



Tropentag, September 18-20, 2019, Kassel

“Filling gaps and removing traps
for sustainable resource management”

Scientific Knowledge Transfer and the Science-Policy Interface: Bridging the Gaps and Overcoming the Traps

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Abstract

Scientific knowledge transfer and the science-policy interface is complex and challenging. It includes contestations about the credibility and legitimacy of scientific knowledge and the strategic use of such knowledge. The cognitive distance between the scientists and science experts on one hand and the policy making institutions on the other, enhances the complexities. In addition, the willingness of scientists to engage in knowledge transfer and exchange with policy is often related to individual capacities, level of training and career trajectories, and motivations. These realities often hamper the successful knowledge transfer between the spheres of science and policy-making leading to under-exploitation of the potential for science to support decision-making. The policy-science interface is further compounded by the fact that policies often address complex, far reaching and large-scale, multi-faceted problems that present social, institutional as well as natural resources contexts. To be more effective many policy makers would need to develop scientific competences to interact more effectively with scientific experts. The policy-making process is politically-driven and involves various arms of government. Interest groups and lobbyists with different points of view are often involved. Scientists need to enhance their level of knowledge of the internal workings of policy-making processes. Once policies are enacted, there often is a lack of coordination among agencies responsible for implementing policy and this contributes to fragmentation. This presentation presents insights on the possible strategies that can fill the gaps and remove some traps in the science-policy-practice continuum for sustainable resources management. They include processes of public participation; a definition of intended outcomes; the theory of change; determination of policy anchors and enablers; as well as provisions on measurement of the transformational impact of a policy. The insights presented are drawn from recent publications on this topic as well as from practice. Inference is drawn from the Kenyan Agriculture Sector Transformation and Growth Strategy (ASTGS). This 10-year strategy supports policies that address food and nutrition security while embracing sustainable exploitation, utilisation, management and conservation of the environment and natural resources.

Keywords: Science-policy interface