

## The Uganda Country Level Soil Health Consortia Launch Report



Held at Ridar Hotel, Kampala on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2013

## **Introduction**

Uganda country level consortia were held on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2013 at the Ridar hotel, Kampala. The launch brought together 45 stakeholders with areas of expertise in agronomy, soil science, entomology, input and output dealers private sector, policy analysis, research and extension. The Launch started at 9.00 O'clock with introductions that were facilitated by Dr. Mudiope and Dr. Mudiope. Welcome remarks were made by the regional commissioner while official opening was done by the director general NARO. In his opening speech the director NARO narrated how bad Ugandan soils had become. He expressed concern that presently most of the farmers cannot produce sufficient food to feed their households. As a scientist he stated that he knew the main causes of such food decline was continued exploitation of soils with minimal soil nutrient replenishment. He thanked AGRA for funding the soil health consortia and IPNI for taking a leading role for coordinating activities of the consortia. He promised continued support from NARO, through provision of technical support to the Ugandan secretariat which is based at NARO, Kawanda.

## **The soil health Consortia, regional perspective**

The regional perspective of soil health consortia was presented by Dr. James Mutegi from IPNI. Mutegi started by explaining the state of ISFM knowledge in Africa. He alluded to many studies in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Ghana and Malawi that showed the potential of improving soil fertility and crop yields through integrated soil fertility management. He however pointed out that despite this existing knowledge there was lack of harmony of what is known and effective communication was lacking. He pointed out that effective scaling up requires knowledge on what works where in terms of soil fertility improvement and boosting yields. As a result of lack of databases there is continued duplication of efforts yet resources are limited. Mutegi insisted that due to variability it was not enough to use blanket fertilizer recommendations, rather through GPS coordinates it is possible to map similar areas that can perform with similar interventions. He therefore stated that the consortia were formed to: i. harmonize existing ISFM knowledge within countries and across the region, 2. develop communication tools for easy dissemination of ISFM information. The level of details and expression in such tools should be determined by the target beneficiaries because what can be easy for scientists to understand is not necessarily clear to policy makers. The structure of regional consortia was presented (Fig 1). Additionally the roles that will be played by IPNI was presented in this session. The roles were stated as:

- Organizing annual regional planning meetings to be attended by country coordinators will be organized Organizing training workshops on technical issues like data analysis, technical reporting and database management
- Supporting consortias with development of communication tools, spatial and non spatial data analysis and development of various data collection templates/instruments
- IPNI will try to harmonize performance of various consortias but at a regional level dissemination; specific activities within countries will be implemented by country consortia

- Regional Analysis: There is also a need to synthesize ISFM knowledge at national level and the regional level to capture and showcase success stories

