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NSSP Workshop Report # 8

Launch of a Nigerian Agricultural Policy Researchers Network

Nigeria Strategy Support Program (NSSP)
Workshop Report No. 008

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IFPRI-ABUJA

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THE NIGERIA STRATEGY SUPPORT PROGRAM (NSSP) WORKSHOP REPORTS

ABOUT NSSP/PSF

The Agricultural Policy Support Facility (APSF) is an initiative to strengthen evidence-based policymaking in Nigeria in the areas of rural and agricultural development. Facilitated by the **Nigeria Strategy Support Program of the International Food Policy Research Institute** (IFPRI) in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources and funded by the Canadian International Development Agency, APSF supports the implementation of Nigeria's national development plans by strengthening agricultural-sector policies and strategies through:

Enhanced knowledge, information, data, and tools for the analysis, design, and implementation of pro-poor, gender-sensitive, and environmentally sustainable agricultural and rural development policies and strategies in Nigeria;

Strengthened capacity for government agencies, research institutions, and other stakeholders to carry out and use applied research that directly informs agricultural and rural policies and strategies; and

Improved communication linkages and consultations between policymakers, policy analysts, and policy beneficiaries on agricultural and rural development policy issues.

ABOUT THESE WORKSHOP REPORTS

The Nigeria Strategy Support Program (NSSP) Workshop Reports provide a review of the presentations delivered during workshops and key comments from the audience and group discussions. The comments from the participants do not necessarily reflect those of IFPRI.

Launch of a Nigerian Agricultural Policy Researchers Network¹

Abuja, Nigeria
April 22, 2009

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¹ Compiled by Sheu Salau, Senior Research Assistant, IFPRI

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Introduction

One of the key activities of the Agricultural Policy Support Facility (APSF) is to improve communication linkages and consultations between policymakers, policy analysts, and policy beneficiaries on agricultural and rural development policy issues. In the light of this, the APSF in October 2008 began to identify those who could contribute to evidence-based agricultural and rural development policymaking in Nigeria. This culminated in the development of a central database.

The need to move from a database of agricultural policy researchers experts to a functional network of agricultural policy experts led to the launch of an Agricultural Policy Researchers Network. The launch brought together about twenty-nine participants from academia, research institutes, the Central Bank of Nigeria, the private sector, and the Ministry of Environment, among others. (See Appendix A for the participant list).

The objective of the launch was to begin the process of formalizing exchange of knowledge and information among agricultural policy researchers. The forum deliberated on the appropriate vision, mission and goals for the network; how to ensure its sustainability; and other essential elements needed to kick start the activities of this network of professional agricultural policy researchers. (See Appendix B for the agenda.)

The ultimate aim of this initiative is to establish a platform where researchers can network seamlessly from the comfort of their offices and ultimately have an active voice in the policymaking process in the country.

The remainder of this report presents opening remarks, presentations, and discussions at the plenary, and next steps.

Opening Remarks

Professor S.O. Akande, Director General, Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) observed in his remarks that there is a changing paradigm within the policy landscape in Nigeria -- a rare opportunity that the network can capitalize on to win the attention of the authorities. According to Prof. Akande, policy research results and actionable programs emanating from such research are no longer ending up on the shelves. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (FMAWR), whose mandate is to formulate and implement policies for the sector, is now poised at implementing the policy options or recommendations of policy researchers. This is a departure from what was obtainable in the past.

Commenting further, he reiterated the important role the agricultural sector can play in the nation's quest to generate employment opportunities, meet food supply need, and achieve the compelling desire to diversify the economy away from oil. Finally, he submitted that given the importance of the sector, such a network of agricultural policy researchers is equally important. More so, most of the researchers present are on familiar ground because they already belong to one network or the other. His hopes are that this network will transform into a pressure group that could attract attention of the government and ultimately ensure that agricultural policies and strategies are analytically supported.

