



## **International Trypanotolerance Centre**

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### **Executive summary**

#### **Stakeholder and expert planning workshops for the development of a ten-year strategic plan for the International Trypanotolerance Centre**

#### **1. Background**

The International Trypanotolerance Centre (ITC) was established as a research for development (R4D) institution by an act of Parliament of The Gambia in 1982. It was conceived to serve the West Africa region, particularly the sub-humid and humid zones. Its original mandate was to carryout research on the unique N'Dama cattle breed in its traditional habitat in West Africa.

Its current mission is to contribute to on-going efforts to increase livestock productivity and utilization in the West Africa region through the optimal and sustainable exploitation of the genetic resistance of indigenous breeds of livestock for the welfare of human populations. In addressing this mandate, ITC focused on improving livestock health and production as well as the development of sustainable socio-economic and environmentally acceptable technological packages and their use by livestock producers. Its main partners in the implementation of this R 4 D agenda are the targeted beneficiaries – livestock farmers, the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) research and development partners active in the region.

In its short history ITC and its partners generated considerable knowledge and technology packages relevant for crop-livestock production systems in the tsetse-infested humid and sub-humid zones. They made significant contributions to the understanding of the uniqueness of the hardy, environmentally well adapted and disease tolerant indigenous animal genetic resources of West Africa (especially the N'Dama cattle, the Djallonke sheep and the West Africa Dwarf goat), and how local communities can best manage and sustainably use them.

This aspect of the work of ITC has certainly contributed to placing “Trypanotolerance” exhibited by these livestock breeds on the global research for development agenda thus highlighting the value of livestock that possess this attribute, and identifying the trait as a valid option for controlling African Animal Trypanosomosis.

An analysis of the contribution of ITC over a 10-year period to livestock productivity improvement showed that in The Gambia where ITC is based, household's incomes, labour productivity, livestock productivity and farm efficiency of farmers adopting its generated or adapted technologies were superior to that of non-adopting families. The country as a whole, made an annual surplus of US\$2 million from increased milk and meat production, from which both producers and consumers benefited.<sup>1</sup>

As with many other research institutions, ITC went through some difficult times in terms of losing financing support from its development partners for two main reasons. Firstly, because it did not effectively share the impacts of its activities on its main beneficiaries either with the beneficiaries themselves (livestock farmers, their households and communities), or with its own development partners. Secondly, because it did not regularly review and modify its programmes and activities to ensure that they factor in emerging issues of regional and global concern.

Hence the decision taken by the management and staff to undertake a process of reorganization and revitalization of the Centre in a manner that will take cognizance of these and other issues through the development of a new 10-year strategic plan. ITC management and staff decided to adopt a broad-based consultative process for the development of this new strategy, and the components of this process are:

- A Stakeholders and Experts Consultative Workshop
- A Civil Society focused Consultative Workshop
- An E-discussion to bring on board those who may have not participated in the above workshops
- Drafting of Strategic Plan
- Validation workshop to review the emerging draft Strategic Plan
- Finalisation of Strategic and Implementation Plans

This background document is a synthesis of the first 2 components - the workshops.

## **2. Workshops Purpose**

The purpose of the workshops was to provide inputs, advice and suggestions that will constitute the raw materials needed for the development of a dynamic strategic plan.

## **3. Workshops Participants**

The first workshop was held from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2012 in The Gambia, and brought together about 60 representatives of: Livestock Farmers' Organisations; Non-Governmental Organizations who work with and/or for livestock farmers; National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS); decision and policy makers from West Africa; as well as development partners and technical experts from other parts of Africa and Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> Okike, I. Agyemang, K. and Ehui, S. 2002. Impacts and potential benefits of ITC's animal health research and herd management interventions: case study of The Gambia.

The second workshop also held in The Gambia on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of June 2012, was a consultation between current and past ITC staff and about 20 representatives of Livestock Farmers' Organisations and NGOs who work with and/ or for livestock farmers drawn from eight West African countries. The rationale for this consultation was to ensure that the concerns, suggestions and ideas of our targeted beneficiaries are clearly heard and factored into the strategy.

#### **4. Workshop Process**

For both workshops, the process was designed to privilege interactive discussions and brainstorming among the participants. To this end only a limited number of plenary presentations were made with the remaining time used for several plenary and/or small group discussion and brain storming sessions.

#### **5. Workshop Outputs**

##### *Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed.*

The outputs of the workshops have been clustered into the following essential components of a strategic plan.

##### *5-A. Thematic Programmes*

###### **5-A-1. The Old: Genetic Diversity Conservation, Improvement and Use**

Majority of livestock keepers have access to and can only manage and use local livestock endemic in their locality and ecosystem. There is evidence that these resources are gradually being undermined and eroded through an uncontrolled introduction of genes both from within and outside the sub-region. This genetic erosion is slow and subtle but may eventually lead to tragic diversity losses at a time when adapted animal genetic resources will be required to limit predicted negative impacts of climate change.

