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Strategic Review of DEVCO support to African continental and sub-regional  
agricultural research organisations: FARA, AFAAS, CORAF/WECARD,  
ASARECA and CCARDESA  
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*Final Report*

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# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1 Background**

This is a summary report of a 3-months (August-October 2015) Strategic Review of EU-DEVCO support to five African continental and regional organisations for agricultural research and advisory services provision: FARA, AFAAS, CORAF/WECARD, ASARECA and CCARDESA. As from 2007 these organisations received a total amount of € 58.48 million through the Food Security Thematic Program: FARA € 28.00 million, AFAAS € 5.00 million, CORAF/WECARD € 11.48 million, ASARECA € 9.00 million, and CCARDESA € 5.00 million. In addition, DEVCO provided support to two continent-wide projects for which FARA leads implementation: the Platform for African-European Partnership on Agricultural Research for Development (€ 6.00 million) and the Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Program (€ 2.5 million).

DEVCO's support aimed to improve the organisations' capacities to advocate for, design, coordinate, manage and implement agricultural research and advisory services. About 75 % of the resources were invested in programs implemented by national agricultural research systems. All five organisations support the former CAADP Pillar IV processes (research, technology dissemination and adoption) under AU/NEPAD, and they have MoUs with the African Union Commission and the respective Regional Economic Communities (ECOWAS, ECCAS, COMESA, EAC, SADC).

Starting 2007, the organisations were supported through Multi-Donor Trust Funds managed by the World Bank. MDTF modalities were seen as attractive ways to provide core support as they would (i) bring coordinated donor support, (ii) take advantage of WB expertise in institutional capacity strengthening, (iii) provide cost-effective monitoring, and (iv) allow individual donors the flexibility to determine how much to devote to each organisation. Also, building on the core support provided through the MDTFs, there was room for other donors to invest in the organisations bilaterally. MDTF donors were, for FARA: DEVCO, CIDA (Canada), DFID (UK) and DGIS (The Netherlands), for AFAAS: DEVCO and SDC (Switzerland), for CORAF/WECARD: DEVCO and CIDA, for ASARECA: DEVCO and USAID, and for CCARDESA: DEVCO.

However, in spite of the increased institutional and staff capacities built by all five organisations, and also in spite of generally positive independent reviews and evaluations, core support through the MDTFs by donors other than DEVCO has been waning over the past years. In addition, donor contributions that had been pledged initially were not put into full effect, while other donors withdrew their support altogether. As a consequence, DEVCO is now by far the leading donor providing core support to the five organisations. Insufficient financial support, paired with too ambitiously planned Operational Plans has left some of the organisations largely underfunded, threatening their financial sustainability and operational capacities.

In view of these developments DEVCO commissioned the present Review with the overall objective to provide elements and recommendations to assist DEVCO to revise its support strategy. Specific objectives were threefold, to: (i) assess how the organisations have met the objectives set in terms of institutional strengthening, increased managerial capacities and operational results, (ii) assess the efficiency of the current support modalities, and (iii) analyse the new context in which the organisations operate and the concomitant implications for future DEVCO funding.

## **1.2 The changing African AR4D landscape**

Rural incomes and food security in Africa depend crucially on improving agricultural productivity. The latter however, is lagging far behind the rest of the world and it fails to keep up with population growth. Turning this underperformance around, depends on overcoming enormous challenges as higher productivity must be achieved from a sector that is expanding onto increasingly marginal lands, that faces competition from other sectors, and that is confronted with the impacts of climate change. Further, it must be achieved largely by farm

families that operate on holdings of 1 to 2 hectares, with extremely modest endowments, and in rural areas that are notoriously lacking in agricultural support services and physical infrastructure.

Improving the current state of agriculture requires a Transformation Agenda, as defined by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The transformation would lead to diversified economic growth, higher rural employment, improved livelihood opportunities, and reduced inequality between rural and urban areas, realising a change-over from the current situation with tens of millions of small farm families barely making a living with low-productivity techniques, to a situation where farm families enjoy steadily rising returns to their inputs. Higher farm-level productivity could then be absorbed by traders, processors and markets adding further value while creating demand for labour and prospects for economic growth. Among the most important factors needed for this transformation are contributions from more-effective, stable, and scaled-up investments in agricultural research, agricultural extension, and (higher) agricultural education.

To that end, effective institutions and programs for agricultural research, extension services and education are required. The world over, meta-analyses have shown that the benefits from productivity growth attributed to agricultural research exceed their costs by a factor of 10 or more whereas high rates of return on investments in science for agriculture, to the order of 40-60 per cent, have also been consistently proven. In this respect, institutions such as FARA, CORAF/WECARD, ASARECA, CCARDESA and AFAAS are expected to provide effective AR4D leadership. The anticipated returns on investment in the sector do justify a substantial increase of the support to these organisations from their current levels, both by African states and institutions, as by international Development Partners.

Contributions by the five organisations to Africa's agricultural development are guided by a number of policy-level documents, including the FARA-initiated Framework for African Agricultural Productivity (FAAP) and the Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa, the CAADP Pillar IV Strategy and the Sustaining the CAADP Momentum Strategy. The latter document points out that strengthening institutional systems of science for agriculture in Africa implies (i) regional-level partnerships: effective NARS are the building blocks for regional and continental collaboration, and (ii) global-level partnerships: CGIAR, GFAR and GFRAS are key partners of NARS, SROs, FARA and AFAAS.

Africa's agricultural development acquired new momentum when, in January 2014, the African Union adopted the 'Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation' in which African Heads of State and Governments recommitted themselves to the CAADP principles and values to uphold 10 % as the target for public spending on agriculture, to double agricultural productivity, and thus sustain annual sector growth in agricultural GDP at 6 % at least.

Implementation of the Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa as the research contribution to the transformation of Africa's agriculture requires a solid, sustainable and inclusive support structure for the scoping, coordination and facilitation of agricultural research and advisory services. This structure exists in the form of the five organisations. With support from donors, the European Union in particular, these organisations have established themselves — at different levels of professional and operational maturity — as 'institutions that matter' as most of their independent evaluations and reviews have put on record.

