

STRATEGIC PLAN

2016–2020

SOWING INNOVATION HARVESTING PROSPERITY

Promoting sustainable agriculture for food
security, nutrition and resilience





MISSION

To advance food security, resilience and inclusive economic growth in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific through innovations in sustainable agriculture.

VISION

Smallholder agriculture as a vibrant, modern and sustainable business that creates value for farmers, entrepreneurs, youth and women, and produces affordable, nutritious and healthy food for all.





INTRODUCTION

Despite all the global challenges – climate change, civil wars, migration, economic crises and the like – there are signs of real progress in the fight against global hunger and poverty. The number of undernourished people in developing countries has almost halved since 2000, with small but important increases in food security and overall nutrition. Some of the world's fastest-growing economies are in sub-Saharan Africa, and much of that growth is powered by improved agriculture. Food prices have dropped and stabilised since their peak in 2007–2008.

There is, however, no room for complacency, and as an important player in agricultural and rural development, CTA has revised its strategic priorities as it continues to work towards sustainable food and nutrition security in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. Studies by the World Bank and others have shown that investment in agriculture is one of the best ways to reduce poverty. CTA's strategy will help that to happen.

The strategy has been developed with a close eye on the Sustainable Development Goals, many of which it addresses directly. Zero hunger, food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture (Goal 2), poverty (Goal 1) and gender (Goal 5) are at the heart of CTA's activities, which will also create employment, particularly for young people and women (Goal 8), resulting in reduced inequality (Goal 10). With our partners, CTA will help to reduce food waste (Goal 12), build greater climate resilience (Goal 13) and promote sustainable fisheries (Goal 14). Ultimately, CTA, through its emphasis on partnership (Goal 17), will contribute to greater sustainability (Goal 15).





THREE STRATEGIC GOALS

CTA has set three interrelated strategic goals to contribute to greater food and nutrition security and achieve the greatest impact for its work. Smallholders need profitable value chains; the development of profitable value chains requires supportive agricultural policies; and both are boosted by improved knowledge management.

Value chains

Simple market access is not enough to allow smallholders to improve their livelihoods. Producers need to know what the market wants, produce it, add value to it, sell it and get a fair share of the added value. To do that, smallholders need to be integrated in sustainable and inclusive business models. CTA seeks to help smallholders move beyond the typical commodity chains that characterise South-North trade so that they capture more value from their produce and take advantage of regional trade. Although shorter value chains could offer rich rewards, much more needs to be done if smallholders are to take advantage of them. We need to understand standards and certification schemes that guarantee quality and safety. Smallholders need access to capital to invest in their enterprises. Other links in the value chain need expertise, for example in business and logistics, and smallholders need good advice that they can act on.

CTA sees coordination as the key to sustainable value chains. Helping individual producers come together into horizontally coordinated associations will give them a greater say in policy and enable them to retain more of the value of what they

produce. Strengthening vertical coordination among the different links in the value chain will build trust and improve efficiency of the entire chain, resulting in greater rewards for all participants in the chain. CTA will work mostly on a limited selection of value chains that our partners in the ACP regions have designated as high priorities.

The Centre wants to ensure that value-chain actors are able to take full advantage of technologies and are able to learn from one another. That will require building skills, especially when it comes to dialogue and negotiation. It will also require CTA to continue to seek innovation across the ACP countries and to make use of its central role to promote and share new ideas that work. New kinds of finance and insurance will be needed, with special facilities for cross-border trade. Given these kinds of changes, smallholders will begin to be able to derive the benefits they deserve from value chains.

Agricultural policies

Rural communities need a stronger voice in the policies that affect their daily lives. For example, if we want farmers to have better access to extension information, government policy needs to ensure that

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extension services use appropriate means of communication and knowledge sharing, including information and communication technologies (ICTs). Similarly, government policy could encourage central banks to support schemes to increase value-chain finance. More generally, supportive policies are vital if the agricultural sector is to be an engine of economic growth for all.

CTA and its partners have been delighted by the investment in and attention to agriculture that came in the wake of the food price crises of 2007–2008. However, it is by no means clear that this level of interest will be sustained. Advocacy for the continued primacy of agricultural development – and the capacity to be effective advocates – will be an important element of CTA's new strategy. Drawing on its strength as a convenor of policy dialogue and platforms for policy development, CTA will work both to create awareness of and evidence for the impact of inclusive policy processes and also to facilitate multistakeholder dialogues.

The two approaches reinforce one another. Well-documented evidence is crucially important to feed into multistakeholder dialogues, and greater awareness of such discussion platforms can catalyse the gathering of evidence. It is also crucial that smallholders take part in policy discussions, which CTA addresses by ensuring that all its

partners are better able to present their case and influence policy.

Knowledge management

CTA has always regarded the ability to manage knowledge and information as highly empowering. That will continue in the new strategy.

CTA will approach knowledge management along two paths. The first is to gather information, including untapped local knowledge, and package and share it for others to use if they can. The second is to ensure that partners are best able to manage and share the knowledge they hold. An important role for CTA will be to work with many stakeholders in different value chains to distil their experiences into actionable knowledge. With partners, CTA will help them to adopt good practices. For both its own and partners' knowledge, the goal is to ensure that information is freely available with open access.

Big data is a rapidly growing field that will often hold the key to good decision-making. However, taming the many and varied streams of data that pour forth every day and harnessing their contents to inform good decisions requires special skills. CTA will work with partners to build their capacity to choose which data to focus on, how to interpret the data and how to use their interpretation to guide choices.



BENEFICIARIES AND PARTNERS

Ultimately, CTA's work targets smallholder farmers. They are the bedrock of economic development in ACP countries. They can feed not only themselves but also burgeoning urban populations, reducing the need for imports and supplying export markets. They can produce healthy and nutritious food. And they can ensure that their livelihoods and production systems are resilient to climate change.

CTA sees youth and women as particularly important target groups. Women because they play a very important role in agricultural production, especially of high-value crops, and small-scale businesses and are responsible for the nutrition of their families. Young people because they are most likely to be open to modern agricultural practices and are best-placed to create innovative agricultural services.

However, CTA cannot work directly with millions of households across the ACP countries. Instead, CTA's partners are the organisations and networks that serve smallholder producers directly. Farmers' cooperatives and similar organisations, especially those that work with women and youth, are CTA's direct beneficiaries, and it is through them that the Centre will help smallholders to lift themselves out of poverty.

CTA intends to put more of its investment into larger partnerships, looking for tight integration for maximum impact. Although the organisation will still not be interacting directly with smallholders, it will be involved as an active partner during the entire project cycle.

In addition, CTA recognises that it needs to look beyond organisations that work directly with smallholders, because smallholders are only one link in the value chains that connect them to markets.

To take advantage of opportunities, smallholders and their value chains need to be supported by conducive policy, regulatory and legal frameworks. They need to be part of a new ecosystem, in which new jobs will be created to deliver the services they need, such as input supplies, extension and advisory services, financial services, market information and so on. That will enable smallholders, as they come together in producer associations or work with the private sector to build business in food processing, to capture more of the value inherent in their production. CTA's new strategy will build capacity with farmer groups, women and youth associations to ensure that they are able to contribute effectively to and benefit from all aspects of value-chain development.





Attracting young people and women to the agriculture sector



CTA'S PRIORITIES

While CTA's strategic goals provide a panoramic view of the areas in which we will work, themes and cross-cutting issues offer a close-up of centres of attention.

Climate-smart agriculture, for example, is gaining traction as a basket of ideas that will optimise resilience, productivity and climate mitigation. However, while technologies for more resilient production systems exist, lack of awareness among extension services and poor supporting policies mean that they have not been widely adopted by smallholders. CTA will build on its previous work with climate-smart agriculture and increase its efforts to promote such practices and create the necessary supportive policy environment. A second priority is business development. Food exports from ACP countries are low and food imports are high – annual food import bills are US\$42 billion for Africa, US\$7 billion for the Caribbean and US\$2 billion for the Pacific. A competitive agricultural sector could take advantage of this, which is why value chains are a strategic priority. Within that, though, countries need agribusinesses of various sizes that can strengthen value chains. CTA is poised to support the development of small and medium-sized enterprises as a route to better value chains.

Nutrition is crucially important in ACP countries, with both overnutrition and undernutrition afflicting the health and well-being of people and stifling economic growth. More food is not the answer. Food also needs to be healthy and nutritious, which requires a multisectoral approach to the whole food system. CTA wants to move towards a more integrated approach in which agricultural production becomes more nutrition-sensitive.

Perhaps most importantly, all future work will have a clear emphasis on women and youth. Four out of five women in least-developed countries depend on agriculture for their livelihood. And yet women earn less than men for the same tasks, have fewer rights to land and property, and where they do hold land it is generally poorer than that held by men. Differences in the yields obtained by men and women are the result not of less skill but of poorer access to inputs. And because women make decisions about what their family eats, empowering women has a disproportionately beneficial effect on household nutrition.



CTA will work with partners to offer women the assistance, training and access they need to become fully empowered

The need to empower women is clear, and CTA understands empowerment as giving women the ability to participate in policy processes, a forum where they can voice their concerns – and be heard – and ensuring that they have access to and control over resources. CTA will work with partners to offer women the assistance, training and access they need to become fully empowered.

Young people are another crucial group. More than half the people in ACP countries are under 30 years old. The future, quite literally, belongs to them, but they face unemployment and a lack of opportunities – and the skills to take advantage of those that are available. Many young people see

no future in agriculture, which is ill-paid, hard physical work. However, agriculture offers two to four times more opportunities for poverty reduction than any other sector. CTA believes that modernising agriculture and encouraging young people to enter the sector is a winning strategy. CTA will partner with organisations that aim to change the negative mindset of young people by demonstrating that agriculture offers a variety of options to earn money and by building their entrepreneurial skills. ICTs have a special role to play, because they offer channels through which to contact youth and because young people are well placed and motivated to innovate for agriculture through ICTs.



Building from strength and
30 years of service to ACP
countries



GREATER REGIONAL FOCUS

The world does not stand still, and neither does CTA. Our new strategy is a way-station on a road of continuous change that has seen CTA become a results-based organisation closely aligned with the priorities of the ACP countries it serves.

Key to this evolution are the regional business plans CTA and its partners formulated on the basis of each of the six ACP regions' agricultural-sector priorities and making best use of the Centre's comparative advantages. Put in place in 2015, each plan identifies key priority areas for CTA interventions that address challenges and realise opportunities specific to that region. These business plans are operationalised through regional flagship projects that further focus CTA's efforts to better identify target clients and opportunities for making an impact. Global projects address cross-cutting topics such as ICTs and knowledge management.

The flagship projects help to improve coordination and team work among various programmes, allowing CTA to fully leverage

the power of key stakeholders, including the private sector, and catalyse complementary actions along agricultural value chains, such as those that improve nutritional outcomes. This focus on business development is crucial, giving smallholder farmers the opportunity to escape poverty by becoming the foundation of improved, inclusive value chains.

Building on more than 30 years of experience, this strategy is a milestone on the path to CTA's vision of a future in which agriculture in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries is a vibrant, modern and sustainable business that creates value for smallholder farmers, entrepreneurs, youth and women, and produces affordable, nutritious and healthy food for all.



The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) is a joint international institution of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the European Union (EU). Its mission is to advance food security, resilience and inclusive economic growth in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific through innovations in sustainable agriculture. CTA operates under the framework of the Cotonou Agreement and is funded by the EU.

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