

## SUMMARY OF STRATEGY FOR RESEARCH ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

DFID's new strategy for research on sustainable agriculture aims to get new technologies to poor farmers, and help governments to make better policies. The goal is to reduce poverty, and help to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Agriculture, forests and fisheries can tackle poverty directly. They also provide a platform for wider economic growth, with knock-on effects far beyond the rural sector.

The strategy has been designed to respond to demands from developing countries themselves. It backs up the African Union's and NEPAD's comprehensive plan for agriculture. It will support regional and national initiatives, and strengthen the capacity of national research institutions. We will work with other donors, so that developing countries do not have to deal with us each separately.



Farmers processing Cassava to make glucose syrup can increase their income by £140 per month

The Strategy is made up of four components:

- **The Research into Use programme.** This will prioritise up to 30 successful technologies from research funded by DFID in the last 11 years and promote them in Africa and south Asia. They will be selected on their potential to raise farmers' incomes, reduce poverty, halt environmental degradation, and increase food security. Lessons from the programme will be collected and shared to show how responsible forestry, fishing, farming and livestock rearing combined with new, viable technology can help reduce poverty.
- **The four regional research programmes,** which will focus on West Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa and South Asia. These programmes will work in close partnership with existing regional organisations so that research is undertaken on those issues that most affect the lives of the majority of people living there.
- **Responsive research programmes.** DFID is in discussion with the UK Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), hoping to develop joint programmes. These would not least provide opportunities for advanced research institutes to increase their efforts towards the science and technology needs of developing countries.
- Support to **international agricultural research** to deliver high quality and effective international public good research to tackle poverty reduction and achieve sustainable growth. The majority of this will be to the 15 centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). The purpose

of our engagement with the CGIAR is to improve its effectiveness in terms of poverty reduction and helping achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

**We already give £20m a year to the international system. DFID is now allocating £100m over the next 5 years to the Research into Use programme, the regional programmes, and – potentially – to joint programmes with the Research Councils.**

## **Background to Strategy**

DFID's Research Funding Framework (2004) identified sustainable agriculture, especially in Africa, as one of the crucial research areas for achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In developing countries as a whole, per capita agricultural production increased by about 40% in the last two decades; but in sub-Saharan Africa it actually fell by 5%. If this trend isn't reversed there is little chance of attaining the MDGs in Africa.

In response, the African Union and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) have developed a Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme which calls for sustained agricultural growth of 6% year on year. One pillar of that programme is agricultural research. This DFID programme will support that pillar - part of the UK's pledge to deliver on commitments made at the 2005 G8 Summit. It is one step towards implementing DFID's new policy paper: *Growth and Poverty Reduction: the role of agriculture*.

National statistics from developing countries show that increasing agricultural productivity is closely related with the speed of poverty reduction. The direct effects through lower food prices, increased farm incomes, and more jobs on farms are well understood. Furthermore, the sustainable management and use of renewable natural resources is important for achievement of growth and livelihoods for poor people. This is through their direct productive use (e.g. forestry and fisheries), and also in terms of this impact on the environment – such as on water and energy, on which growth in other sectors is dependent.

Maximising the contribution of agricultural and natural resource management research to reduce poverty requires focusing both on improving productivity and ensuring this use is sustainable and equitable. This means looking beyond direct impacts and to maximise agriculture's and renewable natural resources' role in wider economic growth and sources of livelihoods for the poor. The strategy uses the term sustainable agriculture to cover the productive use of land, water, and other natural resources. Thus it is not limited to crops and livestock but includes fisheries, aquaculture, forestry, and wildlife. This maximises opportunities for research to contribute to sustainable development, and ensures wealth creation and improved livelihoods for large numbers of the world's poorest people.

The strategy pinpoints a number of key characteristics to ensure tangible results. It will:

- Prioritise technologies that will increase the productivity of labour. Creating employment opportunities in agriculture, post-harvest transformation and commerce are vital to reduce rural poverty and to stimulate growth and

investment in other sectors thus delivering benefits far beyond the rural sector (the multiplier effect).

- Focus on situations where potential gains are greatest. This means research for areas with potential to achieve meaningful increases in employment and output. Addressing the needs of very poor farmers with limited possibilities to expand output, in marginal areas, or those in areas isolated from the non-farm economy may have little direct impact on poverty outside a specific location. This principle does not mean only focusing on current high potential areas but on areas of potential, and also on research to reduce vulnerability and risk in marginal areas.
- Take full account of people's exposure to risk and vulnerability, seeking to maintain high levels of resilience to short-term shocks such as drought, pests and diseases, and longer term trends such as climate change where agriculture and related sectors can contribute significantly to mitigation measures.
- Incorporate research on market opportunities. Growing and secure markets are critical if farmers are to invest, innovate and take the risks in improving their productivity. For large parts of Africa this means focusing on basic food staples and domestic markets. In other areas and in Asia, which are self sufficient in basic staples, more emphasis should be on higher value commodities.
- Ensure the sustainable and productive use of resources such as land, water and common property; to maximise their contributions to growth and poverty reduction, and provision of environmental services. This will include minimising any negative impacts of increasing productivity.

Accelerating productivity combined with the sustainable management of natural resources where it is most needed will not be easy. Rural development in many of today's poorest countries faces major challenges, not least the increased challenges presented by climate change and ever increasing demands for natural resources,

### **Building on past DFID research**

The Renewable Natural Resources Research Strategy (RNRRS) was initiated in 1995 to conduct research aimed to remove constraints to economically and environmentally sustainable renewable natural resource management. It consisted of 10 thematic research programmes. An evaluation of the RNRRS found that the quality of the science had been high and it had made significant contributions to new scientific knowledge. The Research into Use programme will pick up 30 of the most promising outputs of the RNRRS and put them into use. More broadly, the whole of the new Strategy uses its lessons to continue to support research that is relevant and responsive to the needs of poor people.