However, after a decade of support, donor perceptions on continued assistance are changing, including the expectation that the organisations should be more driven and supported by African nations and institutions themselves. As it appears, none of the five organisations have developed inclusive exit strategies anticipating decreasing donor support. Moreover, mostly they have overspent their budgets and are facing financial gaps amounting to 20-80 %. As a consequence expenditures had to be reduced through staff rightsizing, reductions in overheads and operational costs, and programmatic adjustments.

### **1.3 Trends in development financing**

Magnitude and mechanisms of international development financing are changing, including the support to (African) agricultural research and extension. Over the past years new policy priorities and strategic options in donor countries themselves have diverted money from development cooperation. Examples include the global financial crisis of 2008-2009 and its aftermath of world-wide economic recession, the economic crisis of Greece, and political and human crises in the Middle East and in some African countries that continue to result in hundreds of thousands of refugees flooding Europe. Additionally, growing public criticism on the effectiveness of development cooperation compel donors to demand quick and sustainable impacts from their investments and for visibility of the effects of their support. Lastly, there is growing concern about the absence of realistic and sustainable co-investments from recipient national governments and from regional and continental economic communities.

### **1.4 The commitment of the European Union**

As stated above, in recent years the European Union has become the main donor for the five organisations. The EU support aimed at improving the capacity of the institutions to advocate for, and design, coordinate and implement agricultural research and advisory services. DEVCO's objective was to provide support towards an effective and efficient portfolio of AR4D initiatives delivering impact on food and nutrition security, poverty reduction and resilience goals, consistent with the development policies of the European Union. In its recent policy document Research & Innovation DEVCO's overall objectives are: (i) ensuring the success of global and regional AR4D initiatives, (ii) improving European leadership, coordination and influence, (iii) exploring new strategic directions to put research into use and achieve impact, and (iv) ensuring that AR4D delivers impact at country and local level. The main financial instrument for implementing this approach is the new Global Public Goods and Challenges Program (GPGCP). Currently, the Multi-Annual Indicative Program 2014-2017 prevails, having an indicative budget of € 750 million. Synchrony with other EU financial instruments, including EDF and Horizon 2020 will be sought. In the framework of the EU-Africa High Level Policy Dialogue, a long-term EU-Africa Research and Innovation Partnership will be implemented in 2016 with a focus on food and nutrition security, sustainable agriculture and three thematic pillars: (i) sustainable intensification, (ii) agriculture and food systems for nutrition, and (iii) agricultural markets and trade. Cross-cutting issues include innovation, social sciences, gender and youth, and capacity building.

### **1.5 Global initiatives and actions**

Food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture are high on international agendas, including the 2030 UN Development Agenda 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' which defines the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, eight of which are directly or indirectly pertinent to agriculture. Furthermore, the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference COP 21 in Paris has resulted in a declaration on policies to curb global climate change including actions related to agriculture and the environment, and how peoples' uses affect these.

## **2. Review of the Organisations**

### **2.1 Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA)**

#### **General**

FARA is the continental umbrella organisation for advocacy, initiation, and facilitation of agricultural research for development in Africa. It aims to deliver in three results areas: (i) African agricultural stakeholders determining how the sector should be transformed, and establishing the needed collective actions, (ii) strengthened and integrated continental capacity responding to stakeholder demands within the agricultural innovations system, and (iii) an enabling environment for increased agricultural research for development investments. FARA was established in 1997, and is managed by a Secretariat (47 staff), headed by an Executive Director. It is based in Accra, Ghana.

FARA's core activities can be summarized as visioning and facilitation of Africa's agricultural research agenda and research-for-development approaches, and advocacy and resource mobilisation for agricultural research for development among African governance institutions (AUC, RECs and National Governments), international Development Partners and other institutions and mechanisms (AfDB, philanthropic foundations, private sector, etc.).

### **Donor support to FARA: MDTF and other donors**

As from 2008, a WB-managed MDTF supported FARA with a total contribution from DEVCO of € 24 million. Pledges by other donors (DFID, CIDA, AfDB, USAID and DGIS) ranged from € 48.6 - € 35.5 million according to different budget scenarios provided. Most of these, however, were not fully effectuated, and other potential donors opted-out altogether. As from 2010 this left DEVCO as the sole contributor to the FARA-MDTF. As a result, FARA has not been able to fulfil all its planned objectives.

The Reviewers note that for its MTOP 2 (2014-2018) FARA developed three implementation scenarios at different levels of anticipated financial support. In the end, not even the cheapest scenario (at 60 %) matched reality, leaving a gap of US\$ 66 million between targeted and committed funding. Such under-funding threatens the consistency of strategy implementation as, for reasons of survival, FARA may be tempted to acquire external support that is not matching the prevailing priorities and targets<sup>1</sup>.

### **Main achievements due to MDTF-DEVCO support**

DEVCO's support targeted strengthening of FARA's institutional capacity in advocacy and facilitation of agricultural research for development. This support has been instrumental in building an operational secretariat that is capable to implement its multiple tasks, be it under considerable financial constraints. FARA is currently in a delicate process of further downsizing its staff and reorganising their tasks.

FARA's advocacy role is specifically aiming at upstream decision-making levels, including AUC, NEPAD and global Development Partners, including GFAR and CGIAR. FARA has been instrumental in coordinating the CAADP-led national agricultural investment plans. FARA-initiated reference schemes include the *Framework for African Agricultural Productivity (FAAP)* and the *Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa*. The latter identifies five thematic areas for agricultural research in Africa: (i) sustainable productivity in major farming systems, (ii) food systems and value chains, (iii) agro-biodiversity and natural resource management, (iv) climate change, policy and institutional research, including market access and trade, and (v) sustainable intensification, modern genetics and genomics, and foresight capabilities. FARA is now the convener of the Science for Agriculture Consortium as the mechanism for implementation of the Science Agenda as from early 2016. FARA is supporting AUC-Human Resources Science and Technology Department in developing the implementation mechanism of the agriculture component of the AU Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy 2024. FARA is also providing technical support to the AUC, including in the activation of the CAADP-CGIAR Alignment, especially in the implementation of the Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa. Lastly, FARA and NEPAD have developed a new partnership framework to mainstream the Science Agenda into CAADP and the implementation of the Malabo Declaration.

