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“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

## Innovation Platforms as a Tool for Small Holder Dairy Development: A Case from Uttarakhand, India

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### Abstract

Innovation platforms (IPs) are emerging as a new tool for agricultural development focusing on sustainable market development and technology uptake. IPs as a development approach recognise that innovation emerges from the complex interaction of multiple actors who together foster technical, social and institutional change. Interim evaluation is needed to understand the innovation process with a view to adjusting forward planning and activities. ILRI has implemented 2 dairy value chain IPs in 2 districts in the state of Uttarakhand in India. This study evaluates the process of IP functioning and conflict management through a qualitative “innovation story line”. The IP meetings were regularly documented with details of issues discussed, actions planned and follow up activities.

Qualitative analysis of IP documentation over one year led to a storyline which showed that even though identified constraints were similar for both platforms, different innovations emerged according to the driving forces and the enabling environment. The first innovation to emerge was linking to the market for milk sales; linking with the state co-operative was the only option for the Sult clusters as the distance to the nearby town is large. In Bageshwar clusters marketing channels are diverse, starting with a self-help group based co-operative, followed by sharing excess milk with private traders. Feed and breed improvement innovations emerged later and were reasonably successful after market access had been improved. There were institutional conflicts (co-operative membership, breeding policy) and religious beliefs (not to sell milk) which hindered the innovations but these were handled through informal negotiations and tackled through innovative champions. Private actors were not attracted to the value chain initially, but were later motivated by marketing and feed sales.

The innovation storyline/history is a powerful tool to reflect on the innovation process and to share experiences with outsiders and it can be a qualitative first step for impact assessment. Addressing the conflicts or power dynamics in the initial stage is important in the IP to avoid stalling the innovation process.

**Keywords:** Conflict management, dairy development, innovation platform, innovation storyline