

CROSSROADS



Portrait of woman harvesting in a citronella field, the Philippines. © Isabel Corthier/AgriCord

Welcome back, Agriterra!

BY DANIEL SZCZEPANSKI

It has been a while, but our old friends from the Netherlands are now back! Rumours had been buzzing for quite a while, but we are delighted to formally inform you that Agriterra has rejoined AgriCord as of November 2023.

In fact, Agriterra participated already in person at the Program Commission held in Entebbe/Kampala (Uganda) in November.

Agriterra was founded by Dutch farmers' organisations and cooperatives almost 25 years ago as an organisation

for international peer-to-peer agricultural cooperation.

As an international specialist in cooperative development, Agriterra works by using a three-track approach. They focus on making cooperatives bankable and creating real farmer-led businesses. They improve extension services to members and strengthen farmer-government dialogues. Agriterra also uses Agripool, a knowledge broker agency, which is a unique pool of hundreds of agricultural experts from the Netherlands and other countries. Agriterra builds on the know-how and experience of experts in agribusiness.

For more information, please visit:
<https://www.agriterra.org/>

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Ever Striving for Quality and Innovation

BY KATJA VUORI

In November, the Alliance's Programme Commission came together in Entebbe/Kampala to discuss a common agenda under the chairmanship of Patrick Eeckloo (Trias).

All the agri-agencies have a representative in this Commission, focusing on the joint program implementation and sharing and learning of knowledge and competencies. It was a great pleasure to welcome some new colleagues into the Commission! Elske Koelman (Agriterra), Constanza Fernandez-Grenno (Acodea) and Khady Guey (Asprodeb) jumped into the debates with fresh energy and ideas. Those who could not make it to Uganda, participated on line or by sending in their comments to various agenda points.

Prior to the meeting, the Commission's outgoing co-chair, Philipp Conze-Roos/AHA, carried out a comprehensive survey among the agri-agencies, to map out the geographical reach, tools, expertise and competences within the alliance. The results of the survey will serve the agri-agencies in planning joint interventions, but also facilitate and support resource mobilization efforts and initial program design.



PC members visiting a project in Uganda
© Katja Vuori/AgriCord

Linked to this effort, Peter Van Erum (Trias-Uganda), presented Trias's capacity statement as an inspiration for developing a similar type of visibility and marketing product for the alliance.

Major themes were access to finance, agroecological approaches and climate change adaptation and mitigation. As the climate lead, Tiina Huvio (FFD) presented opportunities for FOs related to carbon credit markets. Programme Commission members were moderately enthusiastic about the Acorn scheme, as one option for FOs to enter this complicated market. However, carbon markets entail also many risks and challenges, and some serious expertise needs to be built within those organizations, who want to accompany FOs in carbon projects.

The Programme Commission also had the chance to visit two dynamic and innovative farmers' organizations – Tunado and Nucafes. Listening to their inspiring stories of organizational evolution, bringing many benefits for farmer members, gave a motivational boost to everyone. Such visits bring the work of the Programme Commission alive.

After all, the objective of the alliance is to deliver efficient and impactful accompaniment and technical support to FOs so that they in their turn can better serve their members. The Programme Commission works towards this common objective by establishing common processes and principles for delivery, by ensuring overall quality of implementation and by providing a space to share and learn from each other to spark new ideas and directions.

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A Few Words about COP28

BY GABRIELA QUIROGA AND TIINA
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The UNCCC's climate negotiations yearly highlight is the COP meeting. This year's COP28 took place in Dubai. Though the location initially rose many eyebrows, it did not prevent around 80,000 participants from attending the event. The AgriCord Alliance had a strong delegation in place, consisting of Tiina Huvio (FFD), Tine Vanhee and Carolina Largo (Trias) and Gabriela Quiroga (AgriCord). In addition to this physical presence, WeEffect and AHA sponsored farmer representatives to attend this COP28.

Prior to the event, the Alliance was part of a long preparatory trajectory and participated actively in the work of the farmer constituency, led by the World Farmers' Organization, which made a declaration in the name of farmers.

