



Submission from the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture on

Australia's role in supporting development partnerships in agriculture and agribusiness

Our very limited experience of partnerships with ACIAR means that we are unable to answer all the points raised. "Gender" is also not a specific focus for us on its own. Furthermore, of the reference countries listed, we only work in Kenya. We would, however, note that:

Our initial contact came through an invitation to the opening of the Food Security Institute. This rather chance encounter led to an innovative PPP. The partners' aim is to combine the best of private and public sector skills in crop breeding and variety design. Working relations have been excellent. The result has already been to bring Australian state institutions and African R&D closer together. In the course of the partnership, our funder (the company Syngenta) has already provided both expertise and a design tool, free of charge and with no strings attached.

How could this be enhanced?

It would be good if less were left to chance in establishing such cooperation. We detect a certain nervousness in the public sector about cooperation with the private sector. Working with an industrial foundation such as ours may be a useful "soft" entry point. But the number and reach of such foundations is limited. Therefore, many more trust-building meetings and joint activities are required between the public sector and companies. These should focus on the sharing of best practices, which is perfectly possible without revealing sensitive proprietary information.

What other foci of activity do we suggest for Australia?

We see great value in closer contacts between Australian experts and African counterparts. One example would be better links between scientists, particular with younger Africans. The two continents' farmers share a number of challenges, notably in the similarity of abiotic stresses such as drought and widespread poor soils. Closer links should therefore not just focus on the lab, but also on field work, agronomy, etc.

In addition, we believe that Australia could "export" more of its innovative thinking (and the systems that encourage it!) in areas such as policy. The brilliant export levy approach to the thorny issue of seeds royalties is a fine case in point.

Paul Castle, Basel, Switzerland, November 2nd 2015