance and create farmer-inclusive business models, with the involvement of the public and private sector including financiers.

Following the international training, the farmer leaders and experts received technical backstopping to apply the OPPO tools and lessons in their local context with the active engagement of multiple stakeholders and conduct targeted training workshops. Collectively, the Pacific OPPO champions have trained 450 individuals between May and November 2019, and plan to train 1300 more in the next 3 months. They have analysed priority value chains, developed strategies for enhancing governance and farmer-inclusive business cases. They have also supported upscaling the approach through face-to-face training sessions and online webinars, as well as by influencing policy processes.

One of the Fiji OPPO champions reported: “After functioning for 23 years, this is the first time that our cooperative is identifying and exploring options for value addition.” The Kiribati OPPO champion reported that the approach is included in the ministry’s operational plan of 2020. The Pacific Ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries attending the 2nd Pacific Week of Agriculture (PWA), in Samoa in October 2019 were also exposed to the approach.
By facilitating opportunities for interactive knowledge-based training as well as blended-learning through technical backstopping; both on- and offline at individual and organisational level, and supporting the creation of the enabling policy and institutional environment, the Innov4AgPacific project is contributing to developing capacity for strengthening agricultural innovation systems in Pacific Island States. An updated OPPO training manual (https://innov4agpacific.pipso.org.fj/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Draft-Pacific-OPPO-Manual.pdf) comprising all tools is being finalised and will be published early 2020 and made available on the Innov4AgPacific website.
Innovation outcomes such as increased agricultural productivity, sustainable management of natural resources, improved livelihoods, and food and nutrition security are largely dependent on the effectiveness and performance of the agricultural innovation systems, including the research and extension networks and the real impact they bring to the farming community.

Without adequate assessment and measurement of the properties and performance of an AIS and its sub-systems, such as the agricultural extension and advisory services (EAS), it is difficult for policymakers and practitioners to design approaches, promote policies and investments that foster greater innovation in agriculture. To that end, FAO Research and Extension unit is finalizing guidelines that help assess the AIS at national level and a guide of assessing the EAS at system level in the countries and is completing this work with a robust set of indicators and metrics to provide stronger evidence on the status of AIS and EAS to decision-makers and investors, to track the progress, measure the performance, and inform on their investment.

During the FAO technical workshop on assessment metrics for AIS and EAS, which took place in 18-20 November 2019 in Rome, Italy, country representatives from countries and practitioners from World Bank Enabling Business in Agriculture, Bill Gates Foundation, WIPO, OECD, IITA, AAPARI, GFRAS, CREA and others provided valuable feedback and appreciation of the assessment products and contributed to the development of an indicator framework to measure the progress and performance of the AIS and EAS.

The workshop highlighted that
(i) Diagnostics and related metrics are becoming crucial for governments and agrifood stakeholders to advance on the innovation agenda. The metrics can increase the transparency and help target policy and investment efforts, based on evidence. Metrics reduce the risks in governance and performance of AIS and EAS.

(ii) Current approaches for both assessments and metrics of AIS and EAS are not sufficiently exploring the complexity of the actors, their interactions, nor address efficiently the new political economy models, related to globalization, global challenges, democracy and pluralism.

(iii) Harmonized approaches and frameworks are pertinent to better guide the policy and investment processes in general and data collection at national level as routed in the national systems and encouraged FAO to translate the AIS complexity to meaningful, tangible, feasible and accurate metrics and further elaborate a harmonized indicator framework on AIS, including EAS in partnership with interested organizations with global and regional mandate and national governments.
Initial activities of the FAO/TAP-DeSIRA project

In the last three months FAO signed the FAO/TAP-DeSIRA project agreement with six countries (Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Eritrea, Malawi, Rwanda and Senegal) and consultations with remaining three countries (Colombia, Lao PDR and Pakistan) are in progress.

Inception missions took place in Burkina Faso, Eritrea and Rwanda in December 2019. The main purposes of these missions were to identify the national level focal points, recruitment of national project coordinators and setting up of the project teams, and to discuss with a wider group of project stakeholder and to refine the workplan based on the country needs. EU-delegation at country level were informed about the inception missions and efforts are underway to identify synergies for collaboration.

FARA

FARA’s support for Innovation Platforms, Agribusinesses and Multi-Stakeholder Platforms

Between May-June 2019, the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) launched a call for expressions of interest for support to Agricultural Innovation Platforms, Agribusinesses and Multi-Stakeholder Platforms operating in African countries. The call was also extended to those wishing to register as facilitators of agricultural innovation platforms on the "Innovation Platform Agribusiness Portal" hosted by FARA.