Dr. Shashidhara Kolavalli, Interim Program Leader, Nigeria Strategy Support Program, also welcomed the participants on behalf of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). He commented on the expectations of APSF's donor, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), to strengthen the capacity of FMAWR to perform policy analysis and design, and to implement agricultural policies and strategy based on evidence.

He distinguished between building organizations' capacities and building individual capability. IFPRI's approach has been to collaborate with academics in Nigeria in undertaking policy research while

developing a knowledge system that seeks to share existing knowledge and bring together the knowledge base in Nigeria to share independent research. He stressed that academics or policy researchers need independence when conducting policy-relevant agricultural research to have an unbiased influence on the policy process.

Why a Nigerian Agricultural Policy Researchers Network

Professor G. B. Ayoola, President, Farm and Infrastructure Foundation (FIF) noted that events within the policy landscape have not put the policy researchers at the forefront and this continues to constrain both the use of research in the process as well as the participation of researchers. Actions and inaction by government constitute policy, and many agricultural policies are somewhat implicit.

To change the situation and put Nigeria on the path of evidence-based policymaking, researchers need to come together as a group to exert pressure on government through advocacy and lobbying. Key issues coming from his observations are:

- Need to coordinate research efforts into a knowledge system

- Differences in methodologies or policy perspectives need to be harmonized to have a unifying and active voice

- Research efforts must address development issues

- Need to protect the interest of researchers

- Need to clearly define who the clients are, and at what level to operate to have the desired impact, and

- Need to establish a process to kick start the network

Vision, Mission and Goals

Professor Dayo Phillip, University of Agriculture, Abeokuta began by sharing with the participants the definitions of vision, mission and goals (see Appendix C). He also explored the interrelationship among the three words. Essentially, mission derives from organization's vision while goals of any organization must be premised on both the vision and mission.

He listed four steps as critical to setting up a goal. They are:

- Determining various stakeholders

- Identifying concerns of various stakeholder group

- Stating problems in positive outcome, and

- Disaggregating outcome statements into subgroups. For example, "increasing the rate of employment" is a form of outcome statement, and it needs to be disaggregated further by clearly stating for whom, where, how much and by when those proposing such goal want it achieved.

He noted that it is also important to have a logical framework where the connectedness of vision, mission, goals, outcomes and indicators are specified. This is expected to be very useful in monitoring goals and outcomes.

Structure of the Network

To guide the discussion on which network structure to select, Dr. Hiroyuki Takeshima, a post doctoral fellow with IFPRI, gave a brief framework of possible types of structure for the network. He touched on

the advantages and disadvantages of vertical (hierarchical) and horizontal structures. Critical points to consider when deciding on which structure to adopt are the need to function well as a team, need for efficient flow of information, whether or not to have some level of moderation or control, scale of economy, division of labor, and the need to create sub groups within the network.

Ensuring Sustainability of the Network

Professor Eric Eboh, African Institute for Applied Economics, noted that a facility to promote the relevance of research in the policy process is long overdue and sees the network as a way to formalize the exchange of knowledge and ideas, which is crucial to a good knowledge system.

According to him, the network can only be sustainable if it can add value to the policymaking process. To add value, the network must stimulate demand for its research, and its members must be prepared to generate research relevant to contemporary policy questions.

One prominent point he raised for sustainability is ownership by its members and continued growth of the network. Other issues he raised for consideration in sustaining this network were:

- Cohesiveness of the network

- Its structure

- Constituency delineation (target audience)

- Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to minimize risk of collapse, hijack, manipulation and piracy

- Funding

Finally, he submitted that until the policy institutions start funding research they would not have value for research.

Communication Strategy for the Network

Valerie Rhoe, Programme Coordinator, IFPRI, underscored the need to have good communication tools for the network. She introduced the participants to some of the web-based resources (such as blog, wiki, LinkedIn and Dgroups) that IFPRI currently uses to share information. These web resources, according to her, are to a large extent free and are user friendly. She pointed out that having efficient communication will reduce the transaction costs associated with the search for information and knowledge, especially for members of the network, and will allow members to engage each other in dialogue on a regular basis.

