



# **Africa RISING West Africa Steering Committee Meeting**

## **03 February, 2017**

### **Accra, Ghana**

## **Minutes of Meeting**

**February, 2017**

[www.africa-rising.net](http://www.africa-rising.net)



**FEED THE FUTURE**  
The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## **Present**

1. Michael Abberton, IITA – Chair; on behalf of Robert Asiedu
2. Irmgard Hoeschle – Zeledon, IITA - Secretary
3. Tabo Ramadjita, ICRISAT
4. Cofie Olufunke, IWMI
5. Carlo Azzari, IFPRI
6. Diarisso Niamoye, IER
7. Asamoah Larbi, IITA
8. Jonathan Odhong', IITA
9. Kwaku Agyemang, CSIR

## **Apologies**

1. Kehinde Makinde, AGRA
2. Robert Asiedu, IITA, represented by Michael Abberton

## **Absent**

1. Ousmane Ndoeye, CORAF

## **Agenda**

1. Welcome and introduction of new PSC members
2. Follow up on action points from previous meeting
3. Brief reports from: (i) the Africa RISING West Africa phase 1 legacy workshop in Mali, (ii) training workshop on farming systems research methods in Ghana, and (iii) program-wide science for impact event in Tanzania.
4. Communications update
5. Reflection on Review and Planning meeting including change in partnerships
6. Update on new staff recruitment
7. Briefing about ESA Steering Committee meeting, Program Coordination Team (PCT) and the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG)
8. PSC membership and issues
9. Any Other Business

The meeting was called to order by the chair at 8:40 am.

### **1. Welcome introduction of new PSC members**

Abberton welcomed members to the fifth Africa RISING West Africa Steering Committee meeting. Next, a new member of the PSC – Cofie Olufunke, IWMI (representing international research institutes in the committee) introduced herself to the members. The circulated agenda was then adopted for discussion.

### **2. Follow up on action points from previous meeting**

Members went through minutes of the previous meeting and the following issues were raised for discussion and further action.

i. **Encourage scientists to participate in conferences as a means to encourage publication of project results.**

Larbi reported that all notices for upcoming conferences have been circulated to project partners since the previous PSC meeting; however the situation hadn't changed much. Reminders have also been sent out on the value of publishing scientific outputs in Thomson index listed journals, yet still nearly all the national research institutions involved in the project did not follow the advice. Larbi noted that in phase 1, there were a total of 18 publications from the Africa RISING West Africa team, but they were all not in Thomson index journals. An end of phase 1 legacy write shop was organized in December 2016 and he was hopeful that nearly half of the presented manuscripts could make the mark to Thomson index journals. Azzarri raised his doubts.

**Action:** Project management to: (i) keep on encouraging all scientists involved in the project to participate in conferences and publish in reputable journals; (ii) capture better all the participation in conferences by project partners; (iii) consider pair participation in conferences (IRS-NRS) ; (iv) ensure that students, who complete their research submit a paper before they leave the project; (v) make publications compulsory in the sub-contracts and check progress before disbursement of next tranche of funds.

ii. **Recognition of research and other contributions from IFPRI, WUR, gender specialist and economist.**

This was noted by members still to be a weak point within the project that needs to be tightened up. In this context, members were wondering whether the right research questions were asked by the researchers and whether research plans are always coming with literature evidence. Members felt that the project is still doing things that are economically not viable or not gender friendly and therefore more integration of gender research results and typologies was needed.

**Action:** More leadership on use of research outputs from IFPRI, WUR, gender specialist and economist in the planning and implementation of project activities requested from the Chief Scientist. The work plan template should include linkages to other researchers and provide information how scaling will be addressed.

iii. **Post-harvest and dry-season vegetable production activities.**

Larbi informed the committee that a research associate position (for post-harvest) has been advertised and applications are incoming with the interview for the position scheduled for 17<sup>th</sup> February 2017. The incumbent, who will be based in Tamale, will now be the point person to implement post-harvest activities in Africa RISING Ghana and supervised by Dr. A. Adebayo, IITA post-harvest specialist based in Tanzania.