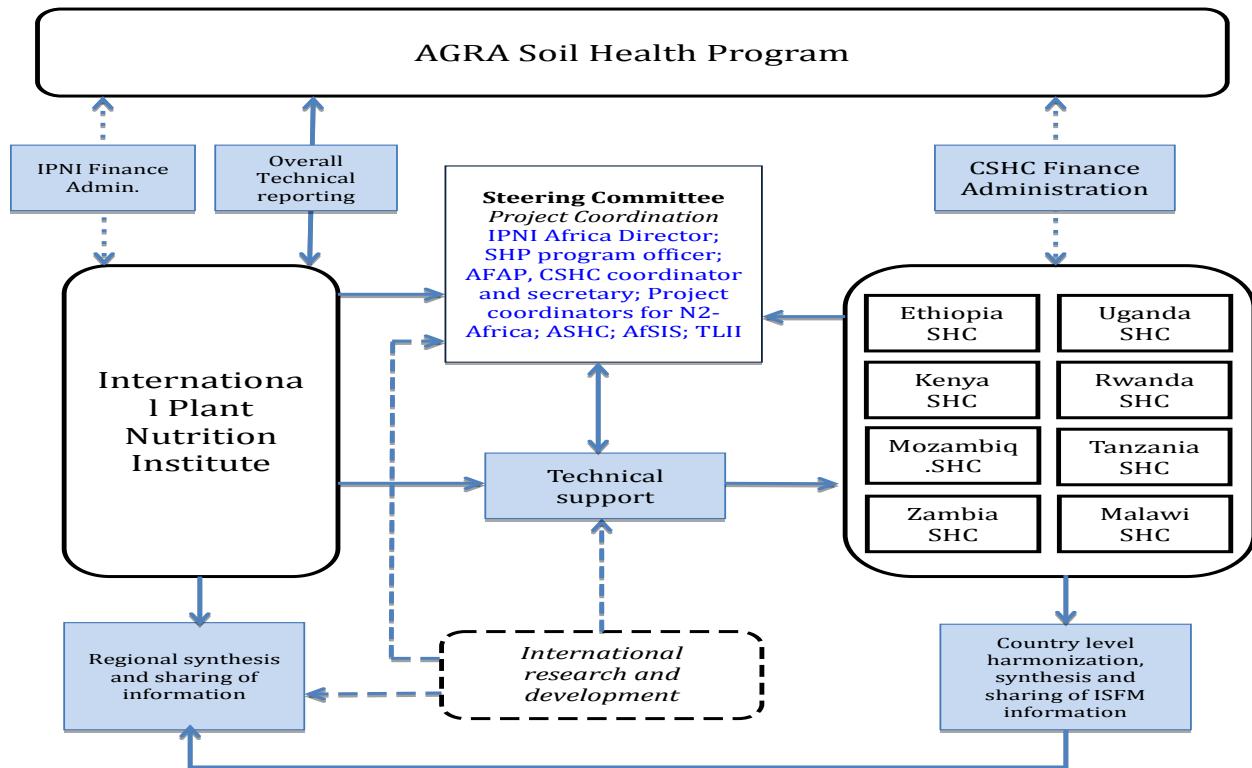


Fig 1: Structure of regional soil health consortia

### Uganda Consortia

Dr. Kaizzi gave history of Uganda Consortia and the expectations. He explained that Uganda requires serious ISFM technology interventions and this is the appropriate time to get started. He presented the project deliverables. He helped form different groups based on expertise and region of operation. The groups that were formed were categorized as,

- i. **Extension group**-this was composed of government extension officers and extension agents from other organizations like; Farm Africa and Africa 2000
- ii. **Policy group**-It was composed of government policy makers (e.g commissioners) and policy experts from the universities. The represented universities included Makerere and Nkozi)
- iii. **Research group**-This was made of researchers from the agricultural national agricultural research institutions and universities. A recommendation for improving this group is that they should attract stakeholders from CGIAR and other research centres. This is because IITA and CIAT have been very active in ISFM research in Uganda

- iv. **Inputs/Market**-This group was made up of private agricultural input dealers and agricultural consultants. They included stakeholders from UNADA and Kilimo trust

### Group discussions

Dr. Mudiope facilitated the group discussions. Each group was tasked to:

- Explore the challenges and opportunities for effective: generation, dissemination, & uptake and utilization of ISFM technologies
- Suggest ways of making the consortium effective & functional – to attain the objectives

### Extension and Education Group

#### Opportunities

- Already a lot of research in ISFM has been done and is available/ ready for uptake
- Availability and willingness of Extension organizations/institutions who are ready to work with research to generate technologies through demonstration farms and farm trials
- Farmers are willing to participate in research related activities to generate and validate ISFM technologies  
*The key players who can make this to happen are: input dealers like NASECO and VICTORIA, CARITAS, World Vision, Plan International, VEDCO,*
- Availability of NGOs, NAADS, and extension workers to disseminate the information
- Farmers are already well organized in groups or associations/cooperatives
- Increased use of new electronic communication methods like mobile phone, radio, T.V and internet (it is possible that every household owns a mobile phone or radio)
- Farmers are aware of declining soil fertility and so they are willing to take up the ISFM technologies that have already been tested and proven
- Farmers already organized in groups for easy training and uptake of ISFM technologies

#### Challenges

- Available Research information is not yet harmonized and standardized. There is no database of ISFM technologies
- Soil testing is very expensive, yet it is necessary to make appropriate recommendations for different soils
- Extension workers are not well trained in ISFM
- Application rates are not well harmonized.
- Language barriers and Low levels of literacy among the farming community ,
- Extension materials on ISFM not readily available and not well translated into languages that farmers can understand
- Some of the ISFM technologies (e.g. fertilizers) are packaged in big quantities not easily affordable by smallholder farmers
- Poor quality inputs ( e.g. adulteration of farm inputs like seeds and fertilizers) (quality issues), high prices and not readily available
- Concentration of several NGOs in a few areas and neglecting other hard to reach areas

- Conflicting messages given by different actors/NGOs e.g. those which promote organic farming
- Lack of follow up by research to get the feedback on how technologies are working or not working
- ISFM technologies are not readily available (e.g. manure) and are labor intensive(method of micro dosing)

### **Suggestions for consortium to address the challenges**

- Collect the available research data/information, standardize it and make it available for the extension organizations to use.
- The consortium needs to advocate and promote action research that brings all actors together (farmers, researchers, extension, private sector etc). This creates harmony, reduces on the costs and enhances uptake of ISFM because they have all been involved.
- The consortium needs to work with input dealers and UNBS to ensure quality assurance
- Work with input dealers to package in smaller quantities without compromising the quality through adulteration e.g. 10kg
- Avail fertilizers in the community i.e. organic and inorganic
- Other socio-economic and cultural factors that limit uptake need to be explored/researched
- Organize fora to share experiences and harmonize the ISFM technologies being practiced.