FARA is the facilitating umbrella organisation for the SROs that coordinate agricultural research at the regional level: NASRO<sup>2</sup>, CORAF/WECARD, ASARECA and CCARDESA. FARA has been instrumental in establishing AFAAS and CCARDESA. Within the CAADP Pillar IV mechanism, FARA has strengthened its

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<sup>1</sup> Similar over-budgeting was also observed at ASARECA and CCARDESA.

<sup>2</sup> NASRO, the North Africa Sub-Regional Organisation, is not included in the present Review.

alignment and partnership with RUFORUM, ANAFE and TEAM-Africa — three initiatives that support transformation of agricultural higher education in Africa, and with the CGIAR. FARA also cooperates with non-research stakeholders including the Pan-African Farmer Forum, the Pan-Africa Agribusiness Consortium, and the Pan-Africa Non-Governmental Organisation Consortium.

FARA is the coordinating agency for AR4D programs including the EU-supported SSA-CP, PAEPARD and the recently launched AHC-STAFF project on capacity development. FARA also coordinates other pan-African programs consistent with its core mandate including UNIBRAIN, AFAPP, SCARDA, SABIMA, RAILS and DONATA, all supported by non-MDTF donors, and being implemented through and in partnership with the SROs. To the opinion of the Reviewers, facilitation and coordination of such time-bound activities is consistent with FARA's mandate provided that they relate to methodology development, including proofing of concepts (e.g. IAR4D and IPs) at continental level. In line with the FAAP-defined subsidiarity principle. Actual implementation is an integral part of the mandate of SROs jointly with NARS in the respective regions. On a 2-3 year schedule, FARA organises its *African Agricultural Science Weeks*.

### **Effectiveness and efficiency of MDTF-DEVCO support to FARA**

The Reviewers side with the general conclusion of the 2011 External Review of FARA that “FARA has put ARD firmly on the map of the African development agenda, and has built a strong network of partners from different sectors and stakeholder groups”. The present Review notes that FARA's capacity to facilitate and implement its core tasks largely builds on the support provided by DEVCO through the MDTF, and that FARA is almost entirely dependent on support from international Development Partners: African governments and financial institutions play minor roles only as supporters of FARA.

Further to the immediate financial shortfall, the Review Team observed that FARA has not been able to design a sustainable exit strategy for continued financial support upon seizure of the MDTF mechanism: fund raising has focused mainly on ‘traditional’ Development Partners. Only by early 2015 have FARA and its partners developed a joint action plan for immediate implementation. In addition, cost-recovery for services rendered was identified as a complementary strategy to attain balanced budgets.

## **2.2 Conseil Ouest et Centre Africain pour la Recherche et le Développement Agricoles/West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF/WECARD)**

### **General**

CORAF/WECARD is responsible for the coordination and facilitation of agricultural research for development in West and Central Africa. It aims to deliver in five result areas: (i) increased use of appropriate technologies and innovations, (ii) increased uptake of decision-making options for policy, institutions and markets, (iii) enhanced institutional and human capacity in agricultural research, (iv) facilitated demand for agricultural knowledge, and (v) effective results delivery. CORAF/WECARD was established in 1987 and comprises 22 member states. Daily management is with a Secretariat (59 staff), headed by an Executive Director<sup>3</sup>. CORAF/WECARD is based in Dakar, Senegal.

CORAF/WECARD's core activities can be summarized as the facilitation of agricultural research for development through coordinated regional approaches jointly with NARS and main stakeholders in West and Central Africa, policy support at the regional level (RECs and national governments), and advocacy and resource mobilisation.

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<sup>3</sup> At the time of this review, CORAF/WECARD's ED position was vacant.

## **Donor Support to CORAF/WECARD: MDTF and other donors**

As from 2011, a WB-managed MDTF supported the implementation of CORAF/WECARD's MTOPs 1 (2008-2013; total operational budget US\$ 112 million) and 2 (2014-2018; total budget estimated at US\$ 125 million). MDTF donors are the EU (€ 11.475 million) and DFATD (Canada; Ca\$ 10 million). Substantial additional funding is received under bilateral arrangements with the WB, DFID, USAID, AfDB and IDRC. The two RECs in West and Central Africa, ECOWAS and ECCAS, are providing financial support as well. Member countries contribute an annual fee of US\$ 1,000. The Canadian MDTF contribution may be discontinued by the end of 2015, to be replaced by a bilateral support modality.

## **Main achievements due to MDTF-DEVCO support**

MDTF support to CORAF/WECARD focused on strengthening institutional capacity to facilitate and implement regional AR4D programs. This support was instrumental in building a competent secretariat, now having operational management systems in place for program implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The Reviewers appreciate that CORAF/WECARD has been very proficient in resource mobilisation: under MTOP 1 a total of US\$ 118 million was mobilised against a target of US\$ 112 million, whereas an additional US\$ 340 million was leveraged for support to member countries. CORAF/WECARD's strong governance and management capacity enabled it to attract programs consistent with its core mandate, of non-Trust Fund donors, including the WB-funded West African Agricultural Productivity Program and the USAID-funded West African Seed Program. In the framework of WAAPP, CORAF/WECARD was instrumental in establishing nine Centres of Excellence for research on key regional commodities such as roots and tubers, rice, dry cereals and aquaculture. Given their regional character, facilitation and coordination of such time-bound activities is consistent with CORAF/WECARD's mandate and targeted result areas. The subsidiarity principle applies, in that actual implementation of the activities involves consortia and leadership of NARS and main stakeholders in the sub-region.

MDTF support was used to implement a competitive grants scheme, resulting in 17 regional projects being executed through consortia of NARS. Outcomes of these projects and other activities have been reported in numerous publications, and via (social) media. Visibility of the MDTF and its individual donors (EU and DFATD) is generally high.

