

Knowledge Management (KM) Awareness

Thematic Policy Brief N° 2/10



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About FARA

The Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) is the apex continental organisation responsible for coordinating and advocating for agricultural research-for-development. (AR4D). It serves as the entry point for agricultural research initiatives designed to have a continental reach or a sub-continental reach spanning more than one sub-region.

FARA serves as the technical arm of the African Union Commission (AUC) on matters concerning agricultural science, technology and innovation. FARA has provided a continental forum for stakeholders in AR4D to shape the vision and agenda for the sub-sector and to mobilise themselves to respond to key continent-wide development frameworks, notably the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

FARA's vision is to "Reduced poverty in Africa as a result of sustainable broad-based agricultural growth and improved livelihoods, particularly of smallholder and pastoral enterprises" its mission is the "Creation of broad-based improvements in agricultural productivity, competitiveness and markets by strengthening the capacity for agricultural innovation at the continental-level"; its Value Proposition is the "Strengthening Africa's capacity for innovation and transformation by visioning its strategic direction, integrating its capacities for change and creating an enabling policy environment for implementation". FARA's strategic direction is derived from and aligned to the Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa (S3A), which is in turn designed to support the realization of the CAADP vision.

Disclaimer

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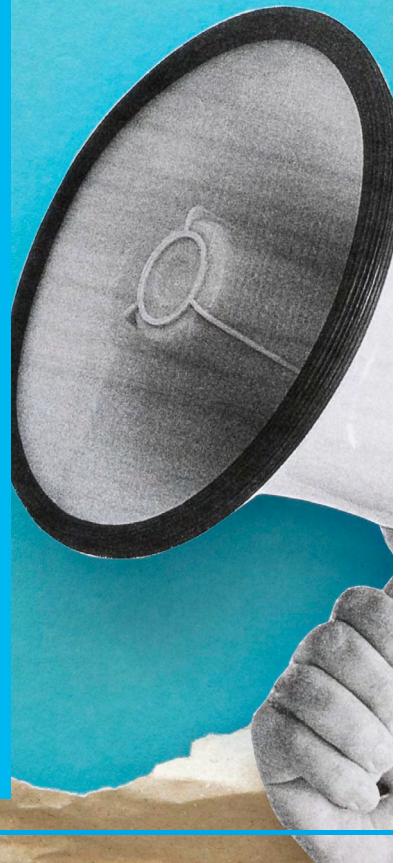
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Background

Knowledge Management and Decision Support initiatives are crucial for catalyzing agri-cultural innovation and climate-relevant interventions. In the last decade, there has been a significant increase in knowledge management and decision support interventions in development programmes across Africa. However, the World Economic Forum's report posits that Informed decision-making processes at all levels are weak due to low availability and accessibility of relevant and reliable data, information or knowledge. Existing agricultural and agribusiness knowledge and statistics are spotty and unreliable in Africa. Despite the existence of official statistics agencies in most, if not all, African countries (housed either by national bureaus of statistics, the national chamber of commerce, or within ministries of agriculture) with the responsibility to collect, manage, and make available reliable agricultural knowledge.

The ability to manage knowledge is becoming increasingly more crucial in today's knowledge economy. The creation and diffusion of knowledge have become ever more important factors in competitiveness. More and more, knowledge is being regarded as a valuable commodity that is embedded in products (especially high-technology products) and in the tacit knowledge of highly mobile employees. Although knowledge is increasingly being viewed as a commodity or an intellectual asset, it possesses some paradoxical characteristics that are radically different from those of other valuable commodities. Knowledge management is the conscious process of defining, structuring, retaining and sharing the knowledge and experience of employees within an organization.



The main goal of knowledge management is to improve an organization's efficiency and save knowledge within the organisation. Often it is referring to training and learning in an organization or of its customers. It consists of a cycle of creating, sharing, structuring and auditing knowledge, in order to maximize the effectiveness of an organization's collective knowledge.

Why is knowledge management important?

Knowledge management is important because it boosts the efficiency of an organization's decision-making ability. In making sure that all employees have access to the overall expertise held within the organization, a smarter workforce is built and are more able to make quick, informed decisions that benefit the company. Innovation is easier to foster within the organization, customers benefit from increased access to best practices and employee turnover is reduced. The importance of knowledge management is growing every year. As the marketplace becomes ever more competitive, one of the best ways to stay ahead of the curve is to build your organization in an intelligent, flexible manner. The major business drivers behind today's increased interest in and application of KM lie in four key areas:

1. Globalization of business. Organizations today are more global—multisite, multilingual, and multicultural in nature.
2. Leaner organizations. We are doing more and we are doing it faster, but we also need to work smarter as knowledge workers, adopting an increased pace and workload.
3. "Corporate amnesia." We are more mobile as a workforce, which creates problems of knowledge continuity for the organization and places continuous learning demands on the knowledge worker. We no longer expect to spend our entire work life with the same organization.
4. Technological advances. We are more connected. Advances in information technology not only have made connectivity ubiquitous but have radically changed expectations. We are expected to be "on" at all times, and the turnaround time in responding is now measured in minutes, not weeks.

