



## Evaluation of Montpellier Panel Report

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<b>Date:</b>	April 2011
<b>Version:</b>	1.0 – FINAL



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## 1. Executive summary

In late 2010 Agriculture for Impact organised five events in London, Brussels, Kampala, Montpellier and Paris to launch the Montpellier Panel Report. Firetail were commissioned to evaluate of this work programme and, between December 2010 and March 2011, conducted 33 interviews with stakeholders who had attended these events.

This evaluation is an analysis of the findings from those discussions.

The Montpellier Panel Report is welcomed by its stakeholders, from different countries and across sectors. During the course of this evaluation, we spoke to representatives of national governments and diplomatic services, the European Commission, NGOs, researchers, practitioners, academia and the press. Despite this diversity of stakeholders, the majority endorses the content of the report. It is felt to present a general consensus of views about the current state of the agricultural development sector.

There is a shared sense that agricultural development continues to be of fundamental importance in Sub-Saharan Africa and that it deserves to be higher up the agenda among European governments. It is considered essential that the international spotlight shines on work already being delivered in this area, especially regarding national strategies, and on the need for increased, targeted support.

There is a strong desire for change. Interviewees were keen that policymakers made progress on the issues raised by the Panel. It is in this context that the strongest criticisms of the report should be understood. The first major concern is that the document's recommendations lack strength, clarity and direction. Stakeholders in the UK, Africa and France feel that indicators, milestones and clear designation of responsibilities should be communicated more strongly so as to maximise the report's potential impact with policy makers and politicians.

The other major concern was whether the Panel report moves the debate forwards. Stakeholders' feel that where consensus exists in the sector the document reflects this, but where issues were more contentious, it does not generate strong conclusions necessary to take the debate to the next level. Price volatility and climate change are repeatedly cited in this context, but acknowledged as sensitive and complex issues.

Broadly speaking, participants engage with the document and feel it has the potential to have a considerable impact. Many have disseminated the document among colleagues, board members, partners and other associates but describe the need for a campaign strategy and more active advocacy if the report is to have a tangible impact on shaping policy.

Stakeholders consider the panel has a strong platform from which to develop and deliver a campaign and feel strongly that this should happen. In their minds the Panel has a number of strong assets: a group of leading and reputed experts with strong personal networks; a contemporary and potentially powerful way of working; and the opportunity presented by a potentially pivotal point in the history of the sector. The timing is important, as the forthcoming G20 summit will be addressing issues linked to the report. In addition, recent food crises have highlighted global nature of agricultural issues and governments in France, Africa, the US and the European Commission have made commitments to address these issues.

Stakeholders with a broader perspective on development issues feel that it is essential for the report to push agriculture as a priority within development, especially in the UK where other issues are perceived to be taking precedence. In order to do this it is important to engage with a wider range of decision makers to ensure that the Panel moves away from 'preaching to the converted'. As there is no clear campaign strategy for this work it is not clear to what extent this was a prior objective for the work, but it does present an opportunity. The Panel has the chance to have an impact beyond validating the efforts of those already committed to this agenda.

In considering immediate next steps it is clear that through publishing, launching and evaluating this work the Montpellier Panel has created a network of champions in the countries which hosted the five events and beyond. Harnessing this interest and keeping these champions engaged will determine the success of this and future work phases.

In summary, the Montpellier Panel and the report produced by this group command much support from a diverse range of stakeholders in the EU, Africa and beyond. For most, the report effectively and valuably synthesises a complex range of issues and presents a series of recommendations with which most broadly agree. It has been disseminated among a wide audience, many of whom have taken the report and shared it among their colleagues and networks. While the evaluation cannot accurately quantify who has and who has not been made aware of the report the evaluation indicates that some government Ministers in France and Africa are aware of it and that a range of other agencies have engaged with it.

In terms of impact, the Montpellier Panel report has not yet achieved its full potential. The evaluation highlights factors which the Montpellier Panel and Agriculture for Impact may wish to consider as it develops this and future work programmes.

**Country differences:**

There was much consensus among stakeholders who attended the events in the four different countries, however some subtle differences of opinion emerge which largely relate to the different contexts in which the report is received:

**London:** A sentiment that agriculture is not firmly on the radar of Government ministers as other development issues take precedence. There is a sense that spending cuts make the challenge of moving agriculture up the agenda harder. Stakeholders are keen to see stronger, clearer recommendations spelling out the steps that Ministers should take.

**Brussels:** Participants expect the report to be greeted with open arms in Brussels. There is thought to be a strong support for agricultural development in Africa backed by high level advocates. Participants stress the value of the international approach adopted by the panel and in general are happy with the report's recommendations.

**Kampala:** Those who attended the Kampala launch are less engaged with the Montpellier Panel work programme than those from the other events. This is linked to a general perception that although the report is of relevance and importance to their work that the document is largely targeted at donor countries.

**France:** Stakeholders feel that the report chimes with their Government's position on these issues. While there are a number of strong champions of the panel and the report its content and recommendations are closely scrutinised by these stakeholders and some express disappointment at the quality of the output.

## 2. Approach and limitations

### 2.1. Evaluation objectives

Agriculture for Impact is an independent initiative led by Professor Sir Gordon Conway, based in the Centre for Environmental Policy, Imperial College London, with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. It seeks more and better European government support for agricultural development in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In 2010 the Montpellier Panel was convened. Chaired by Gordon Conway of Agriculture for Impact the Panel consists of ten experts from the fields of agriculture, sustainable development, trade, policy, and global development. The Panel worked together to produce the report *“Africa and Europe: Partnerships for Agricultural Development, The Montpellier Panel”* which provides an overview of the state of European investment in African agriculture, highlights African priorities in agriculture and nutrition, and makes recommendations for ensuring global food price stability and strengthening partnerships between Europe and Africa.<sup>1</sup>

In late 2010 Agriculture for Impact organised five events in Europe and Africa to launch the Montpellier Panel Report. These events took place in London, Brussels, Kampala, Montpellier and Paris and were attended by a range of stakeholders.