CORAF/WECARD has indeed invested in technology generation and innovation, dissemination and adoption processes through approaches that use Innovation Platforms in partnership with FARA as tools for implementation: currently it is counting more than 200 Innovation Platforms for a wide variety of commodities, dealing with various entry points in the value chain in an inclusive approach involving producers, input dealers, processors, traders and consumers.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of MDTF-DEVCO support to CORAF/WECARD**

Performance levels of CORAF/WECARD, as well as results and impacts have been evaluated positively throughout the MDTF implementation period. The robust implementation support by the World Bank had a positive impact on the organisation's management capacity. However, given its positive track record of managing donor funds and in delivering on agreed outcomes and outputs, it would appear that CORAF/WECARD is now capable and ready to be entrusted with the management of EU funds, under strict reporting and monitoring modalities.

Whatever the support scenario that might be adopted, the bottom line of the present Review is that EU support has been key in building capacity for designing, implementing and monitoring agricultural research in West and

Central Africa. However, it becomes very urgent for African governments and policy-level institutions to deliver on promise to directly support agricultural research organisations themselves. In this respect, CORAF/WECARD's close working relationship with the RECs of West and Central Africa (ECOWAS and ECCAS) is highly relevant. An organisation such as CORAF/WECARD allows to tackle regional challenges that cannot be dealt with by NARS alone.

Overall, the Review Mission acknowledges that CORAF/WECARD has built up considerable expertise to generate and offer research output and innovative technologies to farmers and other end-users, through its partner network. Its intervention approach builds on the IAR4D model that sees formulation of agricultural research agendas and interactive exchange of research output with the stakeholders as the starting point and the centre piece, to bring about sustainable and long-lasting development processes.

### **2.3 Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA)**

#### **General**

ASARECA facilitates and coordinates agricultural research for development in Eastern and Central Africa. It aims to deliver in five result areas: (i) generation of technologies, innovations and management practices, (ii) dissemination and up-scaling, (iii) enhanced policy analysis and advocacy, (iv) strengthened stakeholder capacity for innovation, and (v) improved communication, information and knowledge management. ASARECA was launched in 1994 and comprises 11 member countries. Its daily management is with a Secretariat comprising of 23 staff members (down from 64 before 2014), headed by an Executive Director<sup>4</sup>. ASARECA is based in Entebbe, Uganda.

ASARECA's core activities may be summarized as the facilitation of agricultural research for development and institutional strengthening through coordinated regional approaches jointly with NARS and main stakeholders in Eastern and Central Africa, policy support at regional level (RECs and national governments), and advocacy and resource mobilisation.

#### **Donor support to ASARECA: MDTF and other donors**

As from 2008, a WB-managed MDTF supported ASARECA's MTPOs 1 (2008-2013; operational budget US\$ 84.89 million) and 2 (2014-2018; budget estimated at US\$ 181 million). MDTF donors DFID, USAID and DEVCO jointly covered 70 % of the MTOP 1 budget. Bilaterally, ASARECA received support from the World Bank, CIDA/DFATD, SIDA and the African Development Bank. Up to 2014, member countries contributed an annual fee of US\$ 5,000. In 2015, this fee was increased to US\$ 15,000 plus a one-off contribution of US\$ 100,000. At the time of this Review, only seven countries had paid their annual commitments in full, and none had paid the one-off contribution.

For MTOP 2, ASARECA developed three implementation scenarios at different levels of anticipated donor support. By September 2015, confirmed donor funding to ASARECA was US\$ 29.87 million, which is one-third only of the total amount targeted for the 'low case scenario' at US\$ 90 million<sup>5</sup>. Following the withdrawal of DFID, MDTF support is from the EU and USAID only, at € 10 million and US\$ 1.3 million, respectively. MTOP 2 uses a carry-over from MTOP 1 of US\$ 3.94 million.

#### **Main achievements due to MDTF-DEVCO support**

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<sup>4</sup> At the time of this review, ASARECA's ED position was vacant.

<sup>5</sup> Similar over-budgeting was also observed at FARA and CCARDESA.

MDTF-DEVCO support targeted the strengthening of ASARECA's institutional capacity to advocate for, and facilitate agricultural research for development. Implementation thereof was through competitive calls for multi-disciplinary research in regional stakeholder consortia. DEVCO's support enabled ASARECA to build a competent secretariat having operational governance and administrative systems in place. Building on this core support, ASARECA has been playing a prominent and key facilitating role for its partners in implementing (inter-)national programs and activities, including policy advice to COMESA and ECCAS, and contributions to the formulation of National Investments Plans in the ECA region under CAADP. ASARECA was also an effective regional coordinator of the WB-financed Eastern Africa Agricultural Productivity Program. Under EAAPP, ASARECA supported the establishment of four Regional Centres of Excellence for research on key commodities including dairy, wheat, rice and cassava. ASARECA was responsible for the regional implementation of the EC-supported PAEPARD, SSA-CP and AHC-STAFF programs in partnership with FARA as continental coordinator. It is noted that, given their regional character, these program activities were consistent with ASARECA's core mandate and the result areas targeted. Also, the subsidiarity principle applies, in that actual implementation involves consortia and leadership of NARS and main stakeholders in the sub-region. Biennially, ASARECA organises East and Central African Scientific Conferences. EU visibility, and that of other donors, is taken-up seriously: ASARECA implements internal visibility guidelines that are based on those of the EU.

### **Effectiveness and efficiency of MDTF-DEVCO support to ASARECA**

Under MTOP 1 many joint evaluations and external reviews concluded that ASARECA had made good progress towards achieving strengthened governance and institutional capacity, enhanced generation of agricultural technologies and innovations, enhanced adoption of policy options, and strengthened capacities in agricultural research. Also, the Aide Mémoires of the WB Implementation Support Missions attested to the generally high performance level of ASARECA. More specifically, some external reviews reported that results exceeded targets set, including numbers of stakeholders accessing new technologies, innovations and management practices, and increased cash incomes of beneficiaries. The reviews also observed high participation rates in projects of women and vulnerable households.

