Knowledge and Information Management

Why Knowledge Management

In the ECA sub region, a lot of data and information continue to be generated at local, national and regional levels by a range of stakeholders. However, much of this remains in raw form and, therefore, not useful or accessible to those who need it most. In addition, significant amounts of data are of little value because their integrity has not been tested through analysis and use. These data need to be transformed into knowledge products that are reliable, up-to-date, in the right format and in the right place. End-users also need support in learning how to access and adapt new information to their own unique contexts such as evidence based policy formulation, investment decision making, monitoring and evaluating impact of interventions and capacity building among other uses.

Main focus

This thematic area focuses on improving the management and access to reliable and up-to-date data, information and knowledge to inform agricultural transformation decision making processes and action in the ECA sub region. This is being realized through advocating for and utilizing pathways through which data, information, knowledge and tools relevant for AR4D can increasingly be placed in the public domain.

Under the thematic area, ASARECA is mobilizing higher level regional analyses to bring together national data to provide significant added value to data collection efforts. In addition, quality data collection and expert analysis is being harnessed as the basis for more robust prediction and forecasting to inform longer term decision making and investments at the national and regional levels. Results of these analyses are used to generate knowledge products that are made accessible to different clients through various forms.

The strategic result areas required to deliver this thematic area include:

1. Establishing and managing regional technology and information clearing house;
2. Establishing and managing regional data bases, system models and decision-support tools; and
3. Establishing and managing functional platforms for communicating and exchanging knowledge and information.

Challenges and Opportunities

Some of the major challenges, stated in the opportunity format, that this thematic area is addressing include the following:

- Enhancing the use of revolutionary information communication technologies to open new avenues for knowledge management.
- Establishing databases and ensuring their regular updating and strengthening to address gaps and keep the data and information up to date.
- Improving the mechanisms, infrastructure and incentives for agricultural knowledge and information management.
• Improving systematic collection and collation of the existing data and information produced by various institutions to improve storage and access.
• Enhancing quality, relevance and coherence of data from research programmes and project to improve their value in planning and decision making processes.
• Inculcating knowledge and information sharing practice among stakeholders as a critical prerequisite for sparking creative thinking and innovativeness.
• Improving linkages and communication between data suppliers and users to enhance data collection, analysis, sharing and utilization.
• Establishing systems for capture and storage of data from different sources in readily accessible formats for analysis and use in different ways and purposes.
• Improving access to information by the public, policymakers and planners for use in evidence based policy formulation and planning processes.
• Strengthening, harnessing and integration of indigenous and farmer knowledge into mainstream agricultural knowledge management systems for dissemination.

Key achievements

• Development of Knowledge strategies: Through a consultative process, which aligns ASARECA’s Knowledge Management and Communications (KMC) priorities with national KMCs, ASARECA has developed sub-regional strategies namely: ASARECA Knowledge Management and Communications Strategy (KMC); ASARECA Knowledge Hub Strategy; and the CAADP-XP4 Communications and Visibility Strategy. These strategies are guiding how ASARECA communicates and manages knowledge with both internal and external audiences; and how ASARECA intends to support the member countries in the areas of communication and Knowledge Management.

• Development of knowledge products: Over the last two years, ASARECA has developed and disseminated over 149 knowledge products including published journal articles, corporate documents, workshop proceedings, research reports, technical papers, analyses, policy briefs, etc through existing knowledge platforms, including websites, newsletters, workshop handouts; and other multimedia.

• Consultation of knowledge managers: ASARECA convened key knowledge management stakeholders from the NARS to discuss the role of national partners in the development and dissemination of AR4D knowledge and information products. A total of 39 participants, comprising mainly the DGs, NFPs and Knowledge Management officers attended. The objective to share views on how various national actors can contribute to the improvement of the generation, processing and sharing of knowledge.

• Training in Knowledge Management: In a follow-up, ASARECA provided training for Knowledge management and communication officers from NARIs on the basic concepts of Knowledge Management and in the development and implementation of KMCs strategies. The training was preceded by a rapid assessment of gaps with respect to KM infrastructure, KM procedures; skills sets; and identification of countries that need support in the development of the KMC strategies. Six countries in most need were identified and plans are underway to support them.

• Development of systems: ASARECA has completed the development and upgrade of assorted systems, especially: (i) Monitoring Evaluation and Learning system; (ii) the ASARECA Knowledge and Information Hub (KI-Hub); (iii) electronic filing register; and (v) the resource mobilization portal. The systems are now operational.

• Updated TIMPs database: ASARECA validated more agricultural Technologies, Innovations and Management Practices (TIMPs) and uploaded them in its revamped TIMPs database for sharing with users.
• **Towards ISO certification**: ASARECA in partnership with continental partners developed a generic roadmap to be followed by the members to attain the ISO standards. Using this roadmap, ASARECA has initiated the process of “walking the institution” towards establishing and implementing ISO standards as well as certification of the institution for ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System (QMS).