
OPEV is evaluating the Bank’s assistance to agricultural water management (AWM). The evaluation aims to draw lessons from the Bank’s experience in the sub-sector, and formulate recommendations to inform and guide the Bank’s future investments in this sub-sector. A portfolio review has been completed and country case studies in Ghana and Mali are underway.

The portfolio review covers the 1990-2007 period. It identified 217 AWM operations with an approval value of US$3.447 billion. In comparison, disbursement dropped from 30 months in 1990-95 to around 15 months in 2002-07; and overruns in the time taken for implementation have nearly been eliminated in recent years, down from high levels for multi-country operations has increased.

The portfolio review also indicates increasing efficiency: elapsed time from approval to first disbursement dropped from 30 months in 1990-95 to around 15 months in 2002-07; and overruns in the time taken for implementation have nearly been eliminated in recent years, down from high levels for projects approved in the early 1990s.

Figure 1: Distribution of AWM Bank lending by region and time cohort

Significant decrease in Bank lending in AWM with a substantial focus on the west and northern regions

Figure 2: Financial breakdown of Bank AWM operations by funding source (% of operations)

AWM depends mostly on ADF financing

African Development Fund (ADF) provided 84% of the funding. The portfolio review shows that 50% of all financing went to 8 countries. Funding increased during 1996-2001 but has since declined, although funding for multi-country operations has increased.

The evaluation aims to draw lessons from the Bank’s experience in the sub-sector, and formulate recommendations to inform and guide the Bank’s future investments in this sub-sector. A portfolio review has been completed and country case studies in Ghana and Mali are underway.

Against this changing landscape, the Bank’s independent evaluation department, OPEV, undertook a major evaluation of assistance to agriculture in Africa, conducting the study jointly with the independent evaluation office of the International Fund for Agriculture (IFAD).

Completed at the end of 2009, the study evaluated the Bank’s assistance to agriculture in Africa, conducting the study jointly with the independent evaluation office of the International Fund for Agriculture (IFAD). Completed at the end of 2009, the study found that, given the many changes in the African context, there is now an opportunity for agriculture to flourish in Africa. But attention is needed to develop stronger national, regional and international policy frameworks, and to build new and more purposeful partnerships across the sector in order to improve performance and boost agricultural production and trade. This newsletter reports the results of this joint evaluation overleaf.

OPEV staff and myself enjoyed working closely with colleagues in operations, who welcomed the conclusions and recommendations emerging from the evaluation. The evaluation results have been used to develop a new Agriculture Sector Strategy focusing on “infrastructure for agriculture”. As the evaluation manager, Mr Detlev Puetz, has commented: “The strategy is very much in line with the evaluation’s call for a more focused approach to the sector, drawing on the Bank’s areas of comparative advantage and strategic direction”.

OPEV continues its work in the sector. As well as several project-level evaluations, the department is conducting a study on the theme of “Water for Agriculture”, which is also reported in this newsletter. Evaluation manager, Blaise Nkamleu, recently visited Mali and Ghana. On return from the field, he remarked: “We anticipate that the results of this study will help the Bank’s agriculture specialists and the country teams to improve the Bank’s approach to storing and managing water and ensure the benefits quite literally flow to where they are needed”.

Although OPEV’s work shows that results in the agriculture sector have in the past often been disappointing, it also shows that the prospects are good for greater success in the future.

Colin Kirk
Director, OPEV
Towards Purposeful Partnerships in African Agriculture

Presenting an in-depth evaluation of agriculture and rural development operations in Africa: a timely assessment of relevance, performance, and partnerships

A joint evaluation by the independent evaluation offices of the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) focused on the agencies’ performance in agriculture and rural development (ARD) and on strategic partnerships between IFAD and AfDB and beyond.

The objectives of the evaluation were to:
1. Determine the relevance of ARD policies and operations and assess their performance and impact;
2. Evaluate the strategic partnership between IFAD and AfDB as well as partnerships with other sector stakeholders; and
3. Propose recommendations to enhance the development effectiveness of the two institutions.

The Bank Group’s Agriculture Sector Strategy (AgSS) underscores the need to work in a sharper and smarter way; moving away from multi-component projects. ... The AgSS also emphasizes, as recommended by the Joint Evaluation, purposeful partnerships based on complementarily, comparative advantage and specialization, which will be important in addressing the broad array of rural needs.

Comment:
Mr. Ali Abou Sabaa
Director, AfDB Agriculture Department

For more information on OPEV’s work, please visit www.afdb.org/opev

Key Recommendations
- Address the agriculture policy gap by aligning with the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), supporting national sector policies, and engaging in international advocacy on agriculture trade.
- Help improve lender performance.
- Support borrowers to expand capacity for policy analysis and program management, among others.

Global winds of change for agriculture in Africa

The changing context and prospects for agricultural and rural development in Africa

In this background paper on the evaluation, Hans P. Binnewijzer-Mkhize and Alex McCalla draw attention to the global winds of change sweeping across Africa. They document trends in African ARD in the last 25 years, identify key opportunities for and challenges to improving agricultural growth, promoting food security, protecting natural resources, and assessing the future implications for the work of the AfDB and IFAD in Africa.

Leadership ...
The evaluation underscores opportunities and challenges for ARD in Africa. It highlights the importance of African leadership in developing clear sector policies and strong institutions in the sector.

... and strategy
The AfDB drew on the evaluation in developing its new agriculture strategy, which was reviewed and adopted by the Board in February 2010.

For more information on OPEV’s work, please visit www.afdb.org/opev

We welcome your feedback. Please write to us at: opevhelpdesk@afdb.org