While ASARECA's overall statements of intent remain, the pace of achieving the latter, and the magnitude of impacts to be generated under its ambitiously planned MTOP 2 have been greatly compromised by restricted donor buy-in and by a 'whistle-blower' incident in 2014 on alleged financial mismanagement. The incident spurred an investigation by the World Bank. In reaction to these allegations, ASARECA's Executive Director resigned and, awaiting the result of the investigation, donors, including DEVCO, SIDA and USAID suspended their support. Subsequently, yet another rightsizing exercise was implemented: about two-thirds of ASARECA's original staff now have been laid off and a number of activities have been put on hold. In this respect, the Review Team is concerned about ASARECA's secretariat staff number reaching the absolute threshold of critical mass needed to function correctly: ASARECA is in crisis.

ASARECA's perilous situation spurred a critical reaction from Joint Development Partners who urged the ASARECA Board to address the financial situation, and to bring on real transformation and effective reform. In particular, ASARECA's role in engaging NARS in less-endowed countries was questioned.

With its dented image and strongly reduced budget and staff numbers, ASARECA's niche may be taken by competitors and it may fade into obscurity. An example is its hitherto pro-active role in regional initiatives on climate change which it is no longer able to continue. Also, funding expected from the B&M Gates Foundation (at US\$ 15 million) for a seed-sector development project, was diverted to a competing actor as the Gates Foundation could not await the 'ASARECA issue' to be sorted.

## **2.4 Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa (CCARDESA)**

### **General**

CCARDESA is responsible for agricultural research for development in Southern Africa. It aims to address five priority areas: (i) farmer empowerment and market access, (ii) technology generation and demand-driven advisory services, (iii) knowledge management, information and communication, (iv) institutional development and capacity building, and (v) strengthening of the Secretariat. CCARDESA was established in July 2012, making it the youngest of the SROs, and it comprises 15 member countries. Daily management is with a Secretariat of 16 staff members, headed by an Executive Director. CCARDESA is based in Gaborone, Botswana.

CCARDESA's core activities may be summarized as the facilitation of agricultural research for development and institutional strengthening through coordinated regional approaches jointly with NARS and main stakeholders in Southern Africa, policy support at regional level (RECs and national governments), and advocacy and resource mobilisation.

### **Donor support to CCARDESA: MDTF and other donors**

As from 2013, a WB-managed MDTF supports implementation of CCARDESA's MTOP 1 (2013-2018; total operational budget calculated at US\$ 38.9 million). In spite of expectations that multiple donors would buy in, up to the time of the present Review EU was the sole contributor to the Fund, to the amount of € 5 million. As the WB charges costs to manage the fund (initially US\$ 900,000), the actual amount available to CCARDESA was considerably less than budgeted. CCARDESA management however, was able to negotiate the costs down to US\$ 330,000 for the whole program period. CCARDESA member countries are providing substantial support through one-off contributions that are based on the countries' GDPs. Country contributions are placed in a special Reserve Fund. An additional system of annual membership fees is being developed.

CCARDESA originally developed three budget scenarios for the implementation of its MTOP, at different levels of financial support<sup>6</sup>. By the end of 2014 it had become clear that the Trust Fund would not attract donors other than DEVCO, and CCARDESA had to adopt a 'worst case' scenario that still left a gap of US\$ 18.3 million between targeted and committed funding.

On specific project basis, CCARDESA is supported by the WB-financed Agricultural Productivity Program for Southern Africa, the EU-supported AHC-STAFF and SSA-CP projects (in partnership with FARA), GIZ (Germany), and others. At the time of this Review, new project proposals fitting CCARDESA's core mandate, had been submitted to other donors, to a total amount of US\$ 3.5 million,.

### **Main achievements due to MDTF-DEVCO support**

In its first two years of operations, CCARDESA has been able to position itself as a regional organisation 'that matters'. Internally, and with WB support, CCARDESA's focus has been on establishing and operationalising its secretariat, the compilation and implementation of governance and administration systems, and the development of a communication and visibility policy. Externally, CCARDESA invested in building partnerships at both, policy level (AUC, NEPAD/CAADP, SADC, COMESA), and operational level of NARS in the sub-region, and regional networks and consortia. CCARDESA is also exploring synergies and involvement in the new CGIAR Research Programs

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<sup>6</sup> Similar over-budgeting was also observed at FARA and ASARECA

Institutional strengthening of NARS in the SADC region included the rehabilitation of research facilities and the facilitation of enhanced staff capacity at PhD-, MSc-, BSc- and Diploma-levels. Empowerment of women and youth in agriculture is high on the agenda: In 2015 CCARDESA co-organised the ‘Youth in Agriculture Summit’ in Durban, South Africa, that was attended by some 400 participants.

With respect to technology generation CCARDESA has been supporting 67 regional research projects, either under MDTF funding — in competitive grant projects — or under bilateral support modalities, including APPSA, UNIBRAIN, and others. CCARDESA also supported documentation of available improved technologies and innovations with an estimated outreach to over 400,000 beneficiaries. The WB-financed APPSA program (2013-2019; total value US\$ 90 million) aims at enhancing regional specialization in agricultural research through Regional Centres of Learning in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia that focus on maize, rice and legumes, respectively. It is noted that CCARDESA’s facilitation and coordination of such time-bound activities is consistent with its mandate and targeted result areas. Also, in implementing the activities, the subsidiarity principle applies in that it involves consortia and leadership of NARS and main stakeholders in the sub-region.

Using DEVCO budget, CCARDESA launched its first Call for Competitive Research Projects in 2014, soliciting project proposals from regional consortia of stakeholders. Out of 35 eligible submissions, 8 projects were approved in a two-stage evaluation process, and in keeping with the resources available.

CCARDESA hosts the Southern Regional Focal Point (S-RFP) of the EU-funded project ‘Strengthening African Capacities for Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Animal Genetic Resources’ led by the Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources of the African Union.

CCARDESA has been building-up capacity and (ICT-based) instruments to become the main knowledge information hub for agricultural development in the SADC region specifically using web-based tools. Many of these instruments were developed in collaboration with FAO and CTA. Every two years CCARDESA organises a Southern Africa Agricultural Science Week.