The broad objectives of this stage of the advocacy evaluation are to explore views among these stakeholders on the following areas:

- What is said in the report in terms of the issues it raises?
- Provenance of the Panel report and how this document compares to information that is normally solicited to guide policy
- The quality of the arguments and the digestibility of the report
- Levels of agreement/disagreement with the arguments presented and the report’s recommendations
- Stakeholders’ propensity to act on these recommendations.
- The context of key policy issues on their agendas and how the panel report sits within this policy context

### 2.2. Evaluation approach

To understand the impact of the Montpellier Panel Report we conducted 33 in-depth interviews with stakeholders who attended the various events. The table over denotes the number of interviews conducted for each launch event:

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<sup>1</sup><http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/africanagriculturaldevelopment>

Launch	No. of interviews
London	9
Brussels	9
Kampala	7
France	
<i>Montpellier</i>	x 3
<i>Paris</i>	x 5
<i>Both</i>	x 1

Within the sample of those interviewed we were keen to engage with a broad range of respondents; interviewees represented a range of sectors including:

- National governments (and within these a number of different government departments)
- European Commission
- NGOs
- National and international public bodies (including research bodies/networks)
- Private sector and independent consultants
- Academia
- Press
- Diplomatic services

It should be noted that among those interviewed who attended the French launches were two US stakeholders. To ensure these interviewees' anonymity we have incorporated their feedback with others who attended the French launches.

The launch events took place between October 26<sup>th</sup> and December 2<sup>nd</sup> and the evaluation interviews ran from December 10<sup>th</sup> 2010 to March 17<sup>th</sup> 2011.

The majority of interviews were conducted over the telephone. Discussions followed a semi – structured discussion guide which is appended to the end of this document. In terms of approach it should be noted that several of the interviews were conducted in French and a number of attendees from the Kampala launch sent email submissions outlining their views on the report.

This report details the findings from the interviews conducted. For each section we provide an overview of opinions expressed then, in the relevant boxed sections, refer to any key differences expressed by or issues relating to specific audiences within the sample.

## 2.3. Limitations

We have conducted a broad review of stakeholders involved in the Montpellier Panel programme and that this evaluation has a strong evidence base. The limitations to this evaluation are common to all qualitative campaign evaluations:

- **Limited access to interviewees.** Due to limitations in interviewees' availability and resources for this evaluation, it has not been possible to engage with all stakeholders. As a result, inevitably some points of view may be excluded. Overall the launch events were attended by a large number of stakeholders working in a diverse range of sectors and roles, the majority of whom would have a perspective on the report.
- **Confidentiality.** To ensure the evaluation is based on frank and open feedback from launch attendees we committed to respecting respondents' anonymity. Comments made in the interviews are therefore not attributed to individuals in this report and we avoid including direct comments which would enable an individual to be identified.
- **Quantifying data.** With a qualitative exercise of this kind we do not quantify how many people share specific views, throughout the report we offer a guide as whether the views expressed are shared by the majority or a group of interviews. Equally, we consider it important to include some specific comments voiced by just one or two individuals as these often add to our detailed understanding and the richness of the evaluation. Where comments are voiced in just one interview this is noted in the document.

### 3. Context of the report

#### 3.1. Perceptions of the Montpellier Panel

Among those interviewed there is significant variation in people's proximity to the Montpellier Panel. A number of those interviewed in London, France and Brussels have worked closely with or have at least previously encountered Professor Conway and other panelists and have some understanding, albeit to varying degrees, of the origins and role of the panel. Those interviewed in Africa are generally more distanced from individual panelists and have less unprompted understanding of the panel.

Regardless of this, respondents convey much goodwill towards the Panel. The overwhelming majority of those interviewed feel that those appointed to the panel are authoritative, credible and leading experts. This provides them with a strong and legitimate platform from which to communicate on issues around agricultural development in sub-Saharan Africa. Those more familiar with the Panel suggest they have the power to exert real influence; they combine extensive expertise, strong personal networks and access to decision makers.

**UK launch attendee:** *"I have to admit I don't know a huge amount about them [Montpellier Panel or Agriculture for Impact] but they seem to have assembled some pretty impressive names. What they say should carry an appropriate amount of gravitas to be taken seriously...that's got to be welcomed."*

**UK launch attendee:** *"Gordon Conway's got the reputation. People take what he says seriously and he's seen as a relatively independent figure. Within the agriculture community he is trusted to say what he believes and what he believes tends to be pretty well founded."*

**Brussels launch attendee:** *"The people in the panel are very very knowledgeable people and appreciated from many different corners."*

**French launch attendee:** *"It is very important that this would appear as an expert panel not as a collection of institutions represented by person 1 or 2 of such and such organisations. When we see the names they are people with strategic vision and this is very important..."*

**French launch attendee:** *"A panel with such a prestigious composition stating a position that we can show to our decision makers. It gives some weight to those arguments."*

**Kampala launch attendee:** *"The panel looks a bit slanted to the European membership. More African representation would be recommended. Panel members qualifications and experience is not given in the report to assess their credibility and authoritativeness"*

The working model used in the development of the Montpellier Panel Report draws much praise and enthusiasm. Bringing together a diverse group of international experts to tackle these international issues is considered an intelligent, contemporary and potentially powerful approach. The majority of those interviewed do not view it as important for the Panel to be closely aligned to an associated organisation though those who were aware of the link to Agriculture for Impact and Imperial College feel these links can only enhance the credibility of

the work. Some feel that it is precisely because there is not a strong link to a lead organisation that the panel has strength in its independence.

A number of participants in different countries seem interested in the origins, role and remit of the Montpellier Panel. There is a sense that better communication of this may have had a positive impact on how stakeholders receive the report. As one UK interviewee explains:

**UK launch attendee:** *“It seems to have appeared out of nowhere...”*

It is deemed essential for the Panel to comprise a good mix of Northern and Southern voices to ensure the group draws on the necessary range of experience and expertise. Respondents judge the make-up of the Panel to be broadly appropriate with regards to this North/South mix and in terms of other attributes, which they consider should be represented in a group of this kind.

