

## **Milestone report**

# **COMPRO-II Communication Strategy**

## **Project**

Institutionalization of quality assurance mechanism and dissemination of top quality commercial products to increase crop yields and improve food security of smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa – COMPRO-II

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## **Introduction**

COMPRO-II aims to improve crop yields of smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa through institutionalization of regulatory procedures to guarantee quality of these products and dissemination of effective agricultural commercial products.

The project will achieve this by supporting six countries (Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and Ethiopia) in institutionalization of quality assurance mechanisms and dissemination of top quality commercial products to increase crop yields and improve food security of smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

COMPRO II envisages increased awareness by at least 2 million smallholder farmers on effective and profitable commercial products.

In addition, through a public private partnership approach, the effective products will be promoted to ensure that at least 400,000 households test at least one of the products and half of them will adopt the technology. To ensure proper use of effective technologies, manuals for farmers and extension agents should be developed and tested in addition to the general directions of use on product labels. In the context of COMPRO-II effective products will include those that can achieve increases in crop yield by at least 15% when used as directed within the context of Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) and also found profitable based on adequate economic analysis.

The project will also build capacity of target countries in quality monitoring for commercial products and soil fertility management through supporting MSc. and Ph. D. fellows and training professionals. Equally important, advocacy efforts through policy briefs will be made to create awareness of policy makers about the benefits of effective products and the risks associated with the poor quality ones. It is expected that this will inform the decision making process for effective policies related to registration, approval, as well as monitoring of commercial products of interest in the marketplace in the project countries and even beyond.

### **1 Purpose of the Communication Strategy**

In order to achieve the broad goal of the COMPRO-II project, timely and sustained flow of information and messages across stakeholder groups is essential.

The strategy will support project implementation across all five project objectives namely,

- i) disseminate at least 3 effective products to smallholder farmer households,
- ii) continued screening and evaluation of new products in the core countries,
- iii) establishment of Quality Control Procedures and Safety Screening,
- iv) communication of information on commercial products, and
- v) project management, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and capacity building.

A robust communication strategy is needed to ensure that information flow among project partners is streamlined to support coordination. In addition, the strategy will ensure that all external

audiences including sponsors and other donors of the project are aware of progress and achievements. Finally, the strategy will ensure that smallholder farmers and other stakeholders who stand to benefit or are affected by the use of the commercial products remain sufficiently informed and engaged.

Ultimately, the communication strategy will support the project overall goal which is institutionalization of quality assurance mechanism and dissemination of top quality commercial products to increase crop yields and improve food security of smallholder farmers in SSA.

### **1.1 The context**

COMPRO II is being implemented in the six countries in Africa with common contextual factors which among others include;

- a) Scarcity of information to farmers on quality commercial products and the implications on crop yield
- b) Limited extension services targeting farmers in key cropping systems in the target countries
- c) Private sector business interests in the promotion and sell of commercial products
- d) Inadequate policy provisions for product quality monitoring and promotion
- e) Inadequate information and awareness on the role of Integrated Soil Fertility Management in leveraging the benefits of commercial products
- f) Varying information communication technology contexts with stark rural-urban inequalities
- g) Gender inequality in access to information among women and men smallholder farmers

### **1.2 Objectives of the Strategy**

In direct support of the five objectives of COMPRO II, the objectives of the communication strategy are:

- To inform COMPRO II partners, supporters and beneficiaries on activities, progress and outcomes throughout the project period
- To promote effective commercial products identified in COMPRO II among key stakeholders particularly smallholder farmers
- To provide smallholder farmers and extension agents (agricultural professionals) with appropriate information on adequate use, storage, and handling of effective products for optimum field performance of the technologies
- To provide policy makers with information on implications of effective and ineffective commercial products

### **1.3 Expected Results**

- Adequate dissemination of project information and technologies among COMPRO-II partners, supporters, and other interested stakeholders
- Increased awareness about the availability of effective commercial products among target groups particularly smallholder farmers

- Increased support from policy makers for the implementation of regulatory tools and policies intended to promote effective technologies while virtually eliminating the poor quality ones

#### **1.4 Strategic Approach**

COMPRO II communication activities will leverage the rich partnership model of the project. In order to reach the ambitious goals set in the project including reaching at least two million smallholder farmers with information on top quality commercial products. The approach of the strategy will be informed by a set of core guiding questions (refer to annex 3).

