Stakeholder Analysis as a Tool for Overcoming Some of the Biosciences Policy Challenges in Eastern Africa

Authors: Margaret Karembu, F. Nguthi, D. Wafula, K. Ogero, J. Ecuru, N. Ozor, K. Urama, E. Acheampong, L. Opati, J. Komen, I. Virgin, M. Gasingirwa, T. Haileselassie, A. Abebe, J. Omari, P. Chuwa, N. Nyange.

Lead author's contact details: Dr. Margaret Karembu, Director, International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA)*Afri* Center, P.O. Box 70-00605, Uthiru, Nairobi, Kenya. Email: mkarembu@isaaa.org; Mobile:+254722826154;Website:http://africenter.isaaa.org

Introduction

Advances in biosciences have expanded the range of possibilities for the utilization of biological resources worldwide, including eastern Africa. However, uptake of bio-innovations within the region is slow, a situation attributed to among other factors, inappropriate and/or generalized policies for a generalized public. Policy coordination within governments and across countries is often weak and the needs of stakeholders are poorly understood or not taken into consideration. Performing a stakeholder analysis during project planning is therefore essential in effective implementation. In bridging research and policy, stakeholder analysis is useful in identifying all parties involved in conducting the research, those who make or implement policy, and the intermediaries between them. We conducted a stakeholder analysis to identify policy limitations facing uptake of biosciences innovations within the region and the key value chain actors.

Methodology

A brainstorming session preceded by a presentation on stakeholder analysis was held during the Bio-Innovate Experience-Sharing, Results-Based and Financial Management Training Workshop held on March 29 – 31, 2012 in Nairobi. A stakeholder analysis tool was then developed and circulated among researchers implementing nine projects sponsored by the Bio-Innovate program. The Principal Investigators and their teams used the tool to identify the key policy limitations facing their projects and the key actors to involve. The data collected was collated to identify any similarity in policy limitations and/or stakeholders across the projects.

Results

The table below presents a summary of the stakeholder analysis:

Table 1: Policy gaps hindering biosciences research and commercialization within Eastern Africa.

Policy limitation	Actors	Actions
1. Stringent germplasm exchange regulations	Govt ministries (agric, trade, S&T), regulators, scientists, seed industry, regional trade blocs (EAC)	Open fora, roundtable meetings, parliamentary meetings, exhibitions
2. Restrictive policies on biotechnology research and stringent biosafety regimes	Research institutes, regulators, universities, scientists, ministries, technology developers, NGOs	Seeing-is-believing tours; awareness creation workshops; open fora; scientific champions
3. Poor policy advocacy	Scientists, media, Govt ministries, universities, research institutes, NGOs	Communication trainings; roundtable meetings; open fora; parliamentary meetings; building champions; media briefings
4. Unfavourable research and researcher support environment	Managers of research and academic institutions, procurement officers	Regular updating; one-on-one meetings; posters; training of procurement officers
5. Weak agricultural extension policies	Ministries of agric, faith-based groups, CBOs, research institutions, NGOs	Facilitate MoA through the projects; roundtable meetings; field tours
6. Poor infrastructure and marketing policies	Govt ministries (agric, trade), quality assurance agencies, regional and local admin, private sector, farmers, commodity traders, co-ops, NGOs	Inter-ministerial meetings; farmer field days; IEC materials; roundtable meetings; mass and social media
7. Weak public–private partnerships (PPPs)	Govt ministries (S&T, agric, trade), researchers, research institutes, IP protection agencies; private sector	Trade fairs; roundtable meetings; formal agreements on benefit-sharing
8. Ineffective legal frameworks and policies for technology incubation	Ministries (trade, S&T), PCOs, technocrats (PSs), universities, scientists, private sector, local administration	Parliamentary meetings; science parks; open fora; policy briefs; inter-ministerial meetings
9. Unfavourable trade regulations	Ministries (trade, S&T), scientists, local authorities, licensing bodies, regional trade blocs	Regular consultations; roundtable meetings; IEC materials; technology dissemination platforms; mass and social media
10. Varied perceptions on risks and benefits of new technologies	Relevant ministries, Govt depts, local administration, consumers, private sector, scientists, academia; regulators	Social and mass media; science parks; seeing-is-believing tours; formal consultations; IEC materials; political platforms; PG meetings; open fora

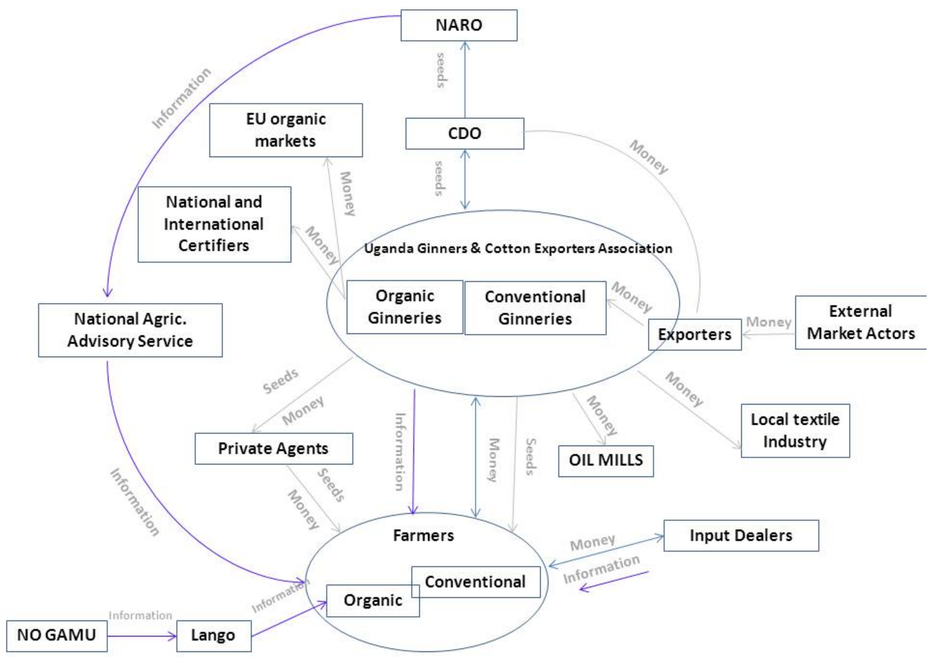

Fig 1: A Stakeholder analysis matrix

Fig. 2: A project team conducting a stakeholder analysis

Discussion

Information on stakeholders' interests can help project managers choose how to best accommodate them, thus assuring policies adopted are realistic and sustainable. Gaining stakeholder involvement requires careful and thorough planning to identify the right stakeholders and to ensure they participate in appropriate and effective ways. Stakeholders with high power and interests aligned with the project should be fully engaged and brought on board. The findings of the current study have shown that commercialization of biosciences innovations in eastern Africa is faced with many policy challenges that can be addressed by diverse actors. The degree of the limitations vary from country to country. Understanding this scenario will ensure the beneficiaries of the technologies are reached.

Conclusion

Stakeholder analysis provides a detailed understanding of the political, economic, and social impact of a project on interested groups, the hierarchy of authority and power among different groups and the actual perceptions of the project among various actors. The policy gaps identified will be addressed by involving the proposed stakeholders through several platforms, most importantly, one-on-one interactions between the researchers and policy makers. This will be crucial in building the essential links necessary in bringing bio-innovations to the market. The ultimate outcome will be transformation of the region into a bio-based economic hub.

Project Partners:

.