

CHARTER FOR THE TROPICAL AGRICULTURE PLATFORM (TAP)

This Charter defines the general conditions and obligations of the Tropical Agriculture Platform (TAP) and its Partners. This Charter sets forth the governance structure for voluntary cooperation by TAP Partners. This Charter was presented and discussed during the GCARD2 Pre-conference Meeting, held in Punta del Este, Uruguay on 28 October 2012, updated and revised during the Steering Committee Meeting in Rome on 8 and 9 May 2013, and adopted by the First Partners Assembly on 6 September 2013 in China.

The TAP was presented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and launched at the first G20 Meeting of Agriculture Chief Scientists (MACS) which took place on 26 September 2012 in Guadalajara, Mexico, based on letters of intent from more than 20 institutional Partners.

1. Purpose of TAP

The purpose of TAP is to improve efficiency and effectiveness of knowledge sharing and capacity development programmes to strengthen agricultural innovation systems (AIS) in the tropics through new and existing mechanisms.

By means of truly effective networking, inclusive partnerships and intense collaboration within an agriculture innovation framework TAP, as a multi-lateral dynamic facilitation mechanism, will foster greater coherence of capacity development interventions in tropical agriculture, strengthening interaction for more harmonized action and greater mutual accountability, and avoiding duplication. It will contribute towards strengthening institutions devoted to agricultural innovation in tropical countries through coordinated support focused on (a) developing capacities in all three major dimensions, namely policy/enabling environment, organizations and individuals; (b) strengthening of the relevant technical and “soft” skills of research, extension and education actors; and (c) improving knowledge and information exchange for enhanced linkages.

2. Terms of reference of TAP

Through TAP, the Partners seek to develop the capacity of AIS in least-developed agricultural countries in the following ways:

- Foster global, regional, and national high level policy dialogues that facilitate international cooperation in capacity development;
- Link centres of excellence and strengthen interaction, coordination and collective action, while avoiding duplication, fragmentation and working in silos, thus increasing synergies;

- Develop customized and consensus-based priority setting in capacity development based on defined national gaps, needs and priorities;
- Foster exchange of information, knowledge and technologies, as well as consolidate lessons learned and good practices in capacity development and promote them across/between countries and continents;
- Capitalize on and add value to ongoing initiatives by maximizing the impacts of investments in capacity development, enabling greater efficiency and effectiveness of action and ensuring greater correspondence with local and regional needs;
- Engage the public and private sectors to participate in the cooperative activities of TAP, such as development banks, research institutions, advisory services, academia, civil society, farmers' organizations, agribusiness and other relevant institutions;
- Enable institutions and their staff from countries of the G20, as well as from developing countries and international bodies that are working on relevant fields to act collectively in an agile and efficient way that (a) contributes to sustainable changes in the agricultural capacities in the tropics; (b) complements existing capacity development initiatives by providing mechanisms for more harmonized action and support; and c) leads to greater transparency and mutual accountability.

3. Partners

TAP comprises a coalition of willing and committed Partners including the national agricultural research, education and extension institutions, as well as the private sector, civil society and farmers' organizations from G20 as well as developing countries, and the key regional and international fora, networks and agencies (see Annex 1: TAP Founding Partners).

Each TAP Partner will individually determine the nature and extent of its participation in the TAP activities.

The TAP Partners are committed to mobilizing resources to implement the TAP's strategic Action Plan. The contribution of resources to TAP is made on a voluntary basis. Each TAP Partner may, at its discretion, contribute funds, personnel and other resources to the TAP Secretariat, subject to FAO rules and regulations. Any in kind contribution provided by the TAP Partners which will not be transferred to FAO, will be administered by the respective TAP Partner according to its own rules and regulations.

The Charter does not create any legally binding obligation between or among the TAP Partners.

Each Partner undertakes the activities contemplated by this Charter in accordance with the laws under which it operates and the international instruments to which it is a party.

New organizations/institutions that wish to join as TAP Partners will have to submit a letter of interest to the TAP Secretariat. The TAP Partners Assembly (see 4.a) will review the requests and approve new Partners.

4. Governance structure and rules of Procedure

A Partners Assembly, a Steering Committee and a Secretariat form the governance structure of TAP.

a. TAP Partners Assembly (TAP-PA)

The TAP-PA consists of the representatives of all TAP Partners. Each Partner nominates one representative and one alternate to the TAP-PA. If the representative of the Partner is unavailable, the alternate will substitute him/her. The nominated representative must be empowered by the Partner to commit the necessary resources and activities to support the agreed Action Plan of TAP.