However, it is also important to note that the Montpellier Panel is viewed as largely comprising representatives from the agriculture sector and that both the report and launch events the panel contributed to targeted others within this sector. For some senior figures interviewed the major challenge for the panel is in moving agriculture up the list of priorities within the wider development sector. Active involvement from experts who work across development sectors is therefore considered key, as one UK stakeholder notes:

**UK launch attendee:** *“They are good people [on the Panel] but they came at this from a certain angle. There were no Nobel Prize winners. Also, they all came from the sector. Where was the Paul Collier figure, for example?”*

When asked if they have any other suggested improvements to the composition of the Panel, interviewees collectively generate the following suggestions (though it should be noted that the majority of these are mentioned by just one or two individuals):

- One UK respondent would have liked to see the inclusion of someone *“who could pick up on EU internal issues”*
- Another UK stakeholder feels that grass roots Southern voices are not adequately represented within the Panel and as such it risks remaining a ‘top down’ model
- One Brussels respondent would like to see another Southern Panelist with greater experience in a senior official role in Africa (i.e. within economic institutions or having held a senior post in government)
- One Kampala stakeholder feels there is a slight European bias in the panel while a French interviewee comments that they would like to have seen more African women involved
- While one of the French stakeholders feels there is a slight bias towards research. Another from Kampala feels there is not enough focus on Higher Education or Technology

**Brussels launch attendee:** *“This is a very credible group but I would like to see some prominent African figures. It may be good to see someone who has some high level experience in the African institutions like regional economic organisations or experience in government – that is very important.”*

A small number of those interviewed in Brussels and London (2 in total) appear have reservations over the role of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in this work. There is some sense that funding from the Foundation represents private investment and questions therefore arise around motives behind this funding though no alternatives were suggested.

**Audience specific themes and differences:**

*French launches attendees:*

Several praise the panel for drawing together a group of actual experts, not simply a group of representatives from different organisations. It is considered a positive decision to involve only a limited number of people; this is perceived to give the panel identity and authority. A number question whether the panel had long enough to work together and fully develop their arguments in order to achieve meaningful consensus.

*Kampala launch attendees:*

Among this group there is generally less understanding of the role of the Panel and who its members are. To a degree their understanding appears blurred by the broader context of the higher education conference at which the launch took place. There was also less spontaneous mention of individual panelists than in other interviews.

*Brussels launch attendees:*

Respondents in this group stress the value of the transnational nature of the team as one that can bridge the gap between EU and US. It is perceived to be of key importance that this document has not originated in just one member state.

### **3.2. Context in which the report is received**

While there is some variation in exactly how the Montpellier Panel Report is perceived and received there is an overriding sense that it represents a timely piece of work which broadly sits with personal, institutional and national thinking.

Interviewees from all events stress that the report is part of a movement which is seeking to address agricultural development and associated issues in Africa and beyond. The majority of those interviewed feel that this movement is gathering pace and is impacting on policy development in their respective Governments as well as at EU level. Plans for these issues to be a focus of the upcoming G20 is perceived to be a clear indication of the importance the international community places upon tackling some of the issues raised in the Montpellier Panel report.

Where the importance of agricultural development is undisputed, many interviewees feel that the Montpellier Panel Report provides a useful synthesis of a complex range of issues as well as a strong validation of work currently been undertaken and an impetus to continue with such work.

Stakeholders note that the Montpellier Programme represents one of many groups producing documents, encouraging debate and convening events around these issues. In this context it may be challenging for the Montpellier Panel Report to stand out and be recognised on its own merits though a number do feel that the working model adopted and quality of the

document does make this possible. A small number of interviewees also express frustration that the report is being introduced into an already saturated sector with more respondents expressing general disappointment at a perceived lack of tangible improvement despite the scale of efforts to address agricultural development. As one interviewee from Brussels explains:

**Brussels launch attendee:** *"There are too many approaches for the rural development of Africa from the 80s up to now. Too many programmes. How can we make sure that the position of the Montpellier Panel will not end up like the recommendations of other organisations? In Africa the problem is not the lack of ideas or recommendations. Something is missing because there is not a connection between the goodwill within the international organisation, the process by the local government to work with these international organisations and the realities in the rural areas."*

#### **Audience specific themes and differences:**

##### *UK launch attendees:*

While the EU and national governments in France and Africa are generally perceived to recognise the importance of agriculture issues and are developing policies to address them, some feel that agricultural development is not securely on the agenda of Government ministers in the UK. Other development issues such as maternal health, nutrition and Malaria are perceived to have taken precedence. This is attributed to the clearer investment cases in these areas, backed up by strong research. Difficulties in securing interest in and commitment to agricultural development are said to be particularly challenging given the current spending cuts, although one interviewee commented that this debate "had been going on for years". It is considered fortunate that the report makes the link to nutrition and food security as these are more salient issues that can hook policy makers' interest:

**UK launch attendee:** *"The focus on nutrition is extremely timely for us in the UK because our ministers at the moment haven't got round to thinking about agriculture but they're thinking about nutrition. We're trying to educate them to make the link... between agricultural development and food security"*

##### *Kampala launch attendees:*

Respondents generally consider the report to be supportive of the work they are doing both at an institutional and governmental level. A number comment how useful it is to sit African issues in a global context and support attempts made to bring together such a wide range of issues and programmes to present a comprehensive picture. Many were keen to describe the new agriculture strategies in their own countries and felt that the report supported their work in this area. However, one respondent asks "why now?" noting that the report seems to represent a change in tone from donor countries and questions what is driving this change.

##### *Brussels launch attendees:*

Interviewees feel that the report will be welcomed with open arms within the European Union. These issues are already high on the political agenda, forming the basis of much debate and

policy development. The new Commissioner is perceived to have a strong interest in rural development and to be championing related issues.

**Brussels launch attendee:** *“What they [Montpellier Panel] were saying fits in with the discussion that is taking place within the European Union at the moment. It wasn’t talked about for a long time but I’d say that over the last year rural development has come to the fore a lot more. For [Commissioner] Piebalgs it is definitely one of his subjects along with renewable energy. It is really prominent and it really helps poor people.”*

*French launches attendees:*

There is a firm belief among many of those interviewed that the French Government is strongly committed to supporting agricultural development in line with recommendations made in the Montpellier Panel Report.

### 3.3. Feedback on the launch events

While a formal evaluation of the actual launch events sits outside the remit of this study, several helpful comments were made about these during interviews with stakeholders. The perspectives, which are outlined below, should assist the Montpellier Panel/Agriculture for Impact in the development of future events.