A key consideration will be the development of linkages with existing soil health dissemination initiatives in the region and in the specific countries including programmes supported by BMGF.

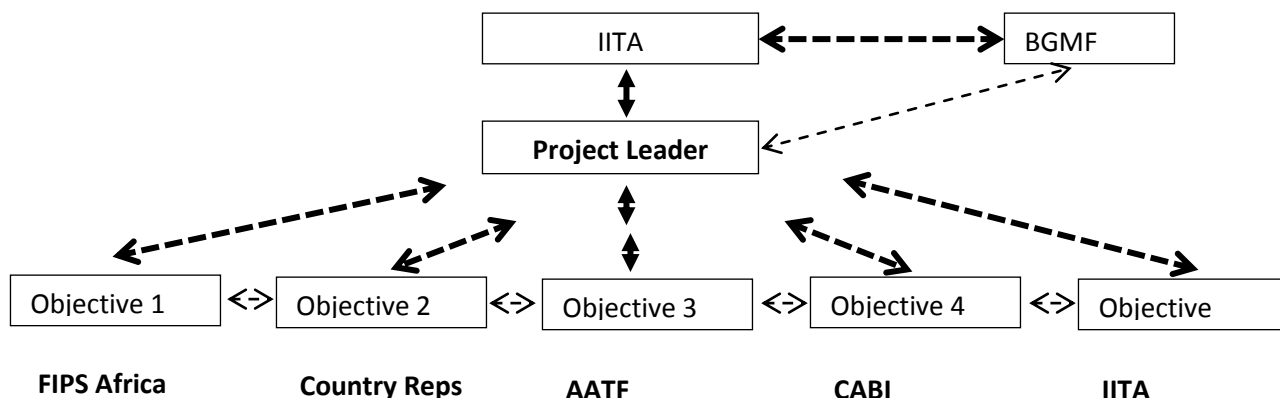
Focal points for information flow and dissemination will include the Objective Leader organizations for all five objective areas. These will form the reference point for the regional support aspect of project communications that are coordinated by IITA. These organizations will help adopt information and messages to country-specific contexts targeting policy level, and smallholder farmer audiences.

This is an essential aspect of the strategic approach since COMPRO II targets a range of cropping systems and commercial products, across different national policy and regulatory contexts. National focal points will be instrumental in delivering a national level implementation plan for the strategy. The overall strategy anticipates a coherent set of activities coordinated by the lead organizations but with very specific national level implementation plans for Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda.

## **2. Internal communications**

The internal audience consists of more than 22 organizations (see annex 1). These organizations are directly involved in project implementation. Internal communications efforts and activities aim ensure that all project partners remain actively informed and engaged in all key aspects of project implementation. The diagram below illustrates the internal information flow and dissemination model for the COMPRO II project.

Figure 1 Internal communications information flow



## 2.1 Internal Communication Objectives

- To keep all project partners informed about COMPRO II activities
- To communicate the roles and responsibilities of the partners in COMPRO II
- To increase partner support for project activities
- To recognise partner contributions to project activities
- To share the scientific principles for commercial products monitoring
- To support partner communications and information dissemination plans
- To optimize the interaction of the project partners

## 3 External Communications

The external audiences of COMPRO II consist of key government Ministries, other line Ministries, smallholder farmers and many other groups that have an active interest in the project work or directly benefit from it (see annex 2). External communications for COMPRO II will seek to ensure that stakeholders are actively informed of project activities and progress but also have remain supportive and seek increased partnership with the project. The diagram below illustrates the external information flow and dissemination model for the COMPRO II project:



