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## Research gaps for the horticultural sector in least developed countries: Monitoring urgencies and brokering research

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### Abstract

The need to transform food systems is ever more pressing. Strategic research is a key component in this process, but it must be tailored to local contexts and should address the most pressing needs, particularly in the least developed country (LDC) context. To improve impact and research uptake, the research process needs to follow a set of guiding principles including stakeholder engagement, contextualisation, communication, the development of strategic partnerships, and capacity development. It is also crucial to direct more effort toward identifying existing technologies that have the potential to address priorities, but which may have not yet been adapted, implemented, or made affordable/accessible in LDCs. Current gaps between private sector needs, the dynamic policy landscape, and the (academic) research world remain significant, and an impediment for the transformation to more sustainable food systems. COLEAD is a not-for-profit private sector association consisting of a network of companies, professional organisations and experts committed to inclusive and sustainable agriculture. It established both a process and monitoring & evaluation system to continuously track research needs in the LDC horticultural sector, and actively promote and facilitate research uptake towards ensuring sustainable production, global trade, and market access.

In this presentation, the Research and Innovation Brokerage department of COLEAD will outline its current modus operandi and the open access monitoring & evaluation tools in place to address most pressing research gaps. We will demonstrate the crucial steps of (i) stakeholder engagement; (ii) creating international research linkages; (iii) identifying existing technologies; (iv) localising research; (v) meeting international standards and regulations; (vi) promoting policy dialogue (public, private, donor); (vii) and facilitating public-private engagement. We will outline the various monitoring tools developed and used by COLEAD including the AGRINFO system; producer/company surveys; the Sustainability Self-Assessment System (SAS); Market Analytics; and the monitoring of trade data on SPS non-compliances as well as our main findings and conclusions. Our aim is share information with researchers and donors on the priority research needs, and facilitate research linkages and partnerships in order to address these needs and support the transformation to sustainable horticulture and trade in the global South.

**Keywords:** Gap analysis, horticulture, knowledge management