The dry season vegetable production was mainly hindered by the fact that there were no boreholes sunk yet at the sites where the activities were being implemented. However, this situation has now been redressed and all the sites have fully equipped boreholes for lift. In the current dry season, there is some production going on (for vegetables), however the water available is still not sufficient. The fence in one of the 6 sites also needs to be repaired.

**iv. R4D Platforms are expected to play important role, yet they are not functional.**

A consultancy was offered, and training was done for the platform coordinators and executive members of the 6 district R4D platforms, however it is still not visible what change has come about from the training. No further R4D platform meetings or actions have been reported since then.

**Action:** Shift focus to work more with community platforms that already exist. Larbi to oversee this change. Members also noted that in shifting focus to community platforms, the teams should still aim to link up with other existing platforms at the district level for particular issues. The 6 R4D platforms established by Africa RISING will not be revived.

**v. The capacity and commitment of SARI.**

Larbi reported that there was a change of approach with regards to SARI. He noted that the participation of SARI will be reduced in phase 2 and restricted to Drs Buah and Sugri. Agyemang also noted that the CSIR head office can ensure improved respecting of obligations by SARI partners.

**Action:** List of scientists of all CSIR institutes partnering with Africa RISING and their expected deliverables should be sent by Larbi to Agyemang for continued internal monitoring. Agyemang committed to help in ensuring responsiveness of CSIR partners.

**vi. Collaboration with USAID Mission in Ghana.**

Zeledon reported that this collaboration has been actively pursued and some headway has been made. However there are still very minimal interactions with the projects they fund, that are working in northern Ghana. She noted that as a result, there have been some missed opportunities. More will continue to be done by the project management to encourage this collaboration.

**vii. Upload of data to CKAN.**

Larbi reported that there was good progress made in this regards, particularly in Mali. However he raised the issue that the number of data sets shouldn't be criteria for evaluating good upload progress, but rather more focus should be on the size of the data set uploaded. It was noted by the members that from the figures of upload progress presented by the M&E team, there was probably still more data sets from both Ghana and Mali that are still yet to be uploaded to CKAN.

**Action:** Azzari to provide Larbi with a list of data that has been uploaded in phase 1 from both Ghana and Mali for follow up to ensure everything that should have been uploaded is added (compare with number of experiments carried out). Still leadership and commitment needs to be enforced to ensure that the focal points better use CKAN and PMMT.

**viii. Membership and participation of CORAF in the PSC.**

It was noted by members that the participation of CORAF in PSC activities was still not happening. Zeledon informed that she had brought this to the attention of the CORAF Executive Director, but did not get a response.

**Action:** Zeledon to write to the CORAF Executive Director again on his personal email and gauge the response for a decision on their membership in the PSC to be made at or before the next meeting.

**3. Brief reports from: (i) the Africa RISING West Africa phase 1 legacy workshop in Mali, (ii) training workshop on farming systems research methods in Ghana, and (iii) program-wide science for impact event in Tanzania.**

**i. Africa RISING West Africa phase 1 legacy workshop in Mali**

The meeting was held on 12 – 13 December, 2016 to help scientists get results and data from the project published. 29 draft publications were presented and reviewed. So far 3 papers have been submitted to peer reviewed journals that are in the Thomson index master list. The internal/external peer review approach prior to the meeting worked out quite well. At least 50% of the manuscripts were considered not suitable for Thomson listed journals.

Members deliberated what to do with the content that was not yet at the “peer review” publication level. Could they be made into other alternative publications? There was an initial plan to publish conference proceedings.

**Action:** Larbi to oversee formation of an internal review committee to take a second look at the quality of all the publications presented at the meeting with the aim of publishing a conference proceedings. Publication in local journals would be acceptable for MSc students’ work. Larbi to budget for the proceedings in the Ghana work plan.

**ii. Training workshop on farming systems research methods in Ghana**

The idea for the training came up during a meeting by the Africa RISING ESA. The researchers requested for training on farming systems research methods. Management therefore organized the training first for Africa RISING ESA scientists in October 2016 and they really appreciated the value. A similar training was therefore organized for the West Africa scientists on 30 and 31 January 2017 and they appreciated its value addition to their work. The training was provided by Ric Coe from Statistics for Sustainable Development, UK. The training was very practical and scientists sent in their data, which they used during the practical sessions, in advance of the meeting.