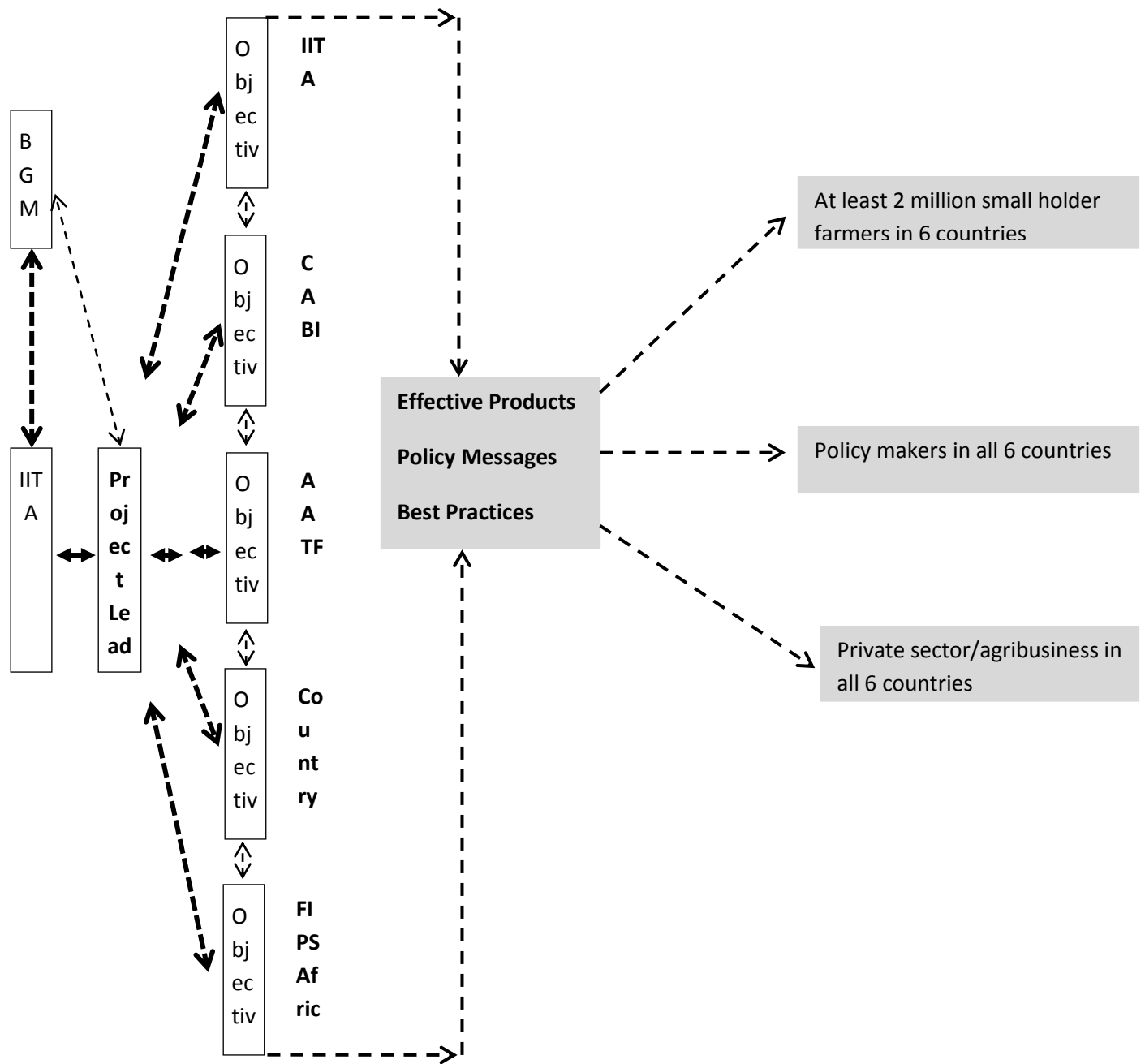


Figure 2 External communications information flow

### 3.1 External communication objectives

- To increase awareness on quality commercial products among smallholder farmers
- To disseminate best practices in quality monitoring for commercial products
- To increase awareness on the risks of ineffective products
- To provide information-support to policy mechanisms on effective commercial products
- To increase awareness on the link between effective commercial products and integrated soil fertility management