### **Effectiveness and efficiency of MDTF-DEVCO support to CCARDESA**

Under a squeezed financial scenario, CCARDESA’s annual work plans so far concentrated on the development of internal operations manuals and systems, for which the World Bank provided valuable feedback and technical support, and on the implementation of the competitive grants scheme. CCARDESA countered its financial challenges through a general revision of the results framework 2013-2018 and by reducing personnel costs: vacancies have not been filled, and sabbaticals of staff of partner organisations were used to fill posts at the secretariat. FARA provided support in internal auditing, and ASARECA in setting-up a monitoring and evaluation system. At the time of this Review, CCARDESA’s internal and external audits had been satisfactorily completed.

In the Review Team’s meeting with the EU Delegation to Botswana, concern was expressed about the reports of the WB Monitoring Support Missions to CCARDESA not capturing results: to the Delegation these were process-oriented rather than results-oriented. The Reviewers noted that with barely two years of MTOP implementation it is too early to expect tangible program results and outcomes<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Similar observations were made for AFAAS, by the EU Delegation to Uganda.

## **2.5 African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS)**

### **General**

AFAAS is the continental umbrella organisation for strengthening national agricultural extension and advisory services in Africa. AFAAS, envisages to impact at: (i) continental level: pursuing CAADP engagement, and building and implementing a continental knowledge management structure, and (ii) country level: establishing and operationalising national Country Fora for agricultural advisory services. AFAAS was established in 2004 and its daily management is with a Secretariat, currently comprising 8 staff members, headed by an Executive Director. AFAAS is based in Kampala, Uganda<sup>8</sup>.

AFAAS' core activities may be summarised as visioning and facilitation of agricultural advisory services, advocacy and resource mobilisation among African governance institutions (AUC, RECs and National Governments), international Development Partners and other support institutions and, more specifically, the facilitation of national Country Fora for agricultural extension and advisory services.

### **Donor support to AFAAS: MDTF and other donors**

Between 2008 and 2011, AFAAS was supported by the European Commission with a grant, through FARA, of € 1.5 million, which helped to establish its governance structure and management system and to initiate engagement with partner countries. Implementation of AFAAS's MTOP 2 (2012-2017; operational budget targeted at US\$ 17 million, committed funding US\$ 6.2 million) is supported by a World Bank-managed MDTF, funded entirely by the European Union (US\$ 4,441,000). IFAD (at US\$ 1 million) and SDC (US\$ 0.5 million) are non-MDTF donors. The Review Team notes that the World Bank charges US\$ 1.4 million for its management and implementation support for the 5-year program period.

In view of the financial gap AFAAS is making efforts to acquire additional support. At the time of this Review, IFAD appears to be committed to AFAAS's work on Country Fora with an estimated provisional funding of about US\$ 2.5-3.5 million for five years.

### **Main achievements due to MDTF-DEVCO support**

The main aim of the DEVCO support was to help building operational capacity at the AFAAS Secretariat to facilitate the establishment of Country Fora for agricultural extension and advisory services. At the time of the Review, AFAAS had 15 Country Fora fully established while 8 'emerging fora' were in varying stages of establishment. Country Fora build on, and stimulate national partnerships, and so far have been involved in policy support and advocacy at national level, and in the initiation and implementation of knowledge management systems. Based on subsidiarity principles, individual Country Fora take on functions relevant to the respective countries' needs. Beneficiaries of the EU support to AFAAS are Ethiopia, DRC Congo, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Liberia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, South Africa, Madagascar and Cameroon. IFAD's bilateral support to AFAAS targeted Burkina Faso, Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Uganda. Benin and Ethiopia are SDC-supported countries. In 2014, the IFAD project was evaluated externally and, on the whole, to good results in terms of targets achieved and operational performance of Country Fora established.

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<sup>8</sup> The Review Team met with AFAAS in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, at the '2<sup>nd</sup> Africa-wide Agricultural Extension Week (October 12-16, 2015)'

Organised jointly by AFAAS and the Ministry of Agriculture of Ethiopia. In total some 300 persons participated.

AFAAS has successfully invested in partnerships with other continental and global organisations involved in knowledge generation and sharing: there is pro-active engagement with FARA and the three SROs, as well as with RUFORUM, FANRPAN, NEPAD and the African Union Commission. AFAAS is a member of GFRAS for which it serves as the focal point in Africa. Also, AFAAS participated in meetings with CGIAR to discuss closer alignment and collaboration in the CGIAR Research Programs.

MDTF resources were used, in close collaboration with CTA, to develop and implement AFAAS's Country Communication Information and Knowledge Management Strategy. As of early 2013, the AFAAS website was up-and-running. Using IFAD resources, a Virtual Social Networking Platform has been put in place, whereas in Malawi, Sierra Leone and Uganda Country Communication Information and Knowledge Management Facilitators have been appointed. AFAAS has a Communication and Visibility Plan in force, designed in conformity with general EU guidelines. Biennially, AFAAS organises its Africa-wide Agricultural Extension Weeks.

### **Effectiveness and efficiency of MDTF-DEVCO support to AFAAS**

As from its establishment in 2004, AFAAS has opted for a lean Executive Secretariat that, at the time of the Review, consisted of 9 staff members. Strategically, AFAAS decided on hiring consultants to access specific expertise (e.g. ICT, climate change, gender and policy) without having to invest in permanent staff and office facilities. The Review Team observed that the MDTF arrangement presents advantages as well as challenges to AFAAS. Overall, WB support has been good, especially by providing help in setting-up quality governance systems, procedures and structures, and via its bi-annual backstopping, it facilitated learning and identification of best practices. AFAAS staff noted that none of the other donors offered similar institution building support. However useful the WB implementation support may be, it comes at a high cost: US\$ 1.4 million for the 5-year program period. In the perception of the AFAAS management this is "painful" as "the 1.4 million dollars is worth a year's operation"<sup>9</sup>.

From its contact with the EU Delegation to Uganda, the Review Team noted that EU and World Bank appear to be divided on what the Implementation Support Missions should be monitoring. WB seems to be content with 'outputs delivered on time', whereas the Delegation is looking for outcomes and results. The Reviewers suspect that this arises from a misunderstanding about the duration of program implementation. Presumably, the Delegation bases its expectations on the complete life span of the MTOP log-frame (2012-2017) assuming that funds were disbursed to AFAAS directly upon signing the EU-WB agreement in 2012. In reality disbursements started in October 2013 only, and the Delegation seems to be asking for mid-term deliverables when implementation is not yet mid-term<sup>10</sup>.

