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“Management of land use systems for enhanced food security:
conflicts, controversies and resolutions”

Research-for-Development (R4D) Platforms - A Multi-Stakeholder Initiative for Integrated Farming Towards Sustainable Intensification

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Abstract

One of the main challenges to agricultural development in Africa is to recognise and take advantage of heterogeneity, both in terms of socio-cultural variation and bio-physical diversity. The research-for-development (R4D) platform is an initiative to address these challenges of diversity and heterogeneity, while at the same time focus on smallholders' demands and opportunities for different interventions to have positive impact.

The presentation will focus on the organisation, facilitation and long-term sustainability of R4D platforms established by the USAID/Feed the Future research programme Africa RISING (Research in Sustainable Intensification for the Next Generation) in Tanzania. The platforms serve as vehicles for prioritising and scaling of sustainable intensification through integrated farm practices, focusing on crop/livestock interactions at the farm and landscape levels, and also linking farmers to input dealers, markets, extension and policy. The ultimate goal is to stimulate learning and innovation to improve livelihoods in terms of productivity, income generation and nutrition.

The primary beneficiaries are small-scale farmers and other stakeholders in rural areas who, through the platform, will have better access to information, technologies, expertise, credits, markets, etc., supporting agricultural intensification for improved and sustainable livelihoods. An important aim of the platforms is that research outputs as well as outcomes of platform discussions/negotiations will inform decision makers, public and private players in agricultural development and educators about how R4D platforms can work to promote technological, social and institutional change, in order to put sustainable intensification to scale.

The main reasons for applying a multi-stakeholder approach are related to the basic functions of “research for development”: Firstly, research institutions need a demand-driven approach as a complement to more traditional “science-driven” approaches. Secondly, the focus is on targeting and effectiveness of development interventions. The third reason is that while research is normally a relatively small-scale activity (in terms of beneficiaries), development initiatives supporting good governance and market access must play the role of promotion of new ideas to a wider audience. Lastly, when these things are in place, the potential for platform sustainability beyond the project lifespan is increased.

Keywords: Demand-driven approach, multi-stakeholder, R4D platform, sustainable intensification, Tanzania