### 3.2 Key Messages

COMPRO II seeks to communicate a number of key pieces of information and messages to the external and internal audiences. The overarching theme is closely tied to the need to institutionalize quality assurance mechanisms and to disseminate top quality commercial products for increased crop yields and food security among smallholder farmers in SSA.

The main project messages are therefore part and parcel of the overall objectives of the project. The main themes for external communications to guide message development will therefore include;

- The need to establish or strengthen quality monitoring mechanisms for commercial products
- The need for smallholder farmers to adopt top quality and effective commercial products within an ISFM framework
- The need to mainstream quality monitoring capacity for commercial products both in government and in training institution curricula.
- The need to understand the implications of ineffective products on economic and environmental fronts
- Effective screening for effective products
- Best practices in commercial products, promotion, regulation, adoption, and impact.
- The business case for promotion of top quality commercial products by the private sector

The broad thematic areas listed above each contain potential for highly contextual messages targeting the wider range of audiences. Country – specific teams are well placed to examine the contextual issues that can inform the most effective messaging from these broad themes. These country specific messaging plans will also incorporate very specific messages targeting the key products in the country from the range of products tested in the initial phase of COMPRO including;

- Rhizobium inoculants (Category I – bio-fertilizer) for legumes
- Mycorrhizal inoculants (Category II – bio-pesticide) for various crops such as tissue culture banana
- Seed coating of fertilizer formulations (Category III – chemical products) for various crops such as maize

Depending on country contextual information, the country communication plans will also incorporate other products for the relevant cropping systems.

### 3.3 Main Approaches

The different categories of COMPRO II audience necessitate an eclectic mix of channels for appropriate delivery. The choice of channels is informed by the need for effectiveness and efficiency, cost-effectiveness, relevance, and outreach. Country contexts will inform most choices of appropriate channels. The list below highlights some of the channels that will be used for different groups and messages.

### 3.3.1 COMPRO II Newsletter

An internal newsletter of the project that highlights partners' activities, showcases success stories and communicates overall project implementation. The main target of the newsletter will be the key stakeholders with sufficient access to Internet including internal (particularly) and external (in general) audiences.

### 3.3.2 COMPRO II Website

A project website ([www.compro2.org](http://www.compro2.org)) has been established to address the internal and external communications needs of COMPRO II. The website will feature, project news, case studies, trainee profiles, commercial product trials and testing information, field trial features, policy advocacy messaging, social media, special interest forums, farmer testimonies, project document and publications repository, photo galleries, media centre among other important features. The website is a critical aspect of the Knowledge Management needs of COMPRO II.

### 3.3.3 Thematic Policy briefs

Properly targeted policy briefs are produced regularly to focus attention on the key policy issues emerging from project experience. Significantly thematic areas in strengthening regulatory environments, lessons for extension services strengthening, product quality monitoring, private sectors engagement and other key issues are highlighted. The policy briefs are produced by selected partners and consultants based on their comparative knowledge in the chosen thematic area. Policy briefs are disseminated through diverse approaches including, print, electronic, presentations, posters and panels. The policy briefs target various stakeholders and particularly policy makers from the Ministries of Agriculture in the participating countries.

### 3.3.4 Thematic workshop

Thematic workshops are organised around priority topics emerging from the project experience. Across all objectives, topics covering training, regulation, product evaluation, dissemination methods and policy analysis are discussed in the workshops. These target academic, research and policy audiences in the six countries.

