

Cluster annual report - 2018

Code	RTB-CC3.2
Name	Sustainable RTB Crop Production Systems
Report Year	2018
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Main achievements	<p>Cassava, bananas, sweet potato and potato have received funds and major progress was attained in developing Yield gap analysis approaches and Decision Support tools (DSTs). Some DSTs are in the validation phase and are likely to go public in 2019. Biological export bananas are gaining in importance and research on sustaining production and nutrient cycling shows promise to attain stable systems. Negotiations with donors has resulted in additional funds to include weed management in RTB systems, which until today have major labour related weed control issues. Cluster members have been active in Big Data platform initiatives and participated in the different ontology activities to move agronomic research towards the level attained in breeding. Discussions continued in 2018 on the problems related to moving the cluster towards true cross crop and cross center activities. Considering the centers working on a limited number of RTB crops and these activities being spread across the continents, the option to conduct tangible research is impractical. With clear crop mandates in centers the cross crop work faces similar limitations. However, agronomy is at the brink of making major progress by employing modern methods of data acquisition, data transfer and management. Participation in the Big Data platform and the ontology work is one step in this direction. Certain projects have developed digital data management systems that are transferable (with modifications) to other projects. The systems are crop and center independent. These systems are a precondition for 'Agronomy at Scale' which is the way forward in developing sustainable RTB Cropping systems with applicability to a wide range of environments and farmer conditions. An initiative to involve all centers is on the way.</p>
Main achievements with specific gender relevance	<p>Gender is fully considered in all agronomic research and DSTs are available and do not pose gender barriers. Employment of female extension agents is one aspect that will ease female farmers' access to DSTs and other information. CC3.2 cluster projects (ACAI and CWMP) foster a gender balanced training of EAs and service providers to overcome gender barriers.</p>



Main achievements with specific capacity development relevance	NARS "buy in" through MSc and PhD students is strong and there are a fair number enrolled in African universities as well as in Europe. For the extension services TOT sessions have contributed to update agents and provide them with new more relevant knowledge. With such new knowledge EAs find it easier to engage with farmers because new knowledge offered farmers will be more interested than being told 'same old same old'.
Main gaps analysis	Insufficient funds for other RTB crops specifically for those of very high economic value such as Yam in West Africa.
Measures taken and adjustments proposed	Negotiations with donors have started to cover more RTB crops
Main achievements and challenges related to partnerships management	Main achievements are an excellent "buy in" of NARS and development partner in several projects up to some of them taking the initiative to propose new activities and seeking funding.
Fund Raising	A proposal on weed control integration into the Afrocan Cassava agronomy initiative was approved allowing two additional years of research and DST development.
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