She submitted that having a good communication strategy would require answering the following questions:

- Who is your targeted audience?

- What type of information does the network want to convey or share among each other?

- What approaches are best at conveying such type of information?

Discussion

The following issues were discussed and agreed upon by the meeting:

Secretariat

One of the issues that attracted serious deliberation among participants was whether the network should have a secretariat and the appropriate place to locate it. It was noted that a heavily structured

secretariat may be difficult to fund, hence a simple secretariat and a steering committee (SC) were suggested. Some of the participants believed that for the network to have government's blessing and be long-lasting, such a secretariat should be located within a government institution (FMAWR and the Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria [ARCN] were suggested). Others felt that to have the level of independence required to influence policy, the network should operate outside a government institution. It was generally agreed that in the interim, IFPRI will house the secretariat, which will evolve over time. It was also agreed that the SC will liaise with IFPRI on behalf of the network.

Ownership

The issue of ownership attracted serious deliberations among participants, perhaps because of its direct bearing on the network's independence. The consensus was that the independence of individual researchers as well as the network must be protected against outside influences. This consensus is premised on a general opinion that the owner is at liberty to dictate what to do and what not to do. To achieve the level of independence required for having an unbiased influence, it was agreed that members of the network be made owners of the network. The members will be responsible for running and sustaining the activities of the network.

Membership

On the membership of the network, it was agreed that all participants at the launch would constitute the core members. Membership was further defined as anyone qualified, actively involved in agricultural policy research, and willing to be part of the network. Membership was seen as key to the sustainability of the network. It was also recommended that the definition of membership be premised on the value-end identified by the network. For instance, if increasing the use of the research is the value-end to operate, Directors of Planning, Policy Analysis and Statistics (PPAS) at FMAWR could be considered as potential members.

To ensure sustainability, it was recommended that membership should include corporate members, and institutional members as well as technocrats. The example of the PropCom-supported NESG Rice Network was cited and it was argued that after PropCom pulled out, the corporate members continued to help the network function. A distinction was also made about who are the members and who are the beneficiaries of the network. It was then agreed that membership needed to be restrictive and yet representative. Following this idea, a suggested list of stakeholders was provided as follows:

- Agricultural policy researchers
- Policy Experts -- independent policy researchers and policymakers
- Farmers Associations
- Relevant ministries such as FMAWR, Environment, etc.
- Legislature
- Executive branch
- Donor community

Structure

Both a vertical and horizontal structure was adopted. The network will adopt the vertical structure for purposes of control and relationship with target audience and other stakeholders, and the horizontal structure will be applied within the network among its members. A concern was raised about whether there is need for the network to have subgroups but the matter was referred to the steering committee (SC) for consideration.

Name

The Nigerian Agricultural Policy Researchers Network (NAPNET) was suggested. This was immediately followed by series of diverging views on whether or not to include the word “research” in the name. In the end, it was agreed that the word research be included, and the SC was tasked to undertake further scrutiny of the appropriateness of the name.

Steering Committee Membership

The discussion identified the need for a steering committee to be set up to craft the vision, mission, goals, and other details of the network. A nine member steering committee was proposed and agreed upon. Each member represents one of the key constituencies for the network. They are:

Professor Dayo Phillip -- Academics

Professor Eric Eboh -- Academics

Prof. G. B. Ayoola -- Academics

Dr. (Mrs.) Ajani -- Academics

Donor Agency -- yet to be filled

Dr. Asumugha Godwin -- National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI)

Dr. (Mrs.) Ngozi Egbuna -- Central Bank of Nigeria

Innocent Azih -- Private sector

Ministry of Agriculture -- yet to be filled

The SC has the overall responsibility of coordinating the activities and affairs of the network, and representing the interests of the network in different fora. The SC was given until the end of May to put up a submission on the various issues identified in the Terms of Reference (ToR) listed below:

Terms of Reference for the SC

Consider the name suggested during the launch, and recommend whether to adopt it or change

Come up with vision, missions and goals for the network

Given the issues raised on the appropriate structure, decide the structure upon which the network will operate

Deliberate and make a final decision on the need to have subgroups based on areas of specialty

Define membership for the network

Finalize the issue of secretariat and its location

Decide on what to communicate and how best to do it

Come up with feasible funding prospects for the network (consider linking activities of the network to any of the existing network's major events)

Come up with activities and budget for the network.

