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Using Evaluation to Enhance Institutional Learning and Change — Recent Experiences with Agricultural Research and Development

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Abstract

National agricultural research organizations as well as centers affiliated with the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) are under strong pressure to enhance their contributions to poverty alleviation, food security and protection of the environment and to demonstrate the results of their work. The dynamic world environment demands continuous changes in the ways in which research organizations operate and relate to other actors in agricultural innovation systems. To date, agricultural research evaluation has been dominated by economic impact assessment frameworks and methods. Designed as research studies, impact assessments have often served accountability and public awareness purposes. However, they have been of less use to further the understanding of how policies, programs and technologies may or may not contribute to agricultural innovation. There is an increasing awareness that appropriately designed and executed evaluations — going beyond traditional economic impact assessment — can contribute substantially to institutional learning and performance improvement. This paper outlines some of the limitations of traditional economic impact assessment and outlines some innovative approaches to evaluation that contribute more directly to learning and institutional change.

Keywords: Agricultural research, evaluation, impact assessment, organizational learning

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