

Policy Implementation and Impact of Agriculture and Natural Resources Research

This study updates an earlier evaluation conducted in 2000 in response to several developments in the agriculture and natural resources (ANR) sector globally and also in developing member countries (DMCs). Key emerging concerns include the increasing scarcity of inputs such as land and water for agriculture, and the impact of trade liberalization, global climate change, and biofuel development. ADB has also made several changes to its policies, institutional setup, and operational guidelines since 2000 in relation to ANR sector

QUICK LINKS

Evaluation Study on Policy Implementation and Impact of Agriculture and Natural Resources Research (Year 2008)

www.adb.org/Documents/SES/REG/EVU-OTH-2008-40/EVU-OTH-2008-40.asp

Special Evaluation Study on Policy Implementation and Impact of Agricultural and Natural Resources Research (Year 2000)

www.adb.org/Documents/PERs/SST-STU-2000-17/Policy-Implementation.asp

Policy on Agriculture and Natural Resources Research

www.adb.org/documents/policies/agriculture-natural-resources/

The Agriculture and Natural Resources Research (ANRR) Policy paper of 1995 (the ANRR Policy) articulated the ADB's approach to support research in the agriculture and natural resources (ANR) sector. The ANRR Policy paper identified six main agenda items that pertain to related research on the sustainable management of natural resources, agricultural productivity gains, and poverty reduction. It specified funding support of \$5 million per year. The regional technical assistance (RETA) modality operationalized the policy agenda. ADB's major partners in undertaking ANRR have been the international agricultural research centers (IARCs), which comprise both the centers under the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research and other international research institutes that have a regional or international scope.

A special evaluation study conducted in 2000 on the implementation and impact of the ANRR Policy concluded that the policy objectives were generally relevant and modalities used in supporting ANRR were effective towards achieving the overall objective of poverty reduction. Audit Committee of the ADB Board of Directors endorsed the findings and recommendations of the previous study and asked ADB Management to implement them fully.

Since the completion of the previous study, there have been several developments in the ANR sector globally and also in developing member countries (DMCs). Key emerging concerns include the increasing scarcity of inputs such as land and water for agriculture; and the impact of trade liberalization, global climate change, and biofuel development. How the agriculture sector will adjust to these changes and what interventions in ANRR would contribute more effectively to the achievement of ADB's objectives of poverty reduction and inclusive growth while conserving natural resources are important questions in this regard.

ADB has also made several changes to its policies, institutional setup, and operational guidelines since 2000 in relation to the ANR sector. The Long-Term Strategic Framework, 2008–2020 (Strategy 2020) places sustainable management of natural resources high on its agenda for achieving sustainable and inclusive growth. Agriculture is identified as one of the sectors that will continue to be supported under Strategy 2020. Further, the donor community has made commitments to make aid more effective through the Paris Declarations.



Given these major changes, an update of the previous study was undertaken to (i) determine the extent of adoption of the recommendations of the previous study and ascertain their continued relevance or otherwise in the current context; (ii) evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of ADB support to ANRR since 2000; (iii) examine the extent to which ADB has used ANRR products by incorporating them in its country operations and by disseminating them widely within ADB, DMCs, and beyond; and (iv) assess the relevance of further support for ANRR in the context of current ANR issues, ADB's current corporate strategies, and the emerging international donor practices.

Key Findings

- RETA projects are found to be relevant for addressing the key constraints to sustainable development. They were effective in achieving expected outputs and immediate outcomes. However, the full utilization of these outputs to generate eventual development impact will require time and concerted efforts from both ADB and governments of DMCs.
- ADB has made partial use of RETA products in its program and project design, both at the sector and country operations levels. Gaps include the absence of institutional linkages between RETA projects and ADB country operations, less effective use of RETA products within ADB, and inadequate support from ADB for technology scaling-up. There is, however, some evidence of the use of RETA outputs by DMCs and other development partners. Some of the activities initiated by RETA have been incorporated in other follow-up projects or have received continued support from other development partners. Some activities were also absorbed into the international agricultural research centers' core agendas.
- ADB's future support for ANRR is relevant and has potentially high rates of return in the context of current ANR issues. It is also relevant to ADB's current corporate strategy—Strategy 2020—and emerging international donor practices in supporting ANRR.
- Overall, RETA projects have made substantial contributions to the generation of improved technologies, knowledge, and information. Despite the relatively modest level of support, RETA projects have been able to leverage major efforts in scientific innovations. RETA projects have also contributed to the overall capacity development of national agricultural research systems, and promoted partnerships among various stakeholders, and facilitated regional cooperation. Despite the evidence of these positive contributions of RETA projects, the low and decreasing level of funding support for ANRR, poor linkages of RETA projects with ADB country operations, insufficient dissemination of RETA products, and inadequate support from ADB and national agricultural research systems for technology scaling up, have appeared as areas needing improvement.



Recommendations

- *Develop a strategy and an action plan for ANRR. An update of the ANRR Policy and related guidelines is needed to align the objectives, focus, and emphasis more closely to Strategy 2020, international donor practices, and emerging concerns in the ANR sector.*
- *Support both short- and long-term research. ADB should embark on supporting ANRR that clearly addresses both short- and long-term issues.*
- *Restore the level of ANRR funding. Funding should be raised to at least \$5 million per year in real terms as stipulated in the current ANRR Policy developed in 1995 and endorsed by the previous study.*
- *Promote effective and wider utilization of ANRR products. ADB should develop a knowledge management system consisting of a central repository for cutting-edge ANR technology knowledge products, and an effective knowledge dissemination system to reach out and ensure effective linkages with country operations, and partnership with DMCs for greater development impact.*

Feedback

ADB Management Response welcomed the study and agrees on the first recommendation to update the ANRR Policy and related guidelines. An Operational Plan for ADB's agriculture and rural development (ARD) for 2009-2011 is being finalized for Management approval. This Operational Plan will guide ADB's priorities and strategies for ARD outputs, including ANRR. Consistent with Strategy 2020, the Operational Plan will ensure innovative measures and smarter ways of delivering the proposed outputs. Once the Operational Plan for ARD is in place, a long-term strategy and an action plan for ANRR will be developed under the fourteenth ANRR Research and Development Technical Assistance.

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