This exercise was carried out by FARA as a means of identifying those commodity-based innovation platforms that could be supported to scale proven agricultural technologies, such as through the ongoing “Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT)” funded by the African Development Bank, for which FARA is managing the Capacity Development and Technology Outreach component, working in collaboration with AFAAS, ASARECA, CORAF and CCARDESA and the NARS.

The call has received over 200 completed applications from 21 countries. Although the current opportunity from TAAT covers 10 countries in Africa, the list of applicants provides FARA with an interesting array of partners involved in agricultural innovation systems to consider and include in up-coming projects and for inclusion in future projects.

Currently FARA is carrying out the evaluation of the applications and encouraging the innovation platforms to provide more information about themselves through the Innovation Platform Agribusiness Platform (http://www.ipabp.org/about). Some of the chosen platforms will be included in an upcoming capacity audit of innovation platforms in 10 countries covered under the TAAT programme.

GCHERA

Conference on Transforming Higher Education with Emphasis on Soft Skills

During the 10th GCHERA World Conference in Nanjing, China, October 2019, a special session was organized around the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) project on transforming higher education. This project is a partnership between WKKF, GCHERA, the American University of Beirut (AUB) and EARTH University. The goal of the project is to catalyze curricular and pedagogical transformation in university education so that graduates are equipped to be future leaders with the commitment to serve society – leaders capable of positively affecting changes in their environment, promoting peace and understanding, and respecting diversity while contributing solutions for the major challenges of the 21st Century.
JIRCAS rewarded outstanding young researchers in agriculture

The Japan International Award for Young Agricultural Researchers (Japan Award) has been presented by Japan’s Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and supported by JIRCAS since 2007. This year, three young researchers from Colombia, Vietnam, and India won the award for their outstanding performance and achievements in agricultural research. The awarding ceremony took place on 26 November in Tsukuba, Japan. For more information: https://www.jircas.go.jp/en/event/2019/e20191126

RELASER work for innovation and pluralistic, demand-driven extension services

During the year 2019, RELASER network achieved important milestones in the framework of the implementation of the project “Delivering extension services to the last-mile: Improving smallholders’ access to innovation and pluralistic, demand-driven extension services”. Two regional workshops were organized. The first in July in Santiago, Chile and the second in September in Bogotá, Colombia.
In the second meeting, the general objective was to agree on the work plans for the year 2020 for the 3 participating country fora of the program (Colombia, Costa Rica and Granada), for the regional network and the guidelines for the medium term plan. With these two milestones accomplished, led by RELASER, the activities will start in 2020.

The objective of the program is to improve the capabilities of rural advisory services (RAS) to “effectively facilitate the flows of knowledge and technology within agricultural innovation systems to foster inclusive, resilient, sustainable family agriculture with a focus on markets”. The main results proposed are: (1) strengthened performance of RAS and (2) improved RAS learning.

The initiative will be implemented by the three main regional networks: African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS), Asia-Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services Network (APIRAS) and the Latin American Network for Rural Extension Services (RELASER)

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Fostering the Rural Extension debate across different sectors in Latin America

The national RELASER forums in Paraguay, Costa Rica and Honduras promoted the Rural Extension debate in their different countries. For its part, the RELASER Chile forum held several meetings where it integrated different sectors such as academia, producers and extensionists to discuss topics such as new extension methodologies, in particular those related to the use of new technologies. For its part, the RELASER Ecuador forum participated in the FAO Technical Workshop on Assessment Metrics for Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS) and Extension and Advisory Services (EAS) on 18-20 November at FAO headquarters in Rome. In 2020, RELASER expects to continue working for the promotion of rural extension in Latin America and the Caribbean, energizing information in sectors as relevant as rural youth and academia. For more information visit [www.relaser.org](http://www.relaser.org)

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Contact the TAP Secretariat

TAP is a G-20 initiative launched in 2012 to promote agricultural innovation in the tropics. TAP has formed a coalition of more than 40 partners. Its main goal is to strengthen agricultural innovation systems (AIS) in developing countries through coordinated multi-stakeholder interventions.

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Since August 2019 the EU supports TAP Action Plan through the project “Developing capacities in agricultural innovation systems: scaling up the TAP Framework” (DeSIRA), implemented by FAO.