Next Steps

IFPRI is to create a virtual discussion group (Dgroup) for the network. Following this, the steering committee is expected to begin their assigned activities based on the terms of reference agreed upon by the group, come up with a document to guide the activities of the network and appropriately define the role IFPRI will play.

Appendix A: Participants List

S/N	Name	Institution	E-mail address	Phone Number
1	Dr. E.O. Idowu,	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife	eidowu@oauife.edu.ng	08037263471
2	Prof Dayo Phillip	University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	dayophil@yahoo.com	08037136628
3	Dr. N. Egbuna	Central Bank of Nigeria	ngegbuna@yahoo.com	08023966701
4	B.A.G. Amoo	Central Bank of Nigeria	bagamoo@yahoo.com	08059050944
5	Gloria Ujor	Federal Ministry of Environment	gloria134real@yahoo.com & gloriaujor@hotmail.com	08059650140
6	Prof Ayoola Gbolagade	Farm & Infrastructure Foundation(FIF)	gbayoola@yahoo.com	08055211560
7	Dr (Mrs.) Victoria Okwoche	University of Agriculture Makurdi	okwoche.victoria@yahoo.com	08020872184
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17	Dr. Asumgha Godwin	National Root Crop Research Institute, Umudike	gnaumugha@yahoo.com	08035086533
18	Dr. Raphael Omolehin	Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	raph201@yahoo.com	08036554983
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26	Shashidhara Kolavalli	International Food Policy Research Institute(IFPRI)	k.shashidhara@cgiar.org	

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29	Sheu Salau	International Food Policy Research Institute(IFPRI)	s.salau@cgiar.org	08033241506

Appendix B: Agenda

Launch of a Nigerian Agricultural Policy Research Network 22nd April 2009

Chairman: Prof. Latunji Akande, Director General, NISER

- 9:00-9:10 Welcome
Dr. Shashi Kolavalli, Interim Program Leader, IFPRI
- 9:10 – 9:20 Introduction of Participants
- 9:20-9:50 Why a Nigerian Agricultural Policy Researcher Network?
Prof. G. B. Ayoola, Director, Farm and Infrastructure Foundation
- 9:40-10:30 Setting the Vision, Mission, and Goals of this Network
Prof Dayo Phillip, University of Agriculture, Abeokuta
- 10:30-10:45 Tea Break
- 10:45-12:15 Structure of the Network (small group discussions & plenary)
Dr. Hiroyuki Takeshima, postdoctoral Fellow, IFPRI
- 12:15-1:15 Lunch (Name for the Network)
Chairman: Prof. O. A. Omotesho, University of Ilorin
- 1:15-2:45 Ensuring sustainability of the Network (small group discussions & plenary)
Prof E.C. Eboh, African Economics Association
- 2:45-3:00 Tea Break
- 3:00-4:30 Communication Strategy for the Network (small group discussion & Plenary)
Valerie Rhoe, Program Coordinator, IFPRI
- 4:15-4:30 Next Meeting
- 4:30-4:40 Closing Remarks
Dr. P. Amaza, University of Maiduguri
- 4:40-4:45 Vote of Thanks
Sheu Salau, Senior Research Assistant, IFPRI

Appendix C: Presentations

- Why a Nigerian Agricultural Policy Researchers Network
- Setting the Visions, Missions and Goals of this Network
- Structure of the Network
- Ensuring Sustainability of the Network
- Communication Strategy for the Network