Participants feel that many of the events were well attended and there is agreement that holding launch events in the different locations was an effective way to encourage engagement. However there are some general concerns that the launch events did not reach their full potential. Criticism largely centres around the profile of attendees and stakeholders from most launches readily identify ‘notable absentees.’ References are also made to the quality of the execution of several events noting, for example, that the process of inviting attendees appeared to lack strategy and structure; a number of key stakeholders explain that they found out about the event at the last minute or through colleagues rather than receiving direct invitations themselves. A couple of participants also note that for many attendees the invitation to the launch was the first that they had heard of the report. As a result they were unable to appreciate the wider context or automatically accord the report the importance which, with closer engagement with the process, they came to see it warrants.

Many stakeholders also refer to external factors, beyond the control of the Montpellier Panel/AfI which are said to have had a negative impact on several of the events; weather, ill health and venue problems are cited in this context.

A number of comments relating to the individual events are outlined in the grid below:

London	Brussels	Kampala	Montpellier	Paris
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Well attended but lack of representation from a broad enough mix of senior decision makers, though participation from DfID was good</li> <li>- Room was</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unfortunate that some panelists were unable to attend due to the snow</li> <li>- Disappointment at the ‘poor’ turn out from key EC figures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Confusion about the Montpellier Panel in the context of the broader HE conference it was part of</li> <li>- Though one does recall strong interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Well attended but those present were (often junior) researchers / academics rather than policy makers</li> <li>- Positive that there was lively interaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Blighted by exceptional weather conditions which meant key figures could not participate and AfI team had to leave straight after the presentations</li> </ul>

uncomfortably cramped as a result of the venue change and this limited how well people could engage  - Sense that the launch did not spell out the next steps for policy makers	- Lack of representation from African Ambassadors and NGOs	and a 'scramble' for copies of the report	after the presentations  - Unfortunate that Professor Conway was not able to participate fully	- Really positive that US Govt were able to take part in the event  - Well attended but lack of engagement with senior policy makers so event was largely preaching to the converted  - Praise for the venue which helped the event to stand out
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## 4. Views on the Montpellier Panel Report

### 4.1. The role of the report

For those interviewed, the Montpellier Panel Report serves a number of valuable roles. Many refer to it as a useful and broadly comprehensive synthesis of a complex range of issues facing agricultural development in Sub-Saharan Africa. A number regard it as a validation of work currently been undertaken and an impetus to continue with such work; there is a strong sense that issues compete for societal and political attention and that any work which emphasizes the ongoing importance of those outlined in this report are welcomed.

**UK launch attendee:** *"It has been pretty grisly and, as the report points out, we've seen funding for agriculture plummet. There has been a slight turn around but it has been pretty slow so anything that puts a spotlight on that... ensuring that some of the mistakes of the past should not be repeated. There's a need to keep up the pressure."*

**French launch attendee:** *"It's always good to have a report to validate what you are doing and to bring attention to what needs to be done."*

Most note that the ultimate goal for this report is to influence policy makers. The majority feel that if it is positioned and communicated effectively the report has the potential, alongside other reports on these issues, to achieve this and push understanding of and commitment to agricultural development.

**UK launch attendee:** *"I see it as an advocacy report, not an evidence report"*

**UK launch attendee:** *"It's got the right people. It's got the right names attached to it. It is a well-researched document. It should have everything it needs to make a considerable impact."*

### 4.2. Quality of the report content

Despite the diversity of stakeholders interviewed and the wide range of contexts in which they work, participants broadly endorse the content of the report. For the majority it represents, in broad terms, the consensus about the current state of the agricultural development sector.

There is little, if anything, in the report that they or the organisations they represent would take issue with. There are a number of exceptions but most feel that while the report does not generally provide new insight, it outlines views which they share and effectively brings together the important issues relating to agricultural development; it presents a powerful summary rather than seeking to provide detailed analysis of each of these complex issues.

**UK launch attendee:** *“It all feels very sensible. I think that broadly speaking it's a really good report.”*

**French launch attendee:** *“We are comfortable with the vision. Yes, for sure. There is no doubt on that.”*

Several participants feel that this report stands out as one, which takes a stance and does not shy away from criticising what has not worked in the past. Others comment that they feel the report successfully presents arguments that are backed up by robust evidence.

**UK launch attendee:** *“It compares favorably because it's not afraid of criticising what has gone before. Too often NGOs produce a report which is so desperate to see the bad side in everything that they fail to take account of the positive story. This seems to take a pretty balanced account of how the situation can be improved.”*

**Brussels launch attendee:** *“I think it's serious research with depth of knowledge. You often go to NGO things and the information you get there is a bit cursory, a bit political, but it is clear that they have a very good grasp of these issues. What impressed me most was the range of people who had been involved and the quality of research – that's quite unusual in Brussels.”*

**French launch attendee:** *“I thought the report was advocating something. It is not a neutral exposé of issues, it is taking a stand. It is not that the information or reflections included in the report are of a completely new nature and it is not going to revolutionise the way we think...but it is a good overview of those complicated issues.”*

**Kampala launch attendee:** *“I like the content of the document very much, I like the very strong statistics given. There has been a big effort on getting the right information...but I was disappointed that there was almost nothing said about education.”*

The strongest criticism levied at the report is that its recommendations lacking strength, clarity and direction. Some interviewees in the UK, Africa and France say these should include indicators, next steps, milestones and attribute responsibility for delivering the recommendations to specific agencies. There is strong concern that without incorporating these elements geared at achieving tangible change, the potential impact for politicians and policy makers will remain limited. Another respondent is critical of the proposed increase in investment outlined as a recommendation in the report saying that this target is far too low.

**UK launch attendee:** *“Politicians can ask for things. When they read a report like this they need to take away the three big things that need to be done. This can form the basis of a question in parliament, or something like that. This report didn't really have that.”*

**French launch attendee:** *“I was disappointed when I saw the content of the report. He managed to put together a very impressive panel... so I was expecting a lot from such an impressive panel then I saw their work...Some of the recommendations and results were sometimes trivial...somewhat superficial. I believe the differences in views could have been reconciled if they had spent more time together.”*

Some stakeholders also express concern that certain key issues in the report are not covered in sufficient detail or are poorly developed. The arguments presented relating to price volatility and climate change are considered vague and inconclusive. Several of those interviewed feel that this links to a general concern about the document; they say that where there is consensus within the sector the document reports this but where there is disagreement within and between sectors, it does not generate the strong conclusions necessary to take the debate to the next level. With regards to price volatility, for example, there is much understanding of the complexities and debate surrounding this issue, even some understanding (notably among several interviewees from France and Belgium) that finding consensus among the Panel on this issue had been challenging. However it is felt that the report does not help to move this issue on. In this light some question whether the report has helped to create or merely reflected the consensus of opinion.

