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“Competition for Resources in a Changing World:
New Drive for Rural Development”

Developmental Returns from Investing in International Agricultural Research

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Abstract

To truly reflect development values evaluation of Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) may need to go beyond evaluation of research performance in terms of the products and services delivered, towards assessing the development outcomes in terms of social and environmental sustainability, at various levels including public goods such as biosphere functions and outcomes for poor people in terms of poverty alleviation, food security, and natural resources use and conservation. Successful agricultural innovation and sustainable rural development depend on social, political, economic and institutional processes as much as technological ones. Technology is therefore but one aspect among many factors influencing to what extent the course of development follows sustainable pathways. Preferably, therefore, evaluation of ARD can be designed and carried out within a holistic development studies framework. Analysing dissemination of research products and calculating rates of monetary returns may remain important; but ultimately impact assessments and evaluations may wish to examine how research products and services are used and how their use affects peoples lives, their societies and environments. This entails therefore a shift away from directly measurable (often market based) impacts; towards capturing the complexity and non linear nature of agricultural innovation and sustainable development. While ARD has been documented as being largely beneficial even in narrow monetary terms we argue that impact assessments has been carried out largely within economic paradigms that are limited in capturing elements such as natural capital and environmental services.

Keywords: Development returns, impact indicators, institutional change, Overseas Development Assistance