



CASA

Common Agricultural
and wider bioeconomy
reSearch Agenda

D2.7

Report No.3 to SCAR SG about facilitation



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Task 2.3



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The overall objective of CASA, a Coordination and Support Action (CSA), is a **consolidated common agricultural and wider bioeconomy research agenda** within the European Research Area.

CASA will achieve this by bringing the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR), which has already contributed significantly to this objective in the past, to the next level of performance as a research policy think tank. CASA will efficiently strengthen the strengths and compensate for the insufficiencies of SCAR and thus help it evolve further into “SCAR plus”.

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Abbreviations

AKIS	Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems
ARCH	European Agricultural Research towards greater impact on global Challenges
AU	Aarhus University
CASA	Common Agricultural and wider bioeconomy reSearch Agenda
CSA	Coordination and Support Action
CWG	Collaborative Working Group
DE	Germany
DoA	Description of Action
FIN	Finland
NB	Nota bene
NL	The Netherlands
SCAR	Standing Committee on Agricultural Research
SG	Steering Group
SWG	Strategic Working Group
ToR	Terms of Reference
WP	Work Package
WR	Wageningen University & Research

Summary

Work Package 2 of the CASA CSA project is entitled “*Added Value and Improved quality for greater impact*”.

This deliverable is D2.7 (“Report No.3 to SCAR SG about facilitation”) of the CASA CSA project and presents a brief report about CASA support to the working groups in terms of facilitation since deliverable D.2.6 (“Report No.2 to SCAR SG about facilitation”) was submitted in month 28 of the project at the end of 2018.

Initial guidelines for proposals for support were revised. The Strategic Working Groups ARCH, AKIS, Bioeconomy, Food Systems and Forest have benefited from CASA support for facilitation in this period.

Some lessons learned are presented.

Introduction/Rationale

The CASA CSA project started on 1st September 2016 and will close on 31st August 2019.

The overarching aim of CASA will be achieved through the accomplishment of the following four specific objectives:

1. Increased and broadened participation, interaction and collaboration of Member States and Associated Countries
2. Improved quality of outputs and outcomes of the Standing Committee of Agricultural Research creating added value for greater impact
3. Strengthening the production of more strategic policy advice by the Standing Committee of Agricultural Research based on the increased, deepened and broadened participation facilitated by CASA
4. Improve overall organisation, communication and dissemination of SCAR activities, outputs and outcomes for greater impact

One of the driving forces for establishing a CSA supporting SCAR is facilitation and coordination of the working groups. Work Package (WP) 2 has provided added value to SCAR bodies and helps deliver results of improved quality leading to greater impact of SCAR activities.

The expected outcomes of task 2.2 were: Improved efficiency of use of resources in the working groups as well as improving the quality and relevance of outputs of the SWGs and CWGs and, thereby SCAR, by corresponding more to the needs of EC (different DGs) and other relevant stakeholders. The task was managed by Consortium partner 5 (Aarhus University, Denmark). Support was provided by the task manager including contributing to: the preparation of facilitation (Terms of Reference); selection of experts, coordination and overall reporting.

The inclusion of this task in the CASA Description of Action responds to the well-known constraint for SCAR Working Groups that members of the groups have to find time to participate in working group activities over and above their regular duties. By providing some resources for coordination and facilitation; improved reporting; preparation of focussed outputs etc. the groups might have a chance of increasing impact of their activities and, thereby, SCAR activities.

This deliverable is D2.7 ("Report No.3 to SCAR SG about facilitation") of the CASA CSA project.

Brief description of process

At a workshop under task 2.1 during the first weeks of the CASA project, at which all SCAR groups participated, initial needs and ideas for facilitation were expressed by some groups.

All 6 SCAR SWGs and 2 SCAR CWGs as well as the SCAR Foresight group were eligible for support.

A simple and non-bureaucratic process of submission and approval was designed and in order to provide a framework for this task a document “Guidelines for Facilitation” was prepared and approved by the CASA Management Group. These were revised in 2017 and 2018 to respond to the experience gained during the process.

Activities could include:

- Organisation of working group meetings
- Organisation of specific events such as workshops
- Improvement in the way working groups are organised including for example preparation of annual work plans
- Improved reporting by SWGs to SCAR plenary and better use of outcomes
- Improved presentation of national experiences including definition of formats
- Overarching learning activities
- Support to preparation of focussed outputs such as policy briefs

Proposals were submitted to the Task Manager and approval was necessary prior to initiating activities.

The Task Manager provided support to the expert(s) and the working groups to seek ways of improving relevant dissemination of any outputs and possibly identifying an appropriate meeting at which the results may be presented.

