Breeder leaders savor first-ever 'demand-led' workshop

African experts build future trainer team step by step

'Demand-driven' approaches* to R&D can greatly increase smallholders' adoption of new varieties. African organizations, the Syngenta Foundation and Australian partners° are developing training to help scientists connect breeding more closely to farmers' needs. A recent workshop in Kenya led the way.

Dr Clare Mukankusi and Jean Claude Rubyogo, both from CIAT**-PABRA, organized their continent's first-ever such training on demand-led breeding. 20 leading bean scientists from 15 countries across the PABRA*** networks participated in the two-day workshop.

Joining Clare and Jean Claude as trainers were Prof. Paul Kimani (University of Nairobi) and Dr Rowland Chirwa (CIAT, Malawi). They were supported by other facilitators, who had personally tested the training modules in October 2015.

"We are using a train-the-trainer approach", explains Jean Claude Rubyogo. "Helping as facilitators is a first step for our colleagues to become educators on Demand-Led Breeding." The next step for Clare Mukankusi and colleagues is to take on the teaching of some of the workshop's seven units (see list below).

"An important additional feature is that we ask all participants if they have information from their own programs to use as case studies or learning points", Jean Claude Rubyogo continues. "Whether these are successes, failures or solutions to challenges, we can jointly draw on them all to create 'institutional memory' and share lessons." Such contributions to the program can also bring recognition and publications.

"The training was very successful", reports Clare Mukankusi. "The breeders participated enthusiastically in all the lectures, brain-storming, group discussions and individual work". For most of them, this was the first formal look at the principles of demand-led breeding. "We got lots of positive feedback", Clare adds. "Participants' only regret was that the workshop wasn't longer!"

Workshop Units
1. Principles of Demand-Led Plant Variety Design
2: Visioning and Foresight for Setting Breeding Goals
3: Understanding Clients' Needs
4: Variety Design and Setting Standards
5: Variety Development Strategy, Stage Plan, Timelines & Variety Registration
6: Investment Decisions in Variety Development
7: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

* www.syngentafoundation.org/index.cfm?pageID=768

** https://ciat.cgiar.org/   *** www.pabra-africa.org/

° Australian International Food Security Research Centre and the Crawford Fund