The World Rural Forum also coordinated smallholder voices under the guidance of Esther Penunia (AFA), leading to a publication.

On December 9th AgriCord co-organized a side event together with the World Farmers' Organization and Fairtrade. The event questioned how top-down dynamics of markets and sustainability standards can be challenged and farmers' priorities voiced. The event considered alternative paradigms to promote inclusive, equitable and practical action on climate mitigation and biodiversity protection at the farmer level and for food security. A great highlight was that a partner organization of Trias and FFD, the Pastoral Women's Council (PWC), won the Global Adaptation Award of the Global Center on adaptation with Ban Ki Moon's congratulations.

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COP28 provided a great opportunity to promote and disseminate AgriCord's Building Resilience tool, the development of which was led by FFD. The toolkit guides the farmers' organizations in assessing climate risks and helps them to decide on priority adaptation measures and design a bankable adaptation plan for climate financing. The development of Building Resilience's Part II aims at justifying FOs climate action and finally setting clear and measurable targets for climate action.

Farmer constituency had high expectations for this COP. The launch of the Loss and Damage Fund at the start of COP28 reinforced the hopes for concrete outcomes and secure climate financing mechanisms for FOs to carry out their work on adaptation and mitigation. As the days went by, the optimism started to diminish, as the Sharm el Sheick implementation of joint work on agriculture negotiations came to a standstill and got postponed.

The Alliance work on climate will not stop, once the members of the COP28 delegation return home. AgriCord's Working Group on Climate will continue its work: to further increase the alliance's expertise in climate action to deliver results for farmers and to mobilize necessary resources for this work. In collaboration with our farmer constituency, the Alliance is committed to follow up on the implementation of all commitments and pledges declared at COP28.

QUESTIONS?

GET IN TOUCH WITH
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Mid-Way: Lessons Learnt from Asia

BY DANIEL SZCZEPANSKI

Recently, at the beginning of December, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) conducted a mid-term review (MTR) of the FO4Asia programme, administered by AgriCord. The Alliance manages 20 projects as part of its sub-programme in South-East Asia, implemented by seven (7) of our member agri-agencies.

While it is early to discuss its official conclusions and recommendations, the AgriCord Secretariat has some preliminary lessons learnt from the process so far, particularly in the areas of monitoring and evaluation and knowledge management. These are key areas, supporting project implementation.

For knowledge management, there was an important point to raise regarding the integration of learning throughout the project cycle. A challenge has been the identification and ready availability of good practices and lessons learnt as a result of or in the context of project activities. Learning should be done throughout project implementation. Even creating and maintaining simple documents, focusing on successes, challenges and lessons learnt, can be done with relative ease. Similarly, the projects' reference lists act as an important repository of knowledge products and should be kept up-to-date. Such lessons learnt can then be used by management to finetune project activities, particularly in support of business planning and financial management.

In the area of monitoring and evaluation, a key point relates to the key performance indicators. The establishment of internal quality assurance processes is crucial to results-based management. In this regard, a correct understanding of the indicators and their definitions plays a critical role. Project partners and agri-agency members are highly encouraged to establish and maintain data quality assurance standards, based on the common indicator definitions that have been shared by IFAD and the Secretariat.

As the programme continues implementation, it matures. Project results become more evident and lessons can be drawn from whatever has been done already. This means that now is the time to invest in knowledge management and monitoring and evaluation. Good work has already been done in the area by our agri-agency members and FO partners. Now we are halfway, the Alliance has the opportunity and responsibility to build on this momentum.

A Moment of Gratitude and Best Wishes

2023 has been another busy year for the Alliance. We would like to take the opportunity to thank all of our agri-agency members and FO partners for the excellent work that has been done! While our work presents unique challenges, we are proud to continue our work in support of FOs and farmers worldwide. Keep up the good work!

Last but not least: we wish you an excellent New Year and all the best for 2024!



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QUESTIONS? WANT
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AgriCord is a global alliance of agri-agencies mandated by farmers' organizations. The mission of the AgriCord Alliance is to promote and help to build strong, democratic, inclusive and professional farmers' organisations and cooperatives and in that way to spur development.