Technical and other experts may be invited to attend the TAP-PA meetings as deemed necessary by the TAP-PA.

The TAP-PA elects its Chair and Vice-Chair on the understanding that they accept to also serve as Chair and Vice-Chair of the TAP Steering Committee (TAP-SC) (see 4.b). The TAP-PA also elects the other Members of the TAP-SC. All these persons are elected by consensus among the representatives nominated by the TAP Partners and serve for a term of two-years renewable for one term. If consensus is not reached, the decision is taken by the majority of the representatives. If the Chairperson resigns before the end of his/her term, the Vice-Chairperson will take the role of the Chairperson until the end of the term.

The TAP-PA meets at least once a year physically or virtually. The decisions of the TAP-PA are made by consensus.

The functions of the TAP-PA are to:

1. Consider and approve the plan of work, budget and annual reports submitted by TAP-SC;
2. Review and approve new requests from applicants to become Partners based on the assessed capacity and demonstrated commitment to the implementation of the TAP Strategic Action Plan;
3. Provide guidance to the TAP-SC.

b. TAP Steering Committee (TAP-SC)

The TAP-SC consists of up to eleven members preferably from different regions and types of organizations. The members are elected by the TAP-PA for a term of two years, renewable for one term. As mentioned in 4.a, all TAP-SC members are elected by consensus among the representatives, nominated by the TAP Partners and serve for a term of two years renewable for one term. If consensus is not reached, the decision is taken by the majority of the representatives. One person from the Secretariat participates in the TAP-SC meetings. The TAP-SC has the right to propose permanent observers subject to approval by the next TAP-PA.

The TAP-SC can invite to any of its meetings specific members of the TAP-PA when the topics covered relate to the specific constituency of this member, or any staff of the TAP Secretariat when his/her support is required.

Any member of the TAP-SC can recommend that experts give inputs for the TAP-SC as necessary but invitations to do so will come from the Chair.

The TAP-SC meets at least quarterly virtually or physically, with additional meetings held as required. The costs associated with membership of the SC would normally be borne by each member's parent organization. The minutes of the TAP-SC meetings are distributed to all TAP-PA members.

The Chairperson of the TAP-SC can propose replacement of SC members who do not attend three consecutive meetings.

The functions of the TAP-SC are to:

1. Submit the draft TAP plan of action and budget to the TAP-PA;
2. Monitor progress made on the implementation of the TAP plan of action and take corrective measures if so needed;
3. Present the draft annual reports to the TAP-PA;
4. Prepare the agenda for TAP-PA meetings;
5. Allocate resources and approve expenditures within the annual budget approved by the TAP-PA.
6. Advise the TAP Secretariat on implementation of the activities.

c. TAP Secretariat

The TAP Secretariat is hosted at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy. The TAP Secretariat is conceived as a small unit with one Lead Officer plus secretarial assistance directly supported by TAP funds. The size and composition of this unit, as well as the specific functions of its members are periodically reviewed by the TAP-SC.

The Secretariat implements the following activities in close consultation with the TAP-SC and in close collaboration with TAP Partners:

1. Organization of meetings of TAP-PA and TAP-SC;
2. Implementation of TAP activities, as per the plan of action approved by the TAP-PA, including:
 - a) development, hosting, and maintenance of the TAP website and TAPipedia;
 - b) organization of the policy dialogue initiatives;
 - c) collaboration with other relevant international initiatives in the field of capacity development for agriculture innovation in tropical countries;
 - d) organization of Marketplace events and activities;
 - e) maintenance of internal and external communications related to TAP activities.
3. Preparation of the draft TAP plan of action and budget;
4. Preparation of the draft annual report;
5. Circulation among the TAP-PA of applications for partnership, in case new applications are received.

The TAP Secretariat may, as required, use the services of personnel employed by the Partners and outposted to the TAP Secretariat under the conditions to be stipulated on a case by case basis.

6. Intellectual Property

All matters related to intellectual property and the treatment thereof arising from cooperative activities of TAP are addressed on a case-by-case basis within the specific context in which they appear, bearing in mind the purpose of TAP.

7. Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

TAP Secretariat reports to the TAP-SC through biannual progress reports, which contain:

- a) Description of the implemented activities and results achieved; and
- b) Identification of problems and constraints encountered and recommendations for corrective measures.