### 3.3.5 Radio

Radio availability in all the target countries is a significant opportunity. Community radio and FM stations constitute a key source of information especially for small holder farmers in rural areas. In some countries like Kenya, estimates put radio access (especially FM stations) above 70% for rural audiences. Key partners will be identified including Ministry of agricultural extension officers to develop appropriate radio campaigns to disseminate information on commercial products.

Innovative initiatives including Farm Radio supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation will form strategic partners in this initiative.

### 3.3.6 Manuals, handbooks and guidelines

For laboratory and extension personnel, a set of materials including handbooks, guidelines and manuals will be appropriately packaged to form effective toolkits to support smallholder farmer's decisions. The manual will be prepared based on instructional communication frameworks to ensure that they maximise sharing of both technical and practical information to the users. The expertise of various information repackaging institutions and individuals will be sought to develop these materials.

### 3.3.7 Communication materials for Interactive Field days

The diffusion of knowledge and information on commercial products especially for smallholder farmer depends a lot on effective on-site demo activities. A component of the communication strategy will involve supporting dissemination teams to design farmer friendly information materials and products including posters, and audio-visual materials (videos, etc). Dissemination of these materials will utilise existing farmer outreach mechanisms including Farm Input Promotions – Africa (FIPS-Africa) network of Village Based Advisors (VBAs), government extension personnel and other partner programmes.

### 3.3.8 Technical and non-technical factsheets

In order to enhance awareness and address information needs of various stakeholders, factsheets will be produced focusing on key topics on commercial products. Unlike policy briefs, factsheets will seek to convey information aimed at increasing understanding and use of commercial products and related technologies. These will target private sector, agro-dealers, farmers, and extension staff.

### 3.3.9 Virtual networking and Social media campaigns

Special interest groups in COMPRO-II will require targeted forums to allow for discussion and diffusion of technical and scientific information of commercial products. On the COMPRO II website, a virtual forum will be created to accommodate topical discussion on commercial products. In addition to the website, effective social media including twitter and Facebook will be used to carry interest group-based topics including issues covering regulation, quality monitoring and other topics. The virtual and social media campaigns are highly targeted to scientists, policy makers, and regulatory officers.

### **3.4 Monitoring & Evaluation**

To measure progress on communication activities, the COMPRO-II project will adopt a core set of indicators based on the overall monitoring framework of the project. The indicators will seek to measure level of diffusion of project messages among the key audiences. Monitoring activities will be undertaken quarterly in line with the reporting timelines of the overall project. The indicators will be developed based on the overall result framework of the project. Tentative generic output indicators include:

- Number of IEC materials produced and disseminated on commercial products
- Number of policy-level dissemination events/products produced
- Number of female and male smallholder farmers reached by materials developed
- Number of commercial products promoted/disseminated
- Number of tools/manuals/guidelines produced on commercial products
- Number of private-sector communication plans developed

## 4 Implementation plan

### 4.1 Strategic Objectives

- To promote effective commercial products identified in COMPRO I&II among key stakeholders
- To inform COMPRO II partners, supporters and beneficiaries on activities, progress and outcomes throughout the project period
- To provide policy makers with information on implications of effective and ineffective commercial products
- To provide smallholder farmers and extension agents (agricultural professionals) with appropriate information on adequate use, storage, and handling of effective products for optimum field performance of the technologies

### 4.2 Target Audience

- COMPRO II project partners (Table 1; Annex 1)
- External stakeholders (Annex 2)