In the course of the interviews we heard a range of criticisms of other issues which respondents perceive to have been ‘neglected’ or treated too lightly. Many of these relate to the issues which are most important for stakeholders in their roles and for the organisations they represent. The table below illustrates the breadth of concerns voiced in the report and in which countries these are mentioned. Please note that issues in italics are raised by just one or two interviewees while others are heard more frequently:

**Table 1: Potential areas for improvement / Areas not covered**

What is perceived to be missing/ not adequately	UK	Brussel	Kampala	France
Clarity and strength of recommendations/inclusion of an action plan	√		√	√
Price volatility	√	√		√
Climate change	√	√		√
Capacity building (esp. focus on education, ensuring support, conditions and infrastructure are in place to retain PHD students, encouraging entrepreneurship)	√	√	√	√
Steps needed to improve coordination of partnership working (and to ensure all regions are being supported)	√	√	√	√
Detailed analysis of financial mechanisms required to support agricultural development (exploring market structure, linking farmers to markets, role of consumers)	√	√		√
Gearing research to impact and need (more effective work with local stakeholders, more focus on extension work, more evidence to underpin the case for investment)	√	√	√	√

Reasons for different regions and their populations to support the implementation of these recommendations (e.g. for European Citizens: the potential benefit of alleviating pressure on European land resources)	√			√
Developing community resilience. (e.g. how to encourage young people to stay in their communities, recognising the importance of supporting the use of meteorological services, irrigation, curbing of postharvest losses, pests, diseases)	√	√	√	√
Land tenure	√			√
Focus on technology	√		√	√
<i>Too little focus on gender issues (including supporting African women to develop their own solutions to challenges facing their communities)</i>	√			√
Emphasis on benefit of and need for research to underpin use of a more diverse range of crops (e.g potential for tuber crops, fruit plants etc)		√		√
Mention of the range of programmes and agencies already working on these issues	√	√	√	√
Greater focus on CAADP with more explicit links to implementation of the recommendations		√		
<i>Too much focus on CAADP</i>	√			
Address sustainability of funding		√	√	
<i>More discussion of the role the private sector can play in delivering positive change</i>	√	√		

In addition to the specific suggestions outlined in the grid, a number of interviewees raise a more general concern that the report does not fit with the reality on the ground in Africa. It is in this light, for example, that a number of respondents question how the report deals with CAADP; they stress that the report does not reflect that fact that for many in Africa this is their focus as one attendee from the Brussels launch explains:

**Brussels launch attendee:** *“The interesting thing about this report is it is talking about Africa and one of its major international partners: Europe...this is very welcome but it needs updating to make it really useful. Basically the report mentions CAADP but I think that ...there should be more emphasis on its implementation. What I mean is every one of the interventions we propose is this report should be geared around the actual implementation of the main preoccupation of the African Union which is CAADP.”*

It is also noted by several respondents that land tenure is a much larger issue facing people in Africa than indicated in the document. One respondent explains that from a corporate perspective Africa is still far from being ‘open for business’ in terms of infrastructure and this requires more attention in the report.

A couple of interviewees feel that there needs to be a general acknowledgment that Africa is different to Europe and therefore requires different solutions; it is perceived to shy away from this at present. This links to a criticism of the report’s tone which is levied by some who feel that in some areas it adopts a ‘one size fits all’ approach to addressing agricultural

development. With regards to upscaling, for example, a couple of participants feel the report should go further to explain that because an approach or initiative works well in one community it does not mean it can be automatically and successfully replicated in another (where conditions may vary in terms of infrastructure, climate, financial structures.)

#### **Audience specific themes and differences:**

##### *UK launch attendees:*

While there is broad support for the content of the report a number of respondents criticise a perceived lack of clarity on clear and actionable next steps. They call for more definite and ambitious recommendations and clearer directions to policy makers in terms of what they need to do to deliver these. They specify that recommendations should be linked to next steps, milestones, indicators and the allocation of responsibilities to specific bodies, a sentiment shared in particular by elected and senior Governmental officials otherwise keen to advocate on behalf of AFI.

**UK launch attendee:** *“I think it is weakest is when you get to the end and wonder are these recommendations? What's going to happen now? Is there any real meat in this? It talks about some of the policy challenges but I would have liked something a bit harder”*

##### *Kampala launch attendees:*

Respondents are generally positive about the content of the report, as they see it supporting and reinforcing their work. They are especially positive about the focus on research, national strategies and improving Africa-European partnerships. However, some respondents do not seem to have engaged with the detail of the policy in the way that those in donor countries have. This appears to stem from the fact that these respondents have more of an academic/research focus rather than policy/advocacy roles and, as such, the report is complimentary rather than integral to their work. Many offer broad endorsement with just a couple identifying areas which they feel require closer scrutiny. A couple do, however, focus on the need for the report to be accompanied by a clear action plan stressing that the report is only of value if it delivers tangible change and concerns are also voiced about a lack of focus on capacity building.

**Kampala launch attendee** *“What worries me is where is the operations plan? Where is this going to go?”*

##### *Brussels launch attendees:*

These stakeholders are less likely than others to criticise the report and its recommendations for lacking clarity and detail though some mention issues which they would like to see developed more fully.

##### *French launches attendees:*

Opinion on the merits of the report's content is most polarised in France; around half the interviewees feel the document has the potential to fulfill its intended role while others feel that the content will hamper its impact and raise numerous issues which they feel are missing or

are not well developed. Stakeholders appear to scrutinise the content more closely than other audiences with a number saying that It does not stand out from other documents. They question what the report is going to be measured against and a couple feel the report lacks the intellectual rigour expected from a group of experts of this caliber.

