

Consortium Europe-Africa for Research and Innovation on Food Systems Transformation (CEA-FIRST)



PERIOD: From December 2023 to November 2027

LOCATION: Ghana, Belgium, France, Sweden, Netherlands, South Africa, Finland, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Germany, Italy, Egypt

FUNDING: European Commission - Horizon Europe, under Food, Bioeconomy Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment

Project website <https://irc-ceafirst.org/>

To know more about the project:

https://library.wur.nl/WebQuery/leap4fnssa-projects?record-status=complete&wg_srt_desc=leap4fnssa/@isn

<https://faraafrica.community/leap4fnssa/irc/cea-first>

<https://irc-ceafirst.org/irc-membership/>

<https://irc-ceafirst.org/newsletter/>

Issues

Despite significant investment through a multiplicity of institutional, national, and private funding, FNSSA research and innovation (R & I) continues to face disabling environments for the scaling of impactful innovations. Short-term research funding, coupled with limited long-term mechanisms that facilitate interactions within food systems have developed a fragmented R & I landscape.

This fragmented landscape stymies the capabilities of R & I actors and policymakers to respond to complex and multi-dimensional challenges through the scaling of research and innovations. Following the Long term European African Partnership for FNSSA project, an International Research Consortium IRC was proposed to reduce fragmentation between R & I and food system actors to speed food system transformations.

The IRC will create enabling environments in which FNSSA Partnership projects better integrate within food systems. Such integration will take place through ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the needs of different food system and R & I actors, and the implementation of funding, multi actor clustering and policy synergy activities that increase the influence of FNSSA R & I.

Description

CEA-FIRST consists of 20 partners from Africa and Europe, partly from the former LEAP4FNSSA, extended with new public and private network partners from Africa and Europe, partly from the former LEAP4FNSSA, extended with new public and private network partners.

CEA-FIRST will operationalise the International Research Consortium (IRC) as a long-term platform on food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture (FNSSA) in line with the FNSSA Roadmap of the AU-EU High-Level Policy Dialogue (HLPD). This IRC is a member-based, multi-actor platform and will work towards increasing synergies and coherence while reducing fragmentation and duplication of research efforts. Its aim is to promote higher returns on investments and impact on business development in Africa and Europe by linking relevant European and African actors, research and innovation projects, initiatives, and funding programmes.

CEA-FIRST will:

- provide public access to a large knowledge platform,
- offer a sound method for analysis of R&I activities,
- support the updating of the FNSSA Roadmap,
- establish operational working groups and thematic research calls.

The methodology and approaches employed across the work packages include:

- supervised learning approaches, rule-based systems, AI and text mining methods (i.e. word embedding, topic modelling)
- stakeholder mapping and analysis
- development and updating of a Knowledge Management System and its linkages to other relevant websites and on-going portals (i.e. European Commission knowledge centre for Global Food and Nutrition security and the African Knowledge Platform managed by Joint Research Center)

- development and monitoring of communication strategies
- various stakeholder engagement activities (consultations, webinars, round tables, clustering sessions, surveys, pools, newsletter, moderated discussions, workshops, etc)
- establishment of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning frameworks at different levels (project, FNSSA partnership, IRC)
- development of the FNSSA database
- development of and engagement with CEA-FIRST community
- expanding the existing IRC network and developing tailored services for its members
- an impact-oriented review and an e-survey of the outputs and outcomes of the eight years of implementing the 2016-2026 Roadmap validated through stakeholder consultations conducted at national and regional levels
- mapping existing or recently concluded platforms/initiatives and analyzing potential synergies while considering their strengths and constraints (including e.g., CSA-PANAP, DeSIRA, HEUROPE, LEAP4FNSSA, LEAP-AGRI, FOSC, TAP, PAEPARD, CANNALS, STAR-IDAZ, LEAP-RE, etc.)
- development of a funding strategy for IRC
- establishment of , and engagement with, working groups within IRC
- case studies
- development of youth and gender strategy
- development of the IRC R&I policy framework

The project is co-coordinated by Agrinatura together with the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA).

Expected outcomes:

- Support to the implementation, functioning, consolidation and possible enlargement of a sustainable, and therefore long-term, platform for the EU-Africa R&I FNSSA Partnership in the form of an International Research Consortium (IRC)
- Creation of a knowledge platform for sharing information on relevant research activities and results concerning the FNSSA Roadmap.
- Maintenance and better coordination of EU-Africa R&I activities and investments in FNSSA in line with the FNSSA Roadmap, thereby maximizing complementarities and avoiding duplication of efforts by supporting FNSSA Working Group

The final output will be a fully functional IRC, including governance bodies. CEA-FIRST will also support its liaison with the High-Level Policy Dialogue (HLPD). It will create a learning environment, including communication channels, to support multi stakeholder networks and to strengthen R&I coordination. The IRC will also serve related AU-EU policy priorities, such as the Climate Change and Sustainable Energy and the Innovation Agenda of the HLPD, as well as the European Green Deal priorities (and farm to fork strategy) and the AU priorities like the African Free Trade Area.

Contribution to wider impacts:

- enable sustainable farming systems that i) provide consumers with affordable, safe, healthy and sustainable food, ii) increase the provision of ecosystem services, iii) restore and strengthen biodiversity, iv) minimize pollution and pressure on ecosystems and greenhouse gas emissions, v) foster plant, animal and public health, vi) improve animal welfare, and vii) generate fair economic returns for farmers;
- enable sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, in marine and inland waters, increasing aquatic multi-trophic biomass production in a way compatible with the protection of aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity, and the diversification of fisheries and aquaculture products, for fair, healthy, climate-resilient and environment-friendly food systems with a lower impact on aquatic ecosystems and improved animal welfare
- benefits for climate change mitigation and adaptation, environmental sustainability and circularity, sustainable healthy diets and nutrition, food poverty reduction, empowered citizens and communities, and flourishing food businesses, while ensuring food safety and the economic sustainability of EU food systems during the transition.

Contract partners

- Forum For Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA)
- European Alliance On Agricultural knowledge for Development (Agrinatura)
- Centre de Cooperation Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Developpement (CIRAD)
- Stichting Wageningen Research (WR)
- Agricultural Research Council Institute for Soil Climate And Water (ARC)
- Sveriges Lantbruksuniversitet (SLU)
- Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN)
- Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM)
- The Registered Trustees of the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA)
- Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR-GH)
- National Research Foundation (NRF)
- Fonds National de la Recherche et de l'Innovation pour le Developpement (FO.N.R.I.D.)
- Conf. Respons. Recher. Agronom.Afriq. de l'Ouest & du Centre (CORAF)
- Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD)
- Comite de Liaison Entrepreneuriat-Agriculture-Developpement (COLEACP)
- African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS)
- Centro Internazionale di Altistudi Agronomici Mediterranei (CIHEAM-IAMB)
- Science, Technology & Innovation Funding Authority (SDTF)
- AGRICORD (AgriCord)