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“Solidarity in a competing world —
fair use of resources”

Building Trust and Collaboration through Co-Learning - Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Sustainable Intensification of Smallholder Farming in Tanzania

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Abstract

This presentation focuses on an evaluation of the organisation, functioning and long-term sustainability of Research-for-Development (R4D) platforms established by the USAID Feed the Future programme Africa RISING (Research in Sustainable Intensification for the Next Generation). The case presented here is from Babati District in north-central Tanzania.

Strategies for sustainable management of agricultural resources by rural communities and farmers must be tailored to local conditions and should foster communication, collaboration and trust between stakeholders on the ground. This is particularly important for reaching groups with limited access to resources, including women and youth. Furthermore, programmes must be able to incorporate local knowledge and consider the particular challenges in specific contexts in order to design effective interventions and build the trust required to introduce them in local communities. This process of co-learning between local stakeholders and programmes needs to be initiated at an early stage.

R4D platforms were initiated as a model for such institutional collaboration and co-learning for Africa RISING in 2014 and formally launched as the district level platform JUMBA (Jukwaa la Utafiti kwa Maendeleo wilaya ya Babati) in April 2014. This initiative summons all major stakeholders in agricultural development in Babati District and functions as a strategic body for coordination of research and development activities on crop and livestock farming and natural resource management in the district.

One of the challenges is how to follow up and measure the progress and impact of such R4D platforms. Long-term benefits will require strong commitment in the form of local ownership and leadership that fosters mutual trust between stakeholders and a commitment to the sustainability of farming into the future. However, solidarity and trust between stakeholders are seldomly measured in terms of development outcomes. What are the success criteria? For what kind of interventions are platforms suitable or necessary? We consider these aspects in an evaluation of the JUMBA platform based on interviews with key stakeholders in the process.

Keywords: Co-learning, platforms, smallholders, sustainable intensification, Tanzania