

FUTURE AGRICULTURES CONSORTIUM (FAC)



Whilst agriculture is central to Africa’s economies, its performance in this sector has traditionally lagged compared to other regions. Poor productivity has been caused by a wide range of factors, including technological issues, climate change and a weak policy environment. As a result, DFID funded the Future Agricultures Consortium (FAC), an Africa-based alliance of research organisations seeking to provide independent, timely and high-quality evidence to improve agricultural policy and practice in Africa. Research and analysis conducted by FAC focuses on the political economy of agricultural policy processes in Africa – looking at the way decision making can better tackle the challenges of establishing and sustaining pro-poor agricultural growth. The consortium uses its findings to engage with policy makers, government ministries, the private sector, civil society and the wider academic community.

Introduction

FAC consists of a consortium of researchers led by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). Since its establishment in 2005, the consortium has conducted comparative, multi-country research across 15 African countries, looking at 10 core themes – [Policy Processes](#), [Agricultural Commercialisations](#), [Growth and Social Protection](#), [Science, Technology and Innovation](#), [Future Farmers: Youth and Agriculture](#), [Pastoralism](#), [Climate Change and Agricultural Policy](#), [Land and Agrarian Change](#), [China and Brazil in African Agriculture](#), [Gender and Social Difference](#).

The consortium has produced almost 600 technical papers, presentations books and policy briefs; and convened dozens of high-profile

events on the politics of policy processes in African agriculture. Providing policy-relevant advice and analysis for improving agricultural decision-making remains one of the key challenges in the region, one that requires Africa-based solutions to address the reality of contrasting political interests and priorities.

Getting Research into Action

The ‘purpose’ of the consortium is to promote more effective African agricultural policy processes by ensuring they are informed by robust evidence. However, the lack of research use in practice is not just due to a



Figure 1 - Research Hubs and Countries

lack of evidence but also due to the lack of policy debate in certain countries. Therefore in addition to the research outputs it produces, FAC also set out to establish the structures and processes in which policy options can be evaluated and discussed.

The consortium established three regional hubs related to the major regional economic communities in Africa. They played a key role in communicating evidence to key policy actors that could improve decision making (see Figure 1).

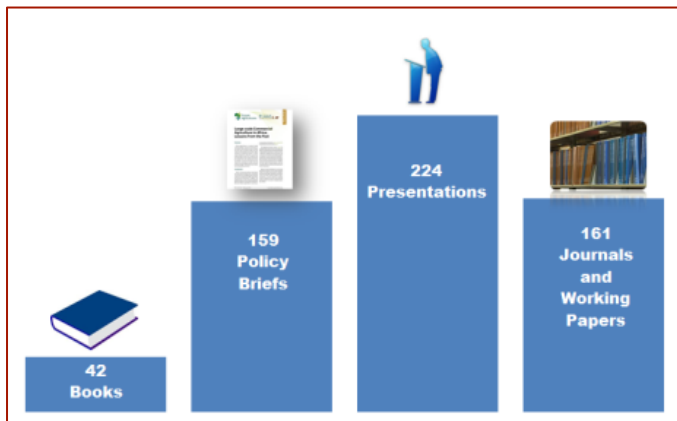


Figure 2 - FAC Outputs

Research Impact

As well as country-level impacts, FAC research has helped to reframe agendas and convene debate at an Africa-wide and international level, using empirical research to address stereotypes and myths about pastoralists, smallholder farmers, progress in science and technology, and gender. With over 1.8m downloads from its website since it was launched, demand for these insights has been continually high, with a significant proportion (27%) of users from within Africa itself.

"Future Agricultures offers a unique blend of solid research and independent policy advice on agriculture. The extensive network is an essential resource for all African policymakers."

Ahmed Shide - MP and State Minister of Finance and Economic Development Ministry in Ethiopia

One clear instance where the consortium successfully informed policy development relates to the programme's Land Theme. At a UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) session of the Committee on World Food Security, the FAC team participated in an event organised by civil

society and academic experts that looked at approaches to Land and Resource Rights. The FAC team successfully argued for a set of Voluntary Guidelines in order to enable better multilateral oversight and civil society input through the UN system. These guidelines were favoured over a comparatively closed approach proposed by the World Bank.

"Africa is faced with the challenge of claiming the twenty-first Century. Africa can only do this through sustainable, pro-poor agricultural growth. Future Agricultures' contribution to this critical debate is essential."

Dr Luka Biong Deng - formerly National Minister for Cabinet Affairs in Sudan and Minister in the Office of the President of South Sudan

There are further instances where FAC research has impacted policy development. Since the mid-1980s images of severe drought and large-scale starvation have become inexorably linked to Ethiopia. However, the Tigray Regional Bureau of Agriculture in Northern Ethiopia has used [FAC research](#) into graduation and social protection¹ to improve their Food Security Program.

Next Steps

In 2014, DFID commissioned an external evaluation to assess FAC's performance and impact. Lessons learned from this exercise will feed into future African agricultural policy and research.

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Links to Further Information:

Programme website:
<http://www.future-agricultures.org/>

¹ Sabates-Wheeler, R. and Devereux, S. (2011) Transforming livelihoods for resilient futures: *How to facilitate graduation in social protection programmes*. FAC Working Paper 023, Brighton, UK: Future Agricultures Consortium. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex