

What is the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science & Technology, IAASTD?

A compilation from its plenary decisions and official documents at www.agassessment.org

Overarching Question:

How can we reduce hunger and poverty, improve rural livelihoods, and facilitate equitable, environmentally, socially and economically sustainable development through the generation, access to, and use of agricultural knowledge, science and technology?

The assessment aims to bring an objective view of the long-term challenges facing world agriculture and consider how these might be addressed by the development and appropriate use of agricultural knowledge and technologies, learning from past experiences and present knowledge.

Objectives:

- a. undertake global and sub-global assessments of the role of knowledge, science and technology (KST) as it pertains to agriculture in reducing hunger and poverty, improving rural livelihoods, and health, increasing incomes and facilitating equitable, environmentally, socially and economically sustainable development;
- b. provide robust information for decision makers on how to ensure that policies, practices and institutional arrangements enable KST to contribute to reducing hunger and poverty, improving rural livelihoods and health, increasing incomes, and facilitating equitable, environmentally, socially and economically sustainable development; and
- c. bring together the range of stakeholders (consumers, governments, NGOs, private sector, producers, scientific community, international agencies) involved in the agricultural sector and rural development to share views, gain common understanding and vision for the future.

Goals:

- a. assess the effects of agricultural KST policy and institutional environments, as well as practices, in the context of sustainable development ;
- b. make the resulting state-of-the-art, objective analyses accessible to decision makers at all levels – from small producers to those who create international policy;
- c. identify where critically important information gaps exist in order to more effectively target research; and
- d. further the capacity of developing country nationals and institutions to generate, access, and use agricultural KST that promote sustainable development.

Outputs:

will include published (printed and web-based) critical in-depth global and sub-global assessments of local and institutional knowledge and experiences, and that the Summaries of the reports will be translated into the six official languages of the United Nations.

Effects:

- a. more directed and targeted agriculturally relevant research programs and policies to contribute to reducing hunger and poverty, improving rural livelihoods and health, increasing incomes and facilitating equitable, environmentally, socially and economically sustainable development;
- b. more effective institutional arrangements to enable the adoption of advances in agricultural KST, including better integration of traditional and institutional knowledge;
- c. increased uptake and adaptation of knowledge, research results and technologies by producers;
- d. better integration of research into outreach programs and policy decisions;
- e. better understanding of the effects of agricultural policies, practices, technologies and institutional arrangements on ecosystems and their goods and services, and on biodiversity; and
- f. better understanding of options for making agriculture more environmentally sustainable.

Definition:

A scientific assessment is a critical, objective evaluation and analysis of information, including indigenous and local knowledge, designed to meet user needs and support decision-making. It applies the judgment of experts to existing knowledge to provide scientifically credible answers to policy relevant questions, quantifying where possible the level of confidence.

The role of IAASTD will be to comprehensively, openly and transparently assess the scientific, technical and socio-economic literature, experience and knowledge (...). The IAASTD Report should be policy relevant but not policy prescriptive, and deal objectively with scientific, technical and socio-economic issues. Peer-review of local and institutional knowledge by relevant experts in government and civil society shall be an essential part of the IAASTD process.

Structure:

The IAASTD will be conducted as an intergovernmental process, with a multi-stakeholder Bureau. 60 members were elected to the Bureau, including 30 government representatives and 30 representatives from civil society and international institutions.

There is broad agreement to approve Judi Wakhungu and Hans Herren as co-chairs of the IAASTD. Prof Wakhungu is the executive director, African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS), while Dr Herren is the outgoing director-general of the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) and President elect of the Millennium Institute based in Washington DC. Also Robert T. Watson, chief scientist of the World Bank has been appointed Director of the Secretariat.

Bureau:

terms of reference for the Bureau include:

- a. designing the nomination process for the IAASTD co-chairs;
- b. selecting authors for the design meetings;
- c. selecting authors for the preparation of the global and sub-global assessments;
- d. selecting review editors;
- e. developing an outreach and communications strategy;
- f. developing a capacity-building strategy;
- g. overseeing the management of the sub-global assessments;
- h. advising the Plenary on emerging issues of concern;
- i. accepting additional functions requested by the Plenary; and
- j. oversight of the budget.

62 Members: 2 co-chairs, 30 government representatives, 22 non-government representatives and 8 representatives from institutions. The 22 non-government representatives will consist of:

- a. 6 non-governmental organizations (NGOs);
- b. 6 private sector;
- c. 6 producers; and
- d. 4 consumers.

Secretariat:

The Secretariat will oversee the day-to-day management of IAASTD. The Secretariat will act as a technical support unit for IAASTD and will organize sessions of the Panel and Bureau and sessions of the global and sub-global (community to regional) assessments. The Secretariat will propose the annual budget and manage the Trust Fund. It will oversee and coordinate IAASTD public information and outreach activities and it will publicize and disseminate reports to the relevant stakeholder groups, including translation of summaries into all UN official languages. The Secretariat will monitor the progress of IAASTD activities and ensure coordination among global and sub-global (community to regional) assessments. It will liaise with member governments and other relevant stakeholder organizations on IAASTD matters. The **Director** of the Secretariat will be appointed by the Heads of Cosponsoring Agencies and will provide intellectual leadership along with the Co-chairs. The Director will appoint the staff, which will be drawn from within and from outside of the Cosponsoring Agencies.

Preparation and Peer-Review Process:

The preparation and peer-review process should take place in six stages:

- Preparation of the first-order draft report;
- Government and expert (peer) review of the first-order draft report;
- Preparation of the second-order draft report;
- Government/expert review of the second-order draft report;
- Preparation of the final report; and
- Government review and approval of the Summaries for Decision Makers

Selection of Authors and Reviewers:

The Secretariat will request that all governments and participating organizations identify appropriate experts with local and institutional knowledge for each Chapter in the Report to act as Coordinating Lead Authors, Lead

Authors, Contributing Authors, Expert reviewers or Review Editors. (...) Bureau members should ensure, where necessary, balanced representation of experts and reviewers from developed countries, developing countries, and countries with economies in transition.

The Bureau shall recommend to the Panel (*actually appoint*) **Coordinating Lead Authors and Lead Authors for each chapter** from those experts nominated by governments and participating organizations.

The composition of the group shall reflect the need to aim for a range of views, expertise, gender and geographical representation, taking into account local and institutional knowledge. The Coordinating Lead Authors and Lead Authors may enlist other experts as Contributing Authors to assist in their work.

Timetable:

The timetable includes the following key features:

- a. one additional Plenary meeting; tentatively scheduled for **September 2007**
- b. three additional Bureau meetings; next meeting: May 25 -27, thereafter tentatively scheduled for end 2006
- c. a series of design meetings; conducted January - April 2005
- d. four lead author meetings for each of the global and sub-global assessments; starting mid 2005
- e. two combined global and sub-global lead author meeting; and
- f. two rounds of expert and government peer review to ensure quality.

Government and stakeholder participants in the first Plenary:

The Plenary in Nairobi was attended by the representatives from **45 governments** including: Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bhutan, Botswana, Canada, Central African Republic, People's Republic of China, Colombia, Arab Republic of Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Haiti, Hungary, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Mexico, Malaysia, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Oman, Philippines, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States of America, and Uruguay.

Civil society groups and institutions represented at the meeting included ActionAid Pakistan, African Academy of Sciences, African Biotechnology Stakeholders Forum, African Centre for Technology Studies, African Technology Policy Studies Network, APNEK Tunisia, Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones & Dry Lands, Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, Agrobased Technologies and Industry Development Project (Bangladesh), Bangladesh Shrimp Development Alliance, Biologistics International, Biosciences East and Central Africa, Botswana College of Agriculture, CAB International, Catholic Relief Services, Center for Science in the Public Interest, Convention on Biological Diversity, CENESTA, Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical, Consejo Nacional Agropecuario, Consumer Rights Commission of Pakistan, CREU (Kenya), Crop Life International, Ecuador Fundacion Ecuatoriana de Desarrollo Social, Egerton University, Emergent Genetics, Environmental Management Advisors (Kenya), European Union Commission, Foodlink Resources Institute, Friends of Nomads International, Gene Campaign, GITA PERTIWI, Greenpeace International, InterAcademy Council, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, International Center for Research on Women, International Center of Insect Physiology and Ecology, International Council for Science, International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, International Food Policy Research Institute, International Livestock Research Institute, International Plant Genetics Resources Institute, International Technology Development Group, International Water Management Institute, Japan National Cooperation Agency, Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences, Kenya Private Sector Alliance, Kenya National Federation of Agricultural Producers, Kenyatta University, Knoll Farms, Kulika Charitable Trust (Uganda), National Council for Science and Technology (Kenya), National University of Ireland, Organization Beninoise pour la Promotion de l'Agriculture Biologique, Pesticide Action Network (Indonesia; North America; Senegal), RAMSAR, Red Accion en Alternativas al uso de Agroquimicos, SACRED AFRICA, Science Council of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, Southeast Asia Council for Food Security and Trade, South Asia Partnership Program, Sustainable Agriculture Action Group (Pakistan), Syngenta, Third World Academy of Sciences, Unilever, Uruguay National Institute for Agricultural Research, Vredeseilanden, Wageningen University, World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), World Conservation Union (IUCN).

Representatives from **FAO, the World Bank, UNDP, UNESCO and UNEP** also participated in the Plenary.

Contact:

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List of participants: <http://www.agassessment.org/list/index.html>

Sources:

Official IAASTD website: <http://www.agassessment.org/>

NGO IAASTD website: <http://www.iaastd.org>

2005, Outline of the Global Assessment: <http://iaastd.org/docs/Global%20Outline04Apr05.pdf>

2004, Principles and Procedures: <http://www.agassessment.org/pdfs/official/Doc8.pdf>

2004, First Plenary minutes: <http://www.agassessment.org/pdfs/reports2/FirstPlenary.pdf>

2004, Agreed Decisions of the Plenary: <http://www.agassessment.org/pdfs/reports2/PlenaryIAnnex2.pdf>

2004, First Bureau Meeting minutes: <http://www.agassessment.org/pdfs/reports2/BureauOne.pdf>

2003, Recommendations of the Steering Committee: <http://www.agassessment.org/reports/index.html>