When receiving grants for the implementation of the Action Plan, the TAP Secretariat will administer such grants in accordance with FAO financial rules and regulations.

An external review of TAP results, outcomes and impact will take place three years after the inception workshop. After which external reviews will take place at least six months before each Action Plan cycle finishes.

8. Use of logos and names

The logo and name of TAP can be used by Partners for activities related to TAP projects subject to prior approval by the TAP-SC. The logos and names of Partners will be included in the TAP web site.

9. Modification of the Charter

This Charter may be modified by decision of the TAP-PA by simple majority.

10. Withdrawal of Partners

Any Partner may withdraw from the TAP at any time upon three month written notice.

Annex 1

TAP Partners

Global associations, organizations and institutions to promote agricultural research, education and extension:

- Center for Agricultural Bioscience International (CABI): <http://www.cabi.org/>
- CGIAR: Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR):
<http://www.cgiar.org/>
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): <http://www.fao.org>
- Global Confederation of Higher Education Associations for Agricultural and Life Sciences (GCHERA): <http://www.gchera.com/>
- Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR): <http://www.egfar.org/>
- Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS): <http://www.g-fras.org/en/>
- International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA): <http://www.biosaline.org/>
- International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD):
<http://www.icimod.org/>
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD): <http://www.ifad.org/>
- International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA):
<http://www.planttreaty.org/>
- Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA): <http://www.cta.int/en/>
- World Bank Group: <http://www.worldbank.org/>
- Young Professionals' Platform for Agricultural Research for Development (YPARD):
<http://www.ypard.net/>

Regional and national associations and institutions to promote agricultural research and education and extension:

Africa and the Middle East

- African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS): <http://www.afaas-africa.org/>
- African Insect Science for Food and Health (ICIPE): <http://www.icipe.org/>
- Agricultural Research Council, South Africa (ARC): <http://www.arc.agric.za/>
- Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA): <http://www.agra.org/>

- Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA): <http://www.aarinena.org/>
- Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA): <http://www.fara-africa.org/>

Asia

- Asia Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutes (APAARI): <http://www.apaari.org/>
- Central Asia and the Caucasus Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (CACAARI): <http://www.cacaari.org/>
- Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS): <http://www.caas.net.cn>
- Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences (CATAS): <http://www.catas.cn>
- Indonesian Agency for Agricultural Research and Development (IAARD): <http://www.litbang.deptan.go.id/>
- Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS): <http://www.jircas.affrc.go.jp/>

Europe

- Consiglio per la Ricerca e la Sperimentazione in Agricoltura, Italy (CRA): <http://sito.entecra.it>
- Institut Agronomique, Vétérinaire et Forestier de France, France (AGREENIUM): <http://www.agreenium.org/>
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH: <https://www.giz.de/de/html/index.html>
- European Alliance on Agricultural Knowledge for Development (AGRINATURA): <http://www.agrinatura.eu/>
- European Commission (EC): <http://ec.europa.eu/>
- European Forum for Agricultural Research for Development (EFARD): <http://www.efard.eu/>
- Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria, Italy (INEA): <http://www.inea.it/>
- National Institute for the Agricultural and Food Research and Technology, Spain (INIA): <http://www.inia.es>
- National Resources Institute, University of Greenwich, UK (NRI): <http://www.nri.org/>

Latin America

- Associação Brasileira das Entidades Estaduais de Assistência Técnica e Extensão Rural, Brazil (ASBRAER): <http://www.asbraer.org.br/>
- Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária, Brazil (EMBRAPA): www.embrapa.br/
- Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza, Costa Rica (CATIE): <http://catieeducacion-web.sharepoint.com/>
- Foro de las Américas para la Investigación y Desarrollo Tecnológico Agropecuario (FORAGRO): <http://www.iica.int/foragro/>
- Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Forestales, Agrícolas y Pecuarias (INIFAP), Mexico: <http://www.inifap.gob.mx>
- Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria, Argentina (INTA): <http://inta.gob.ar/>
- Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, Costa Rica (IICA): <http://www.iica.int/>
- Programa Cooperativo de Investigación, Desarrollo e Innovación Agrícola para los Trópicos Sudamericanos, Brazil (PROCITROPICOS): <http://www.procitropicos.org.br/>

North America

- United States Agency for International Development, USA (USAID): <http://www.usaid.gov/>
- United States Department of Agriculture, USA (USDA): <http://www.usda.gov>