

Building trust and collaboration through co-learning – R4D platforms for sustainable intensification of smallholder farming in Tanzania

Hillbur, Per^{1,3} and McCormack, Caitlin^{2,3}

Introduction

This study explores the challenge to implement sustainable intensification by a combination of science-driven promotion of agricultural technologies and a demand-driven process in a local organizational context. The empirical focus is on evaluation of the organization, functioning and long-term sustainability of research-for-development (R4D) platforms established by the USAID Feed the Future program Africa RISING (Research in Sustainable Intensification for the Next Generation). The case presented here is from Babati District in north-central Tanzania.

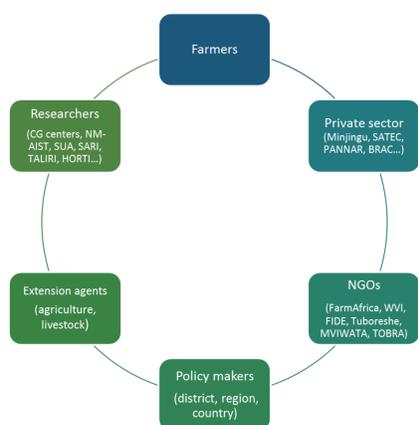


Figure 1. The local innovation system. Major stakeholder groups of the Babati District R4D Platform.

Background

Investments in R4D platforms raise challenges about following up and measuring the progress and impact of complex, systems-oriented programs. Long-term benefits require strong commitment in the form of local ownership and leadership that fosters mutual trust between stakeholders as well as a commitment to the sustainability of agriculture itself.

This study is an evaluation of a local R4D platform based on interviews with key stakeholders. The analysis departs from three dimensions of platform performance, each with related indicators (table 1). We have also added a relational dimension to explore how platform members build networks and relations within and outside the platform, which is essential to understand the platform's potential for long-term impact.

Results and Discussion

The R4D platform experience is of mixed nature. It is effective in bringing stakeholders together, and there is a consensus on the potential of platforms in promoting adoption of agricultural technologies. There seems to be a strong support for multi-stakeholder arrangements to discuss and resolve market problems and conflicts over land management. Due to a number of factors, some of this potential is not released. The case study object is still in an early stage, where facilitation from outside is still essential, both in economic and organizational terms. The strategic (district) level platform is believed to be reinforced by initiating an operational (ward) level platform organization to stimulate local involvement. It is only through its activities in the local communities, stimulated by a strong and passionate local leadership, that R4D platforms can play an essential role in the promotion of sustainable intensification.

References

- Cadilhon, Jean-Joseph (2013). *A conceptual framework to evaluate the impact of innovation platforms on agrifood value chains development*. Paper prepared for the 138th EAAE Seminar on Pro-poor Innovations in Food Supply Chains, Ghent Belgium, September 11-13, 2013
- Damtew, Elias and Alan J. Duncan (2015). *Participatory monitoring and evaluation framework to measure Africa RISING innovation platform contributions to project outcomes in the Ethiopian highlands*. February 2015. Available at: www.africa-rising.net
- Dror, Iddo; Cadilhon, Jean-Joseph; Schut, Marc; Misiko, Michael; and Shreya Maheshwari (eds.) (2016). *Innovation Platforms for Agricultural Development: Evaluating the Mature Innovation Platforms Landscape*. New York: Routledge.
- Horton, Douglas; Rotondo, Emma; Ybarregaray, Rodrigo Paz; Hareau, Guy; Deveaux, Andre and Graham Thiele (2013). Lapses, infidelities, and creative adaptations: Lessons from evaluation of a participatory market development approach in the Andes. *Evaluation and Program Planning* 39 (2013) 28–41
- Pamuk, Haki; Bulte, Erwin and Adewale A Adekunle (2014). Do decentralized innovation systems promote agricultural technology adoption? Experimental evidence from Africa. *Food Policy* 44 (2014) 227–236
- Tenywa, M.M., Rao, K.P.C., Tukahirwa, J.B., Buruchara, R., Adekunle, A.A., Mugabe, J., Wanjiku, C., Mutabazi, S., Fungo, B., Kashaia, N.I.M., Pali, P., Mapatano, S., Ngaboyisonga, C., Farrow, A., Njuki, J. and Abenakyo, A. (2011). Agricultural innovation platform as a tool for development oriented research: Lessons and challenges in the formation and operationalization. *Journal of Agriculture & Environmental Studies* 2(1):117-146

Evaluation of R4D platforms

R4D platforms are a result of extensive research on innovation systems and participatory research approaches. In spite of decades of implementation of various participatory and community empowerment approaches, there are few attempts to evaluate these in a more systematic way (Horton *et al* 2013). This is partly because of some recurring methodological challenges, as many of these approaches address complex development goals such as food security, improved livelihoods or environmental sustainability (*ibid*:29).

Cadilhon (2013) provides an overview of different attempts to monitor outcomes and assess impact of innovation platforms. He develops a conceptual framework that applies primarily to evaluating the impact that innovation platforms have on agrifood value chain development. Among the best documented evaluations of multi-stakeholder platforms are from the SSA-CP programme (Tenywa *et al* 2011, Pamuk *et al* 2014), and the structure for monitoring and evaluation in the Africa RISING platforms (Damtew and Duncan 2015) has emerged from this work. A recent overview of the organization and performance of innovation platform are compiled in Dror *et al* (2016).

Table 1. Dimensions of platform performance and related indicators used in this study (Damtew and Duncan 2015, based on Tenywa *et al* 2011)

Dimension of performance	Performance indicators
Platform establishment/formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - representativeness/inclusiveness of the platform - existing relationships and interactions between members of the platform - documentation of all platform establishment processes at the strategic and operational levels - identification of common objectives (problems), issues around sustainable intensification and definition of roles
Platform functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - frequency and consistency of participation of platform actors - assessing the extent to which planned activities have been achieved (quality of planned activities) - actor perceptions of the formation, functioning and outcomes of platforms - enhancing innovative capacity: changes in the knowledge and skills of the stakeholders in relation to identified needs
Platform outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - changes in interactions among the platform actors and/or their organizations as a result of their participation in the platform - change in knowledge, attitude and practices on introduced sustainable intensification technologies (increased utilisation of technologies, knowledge and information)

- ¹ Malmö University, Sweden
² SLU, Uppsala, Sweden
³ IITA-Arusha, Tanzania

The Africa Research In Sustainable Intensification for the Next Generation (Africa RISING) program comprises three research-for-development projects supported by the United States Agency for International Development as part of the U.S. government's Feed the Future initiative.

Through action research and development partnerships, Africa RISING will create opportunities for smallholder farm households to move out of hunger and poverty through sustainably intensified farming systems that improve food, nutrition, and income security, particularly for women and children, and conserve or enhance the natural resource base.

The three projects are led by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (in West Africa and East and Southern Africa) and the International Livestock Research Institute (in the Ethiopian Highlands). The International Food Policy Research Institute leads an associated project on monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment.

www.africa-rising.net