The work of ITC to gradually increase the performance of a number of endemic ruminant livestock while conserving their gene-linked adaptability to a hostile environment through the Open Nucleus Breeding Scheme was acknowledged by the participants. Hence the suggestion that this is something old, that the new ITC should pursue and improve upon because it will ensure not only the use of these resources by the current generation but also their conservation for future ones. **Genetic Diversity Conservation, Improvement and Use** was therefore identified as one major programme area that the new ITC should further develop and implement.

###### **5-A-2. The New: Livestock information and knowledge management hub**

During the consultative workshops the need for better, more comprehensive and more accessible information and data to inform decision-making in the entire livestock sector in West Africa emerged as a real need. The idea that the new ITC could become the default place to go to by livestock sector actors for information/data and knowledge on livestock production (breeds,

breeding, feeds, animal health), markets & marketing, policies, and trends (national, regional and global), and other aspects of livestock value chains was considered by stakeholders as a potential cornerstone of the new ITC Strategy.

It was therefore suggested that the new ITC should position itself to fill this niche through the development of a **Livestock information and knowledge management programme** geared towards the collection, collation and interpretation of various forms of information and data on livestock data with a functional and innovative platform for knowledge management on livestock production in the region. Livestock data, information and knowledge platform outputs could then be used as advocacy tools for the sector vis-à-vis various stakeholder groups including farmers organizations, researchers, decision makers at various levels and development partners.

### **5-A-3. The Borrowed: Capacity Development**

Capacity development was one of the themes identified by participants in response to the question of what is being done well by others with regards to AnGR management opportunities and challenges, but with the caveat that because others are doing it does not necessarily mean they are doing it well, doing all that is required to be done, or that it cannot be improved upon. Moreover, it was suggested that in order to obtain significant outcomes and impacts from the implementation of other programmes, the new ITC would need to pay a commensurate attention to developing the capacity of its stakeholders so that they can adopt, adapt and use quality research outputs.

Participants therefore concluded and recommended that ITC should consider taking this well-trodden path – the borrowed – and develop an innovative programme around the theme of **Capacity development of actors along the livestock value chain.**

### ***5-B. Accompanying but equally important cross cutting activities***

Participants suggested that in order to effectively implement these three thematic programme areas, and more importantly obtain significant outcomes and sustainable impacts, a friendly enabling environment would have to be assured in the form of the following:

#### ***5-B-1. A solid communication and advocacy component of the strategy***

Participants remarked that poor communication was a key reason for the current loss of donor support and funding by ITC. They therefore recommended that the new strategy and implementation plans should include a solid and comprehensive multi-way communication and advocacy component. This component they recommended should among others include the following:

- Strategic Objectives (Increase awareness and support for the new ITC; promote and support the use of endemic ruminant livestock in the region; engage effectively with stakeholders and share research outputs; facilitate partnerships and networking )
- Target Audiences (Livestock farmers and their communities; Non-government organizations; Research institutions; Policy and Decision makers at various levels; private sector; regional economic communities; development partners)

- Key messages which not only clearly communicate its mission, what it aims to achieve, why this is important and for whom, but also dispels common misconceptions about the centre.
- Appropriate communication tools it plans to use or uses including: on-line tools, publications, events, media etc.

### **5-B-2 Strategic alliances and cost-effective partnerships**

Even with the smart idea of focusing on animal genetic resources management and concentrating on no more than 3 thematic programme areas, the task remains complex. Hence the need to develop strategic alliances and work with relevant partners in order to lighten the burden, avoid duplication of efforts and ensure effective synergies.

### **5-B-3 Sustainable funding and financing mechanisms**

Participants discussed a number of such mechanisms, and encouraged the new ITC to consider the following:

- Pursue on-going negotiations to become an ECOWAS Centre for Livestock Research and Development. This will not only attract support from other development partners, but also generate direct support from ECOWAS. Care should be taken, however, that this does not result in a heavy, bureaucratic and costly governance structure, and a loss of scientific autonomy.
- Revive the interest and support of traditional development partners that until recently supported the Centre since its establishment some 3 decades ago.
- Develop relationships with new non-traditional development partners (Foundations, private sector organizations active in the livestock sector, south-south collaboration etc.)
- Develop vibrant service-based revenue generating activities

## **6. Concluding remarks**

The workshops benefited from a broad based participation, were truly brain-storming exercises as reflected by a large number of plenary and small group discussion sessions, and were adroitly facilitated to ensure that all specific objectives were addressed, and that the purpose - “to provide inputs, advice and suggestions that will constitute the raw materials needed for the development of a dynamic strategic plan” - was realized. The outputs reported above constitute a rich mix of ingredients with which the management and staff of ITC can effectively prepare a balanced diet on which the new ITC can grow, develop, prosper and position itself to realize its vision of contributing to the development of a food sovereign, nutrition secure, environmentally stable and prosperous West Africa Region.

The raw un-synthesized processes and outcomes of the workshop together with plenary papers and presentations are available on the ITC website<sup>2</sup> for consultation and additional information.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.itc.gm](http://www.itc.gm)