

# Science-Policy-Practice Interfaces in Agricultural Innovations in Africa: Moving Beyond the Traditional Boundaries of Doing Science



Girma Kelboro<sup>1</sup>, Christine B. Schmitt<sup>1</sup>, Kwadwo Amankwah<sup>2</sup>, Manfred Denich<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Center for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn, Germany

<sup>2</sup> Kwadaso College of Agriculture, Ghana

## Introduction

- Agricultural innovation pathways developed from the linear model of technology transfer (from 'sources' to 'receivers') through the extension system to joint innovation.
  - There is limited documentation on how to operationalize joint innovation in practice.
  - In the *BiomassWeb* research project [www.biomassweb.org](http://www.biomassweb.org), we followed the research-policy-practice interface (RPPI) based on the concept of transdisciplinarity.
- Transdisciplinarity strives to embrace beyond disciplinary boundaries and work with policy makers, practitioners, farmers and the private sector.

## The research-policy-practice interface in *BiomassWeb*

The research process followed four stages to create the RPPI:

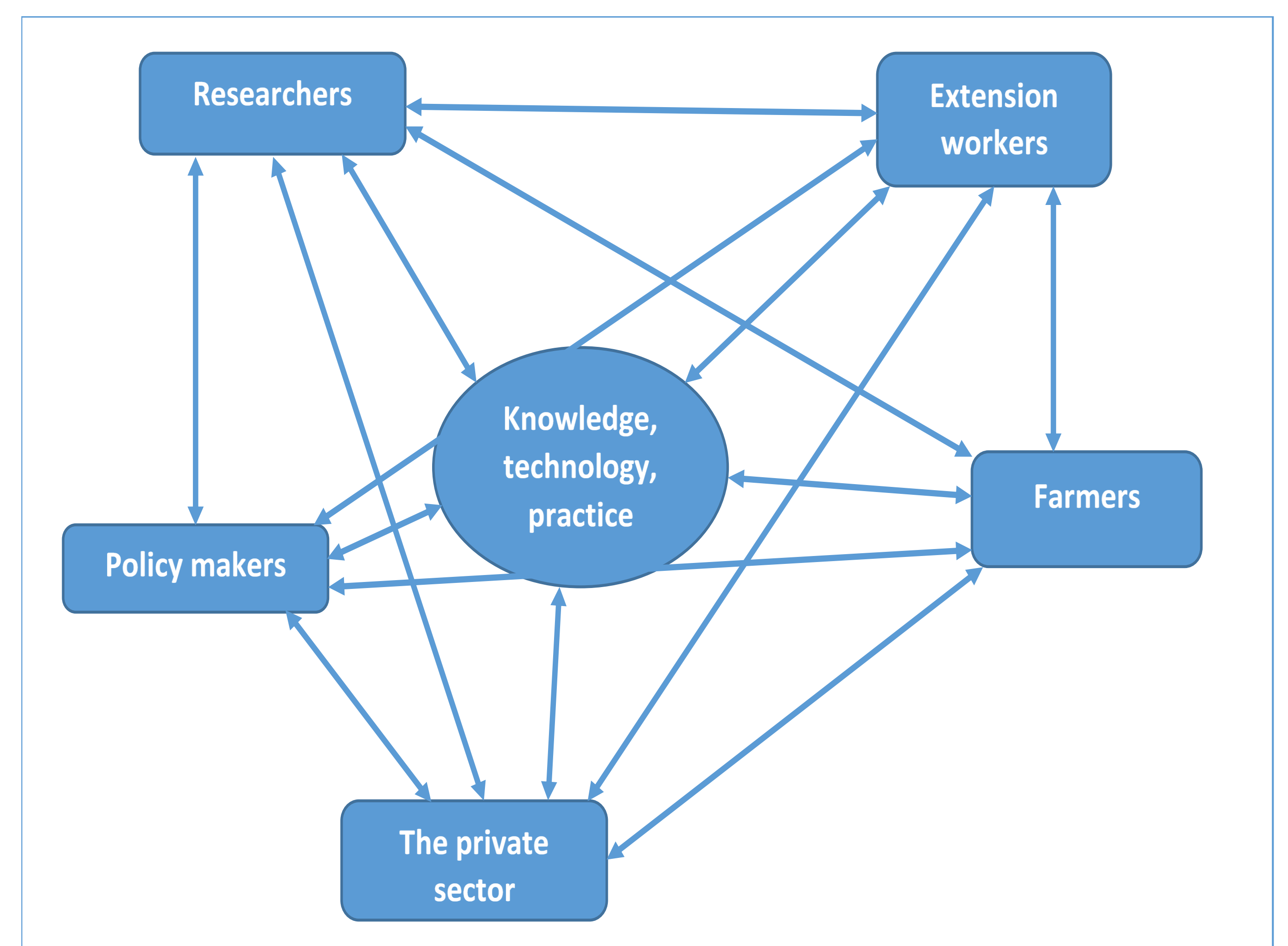
- 1) *BiomassWeb* researchers formed teams;
- 2) Researchers participated in training workshops on participatory research methods;
- 3) Workshops were organized for the researchers to evaluate and collate lessons learned from their practice of participatory methods;
- 4) *BiomassWeb* research findings were shared through science-policy dialogues (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1** Facilitated science-policy dialogue in Accra, December 2017

## Learning & knowledge flows

- In transdisciplinary research, interactions and knowledge flows are non-linear with a mix of multiple actors, institutions and channels (Fig. 2).
- Field researchers engaged in continuous interactions with stakeholders; laboratory researchers based their studies on the problems identified by the stakeholders.
- Facilitated science-policy dialogues form a channel to communicate the findings and initiate discussions on ways of converting scientific results into policy and practice.



**Fig. 2** Framework of RPPI and knowledge flows in *BiomassWeb*

## Conclusion

- The concerns of practitioners/policy makers often go beyond the scope of questions posed by researchers.
- Researchers are required to work beyond their disciplinary competence, apply participatory approaches.
- Universities and other research institutions can work in the research-policy-practice interface if sufficient time and other resources are allocated to work in this environment of multiple interests, knowledge and institutions.