Pan-Africa Bean Research Alliance (PABRA) A UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

Benefits of beans

4 Beans are the most important, widely grown and consumed protein source for millions of resource poor urban and rural families in East, Central and Southern Africa, and there are signs of their growing importance in West Africa.

4 As a legume, beans improve soil fertility as well as household food supplies and incomes and are preferred because of their short maturity period and compatibility with other crops.

4 Beans are rich in protein; they are also a good source of iron, zinc, fibre and complex carbohydrates.

4 Beans provide food for more than 100 million people in Africa and are a significant and growing source of income for rural households, with annual African sales worth over US$580 million in 2005.

MORE INFORMATION

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www.ciat.cgiar.org/africa/pabra.htm

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Established in 1996, the Pan-Africa Bean Research Alliance (PABRA) is a consortium of African regional bean networks (the Eastern and Central Africa Bean Research Network, ECABREN, and the Southern Africa Bean Research Network, SABRN) consisting of National African Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) in a total of 18 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, an international research organisation (CIAT) and a number of donor organisations.

PABRA has evolved from a CIAT project to an African partnership programme by strengthening the national bean programmes and by supporting the regional networks. PABRA facilitates collaborative research within and between the networks by providing a forum for building and strengthening linkages to multiple partners (researchers, non-government organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs) and farmers). Linkages are maintained through joint planning, joint implementation of activities and joint reporting. The collaborative approach facilitates the sharing of knowledge, the exchange of germplasm and the dissemination of technologies across national boundaries. The Alliance also facilitates capacity building. With PABRA support, the regional networks identify, develop and deploy national expertise in a range of areas such as agroenterprise development, participatory research, integrated pest and disease management (IPDM), plant breeding and seed dissemination.

The 18 countries participating in PABRA are Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Our Purpose

PABRA's goal is to enhance the food security, income and health of resource-poor farmers in Africa through research on beans. To achieve this goal, PABRA works in partnership with farmers and rural communities, NGOs, traders and other private sector partners. The major beneficiaries of PABRA's work are rural women, who are primarily responsible for the crop's production and post harvest handling.

Our Aims

- Develop and disseminate new higher yielding bean varieties.
- Improve production through better crop, soil and pest management by farmers.
- Achieve wider impact by extending farmer access to new bean technologies to all main bean production areas in Africa.
- Improve and disseminate understanding of how communities in diverse situations can best achieve food security and improve incomes.
- Strengthen the capacity of NGOs and local agricultural providers and strengthen the research sector (NARS, farmer research groups).

PABRA ACHIEVEMENTS

Wider impact of new bean varieties

- By 2004, 245 new bean varieties were disseminated in the 18 PABRA countries. Impact studies have shown that, in 7 of these countries, a total of 35 million farmers have sowed the new varieties.
- With CIAT support, national researchers and extension workers have adopted outlets such as health centres and grain traders for dissemination of beans in small, affordable quantities. In just 18 months from its launch in 2003, some 2.5 million households in East, Central and Southern Africa received improved bean varieties.
- More than 80 partners are working with NARS to collaborate in seed production and/or dissemination.

Towards healthier ecosystems

- PABRA adopts an ecosystems approach to the problems of poor soils and crop pests and diseases. The Alliance has promoted the use of bean varieties that combine tolerance to low soil fertility with pest and disease resistance and encourages farmers to improve soil fertility through use of green manures and organic soil amendments.
- To combat pests and diseases while reducing the use of chemical pesticides, farmers are using a range of integrated pest management (IPM) technologies in association with improved bean varieties. These include timely planting and the use of plant extracts from marigold, neem and other species.

Strong farmer research groups

- PABRA has fostered the development of dynamic farmer research groups, which are effective in linking farmer experimentation and formal research, and in raising skills and confidence of women and the resource poor in target communities.
- By March 2006, 300 groups (5,000 farmers) had been trained in new methods for varietal testing and in quality-based seed production. Knowledge sharing among farmers has helped technology dissemination and adoption.

Agroenterprises

- Income from sale of seeds is now a lucrative enterprise for farmers in some countries. Technical manuals on community-based seed production have been developed and supplied to farmers and extension organisations.
- PABRA has trained women's groups and their service providers in starting and running an agroenterprise, and through this process, farmers have been exposed to new service providers (such as creditors and input suppliers).

Bean-based diets for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)

- PABRA addresses the nutritional needs of people affected by HIV/AIDS through the development of beans rich in protein, iron and zinc.
- PABRA partners are working together to improve dietary characteristics of PLWHA and their families in Rwanda through the promotion of improved cooking methods and bean-based recipes. The project has also disseminated four improved bean varieties to 12,000 affected farmers.

Climbing beans

- Improved climbing beans developed and disseminated by PABRA partners yield three times more than traditional bush types.
- Rwanda is leading the regional research effort with new varieties that combine resistance to diseases and pests (such as root rot), with other desirable traits. Climbing beans continue to spread beyond Rwanda to Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.