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“Utilisation of diversity in land use systems:
Sustainable and organic approaches to meet human needs”

**Impact Pathways Assessment of Research for Development
Programme: Case Study of Dual Purpose Cowpea Breeding
Programme of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture in
Northern Nigeria**

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Abstract

The primary focus of agricultural research and extension in Africa is technology generation and dissemination. Despite prior critiques of the shortcomings of this approach, the consequences of such activities continue to be measured through the number of technologies developed and introduced into the supply chain. Impact assessments of these programmes have taken various forms from simple to complex, and may involve inputs from different disciplines. Where impact assessment was carried out on the livelihood outcomes of farming communities; such approaches have focused on the total number of adopters and by the household and system factors influencing adoption. In addition to this, quantitative estimates of varietal adoption rates, economic value of crops and livestock are used. On occasions this work has been broadened to look at wealth, income distribution and other social outcomes of research activities. However, there has been comparatively little analysis of the processes and pathways that gave rise to these outcomes despite the importance in understanding the pathways of different types of agricultural technologies on poverty reduction and natural resource use. For example when high economic rates of return are estimated, there is often no serious analysis to understand why on occasions research gives rise to high rates of return and other occasions to low rates of return.

Conventional impact studies are able to document the improved seed technologies; however where agricultural programs have combined this with knowledge systems such as soil conservation practices, input management, natural resource management, it becomes harder to track adoption barriers and attribute impact. Examining impacts processes and impact pathways of different types of agricultural technologies can guide future research in ways that will make the greatest contribution to poverty reduction. If technological innovation is seen as a discrete step - introducing new technologies rather than process substantial risks may also be introduced into the system through socio-economic gap-widening or decreased agro-ecosystem resilience. This paper seeks to use a case research in Northern Nigeria to understand impact process and pathways of International research for development projects on poor small holder farmers.

Keywords: Development, impact assessment, international research, natural resource management, poverty, sustainable livelihoods

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