### **Perceived tasks of this Committee**

- Participate in collection information on the ISFM technologies that are being practiced by different organizations/farmers, what is working well currently or not working and share it with the consortium
- Make themselves available to be trained in ISFM technologies by the consortium
- Participate in ISFM research, and dissemination
- Produce extension materials



**Caption: Participants discussing country level soil health consortia during the launch**

## **Markets and Input dealer group**

### **Opportunities**

Research focus on reducing cost of inputs to increase production efficiency

- Existence of a growing agro-dealer association that is member based
- Potential to utilize agro-dealers for both input and output market development
- Increased potential market for use of inputs
- Growing market for farm outputs such as the Southern Sudan – therefore need to increase production
- Input dealers conducting more promotions of their products to increase demand

### **Challenges**

- Low demand leading to low supply
- High costs of inputs
- Inadequate knowledge on need to improve soil fertility
- Input packages are in huge packages yet users usually demand for small packs
- Adulterated inputs in the market
- Long term concerns on use of inputs – food safety
- Market distortion by free hand outs

### **Suggestions for consortium to address the challenges**

- Explore possibility of having input production plants
- Streamline ISFM information and widely disseminate
- Better utilization of existing agro-dealer network to widely disseminate
- Engage policy in ensuring inputs are availed in small packages as well
- How can input subsidy be better utilized to increase demand for inputs

## **Research Group**

### **Opportunities**

- Existence of fairly operational labs
- Donor interest in soil related research
- Increased government interest in science
- Existence of national and regional platforms (SSSEA, ACSS)
- Participatory research offer opportunities to involve end-users of research products
- Exposure visits and agricultural shows
- Soils are depleted hence high potential to get responses
- Some technologies have been tested and proven

### **Challenges**

- Very few ISFM scientists
- Limited government support to research hence lack of sustainability

- A lot of research findings remain unpublished leading to limited access to research findings
- Limited funds for dissemination
- Poor packaging of research products to suit the needs of the end users
- Affordability of the technologies
- Some interventions don't address the whole value chain

### **Suggestions for consortium to address the challenges**

- Encourage collaborative research
- Create a platform to enable sharing and exchange of research findings at regular intervals
- Create a national ISFM research database
- Help in the synthesis of ISFM research materials
- Involve more actors such as the media, local leaders
- Encourage interphase between farmers and researchers
- Regular quarterly meetings to review success/failures
- Basic training in packaging of research products
- Identification of research gaps so as to promote holistic research

### **Going forward**

The groups were declared operations. Members of the group were declared preliminary steering committees. They were encouraged to recruit other relevant stakeholders. Question of resources came up, it was explained that the budget was not too much but just enough to meet the projected targets. The budget was displayed and allocation for various activities explained. It was agreed that regular communications will be maintained to check on various teams and for training purposes. Participants were reminded to start returning the baseline survey questionnaires whose deadlines were about to lapse. There being no other business the meeting was closed at 16.30 pm. In the four region North, East, Central, West, South West host a person to coordinate activities (coordination point where pple can be able to follow what is happening on the ground) so national then regional.

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Dr. Nkuhe Johnson	<b>Agricultural consultant</b>
Dr. James Mutegi	IPNI
Mr. Lwakuba Alex	MAAIF
Mr. Muwanga Moses	NOGAMU
Mr. Kabuye Fred	<b>Africa 2000</b>
Mr. Okasai C. Opolot,	MAAIF
Mr. Byaruhanga Josephat	A2000 Network
Ms Nakitende Harriet	Uganda Martyrs University
Mr. Rusoke John	Farm Africa
Ms Kasande Glorious	<b>NARL</b>
Dr. Mulumba Lukman	Makerere University
Dr. Kabanyolo Ruth	MuZARDI
Mr. Musinguzi Patrick	Makerere University
Dr. Byalebeka John	NARL
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