

**Evaluation Report Title:**

**Evaluation of the Future Agricultures Consortium (FAC)**

**Response to Evaluation Report (overarching narrative)**

This report contains an evaluation of the Future Agricultures Consortium (FAC) and provides a balanced view of the programme. It has highlighted the strengths of FAC but also pointed out areas for future improvement. Crucially, it has underlined how challenging it is to measure the effectiveness of FAC at outcome and impact level and therefore the influence of quality evidence on policy making. Nevertheless, an insightful set of case studies were documented and the main report effectively synthesises the common and contrasting experiences and learning.

The Upper Quartile (UQ) team grasped the complexities of the FAC programme and delivered a robust evaluation. They engaged well with both the FAC and DFID teams and completed most stages of the work on time. Improving the drafting of the final report to publishable standard proved to be a protracted process, with time and effort put in by both DFID and UQ.

The trialling of the Qualitative Content Analysis approach as part of the evaluation demonstrated the commitment of the evaluation team to delivering an innovative product.

The lessons from this evaluation are of relevance not only to the Agricultural Research Team but also to other parts of DFID engaged in the development of evidence to improve policy making.

## 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>1. Having invested in the creation of a network with future value, DFID should manage its exit from core funding in ways that minimise risk of value loss and maximise potential future returns from the investment made.</p>	Partially accept	<p>DFID accepts that the transition between two phases of funding could have been handled more strategically. However, the Agriculture Research Team is accountable within DFID, not to research contractors outside.</p>
<p>2. If the exit strategy from an accountable grant includes an opportunity for replacement with competitive funding, this should include realistic assessment on the timescale for DFID launch and contracting and formal consideration of contingency risk management actions if the timetable changes.</p>	Reject	<p>The need for FAC to broaden its funding base has been a recommendation in annual reviews for the last four years of funding. And, it has been clear to FAC since 2012 that DFID would withdraw core funding, that they would have to compete for future funding and that this would not be guaranteed. Delays to future funding have been unavoidable.</p>
<p>3. While not making recommendations on criteria for a future competitive tender, the following lessons from FAC suggest that consideration should be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The specific advantages of a researcher led structure in terms of flexibility, getting information rapidly into the public domain, convening and framing debates; it would make sense for a proportion of future research funding to be researcher-led;</li> <li>b. The potential VfM of creating synergy between policy research, communications, capacity building and using the evidence to influence policy;</li> <li>c. Ways of combining African ownership which is valued by policy makers with access to global thinking and communications;</li> <li>d. Organisational culture, relationships and individuals matter and help deliver value; therefore support organisational models that build and increase VfM through non-financial incentives.</li> </ul>	Accepted	<p>The DFID Agricultural Research Team is currently developing a Business Case for a new phase of Agricultural Policy Research for Africa. The lessons listed under this recommendation are being taken into consideration. The target date for approval of the Business Case is mid-March 2015</p>

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4. Develop institutional mechanisms to enable DFID staff, country offices and partners to engage creatively with centrally funded research, evidence generation, communication and policy processes, thus releasing the latent opportunities for synergy.	Accepted	<p>DFID welcomes this recommendation which is consistent with recommendations from other recent reviews of the Agricultural Research Portfolio.</p> <p>A number of initiatives are already underway across Research and Evidence Division to improve how evidence generated by centrally funded programmes is communicated. The DFID Agricultural Research Team has stepped up its engagement with the Regional Research Hubs, DFID staff and Country Offices, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the preparation of country briefs highlighting DFID funded research.</li> <li>• Providing support to the Ag Hub, established by the Economic Inclusion and Agriculture Team, as a cross-cadre, virtual network working on coordination, programmes, learning and communication.</li> <li>• Seeking opportunities for linking centrally funded programme with country office programme activities where relevant and feasible. Examples include recent support for Business Case Development in DFID-Nepal and discussions with Country Offices concerning the nNutrition Programme.</li> </ul>