



## Press Release

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### **African countries south of the Sahara must double investment in agricultural R&D, report finds**

*New report analyzes trends in investments and human resource capacity in African agricultural R&D  
New online tools enable cross-country comparisons and rankings of key R&D indicators*

**Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 November, 2014** – African countries south of the Sahara will need to double their investment in agricultural research and development if ambitious United Nations and African Union targets are to be achieved, according to a new report issued by researchers at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

This is one of many findings of a [report](#) entitled, “Taking Stock of National Agricultural R&D Capacity in Africa South of the Sahara,” produced by the Agricultural Science and Technology Indicators ([ASTI](#)) program led by IFPRI. The report is being presented at the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) in Johannesburg during a three-day conference that begins today. The conference marks the launch of the Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa, which identifies a suite of issues and options for increasing and deepening the contributions of science to agriculture in Africa.

ASTI researchers attending the conference will also launch a new set of interactive tools designed to enable policymakers and researchers to better track progress in African R&D investment and capacity over time and facilitate cross-country comparisons.

“It is critical that African countries invest more in agricultural research to ensure that they can feed their populations,” said Nienke Beintema, head of ASTI and one of the authors of the report. “Underinvestment, inadequate human resource capacity, poor research infrastructure, and a lack of coherent policies continue to constrain the quantity and quality of research outputs in many countries.”

The report found that, although agricultural R&D spending and human resource capacity has grown considerably in the region since 2000, it was concentrated in only a few African countries. Other key findings include:

- Low salary levels and poor conditions of service have led to high researcher turnover across Africa. In addition, a very large share of senior researchers are approaching retirement.
- Female scientists remain grossly underrepresented in agricultural R&D, despite the fact that they are in a unique position to effectively address the pressing challenges facing African farmers, the majority of whom are female.
- Donor dependency and funding volatility remain critical in many countries. The research agendas of countries with very high shares of donor funding can be skewed toward short-term goals that are not necessarily aligned with national or regional priorities.

African governments and research agencies are limited in their choice of options to address the many challenges they face in developing their agricultural research systems because of funding constraints. The ASTI report lists various successful policy changes already adopted in certain countries, which can offer valuable lessons for other countries.

“Addressing these R&D challenges will be critical to enhancing future agricultural productivity,” said Gert-Jan Stads, one of the authors of the report. “The implementation of the Science Agenda is extremely important for the development of African agriculture. Today’s launch of the ASTI report is intended to serve as an important input into, and a potential benchmark for, the implementation of the Science Agenda and the broader development agenda for the region.”

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*The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) seeks sustainable solutions for ending hunger and poverty. IFPRI was established in 1975 to identify and analyze alternative national and international strategies and policies for meeting the food needs of the developing world, with particular emphasis on low-income countries and on the poorer groups in those countries. [www.ifpri.org](http://www.ifpri.org).*

