

Human resources development

The Proposition

In many developing countries, there is a mismatch between the technical and managerial requirements of the agro-industrial sector and the quality and content of professional education at all levels. This misalignment must be corrected if competitive agro-industries are to be developed.

The rationale and proposed response

The competitive dynamics of the agro-industrial sector have resulted in an unprecedented need for specialized professional competencies (knowledge and skill). Indeed, the level and magnitude of professional expertise that is available to agro-industrial enterprises now largely determines their position within the sector's increasingly globalized value chains.

The education systems of most developing countries are not, however, producing sufficient numbers of graduates with the skills required to meet the technical and competitive challenges posed by a rapidly evolving agro-industrial sector.

Given the overall resource constraints of developing countries, a more strategic response is called for to address this crucial constraint to the development of competitive agro-industries.

The focus of such a response must be:

- The fostering of greater interaction among policy-makers, academic, training and research institutions, and the private sector;
- The upgrading of both curricula and education delivery; and
- The coordination of educational and research programmes that address directly the specific human resource requirements of the agro-industrial sector.

There are successful and replicable examples of such a response.

Focus of the debate

1 What are the key areas of professional training required to sustain a competitive agro-industrial sector and what are the most critical competency gaps faced by developing and transition economies? Where do the critical "misalignments" exist in developing countries?

2 Should public policy prioritize the training of a few highly qualified professionals or opt to develop the skills and capacities of a large number of individuals at a lower level? What are the risks and benefits of pursuing either avenue?

3 Given overall resource limitations, would a cross-country regional approach to developing requisite specialized competencies be preferred over national approaches? What has been the experience of such regional educational initiatives and what lessons can be drawn for the agro-industrial sector?

4 What types of partnerships need to be developed between academic institutions, research centres, and private sector associations representing agro-industries? What are the more relevant examples of such partnerships? What lessons can be drawn by policy-makers? What is and what should be the role of public policy in the promotion, facilitation and coordination of such partnerships?

5 What are the institutional implications of coordinating a relevant national response to the challenge of human resource development in agro-industry?



Photo: ©UNIDO

Claudio de Moura Castro is the president of the Advisory Council of Faculdade Pitágoras, Brazil. His research focuses on labor markets, social and economic aspects of education, vocational training and science and technology policies. He has authored/co-authored more than thirty books and approximately three hundred scholarly articles in these subject areas. He has taught at universities in Brazil, the United States, Switzerland and France and has held key positions in the Program of Joint Studies of Latin American Economic Integration, the Brazilian Agency for Postgraduate Education and the Brazilian Social Policy Institute of the Planning Secretariat. He has also held senior positions at the International Labour Office and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). He holds a doctorate in Economics.



Emma Oriwedu is a Human Resource Development specialist with over fifteen years experience in the management of training, the development and management of grassroots organisations, in community mobilization, gender and development issues and micro-enterprise finance and management. From 1990 to 2000 she successfully managed the Training and Grassroots Organization Development components of two projects resulting in the organization and training of 3600 small-scale women entrepreneurs in business management and the training and preparation of over 5000 farmer groups for financial assistance in over 1500 communities in Ghana. She has provided capacity building and impact assessment for such institutions as IFAD, government Ministries, the US African Development Fund in Liberia and FAO.

Raul Espinal is the Academic Dean of Zamorano University, a private international, non-profit university based in Honduras. As former chairman and currently active professor in the Food Science and Technology Department, he led an international program targeted to building the technical capacities of professionals in food science and technology. Mr Espinal has coordinated and planned diverse training activities in the areas of quality and food safety for rural agro industries and exports, new product development, innovation and competitiveness. He was professor in the area of food grains science and technology with extensive research on this topic resulting in more than a dozen publications including training manuals on food issues.



Colin Dennis is Director-General of the Campden & Chorleywood Food Research Association Group (CCFRA) in Gloucestershire, UK. He previously worked for the Institute of Food Research, including a period at the Norwegian Food Research Institute. He has extensive experience in food research and in senior management of an industry focused Research and Technology organisation providing multidisciplinary scientific and technical support to large, medium and small companies and governments. He is a Fellow of the International Academy of Food Science and Technology and is Chair of the Scientific Council of the International Union of Food Science and Technology and Chair of the Technical Programme Committee of the 14th World Congress of Food Science and Technology.

Moderator: Rosa Rolle is an Agricultural Industries Officer in the Agricultural and Food Engineering Technologies Service of FAO's Rural Infrastructure and Agro-Industries Division. She works in food biotechnology, coconut water preservation, post-harvest systems development and food packaging. Since 2006, Rosa has been actively involved with the development, design and implementation of capacity building programmes on horticultural chain management. Prior to joining FAO, Rosa conducted post-doctoral work at the University of Florida and worked as a consultant to the Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica. Rosa has MSc and Ph.D degrees in food science and a Higher National Diploma in applied chemistry. In 2003, she was recognised as an outstanding international alumna of Ohio State University's College of Food, Agriculture and Environmental Sciences.

