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Institutionalizing Demand-Driven Agricultural Research: Experiences with the Management Cycle of Agricultural Research in Benin

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Abstract

In the framework of the master plan of agricultural research, a management cycle at eco-regional level is implemented since 2001 covering one agricultural year and being the main instrument for implementation of regional research programs with a medium term horizon. These have been conceived with the involvement of numerous stakeholders and users of research results in 2000.

The cycle comprises the following elements:

- During the annual meeting of the regional committee for research and development research (CRRD) results are evaluated by users and decisions on their use in extension or further research are made. New potentials and/or constraints are identified and constitute the framework for research in the following year.
- Implementation of research according to the decisions of CRRD is steered by a competitive fund. Researchers of the NARS submit proposals following standard structure and criteria which then are reviewed by peers from INRAB, university, NGOs, extension and peasant organizations. The ranking of proposals is based on strategic, scientific and methodological relevance and on competitiveness. Funding is allocated to about 60% (66 of 133 in 2001, 71 of 108 in 2002) of submitted proposals. Significant improvements in demand orientation and scientific quality have been achieved during the first two years.
- M&E during implementation is focussed on methodological and organizational advice to participatory OFR and helps to identify needs of complementary training.
- For exchange of experiences and to prepare the subsequent meeting of CRRD, a scientific workshop is organized. Proceedings of the workshop help to capitalize results.
- The cycle is completed with the next meeting of CRRD which initiates the new cycle.

The management cycle has stimulated interdisciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration focussed on articulated demand for technologies. Perspectives are

- Improvement of representativeness of users
- Strengthening of local committees on village level for priority setting and evaluation of results

- Raising of funds for increased sustainability of the competitive fund
- Transfer of the cycle to other research programs and application of the cycle management to contractual research (ongoing)