### 4.3. Quality of the document

Stakeholders regard the Montpellier Panel Report as a quality document which compares favorably to others published within the sector. Many feel that as a tool it has the attributes required for senior policy makers to make use of it; there is praise among all audiences for the production of what they perceive to be a succinct and user-friendly report. Many comment that it is helpful to have the executive summary available when this is underpinned by a more substantial report.

A small number of those interviewed explain that their preference would be for a full report which is more comprehensive still including more detailed information, data and references. Others feel that the document does not set out to present this level of detail and are concerned that decision makers would be unlikely to read a lengthier document.

A range of positive comments were made about the presentation of the material in the document which is said to be:

- Well formatted
  - Clear and helpful presentation of data
  - Include a clear introduction to panelists
  - Well written including the use of some catchy phrases
  - Make good uses of boxes and case studies
  - A couple of participants also say how positive it is that the document is available in translation
- **French launch attendee:** *"There were some good phrases in there. The "virtuous cycle of agricultural development" is one which I've poached a couple of times and cited, of course".*

A number of interviewees had suggestions for how the document could be further improved although it should be noted that each of these comments were made by just one or two interviewees:

- Ensuring that the relevant website(s) are clearly visible for readers who want to research the Montpellier Panel in more detail
- More intertextual references to give the report greater credibility
- More detail on panelists' background and qualifications
- Include some images

- Production of an even shorter executive summary (1 or 2 pages) which could make it more accessible to policy makers

**Brussels launch attendee:** *"I would give it an 8+ in comparison to the other documents I get. It really is very good; it has graphics, foot notes. If anything I'd say maybe there are some pictures missing..."*

## 5. Current use and anticipated impact of the document

### 5.1. Current use

Attendees from the different launch events cite examples of how they and their colleagues are using the Montpellier Panel Report at present, both to inform their work and to ensure that the

content of the report is shared and understood among a wider audience. In the grid below we list some examples of how the document is being used. It is worth noting that it is difficult to form an accurate judgment of how widely the report has been disseminated beyond the examples cited above. We know, for example, that one organisation has shared it with several hundred of its members, some of whom may well have shared it with others. Similarly we understand the chairperson of another organisation has taken a copy of the report to meetings with African ministers. While we could not attempt to quantify this secondary dissemination it is safe to assume that the document has been shared more widely than we are able to judge solely on the basis of the interviews conducted to date.

**Table 2: Current use of the Montpellier Panel Report**

*(It is important to note that with the exception of examples listed in bold, this information generally relates to comments made by one or two stakeholders in each group)*

	UK	Brussels	Kampala	France
In the preparation of documents (briefings, speeches etc.)	√	√		√
<b>Internal dissemination among colleagues/ board members/ members</b>	√	√	√	√
<b>Dissemination and discussion in networks/ committees which interviewees sit on</b>	√	√	√	√
Using the document as a reference work in their roles when developing policies/work plans	√	√	√	
Cable to govt officials (including ministers) following event				√
Basis of a question and ensuing debate in parliament	√			
In preparing a story for the press		√		

**Brussels launch stakeholder:** *“I’ll refer to it as a document coming from an expert panel and quote some of the opinions in it. It’s on my desk - it’s not a report I’ve immediately put away. When I write a speech or a policy paper then I can refer to certain aspects. I used it as part of a presentation I did...”*

**Kampala launch stakeholder:** *“We didn’t know that some of the programmes in the document existed at all, like the World Bank food security programme...Among national Governments there can be a lack of awareness about what is going on so this document highlights where there are opportunities.”*

**Kampala launch stakeholder:** *I do not directly use the reports. However, I have reported to the minister all about the discussion and the reports so believe he can make use of it.*

**UK launch attendee:** *"I made a point of keeping it in a safe place. It is something I would keep in my briefcase and carry with me."*

**French launch attendee:** *"We've cited it several times and sent it along to a number of people – perhaps 25 to 30 in our department and beyond."*

While the majority of stakeholders feel that the Montpellier Panel Report has the potential to be a 'useful' tool for policy makers, its use to date in actually shaping policy is felt to have been limited; during the evaluation we heard countless examples of how the report has been widely shared but respondents struggle to attribute significant changes to policy to this report. This is largely to be expected among a group of stakeholders who are, for the most part, working in fields directly related to the content of the report and in broad agreement with the arguments it presents. There is a strong sense that the report reinforces and justifies the work people are doing rather than serving as an active tool and as such is viewed by some as a 'nice to have.'

Several stakeholders suggest that they do not feel that the report is part of an ongoing, coherent campaign and that this limits how useful it can be to them in their work; without an understanding of the report's next steps they do not know what concrete objectives they or the organisations they seek to influence should be aiming to meet. For many interviewees the report appeared to 'come out of nowhere'. A number explain that as a result of this they were unable to create a sense of anticipation within in their organisation/sector or to plan for a formal response upon receiving it.

## 5.2. Anticipated impact of the document

While the potential for the Montpellier Panel Report to impact on policy making is considered significant the vast majority of stakeholders interviewed feel that its actual impact has yet to be determined. Stakeholders identify two priorities in ensuring that the report achieves its potential impact. The first centres around a need to take the report out of its 'comfort zone' through convincing policy makers outside the agriculture sector. It is considered important for the report to push agricultural development as a key priority within the broader development agenda, especially in the UK where other issues are perceived to be taking precedence. In order to do this it is considered essential to communicate with a wide range of decision makers ensuring that the Panel moves away from 'preaching to the converted.'

The second priority, which follows on from this and is echoed repeatedly among all audience groups is "*what now?*" According to those interviewed, the potential for this document to result in change can only be achieved through structured and on-going dissemination across relevant roles, sectors and institutions both at a national and international level. Many stress that without a considered and targeted follow up campaign the document will achieve very little; the report itself is regarded as the 'starting block' for such a campaign. Those who have engaged with the launches and report are generally highly supportive of the model and its objectives and are keen to see its potential impact maximised. Interviewees are forthcoming with specific suggestions around how to shape an ongoing campaign; they do not want to see it filed on a shelf as is often perceived to happen to documents of this kind. Several

respondents express a stronger feeling of real frustration that so often work programmes of this kind have no impact on the ground and hope for more from this report.