**iii. Program-wide science for impact event in Tanzania**

The meeting was held 17 – 19 January with diverse participation by scientists, USAID representatives, development project representatives, project implementing partners and government. There were intense discussions about Africa RISING Phase 2 and a review of phase 1 achievements/outputs (through posters). There were also presentations on scaling models and approaches being applied by different Africa RISING projects and other projects that Africa RISING could learn from. 5 communities of practice that are cross-cutting across the program were launched to help with integration and harmonization within the wider Africa RISING program.

#### **4. Communications update**

Odhong updated PSC members about some changes with regards to communication work – at program and project level.

- At program level – An additional communications specialist was being recruited to handle some of the higher level program responsibilities. This will be an ILRI staff who will work with the communications focal points for the three regional projects to achieve certain set goals for Africa RISING in phase 2. Since three weeks now, the project management team has also been updated that Peter Ballantyne, who has been leading Africa RISING program communications (in his capacity as the head of ILRI Communications Unit) will be leaving at the end of March 2017.
- Changes to respond to country level communication needs at project level:
  - A communication specialist is being recruited to support Africa RISING activities in Ghana. The incumbent who will be based in IITA Tamale office will work 60% for Africa RISING while the rest of his/her time will be dedicated to supporting communications activities in other IITA projects operating out of the Tamale office. The incumbent will work under the guidance of the Africa RISING West Africa and East/Southern Africa Research Communication Specialist in Ibadan.
  - Discussions are still ongoing for a permanent solution for Mali. Tabo noted that a communications assistant had been recruited for the Hope project and ICRISAT and maybe this person could support Africa RISING communications too? An update on this will be given at the next PSC meeting.
- Communication activities to support scaling:
  - Discussions are underway with Farm Radio International (FRI) for a joint activity in Mali to support scaling of select Africa RISING project technologies. The activity will be anchored on use of radio supported by mobile telephone and other ICT tools that have been applied by FRI in other projects with a view to helping the project meet the numbers presented in the scaling targets for Africa RISING Mali. Budget is a major limitation for the scope of this proposed activity and a report on progress will be provided at the next steering committee meeting.

#### **5. Reflection on Review and Planning meeting including change in partnerships.**

Going round the table, PSC members had the following reflections about the just concluded Africa RISING West Africa Review and Planning meeting:

**i. Victor Agyemang**

There will be stronger and more responsive participation of CSIR institutes in Africa RISING phase 2. A multi-institutional approach will be a critical success factor to achieve the scaling targets presented for phase 2.

**ii. Asamoah Larbi**

I consider the meeting a success. One of the key objectives was for project partners to get an opportunity to review the phase 2 logframe for West Africa project. I also felt that the spread of stakeholder participants at the meeting was great. The discussions on scaling were sort of incomplete. There will be follow up on work plans finalization with implementing partners.

**iii. Diarisso Niamoye**

The meeting was great. It allowed different participants from different countries to interact. There is need to strengthen project focus on partnership for achievement of the scaling results. And finally, what is the best process for selecting activities that will be implemented in phase 2 of the project?

**iv. Carlo Azzarri**

The research team needs to know in advance that there will be a steering committee evaluating the proposal for activities that they will submit. I also hope that everybody is on board with the detailed work plan template presented by the Chief Scientist at the meeting. Our scaling / innovations to scale is still very broad, not focused. Probably some deliberate choices need to be made to make sure it is narrowed down? There was no discussion about the revisions of the logframe made by the participants.

**v. Cofie Funke**

The meeting was very well organized and the facilitation was great. As a participant I felt very engaged. The last two exercises were key (on logframe review and listing of proposed sub-activities on the work plan), but we didn't get to fully participate and wrap our heads around them. It would have been good for example (on the logframe review) that each output group report back on their feedback. Probably the meeting could have used an extra-day or two to ensure everything is well concluded. Probably the country teams should also have some follow up meetings to ensure that all aspects of planning are well concluded. On hindsight, probably the poster session should have been based on the technologies for scaling that were presented during the review and planning meeting in 2016. There are also different pathways for scaling, not only what was presented. AMEED in Mali is too expensive. Each researcher should be held responsible for scaling the technologies he/she has developed and validated. Africa RISING should link up with TAAT. Funds from TAAT are going to partners and Africa RISING should not fund the same partners for scaling. It would also be helpful for project partners to be given some guidelines for scaling. **I will share some samples with project management for a decision.**

**vi. Tabo Ramadjita**

A very good meeting, in general. The meeting could have probably been better served if the poster session on the first day actually focused on scalable technologies. There were good presentations on M&E by Carlo and Thomas Wobill. The diversity of people and participation levels was also great!

