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Sustainable Systems Intensification: The Humidtropics Approach in West Africa

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Abstract

HUMIDTROPICS, the CGIAR research programme on integrated systems for the humid tropics, seeks to improve the livelihood of poor smallholder farmers in the humid tropics regions of the world through integrated systems approach. To do that, partnerships are built among stakeholders through platform establishment to identify major constraints and accordingly entry points for research interventions and system research implementation. This poster presents the approach used in the West Africa Action Area countries of Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana and Ivory Coast. Multi-stakeholder platforms, research for development (R4D) and innovation platform (IP) were set up respectively at action sites and field sites levels in each country. R4D platforms are research oriented whereas IPs are action and implementation oriented. Both R4D and IPs are formed by representatives from farmer organisations, research and training institutions, private sector (agricultural products processors, transporters, marketers, inputs dealers, microfinance institutions, etc.), NGOs and civil society, and government. The R4D platforms identified the research entry points and these were validated by the IPs through stakeholder based constraints identification and ranking. Both platforms develop and implement the research approach to generate solutions. In all countries cocoa intensification was identified as a major entry point yet with differences in the components that require improvement. In Cameroon farmers prefer cocoa diversification with other fruit trees, food crops and vegetables. In Nigeria cocoa rejuvenation and new plantation establishment appears the first choice. In Ghana the long term sustainability of the relatively young plantations is a concern and addition of shade trees with commercial value is an entry point. In Ivory Coast food crop production in cocoa growing areas is insufficient and farmers focus on integrating cassava, maize and grain legumes to attain food security and cash income. Although at different stages of implementation, the on-farm trials/demonstrations encourage joint learning and adoption of innovations, shown by the number of ‘baby’ trials established by farmers themselves in their own farms. We conclude that the identification of entry points by the platforms and the joint development and implementation of the research to find place-based and demand-driven solutions supports the learning process and technology adoption.

Keywords: Cameroon, constraints, Ghana, innovation platform (IP), Ivory Coast, Multi-stakeholder platforms, Nigeria, research entry points