**Brussels launch attendee:** *"It is a great document....Now it's a matter of ensuring that the relevant decision makers are made aware of it and take it on board to actually implement its recommendations. Only at this point will we be able to measure its impact"*

A number of those interviewed clearly appreciate the challenges facing the Montpellier Panel in working to ensure that the report makes an impact. In general terms the scale and complexities of the issues and diversity of agencies involved represent a challenge in terms of shaping a targeted campaign.

**UK launch attendee:** *"It's very difficult to disseminate these things effectively. There's no right answer. It's hard work!"*

The difficulty of being able to attribute changes in thinking or policy to this report poses a further challenge for the Panel. Their report is very much regarded as part of a wider movement and there is a feeling that its success should be evaluated in this context:

**Brussels launch attendee:** *"It is very difficult to say [what the impact will be] because it is one report out of many to support agricultural development in Africa which is already policy but which is likely to become even more at the heart of policy in the Commission but also in the different member states. It may bear fruit but it is very difficult just to ascribe it to one report. It is one part of a bigger movement. You have so many NGO reports, the FAO, WFP, IFAt, World Bank reports...there are many many pointing in the same direction. You cannot just say this is a landmark report that changes people's thinking".*

### 5.3. Developing an effective campaign

Stakeholders identify a clear need for a campaign plan to take the report forward and they stress that the panel has a strong platform from which to build and execute such a campaign. Much work has been invested in the preliminary stages; the creation of the panel, production of the report and delivery of an international programme of launches. The panel itself comprises a group of reputed and respected experts who have good access to senior policy makers in the EU, Africa and beyond. What is needed now is a plan which draws together and maximises the value of these positive elements.

Ensuring that the report is considered in light of the upcoming G20 summit is regarded as valuable and timely opportunity for this report to achieve real change. Participants would like to see the document communicated with all the Agricultural Ministers who will be attending a pre-summit meeting. Equally, several interviewees mention the FAO and IMF joint submission to the G20 and would like to see Montpellier Panel Report considered by these organisations as they prepare their submissions.

Stakeholders are also keen to ensure that the Montpellier Panel keeps other networks and forums working on agricultural development up to date with the campaign's objectives, particularly those which influence or inform policy making at national and international level. A whole host of such networks are cited throughout the research (some of which are detailed in the box below). A couple of respondents mention the importance of asking organisations to

consider their formal response to documents of this kind; requiring people to commit to a stance encourages a broader level of engagement and can result in organisations undertaking to deliver certain steps to meet recommendations.

A third priority for those interviewed is for Professor Conway and other Panelists to draw on their personal networks, their reputations as experienced and independent experts and to meet with key policy holders at a national and EU level. A number of stakeholders in Africa and Europe communicate the importance of meetings with African Government ministers on these issues so they can draw on the information for policy making and to lever funds from donor organisations, as one UK stakeholder explains:

**UK launch attendee:** *"It would be nice to see this being really actively promoted in Africa, so you have the Ghanaian Minister for Agriculture saying to DfID (or US equivalent) to say I'd like development assistance... to be along the lines of recommendations by the Montpellier report. I think that could be hugely effective."*

Meeting with ministers and policy makers in donor countries to communicate the importance of increased support for agricultural development is also recommended by stakeholders.

#### **Audience specific themes and differences:**

##### *UK launch attendees:*

Stakeholders in the UK are eager to see engagement with a broader range of UK stakeholders; there is a sense that at present the report sits perhaps too comfortably within the agriculture sector. Several mention the need for greater engagement with political figures on the report, perhaps though organising follow up seminars and briefings. A couple of participants talk about the importance of sharing the findings more widely across relevant private and NGO sector organisations respectively.

##### *Kampala launch attendees:*

In general, interviewees are less aware of how the report might be used in their domestic policy contexts, other than to reinforce the importance of national strategies as the key tool for delivering agricultural reform. There is a call for further follow up meetings with Ministers and other high level officials in different African nations. One respondent would like to see the report promoted through the four pillars of CAADP.

**Kampala launch attendee:** *"We need to get awareness for this thing in the nations in Africa. In Malawi for example there should be a forum where the same report is presented. There needs to be a deliberate move to get this presented within the agricultural ministries. They need to find a way to make policy makers aware of this through national or regional meetings where this is presented to high profile people. "*

##### *Brussels launch attendees:*

Respondents in Brussels are keen for the report to be shared with the European Parliament and the Commissioner for Development. As a champion of agricultural development, he is

expected to welcome this work. Some interviewees consider it important to hold further follow up events in European institutions including for European Parliament.

*French launches attendees:*

Interviewees in France focus on the importance of ensuring the G20 engage with this work. They suggest that the Panel should ensure that Agricultural Ministers receive a summary of it before the summit and that it is communicated to the FAO and IMF as they prepare their joint submission to the G20. Keeping abreast of other relevant major international events is also considered important as is ensuring that the report is communicated to all relevant bodies and networks. The following are mentioned as groups which the Panel should be engaging in this context: SCAR, EIARD, FAO committee on food security and HLP (*Groupe experts de haut niveau pour la sécurité alimentaire.*) American attendees are keen to see meetings set up with relevant US government officials. One participant suggests it could be discussed in the context of the reform of CGIAR and another would like to see engagement with academics through existing EU structures.

**French launch attendee** *“It will only have an impact if it is written into the international diary. Will Bill and Melinda Gates carry this forwards? Can it be one of the things that can be discussed in 2012 at the UN summit? There are debates in the international diary. If they are not debated there then it will stay no more than a report. Like many that do. They say intelligent things but it goes no further” Paris Stakeholder*

**French launch attendee:** *“Sir Gordon Conway is so well respected. I wonder if there is a follow up with him and his team with executives of donor agencies, going in and making sure they see the report and its findings” Montpellier Stakeholder*

The table below summarises participants’ suggestions for developing an effective Montpellier Panel Report communication campaign:

**Table 3: Campaign suggestions**



#### 5.4. Other considerations

It emerges through the interviews that a whole range of individuals and organisations are keen to be kept up to date with the work of the Montpellier Panel and that maintaining this interest is now an important consideration.

There is much praise for undertaking evaluation as an initial follow up to the publication of the launch and several ask to see the findings. It is also worth noting that in number of instances it emerged that taking part in the evaluation interviews had refocused stakeholders' thinking on the report; a number of respondents explained that having revisited the document they are now reconsidering the value of the report and how they might use and disseminate it in their roles.