**vii. Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon**

I think the session on the first day about posters was still a good start, but probably the next step should have been to also include the list of scalable technologies that were presented at the review and planning meeting last year. Discussion on scaling was dominating. Africa RISING remains a research program. Outcome 4 helps with scaling.

**viii. Michael Abberton**

Diversity of participants was good, but also worrying. While the breadth of partners seeking to be part of Africa RISING is a good thing, it is also a weakness because it could imply a lack of focus. Breadth can lead to confusion and it is also clear that the budget is very limited. It is absolutely critical that phase 2 of the project has to build on phase 1 research. There is a big

need to identify the scalable technologies and focus on some. What process was gone through to decide that the two value chains (Guinea fowl and maize) will be scaled?

## **6. Updates on new staff recruitments**

Zeledon briefed members of the progress of the following recruitments in the project:

- Communication Specialist (additional shared IRS position at program level and based in ILRI Addis); advertised
- Farming systems specialist (IRS position for Africa RISING West Africa Project, based in IITA Tamale); screening of applications ongoing
- Gender Specialist (National position, based in Accra)
- Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (National position, based in Bamako)
- Communication Specialist (National position, based in Tamale); advertised
- Post-harvest Research Associate (National position, based in Tamale), advertised

It was noted by the committee that for avoidance of confusion and duplicity within the project, communication lines for the new recruits and the existing cross-regional staff with the project partners needed to be clarified by the project management.

## **7. Briefing about ESA Steering Committee meeting, Program Coordination Team (PCT) and the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG)**

### **ESA Steering Committee meeting**

The previous meeting for ESA steering committee was in 1 July, 2016. The meeting focused a lot on the comments of the external reviewers from USAID. Other matters focused on included: draft phase 2 proposals, whether a criterion existed within the project for farmer selection, and the standards of partner engagement. A conclusion by the ESA steering committee was that Africa RISING phase 2 requires some new areas of expertise that aren't currently available within the project, the project management will probably need to drop some partners and bring others on board to carry out the work described in the draft proposals.

### **Program Coordination Team (PCT)**

The PCT has been mainly busy with preparing the Program proposal for phase 2 and the planning for the science for impact event and agreeing on ToR for the additional Comms person at Africa RISING program level. There is a change in the chairpersonship of PCT from Siboniso Moyo of ILRI to Bernard VanLauwe of IITA since October 2016.

### **Scientific Advisory Group (SAG)**

This team was meant to be an external advisory group to look at the science being implemented by Africa RISING. However, it has been dysfunctional for some time because of the stepping down of members. A decision has been made by the PCT members to revive it. Suggestions for new members of the SAG are currently being received by the PCT. The PCT is seeking distinguished scientists who are in a position to dedicate their time (8 days in a year) to advising Africa RISING on scientific aspects of the program. Tabo and Cofie gave some suggestions.

**Zeledon to follow up with them on the two names.**



## **8. PSC membership and issues**

It was noted that in certain cases, responses by some of the PSC members to requests from the secretary was less than ideal. For example, when comments were requested for the proposal and work plans only a few members provided input. After deliberation by members a resolution was reached that PSC members needed to be more involved and committed to requests sent to them for action.

## **9. Any Other Business**

Zeledon informed members about a request from the West Africa Soil Health Consortium to contribute Africa RISING data to their soil health database. The members asked to respond positively.

There being no other business, the meeting was ended at 13:15. The date, time and venue of the next PSC meeting will be communicated to members at a future date.

Ibadan, 9 February, 2017

I. Hoeschle-Zeledon (Secretary) and J. Odhong'

**PSC Africa RISING West Africa Project**