The CASA Management Group decided that all facilitation must be completed by 30th June 2019 with a view to allowing enough time for reporting and accounting by the time the CASA project officially closes on 31st August 2019. The working groups complied with this decision although a number of last minute reminders were necessary.

Overview of facilitation

Two groups; AKIS and ARCH had benefitted from facilitation support from national ministries (NL, DE, and FIN) prior to the CASA project. However, this support finished prior to the initiation of CASA. CASA resources were allocated to continuation of this support. In addition, facilitation funds were used by three other groups: Bioeconomy, Food Systems and Forest. CASA resources were managed by the CASA Coordinator, Consortium Partner 1 (JUELICH, Germany).

Funds for Facilitation			
		Contracted Amount €	
1	SWG Forest 1	9.800,00	
2	SWG Forest 2	11.000,00	
3	SWG Bioeconomy 1	17.500,00	
4	SWG Bioeconomy 2		resources to AU & WR
5	SWG Bioeconomy 3	5.000,00	+ resources to AU & WR
6	SWG ARCH +		resources to AU
7	SWG AKIS +		resources to WR
8	SWG Food Systems 1	9.100,00	+ resources to WR
	Total	52.400,00	+ resources to CASA partners
AU	Consortium partner no. 5		
WR	Consortium partner no. 2		

The table on the next page presents the eight facilitation support agreements.

	Start	End	Amount €	Institution and Expert's name	
SWG Forest 1	01.10.2017	30.06.2019	9.800	ECOFOR, France	
	Supporting SWG activities on forests and forestry research and innovation.				
SWG Bioeconomy 1	06.2017	February 2018	17.500	Luke, Finland	
	Report: "Strategic Knowledge and Innovation Agenda" (9pp)				
SWG ARCH +	01.02.2017	30.06.2019	65.187,50	Alex Percy-Smith (AU)	
	Support to Coordination Group and organising and facilitating workshops				
SWG AKIS +	01.03.2017	30.06.2019	69.125,00	Floor Geerling-Eiff (WR)	
	Support to organising and running group and compiling end of mandate reports				
SWG Food Systems	29.01.2109	30.06.2019	13.925	WR + Sub-contract with ACTIA, France	
Status	Workshop: "Diversity among Food Systems. Diversifying Food Systems in the Pursuit of Sustainable Food Production and Healthy Diets"				
SWG Forest 2	23.01.2019	30.06.2019	11.000	Sub-contract with ECOFOR, France	
Status	Workshop: "International cooperation in research and innovation for the future European forest-based sector"				
SWG Bioeconomy 2	January 2019	30.06.2019	13.031,25	AU and WR	
Status	Joint workshop with State Representative Group on bioeconomy clusters				
SWG Bioeconomy 3	January 2019	30.06.2019	25.000	AU and WR	
Status	Facilitation of three workshops: "Providing advice for the creation of a Policy Support Facility for Member States to develop and implement dedicated national bioeconomy strategies"				

Lessons learned

The chairs and co-chairs, as well as the members of the working groups, have limited resources (time and budget) to implement activities. Facilitation support is provided to reduce the work-load of the chairs and co-chairs in preparing, implementing and following up activities in connection with their respective working group, giving them time to focus, for example, on strategic research programmes and other related topics, and reducing the time needed by them for preparing agendas, moderating meetings, writing minutes. In addition, CASA facilitation funds have provide support for specific activities which otherwise had inadequate funds to be implemented, e.g. workshops.

Some working groups focussed especially on the possibility of funding of someone to organise and provide facilitation for workshops including reporting. This was extremely successful.

Increased interest in using these funds occurred towards the end of the CASA project when it was realised that facilitation of workshop organised by the SCAR working groups was also eligible for this support. It became apparent that this is an extremely useful form of support to the working groups.

Support to processes such as formulating Terms of Reference is needed in many cases. There are no or very limited resources within the groups and the members' home ministry or organisation for such support meaning that efforts are often sub-optimal.

It is imperative to ensure fairness and transparency, but at the same time limit the administrative burden both on the experts carrying out the task and the SCAR working group. Guidelines for applying for funds and implementing the studies should be improved. This could be supported by a small unit working part time to support the SCAR Secretariat.

Targeted dissemination of results is needed to improve the value of results and ultimately the impact of working group activities. Obviously various websites should be used, but also direct communication to organisations and persons is absolutely essential for more efficient dissemination.

There is a need for a small fund facility for SCAR working groups to cover costs of facilitation which supports the functioning and daily running of SCAR Working Groups as well as organising and facilitating specific workshops.

In general there has been very positive feedback about the availability of funds for facilitation. Indeed in a survey carried out by CASA in WP3 and reported in CASA deliverable D3.10, a very large majority of respondents think such funds are important or very important for future work.