**Table 1 Selected indicators used to assess the performance of the communication strategy**

Activity Area	Time Frame					Indicator	Means of Verification	Partners
	Project year							
	1	2	3	4	5			
<b>Support development and dissemination of Information on COMPRO II project for partners and stakeholders</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>COMPRO II Newsletter</li> <li>COMPRO Website</li> <li>COMPRO Articles</li> <li>COMPRO II blog</li> </ol>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number and types of information materials developed and disseminated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Information materials</li> <li>▪ Dissemination report</li> </ul>	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, CAB International, International Centre for Tropical Agriculture – Tropical - Soil Biology and Fertility, African Agricultural Technology Foundation, Agricultural research institutions [e. g., Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research, Egerton University (Kenya), Makerere University (Uganda), Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (Ghana), Sokoine University of agriculture (Tanzania), Institute of Agricultural Research/Ahmadu Bello University (Nigeria)]. Regulatory bodies (e. g., Plant Protection Regulatory Services (Ghana), Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Services, Tanzania Fertilizer Regulatory Authority, National
<b>Support development of key messages for priority commercial products, training, regulation, screening, and policy.</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convene stakeholder message development workshops</li> <li>Organise message pre-test</li> </ol>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number and themes of key messages developed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ List of messages</li> </ul>		

with key audiences											
<b>Support development and dissemination of Information Materials on priority Commercial products</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Policy briefs on regulatory environment, products and training</li> <li>ii. Factsheets on effective products</li> <li>iii. Promotional posters for farmers</li> <li>iv. Manual for extension personnel</li> </ol>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number and types of information materials on commercial products produced and disseminated</li> <li>▪ Number and type of target audiences reached with materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Information materials</li> <li>▪ Dissemination report</li> </ul>				Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (Nigeria), Department of Crop Protection (Uganda), Regulatory Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture (Ethiopia)]. Dissemination partners [e.g., Farm Inputs Promotion Africa (Kenya), Extension Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture (Ethiopia), Africa 2000 Network (Uganda), Africa Fertilizer Agribusiness Partnership (Tanzania), Notore Chemicals Industries Ltd (Nigeria), Antika Company (Ghana)]
<b>Conduct Advocacy to policy makers on effective commercial products, and regulatory mechanisms</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Hold national symposia on regulatory environments</li> <li>ii. Engage media on effective commercial products</li> <li>iii. Engage academic institutions in information dissemination</li> <li>iv. Conduct private-sector information sharing forums on commercial products</li> </ol>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of policy advocacy activities undertaken</li> <li>▪ Number of key stakeholders reached with advocacy activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advocacy activity report</li> </ul>				
<b>Hold Field demonstrations/pilots on priority products</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Community awareness farmer-led field demos</li> <li>ii. Special interest groups mobilization and information sharing (female farmers, youth etc)</li> </ol>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of successful demos conducted</li> <li>▪ Number of countries reached</li> <li>▪ Number of farmers reached in demos by gender</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstration activity reports</li> </ul>				

<p><b>Conduct Partnership information dissemination forums</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Conduct issue-specific private sector forums</li> <li>ii. Conduct issue-specific government sector forums</li> <li>iii. Conduct joint public-private sector forums</li> </ul>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of partnership forums held</li> <li>▪ Number and type of partners involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Forum reports</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Conduct Scientific forums on the science of effective commercial products</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Convene high-level scientific forum on commercial products</li> </ul>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number and themes of scientific forums held</li> <li>▪ Number and type of participants involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Forum reports</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Convene best-practice sharing forums</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Document innovative community and ICT-enabled approaches for dissemination of information on commercial products</li> <li>ii. Hold bi-annual best practices forum on impact of commercial product adoption</li> <li>iii. Organize media outreach to showcase impact of effective products</li> </ul>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of best practice forums conducted</li> <li>▪ Number and type of best practice case studies disseminated</li> <li>▪ Number of effective products promoted</li> <li>▪ Number and type of partners involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Forum reports</li> </ul>	



## Conclusion

The range of COMPRO II audience is very diverse; it includes project partners, ministries of agriculture, the private sector, and the smallholder farmers among others. This makes it imperative to gain some insight into the key motivations, levels of interest, potential for support or opposition to project activities and messages and how they will be addressed by in the strategy.

COMPRO II project partners consist of organizations that are actively involved in the key thematic areas of the project either on an on-going basis, or as a result of invitation into the project. While challenges may emerge as a result of managing partnerships and role-clarification, it is safe to assume that this group will remain supportive of the project activities. Communication efforts will therefore aim to keep this group actively engaged, informed and acknowledged.