From the Review Team's meeting with the AFAAS Board of Directors, it was not clear what the specific roles of the Board are, besides endorsing documents and attending meetings. Visioning and fore-sighting would seem important aspects that Board Members should bring in, as well as pro-active engagement in resource mobilisation from national, regional and continental sources. Neither was it clear to the Reviewers whether provisions exist within AFAAS's structure and budget for Board Members' training and development as part of the organisation's overall program for institutional strengthening.

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<sup>9</sup> WB Implementation Support for CCARDESA was also costly budgeted, at US\$ 900,000. CCARDESA management however was able to negotiate these costs down to US\$ 330,000 for the 5-year program period.

<sup>10</sup> Similar observations were made for CCARDESA, by the EU Delegation to Botswana.

### 3. Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

The institutional architecture of the Pillar IV institutions is a logical, pyramidal system comprising NARS and main stakeholders at the base, three SROs and their partners in the middle, and both umbrella organisations, FARA and AFAAS, at the apex. The organisations operate at and between the three levels: national, sub-regional and continental where actors are able to engage in advocacy, design, facilitation and implementation of agricultural research and extension according to the principles of subsidiarity as specified under FAAP. The Reviewers observed that at all levels changes in the African agricultural policy landscape are followed closely and responded to by adjusting strategic and medium-term operational plans to new research paradigms, thematic priorities and modalities.

The objectives, strategies and targets in various recent policy-level documents, including the ‘*Sustaining the CAADP Momentum Strategy*’, the ‘*CAADP 10-years Results Framework*’, and the ‘*Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa*’ match the development objectives of the European Union covering three pillars in DEVCO’s recent vision document ‘*Research and Innovation*’: (i) ensuring success of global and regional AR4D initiatives, (ii) exploring new strategic directions to put research into use, and (iii) ensuring that AR4D delivers impact at country and local level. Indeed, targeting these pillars in the framework of DEVCO’s support to the organisations, implies achieving the fourth pillar in the DEVCO vision, namely: (iv) improving European leadership, coordination and influence. This would manifest itself, not only at the level of the European Commission, but also among the European member states — many of which are supporting Pillar IV institutions through bilateral arrangements — and, perhaps even more importantly, at the level of the African Union Commission, with the Pillar IV institutions themselves, and among other international Development Partners.

To the reviewers’ opinion, if current EC support comes to an end, the future of the organisations would be jeopardized for a number of reasons, including:

- Donor buy-in into the MDTF mechanisms for joint and coordinated support did not reach the anticipated levels. The present Review shows that DEVCO has been the most reliable, consistent and substantial contributor to the core functions of the organisations involved. In the course of implementing MDTF support, some donors reduced their contributions while others opted-out altogether. *De facto*, this left the EU as the sole contributor to most of the organisations.
- However undesirable that situation may be in terms of the organisations availing of less funds than anticipated, as well as creating dependency on a sole donor, it made the EU an important, respected and visible partner in the institutional strengthening of the organisations concerned — the core activity targeted by the European Union. DEVCO’s support has been key in achieving the targets set in terms of building operational and managerial capacity at the respective secretariats, enabling them to successfully implement (large) research-for-development programs funded by other donors, including previously aspirant MDTF partners.
- None of the five organisations have developed inclusive exit strategies anticipating decreasing donor support.
- In spite of the many declarations by African leaders to boost investments in agricultural research and extension, in reality African states and supra-national institutions do not take ownership of their institutions by structurally providing financial support. In the best of cases the African share of investments in the organisations is estimated at 5 % of total operational budgets only.
- Prospects for the five organisations to provide services at full cost-recovery basis still remain a long-term aspiration.

Regional coordination of research and extension has a number of comparative advantages, including:

- Cross-border collaboration and learning on the challenges in the sub-regions, as addressed in the competitive and commissioned regional research projects under the SROs.
- Avoiding duplication of research effort in the sub-regions, increases efficiency of research while economising on the costs thereof.
- Coordinated research approaches promote comparability and exchange of results.
- Drawing on strong NARS' competencies in research to benefit the weaker ones, as applied in the competitive calls launched by the three SROs, and in the Country Fora facilitated by AFAAS.
- Reduced transaction costs for common needs, such as ICT, M&E, sub-grant agreements, etc.

Comparative advantages of continental coordination include:

- Representation and joint advocacy at continental policy level (AUC, NEPAD, others).
- Coordinated agenda setting, e.g. FAAP and the Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa.
- Joint resource mobilisation
- Strengthening the voice of Africa in global platforms — GFAR, GFRAS and CGIAR, and in global issues — SDGs, food and nutrition security, climate change, sustainable energy and biosafety.

Review-based conclusions and recommendations to the five organisations include:

1. The practice of ambitious budgeting of MTOPs, even if these include full, intermediate and worst case scenarios, is impractical and undesirable. Financial shortfall resulted in some organisations not being able to operationalise the original mandates and ambitions with the staff contracted over time. This has left them with a credibility issue vis-a-vis (potential) donors and stakeholders. Moreover, for reasons of survival, the organisations may be tempted to acquire external support that is not matching the prevailing priorities and targets.
2. FARA having a unique position with the AUC should increase its lobby for African governance at all levels to fully commit itself to supporting the Pillar IV institutions. Without true commitment to declarations such as those of Maputo (2003), Sirte (2004 and 2009), Khartoum (2006), Abuja (2006), Addis Ababa (2011) and — most recently — Malabo (2014), which all elaborate on the need to invest more in agriculture, African agricultural research will remain dependent on the goodwill and finance of external donors. National contributions could be based on the countries' agricultural GDPs, as is currently done in the SADEC region.
3. In view of the current financial shortfall with FARA, ASARECA and CCARDESA, it is recommended that all organisations embark on designing exit strategies for continued financial support upon seizure of the MDTF mechanism. Fund raising so far has been focused largely on 'traditional' donors, including DEVCO. Only by early 2015, and largely on the initiative of the World Bank, have the organisations come to realise that joint resource mobilisation was urgently required. As a result, actions between FARA and its partners now include engagement with new bi- and multi-lateral donor institutions and actors (e.g. private sector), cost sharing, and (full) cost-recovery mechanisms for services rendered. The Review Team strongly supports the latter.
4. In lobbying for support, the organisations may want to rethink and rephrase their message on their effectivity and efficiency to implement support programs. The waning interest among many donors to finance organisations for agricultural research and extension in Africa cannot be solely blamed on changing perspectives or economic prospects among taxpayers in the traditional donor countries. In the face of increasing donor fatigue, the organisations should rather show that AR4D remains an indispensable element to increase food production in order to ensure the continent's survival.

