

Evaluation Report Title: Evaluation of the Sustainable Agriculture Research for International Development (SARID) programme

Response to Evaluation Report (overarching narrative)

DFID welcomes this evaluation report which acknowledged the quality of science funded under the SARID programme and that there was more movement to development impact than was expected in an advanced science programme of this nature. The positive feedback from scientists and stakeholders is encouraging.

The nine recommendations made by the evaluation team highlight some of the on-going challenges faced when commissioning agricultural research for development impact. DFID accepts these recommendations. It is already taking steps to address them in future programmes.

Management Response & Recommendations Action Plan

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Recommendations	Accepted or Rejected	If “Accepted”, Action plan for Implementation or if “Rejected”, Reason for Rejection
<p>4.2 Selection Processes: Guidance should be produced for the panel to cover areas in which they may not have expertise, to help assess the impact the project will have on the poor. This is inevitable given the very wide geographical scope of the project and the range of crops covered.</p>	Accepted	DFID Agriculture research team to provide guidance to future selection panels on gender and social inclusion aspects to be considered by the Panel.
<p>4.2 Selection Processes: Developing-country panel members should be given appropriate training in the UK Research Council approach to panel selection, in order to increase their confidence to contribute and in particular to raise awareness of any local constraints.</p>	Accepted	While DFID appreciates the need to provide support to panel members who are not well versed in the UK Research Council approach, given their location outside the UK, formal training may not be feasible. However we will ensure that BBSRC provides more detailed guidance and orientation to panel members and explores the possibility of holding a web-based information session.
<p>4.3 Project Implementation: A mentoring and/or training scheme is implemented in anticipation of the retirement of a large number of experienced field scientists.</p>	Accepted	The retirement of experienced researchers is of concern to DFID, and we already support capacity building/training of researchers through a number of existing programmes including the BBSRC CIDLID programme, ZELS, which is implemented with BBSRC and other RCs. We will consider ways of incorporating capacity building objectives both individual and organisational, as part of future calls with BBSRC.
<p>4.3 Project Implementation: To ensure a thorough understanding of local contexts, particularly regarding gender, either a greater emphasis on stakeholder engagement should be placed in the application process, or liaison officers appointed on the ground.</p>	Accepted	<p>The Zoonoses in Emerging Livestock Systems (ZELS) research programme, funded by DFID, BBSRC, MRC and DSTL includes a Knowledge Broker to facilitate engagement with stakeholders.</p> <p>The Agricultural Research Team will continue to work with existing programmes to ensure that potential end-users of research (farmers, policy makers, technicians) are involved in research programmes where appropriate.</p>
<p>4.3 Project Implementation: If capacity building is to be a major objective, more specific expectations should be laid out in the application stage.</p>	Accepted	Where capacity building is intended as a major objective of future programmes, more detail will be requested at the application stage.

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<p>4.4 Strategic Context: Give the opportunity for a review with a view to extending projects to 5 years, or maybe even longer. This is to avoid research programmes from being forced to finish just as they bear fruit.</p>	Partially accepted	This will be considered in the future design of programmes with the BBSRC and other advanced research programmes. Where it is not possible, the Business Case will set out in more detailed the expected development pathways to impact.
<p>4.4 Strategic Context: There are times when private money is needed to continue a project, which may well be of commercial interest. Help should be given to grantees to obtain alternative funding once grant funding runs out.</p>	Accepted	In order to address this issue the DFID Agricultural Research Team is investing in the Agri-Tech Catalyst, managed by the Technology Strategy Board, which specifically seeks to foster industry/academic partnerships to get research into use. Match funding from industry will be required.
<p>4.5 Partnerships: Inclusion of next-generation researchers in pilot collaborations and networking events. Facilitate early opportunities for researchers to get to know one another, perhaps via retreats, as this improves productivity.</p>	Accepted	DFID fully recognises the need to invest in the next generation of researchers and supports this through a number of capacity building and training initiatives. For example, the ZELS programme holds annual workshop for researchers. The new programme on agriculture, health and nutrition metrics specifically incorporates support to early career scientists and research networking. Similarly, the SCPRID programme held a workshop to provide orientation and allow researchers to get to know each other. A website has been set up to allow researchers to network and share knowledge. The Agricultural Research Team will look at how this could be strengthened in future calls.
<p>4.6 Reporting: In general, keeping existing reporting expectations the same, so as they do not become over-burdensome. However, it does recommend including the opportunity to report capacity-building activities. If changes to reporting are imposed its utility must be made clear to participants.</p>	Accepted	Reporting on capacity building activities has been added to existing BBSRC managed programmes. Changes to reporting formats are inevitable during the lifetime of a programme and are crucial in ensuring that the results of research are captured. Future changes will be communicated more effectively with research teams.