Knowledge management provides benefits to individual employees, to communities of practice, and to the organization itself as follows:



- More efficient workplace,
- Faster, better decision making,
- Increased collaboration,
- Building organizational knowledge,
- Employee onboarding and training process is optimized,
- Increased employee happiness and retention, due to the valuing of knowledge, training, and innovation
- Builds a sense of community bonds within the organization.
- Provides challenges and opportunities to contribute.
- Facilitates more effective networking and collaboration.
- Develops a professional code of ethics that members can follow.
- Builds organizational memory.
- Some critical KM challenges are to manage content effectively, facilitate collaboration,
- Help knowledge workers connect and find experts, and help

Challenges

- a) Lack of a common terminology, strategic vision and guidance within the organisations,
- b) Lack of support and sponsorship at senior management level,
- c) Insufficient staff awareness and organizational culture, including absence of recognition, incentives and sanctions with respect to knowledge-sharing attitudes,
- d) Difficulties in measuring knowledge management impact and in adopting indicators,
- e) Loss of tacit knowledge owing to lack of continuity and adequate knowledge-retention policies,
- f) Persistence of the bad practice of working in silos,
- g) Incompatibilities artificially created by the technological infrastructure,
- h) Lack of financial resources.
- i) Getting and Keeping People Motivated.
- j) Keeping up with Ever-Changing Technology.
- k) Measuring Knowledge Contribution.
- l) Security.
- m) Keeping Shared Information up to Date and Accurate.
- n) Interpreting Data Effectively.
- o) Ensuring Relevancy.
- p) Rewarding Active Users.

Gaps

Lack of critical information to unleash the capacity of agricultural stakeholders mostly farmers to enable them effectively participate in the modernization of the agricultural sector through facts checking and resilience education on KM Awareness tracking.

Opportunities

- i) KM encourages innovation and effective planning hence requires current and up to date information
- ii) The process of systematically, actively managing and leveraging the stores of knowledge in an organisation
- iii) Create change in agricultural development (overall, availability and accessibility to improve KM system solutions for job creation and opportunities.
- iv) Build capacity and awareness and strengthen knowledge retention and appropriate mechanism to support knowledge development and use and digital skills and innovation.

Rationale

KM4AgD is gaining popularity and credibility in Africa through the continental development in agricultural value chain. Many institutions intervening in this sector both at regional and national level lack the human, financial and technical know how to properly embrace KM and its technological changes so as to build in house organizational knowledge. As such, unwillingness of experts to share knowledge or lack of knowledge culture are some of the factors that hinders KM popularisation, the reality calls for deliberation. This could be due to issues including:

- i) Lack of understanding of the important of KM in organisation,
- ii) Identification of actors in KM is a challenge,
- iii) Poor knowledge quality and misappropriation of funds,
- iv) Lack of access to credible and correct information.

To operationalize the vision and objectives of KM4AgD, KM Awareness, will be critical. It is in this regard that KM4AgD Challenge participants in groups 3 developed this policy brief.