5. It is recommended to review whether the Science Weeks that all five organisations are organising at 2-3 year intervals and largely with overlapping programs and audiences, could be combined and compacted into 2-3 day events at 3-year intervals, held in rotation in the home towns of the respective organisations. In addition to help building further synergies, such a set-up would reduce costs and time spent on their organisation. Also, participants should financially contribute themselves, for example by paying the costs of accommodation and travel from their own budgets.

Review-based recommendations to assist DEVCO in deciding on its future support to agricultural research in Africa at the continental or sub-regional level include:

1. DEVCO can be assured of the impact of its support to agricultural research and extension in Africa, so far. It has been successful as can be derived from the positive joint external evaluations of the organisations. Also, the 'aide mémoires' of the WB Implementation Support Missions may have criticized progress of implementation and aptness of the organisations' financial administrations but they were largely fair, as evidenced by the organisations' responses.
2. As there is no immediate alternative, continued support is required to avoid the collapse of the institutional architecture built over the past decade, and the operational capacities developed in the constituent organisations.
3. DEVCO's support to the Pillar IV institutions fits perfectly well in the totality of its vision on '*Research and Innovation*' and in the larger complex of EU strategies and actions on African-European collaboration on Science, Technology and Innovation for Development.
4. DEVCO is advised to accept and support the present pyramidal institutional architecture in its entirety. As explained above, the structure serves a purpose and has its comparative advantages.
5. DEVCO is advised to consider developing implementation scenarios that bring it closer to the recipient organisations, and vice-versa: to the opinion of the Review Team, DEVCO, if continuing its support, should invest in closer interaction with the organisations than it does at present. Such closer interaction should be instrumental, for example in preventing unrealistic financial planning as observed with some of the organisations, and in determining on EU support on specific activities and partnerships consistent with the core mandates of the respective organisations.
6. DEVCO is advised to provide a long-term support perspective, e.g. for 10 years in two 5-year phases, while insisting on African buy-in and ownership, to be achieved incrementally over the 10 year period. This perspective should include an exit strategy with clear go/no-go moments, at intervals of two and a half year coinciding with external evaluations. At the end of Phase 1, a thorough evaluation of past activities and results achieved should form the basis of the decision whether to continue financial support or not.
7. If continuing its core support to the organisations, DEVCO is advised to first address and clarify, in close interaction with the organisations concerned, the issue of structural over-budgeting. In the opinion of the Reviewers, core support by DEVCO can only be effective if it feeds into attainable, overall operational budgets that support realistic goals and ambitions. Such interaction (ref item 5 above) should also be used to define the specific areas and actions on which DEVCO's support to the organisations should be targeted, in line with the latter's respective mandates.

8. DEVCO needs to address the issues raised under items 4, 5, 6 and 7 above before deciding on the specific mechanism for further support to the five organisations, which might be one of the following:

**1. Continue the present WB-managed MDTF mechanism**

Adopting the scenario of a WB-managed MDTF, implies that DEVCO accepts that it is the sole contributor to the Trust Funds. An advantage of this modality is that WB continues its management, including the Implementation Support Missions. Costs of the latter, however, need to be reconsidered against the total of DEVCO's contributions, and in terms of their frequency and the number of mission members involved. Also, a comprehensive monitoring mechanism that is both process- *and* result-oriented, should be applied. Closer involvement of DEVCO, or the EU Delegations, is recommended and would be in line with DEVCO's policy on *Research and Innovation*. Frequency of support missions may take into account the relative maturity of the organisations, CORAF in particular.

**2. Establish a European Multi-Donor Trust Fund**

Adopting the scenario of a European MDTF implies that DEVCO engages like-minded individual European countries in a concerted support mechanism. Many European countries support the organisations under bilateral funding arrangements, including the UK (DFID), the Netherlands (DGIS), Germany (GIZ), Sweden (SIDA), Switzerland (SDC), Denmark (DANIDA), and Norway (NORAD). In the opinion of the Reviewers, a harmonized European support would greatly enhance impact, while reducing transaction costs and allowing for a standardised implementation support mechanism. Close involvement of EU Delegations and/or National Embassies would be a logical set-up under this modality. Responsibility for the management of such a European Multi-Donor Trust Fund should be with DEVCO, either as the implementing agency (i.e. a Trust Fund Management Unit) or in an outsourced construction involving, for example, IFAD, AGRINATURA, an ad-hoc European 'Research for Development Consortium', a (European) Consultancy Firm, or combinations thereof. The Trust Fund Management Unit would need to implement comprehensive monitoring that is process and results oriented. As in the WB-MDTF modality above, frequency of support missions may take into account the relative maturity of the organisations. It is recommended to engage Africa-based consultant(s) in these missions.

**3. Establish a 'Single-Donor' Trust Fund<sup>11</sup>**

A third scenario would be for DEVCO to establish its own Single-Donor Trust Fund. As in the above European Multi-Donor scenario, responsibility for its management should be with DEVCO, either as the implementing agency (i.e. a Trust Fund Management Unit) or in an outsourced construction as suggested above. Likewise, close involvement of the EU Delegations would be logical, and the Trust Fund Management Unit would need to implement comprehensive monitoring. As before, frequency of support missions may take into account the relative maturity of the organisations, and it is recommended to engage Africa-based consultant(s) in them.

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<sup>11</sup> It is noted that the option 'Single Donor Trust Fund' does not correspond to an existing EC financing mechanism. In EC/DEVCO terminology this mechanism would be 'Direct support by an EU project'.