Ministries of agriculture in the target countries are the custodians of agricultural policy provisions which may include commercial product quality monitoring. For this reason, they will be actively interested in the lessons and experiences of the project and how these can inform/improve policy. Communication activities targeting the ministries will seek to convey key lessons, and policy-oriented messages on commercial products with a clear focus on indicating the value-added by the project interventions.

The private sector within the project context consists of input suppliers, manufacturers, and private research institutes/organizations involved in various aspects of commercial-product production and marketing. Aspects of the COMPRO II project involve sensitizing stakeholders on quality aspects of commercial products. It is possible that both supportive and unsupportive responses can emerge from private sector actors. Communication activities targeting this group will aim to demonstrate the business sense of promoting approved high quality commercial products to create a levelled playing field.

Smallholder farmers are the ultimate beneficiaries of the COMPRO II project outcomes. These include all farmers currently involved in using existing commercial products as well as those that plan to start using the products to improve their yield. These include both men and women farmers in the target countries. Key motivation for this group is increased yield, and improved incomes. Communication activities targeting this group will aim to inform, educate, and demonstrate the use of high quality commercial products and its link with improved yield and incomes. Conversely, the negative aspects of poor quality or ineffective products will be highlighted.

## Annex 1 Internal Audience

- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Key donor)
- African Agricultural Technology Foundation
- International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
- CAB International
- International Centre for Tropical Agriculture – Tropical - Soil Biology and Fertility
- Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research
- Egerton University (Kenya)
- Makerere University (Uganda)
- Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (Ghana)
- Sokoine University of agriculture (Tanzania)
- Institute of Agricultural Research/Ahmadu Bello University (Nigeria)]
- Regulatory bodies (e. g., Plant Protection Regulatory Services (Ghana)
- Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Services
- Tanzania Fertilizer Regulatory Authority,
- National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (Nigeria)
- Department of Crop Protection (Uganda)
- Regulatory Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture (Ethiopia)
- Farm Inputs Promotion Africa (Kenya)
- Extension Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture (Ethiopia)
- Africa 2000 Network (Uganda)
- Africa Fertilizer Agribusiness Partnership (Tanzania)
- Notore Chemicals Industries Ltd (Nigeria)
- Antika Company (Ghana)

## Annex 2 External audience

It includes, but is not limited to, the following stakeholders

- International Development Agencies
- Ministries of Agriculture Ethiopia
- Ministries of Agriculture and Food, Ghana
- Ministry of Agriculture, Kenya,
- Ministries of Agriculture Nigeria,
- Ministries of Agriculture Tanzania,
- Ministries of Agriculture, Uganda
- Smallholder farmers (same countries as above )
- Media (same countries and international)
- International and National agricultural research institutes (same countries as above)

- NGOs in agriculture sector
- Extension personnel
- Institutes of Higher learning e.g. Universities
- Private sector in agricultural products (input suppliers, manufacturers)
- Regional organisations (AU, COMESA, ECOWAS, FARA, etc)

## Annex 3 Guiding Questions

Strategy Component	Guiding Question(s)
<b>a) Stakeholders and key audience</b>	Who do we intend to communicate to and what do we want them to do with the information?
<b>b) Information Needs and context</b>	What are the contextual issues in COMPRO II communications? Country, local, regional? Gender? Private sector issues?
<b>c) Objectives (strategic) and expected Outcomes</b>	What specific aims do we have in mind and wish to achieve with the communications?
<b>d) Information themes and messages</b>	What main topics, project components do we want to communicate about? And what do we want to say?
<b>e) Delivery Channels and formats</b>	What ways and means will be most effective to get our message to key audience?
<b>f) Activities/Strategies</b>	What specific things will we do/implement to deliver this strategy?
<b>g) Monitoring Plan</b>	How will we know if we are making progress? What information will we look for? Where will we find it? How will we use the information to improve?
<b>h) Resources</b>	What will it take in terms of human, materials and other resources to implement our strategy?