**French launch attendee:** *"I'd like to add that I'm really impressed that you are doing this evaluation. All too often panels meet, reports are written and conferences take place and no one follows them up"*

**Kampala launch attendee:** *"I have to say that now I look at it again I see it is very useful. There is information in here which I will now think of using"*

A number of respondents say that they feel that the completion of the evaluation presents a timely opportunity for the Panel to reconvene and consider its outcomes and refine their thinking, and possibly the report, in light of these.

In terms of future work a number of participants suggest that the working model of the Montpellier Panel could be used again to explore new areas, possibly convening different experts as appropriate.

Several respondents, who hold panel members in high esteem suggest that the group could consider taking on the following roles:

- Negotiations between African and donor governments in an attempt to agree and coordinate investment priorities
- Detailed work on global governance and responsibility exploring, for example, where the money from L'Aquila has gone and what its impact has been
- Adopting a coordinating role to ensure that different agencies with a focus on Agricultural Development work together in a strategic and coherent way to address the key issues so many in the sector agree on
- Developing international champions
- Exploring how we communicate to tax payers why this work is so important

**French launch attendee:** *"We hope it's not a one-off report. We want to see maybe a year from now if anything has taken hold. And I feel it would be probably very useful at some point to start to hold countries accountable to the commitments they made two years ago at l'Aquila"*

## 6. Lessons

The Montpellier Panel and the report produced by this group command much support from a diverse range of stakeholders in the EU, Africa and beyond. For most, the report effectively and valuably synthesises a complex range of issues and presents a series of recommendations with the majority subscribe to. It has been disseminated among a wide audience, many members of which have taken the report and shared it among their colleagues and networks. While the evaluation cannot accurately quantify who has and who has not been made aware of the report the evaluation indicates that some Government Ministers in France and Africa will be aware of it and that a whole range of other agencies ranging from NGOs and public bodies to international research organisations have engaged with it.

There are other areas in which the Montpellier Panel report has not yet achieved its potential and the following are factors which the Montpellier Panel and Agriculture for Impact may wish to consider as it develops this and future work programmes:

- **PANEL COMPOSITION:** When adopting a working model of this kind it is worth investing time at the outset in bringing together Panelists whose names and experience will resonate. Although there were some individual suggestions for how the composition of the Montpellier Panel could be improved, the majority of stakeholders are impressed by and have much confidence in those selected indicating that efforts made at the outset of the programme paid off
- **IDENTIFY TARGETS:** A report of this kind has the potential to interest a huge and diverse audience but the challenge is in anticipating where this interest will be translated into action. A targeted approach which engages key decision makers has the potential to have the strongest impact
- **PLAN FOR IMPACT:** When considering the target for a campaign of this kind it is important to also engage with those who are more distanced from the issues in hand. This evaluation indicates that the Montpellier Panel Report and launches have largely engaged with individuals who are already aware of the arguments presented in the report
- **CAMPAIGN STRATEGY:** To ensure that a report of this kind can maximise its potential impact it is helpful to deliver it within a strategic multi-stage communications campaign. Preparing people for the publication of the document, communicating its origins and planned next steps can cement its importance in the minds of key stakeholders increasing their propensity to act upon it

- **MANAGE NETWORK:** Most stakeholders involved in the evaluation welcome the report and many have taken steps to ensure its wider dissemination. Through publishing and promoting this report the Panel has created a network of champions in all the countries which hosted the events and beyond. Harnessing this interest and keeping these champions engaged at this present time will be important to future stages of this and other work programmes

## 7. Appendix 1

### Discussion guide: Monitoring perspectives around the Montpellier Panel Report:

<p><b>1. Introduction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Thank respondent for their involvement, confirm purpose of discussion and explain Firetail's role in the process</i></li> <li>- <i>Assure of confidentiality (comments will not be attributed to individual stakeholders unless they request this)</i></li> <li>- <i>Seek permission to record discussion (again, assuring anonymity and that recordings will only be used by Firetail for reporting purposes)</i></li> <li>- <i>Explain next steps</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Views on Montpellier Panel/Agriculture for Impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is your understanding of the Montpellier Panel / Agriculture for Impact?</li> <li>- How do you view the organisation? What are its objectives? What are its strengths? What challenges does it face?</li> <li>- Is there an on-going role for Montpellier Panel/Agriculture for Impact</li> <li>- What are your views on the role of southern voices in this work?</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Understanding perspectives on the report's context</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Could you outline the key policy issues of most importance to you/your organisation at present?</li> <li>- Where does the Montpellier Panel Report sit within this context?</li> <li>- How do you anticipate the Montpellier Panel Report will be received by stakeholders</li> </ul>

and organisations in the wider policy environment?

- Overall, how does the report compare to information from other sources which stakeholders use to guide policy? What are its strengths and weaknesses in this respect? How do the ideas presented fit with those communicated by other organisations working in these areas?

#### **4. Views on the content of the report**

- What was your initial reaction to the report?
- What most stands out to you from the report?
- How do you feel about the case presented in the document?
- How far do you agree/disagree with the arguments made?
- How far do you agree/disagree with the reports' recommendations

#### **5. Views on the quality of the report**

- How well does the report present the panel's case?
- Which arguments are presented most strongly? How and why?
- Are there any which feel less compelling? Why?
- Do you have any comments on the document's digestibility? What are its strengths and weaknesses in this respect?

#### **6. Stakeholder perspectives on how the report will be acted upon**

- How would you like to see this report being used?
- What do you think will be the impact of Montpellier Panel report?
- How does agriculture fit within the wider development agenda?
- What needs to happen for the impact of the report to be maximised?
- How likely do you feel stakeholders are to act upon the report's recommendations?
- How might you use the report in your role and in your organisation?
- How likely are you to disseminate this report?
- How do you envisage other stakeholders/organisations will use the document

#### **7. Wrap up**

- Do you have any other comments regarding the panel report/launch programme?
- How can Agriculture for Impact become more effective in working towards its vision

of “*more effective European donor support for smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa*”?

- Do you have any other recommendations to assist Agriculture for Impact as it develops future phases of its work?

*Explain next steps, thank and close*