

THE AFRICAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY (AGRODEP) MODELING CONSORTIUM

WHAT IS AGRODEP?

The African Growth and Development Policy (AGRODEP) Modeling Consortium is an initiative led by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). The goal of AGRODEP is to position African experts to take a leading role in both (1) the study of strategic development questions facing African countries as a group and (2) the broader agricultural growth and policy debate, which traditionally has been dominated by external actors and concerns. Building on more than three decades of research and capacity-building activities in Africa, IFPRI aims to provide locally relevant solutions to agriculture-related development challenges. Through AGRODEP, IFPRI and its partners will equip African countries with the tools to perform science-based research that will enable them to formulate sound and effective policies.

AGRODEP is a collaboration among IFPRI; the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in East and Central Africa (ASARECA); the West African Council on Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF/WECARD); and the Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Policy Network (FANRPAN).

The Modeling Consortium pursues three essential activities:

- Promoting access to and use of state-of-the-art economic modeling tools and improving the quality, relevance, and timeliness of data to meet the demand for high-quality, locally based research that contributes to evidence-based policy and strategy planning and implementation.
- Facilitating access to existing data sources for research and policy analysis, developing methodologies and standards to improve the quality of available datasets, identifying and bridging data gaps, and complementing sources to raise their local content and relevance.
- Supporting collaboration among leading African scientists and their peers outside Africa and building a dynamic research community that can respond to the emerging and long-term needs of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme's (CAADP) growth and poverty reduction agenda.

THE CONTEXT

African countries have experienced a remarkable economic recovery since the start of the century. The continent has witnessed its longest period of sustained positive per capita income growth since the 1960s. High and increasing annual GDP growth rates hover above 5 percent.

Africa is simultaneously undergoing an important policy renewal process, including in the agricultural sector, under the leadership of the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). This process fuels a growing demand for locally



based, policy-relevant research. Meeting the demand requires strengthened capacities, targeted partnerships, and broadened linkages to the ongoing policy debate in Africa's leading policy and development institutions.

There is a need for a mechanism that helps to

- mobilize a critical mass of modeling experts within Africa's policy research and analysis community,
 - broaden access to innovative research methodologies, and
 - facilitate partnership with the global research community.
- AGRODEP's goal is to create such a mechanism and help African countries maintain their strategic focus by raising the quality of the policy debate and by helping to optimize policies and strategies in the continent.

The Consortium will establish a network of African researchers with both the skills and the modeling and data infrastructure to lead this effort. It will create the conditions for a rigorous testing of the validity and added value of the modeling scenarios and statistical information that are routinely fed into the policy debate in Africa.

AGRODEP MEMBERS

The Modeling Consortium has three types of members:

- Scientists who are Africa-based researchers.
- Institutions based within or outside Africa that provide technical or institutional support to the Consortium.

- Leading global and African experts who advise the Consortium and support its efforts to remain at the cutting edge of technical innovations.

KEY COMPONENTS

AGRODEP consists of four key components. Three focus on policy research and analysis, and one focuses on policy debate.

A Shared Modeling Infrastructure

AGRODEP provides a platform for sharing existing core economic models dealing with sector, national, and international policy issues as well as long-term projections in areas such as agricultural growth and poverty, trade, nutrition, climate change, natural resources management, and science and technology.

Initially, the shared modeling infrastructure will be based on three complementary models that were developed or are being used substantially at IFPRI:

- MIRAGE (Modeling International Relationships in Applied General Equilibrium), a multicountry, multisector computable general equilibrium (CGE) model of the world economy.
- LHR (Lofgren, Harris, and Robinson), a single-country CGE model.
- ACT (African Commodity Trade Model), a new partial-equilibrium model of agricultural supply, demand, and trade in Africa. These models will be customized as needed.

The goal of AGRODEP is to give its members access to a set of high-quality, adaptable tools that can be used to address research needs responding to demand emanating from country- and regional-level priorities.

The modeling component of AGRODEP will expand with the inclusion of new models in the future in order to address specialized needs in such areas as agronomy, animal sciences, health, and education. The shared modeling infrastructure will thus provide a window on innovations in modeling.

A Common Database Platform

AGRODEP seeks to bring together dispersed and disparate statistical, economic, and geospatial data in Africa in one central clearinghouse with a Web data portal. It links existing key data sources, complements them as necessary, and develops shared standards, formats, and exchange protocols that facilitate access by Consor-

tium members to high quality and consistent datasets. AGRODEP also provides data quality checking and certification.

A major goal of AGRODEP is to facilitate access to databases or portions of databases that are otherwise not easily accessible to individual researchers due to costs and/or access restrictions. It will cover the types of data that are used for economic analysis and policy research related to growth and development in Africa. These include agricultural statistics, household survey data, social accounting matrices, firm-level data, food supplies and balances, national accounts, macroeconomic data, bilateral trade data, market access data, transport costs, migration data, geospatial data, and various development indicators. The Consortium will actively interact with the national statistical offices to provide country-level data.

A Network of Experts

AGRODEP's activities center around collaboration and the exchange of data, modeling techniques, joint analysis, reporting, and strategic debate. Networking activities will encourage collaboration around the following:

- Development of a family of state-of-the-art models and high-quality modeling databases for use by individual researchers.
- Facilitation of joint research activities on specific issues of great strategic importance to Africa, including technical and logistical support, fundraising assistance, and joint publishing.
- Organization of technical meetings and outreach events to promote scientific exchange among experts and interaction with policy practitioners, the latter in collaboration with leading organizations at the country, regional, and continental levels.
- Organization of training workshops and seminars to support young scientists, upgrade skills of Consortium members, and promote technical and methodological innovation to ensure that the Consortium remains a world class entity.

A Community of Practitioners

AGRODEP seeks to establish a set of specific, thematically or technically focused interest groups to serve as a forum for scientific exchange, training, and capacity building. The objective is to use the expertise across the Consortium to strengthen policy research and analysis capacities and to use the members' research findings to raise the quality of policy debate and broaden it beyond the traditional sphere of policymakers and researchers to include other stakeholder groups.



IFPRI-Dakar

Immeuble Ousseynou Thiam Gueye
Point E, rue de Thiés
BP.15702 CP 12524
Dakar-Fann, Senegal
Tel: +221 33 869-3984 • Fax: +221 33 869-3954
info-agrodep@agrodep.org • www.agrodep.org

INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

2033 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006-1002 USA
Phone: +1 202-862-5600 • Fax: +1 202-467-4439
ifpri@cgiar.org • www.ifpri.org

IFPRI is one of 15 agricultural research centers that receive their principal funding from governments, private foundations, and international and regional organizations, most of which are members of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (www.cgiar.org).

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