Vision and goals

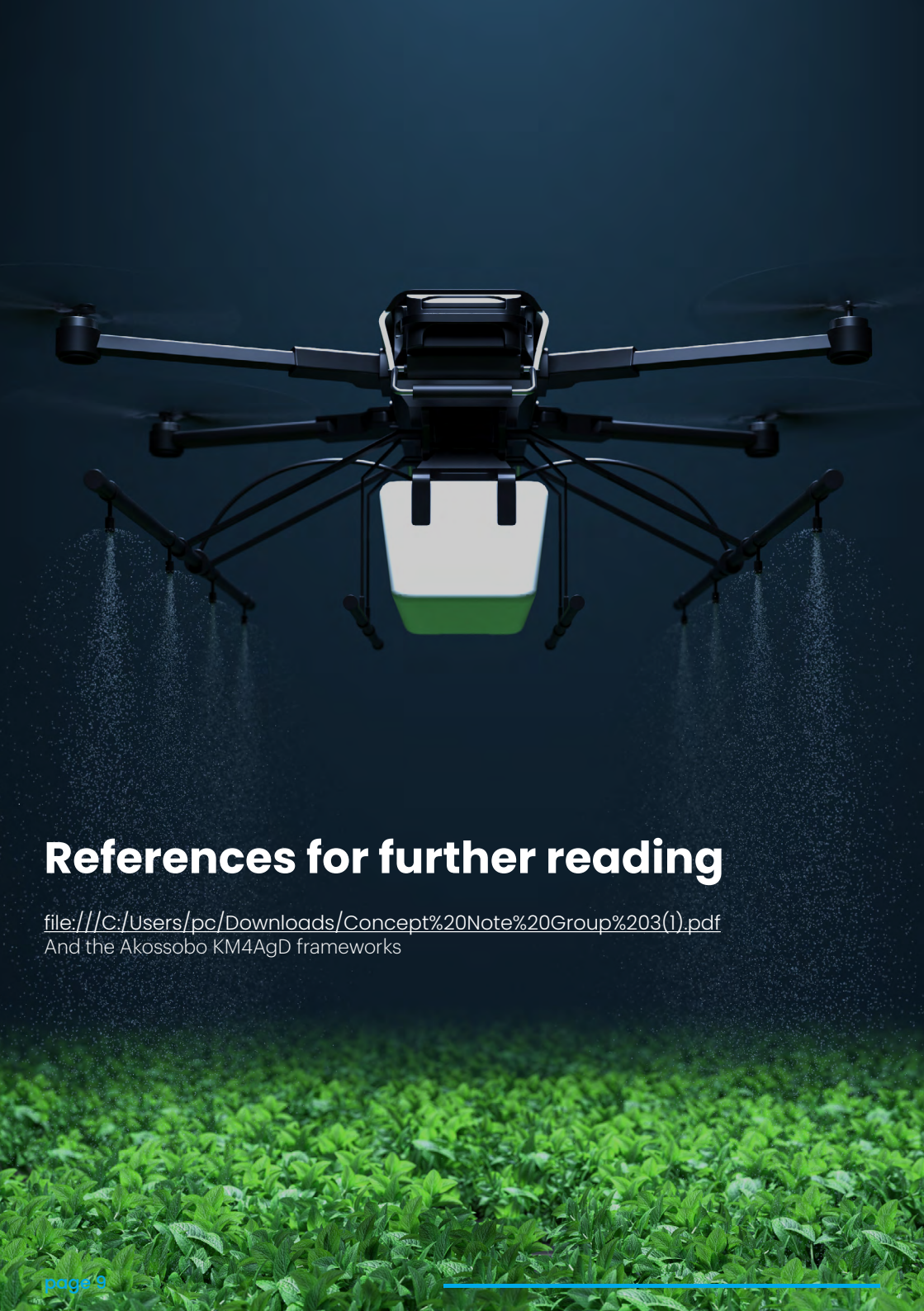
To popularize KM in various levels and nationwide, increase numbers of KM practitioners, fostering KM for continuous learning and visibility and accessibility for all.

Recommended actions to be taken

1. Undertake Capacity development training practices for KM awareness (seminars, training, workshops, Social media, Print media, Knowledge cafes, mainstreaming KM in colleges etc.)
2. Establishment CoPs/Groups for knowledge sharing/peer learning;
3. Increase funding for KM in order to enhance visibility
4. Rewarding KM managers and those that share generated information
5. Strengthen the key contributors or generators of Knowledge (KM holders) to enable them provide in-depth, evidence-based information that is authoritative.
6. Capacity building development practices (training, workshops, brown bags, Knowledge cafes, etc.)
7. Establishment facts checking unit, D-groups for knowledge sharing/peer learning.
8. Use of Artificial Intelligence in developing knowledge could help reduce distortion

Conclusion

KM is gaining momentum in Africa and all of us have a role to play in enhancing its visibility. The challenge is in Knowledge Managers to correct this uncomfortable situation and develop or capture knowledge that we can be proud of as a continent or organisation. Once this done, employment creation and poverty reduction in the agricultural sector will be guaranteed.



References for further reading

[file:///C:/Users/pc/Downloads/Concept%20Note%20Group%203\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/pc/Downloads/Concept%20Note%20Group%203(1).pdf)
And the Akossobo KM4AgD frameworks

About the KM4AgD Challenge

Under the frame work of the KM4AgD Challenge, ten core challenges were identified as critical to the advancement of knowledge in the agricultural sector and knowledge management awareness being one. As such, through this knowledge and sharing opportunity event, the Knowledge Café hosts and joined by other audiences (institution or department, researchers, and other KM practitioners) including 25 participants across Africa were engaged to critically brainstorm on what works should be done in line with the challenges identified, and to operationalize the vision, objectives of KM4AgD. Knowledge Management Awareness, was identified to be critical and much attention needs to be made in this regard. It is in this regard that KM4AgDChallenge participants in groups 3 through the KM-Café session have successful develop this policy brief that will be implemented. A lot of thanks goes to Mr. Benjamin Abugri Knowledge Manager, Knowledge Management and Outreach Officer for FARA and Dr Andreas Brandner Founder and Managing Director of KM, for providing direction, guidance, technical and administrative support on this project.



Development
Symbol



Growth Arrow



A leaf signifying
Agriculture



Knowledge
Management





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