

Joint learning in Innovation Systems in African agriculture

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Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS)

The AIS concept acknowledges that linear research-extension-farmer relations cannot effectively address the challenges faced by farmers experiencing rapid change in climate, market and technology. AIS is an evolving concept that requires better understanding and operationalisation (World Bank, 2006; 2008). Engaging multiple stakeholders is essential to strengthening AIS but it is not clear yet how these collaborations can develop into flexible relationships and effective responses or what key mechanisms drive their functioning.

The research project JOLISAA

It started in February 2010 and will run for 30 months. The project aims to increase understanding of AIS focusing on smallholders' livelihoods and integrating local and global knowledge. Lessons learnt about past and ongoing experiences with agricultural innovation in small-scale farming in sub-Saharan Africa will be synthesised by combining joint case-study assessment with capacity-strengthening and networking. Joint learning will be fostered by engaging diverse stakeholders, including researchers, development practitioners and policymakers, in comparing and analysing these cases. The project will deliver recommendations to the European Commission and African decision-makers for future research, practice and policy in agricultural research and development (ARD).

Overall research strategy

The overall research strategy of JOLISAA is based upon five interlinked thematic work packages (Figure 1). WP1 develops an analytical framework and an operational approach based on an

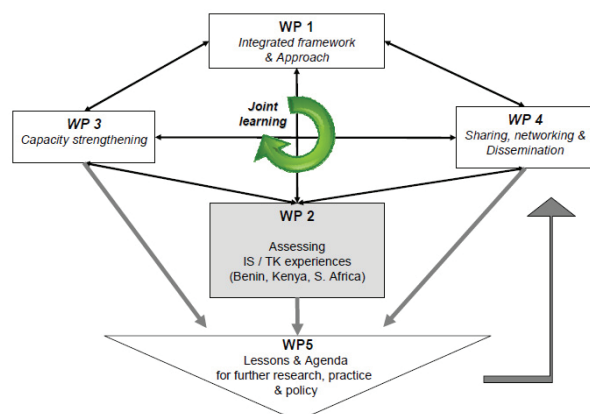


Figure 1. Global interactions among thematic WPs.



innovation-system perspective and carefully adapted to the context and experiences in West, East and Southern Africa. WP2 involves joint assessment and learning from a series of case studies in these regions. WP3 focuses on strengthening the capacity of members of existing innovation networks to assess their experiences and to facilitate innovation. WP4 involves networking activities to stimulate joint learning and sharing of lessons, including:

1. a global outreach circle for information sharing and dissemination of outputs;
2. an international learning platform involving key resource persons engaged in discussion of project findings and lessons learned;
3. a national-level networking and learning circle in Benin, Kenya and South Africa, respectively.

WP5 compiles and shares the project outputs and deliver them in formats suitable for a range of audiences.

Partners and participants

JOLISAA is coordinated by CIRAD UMR Innovation (France), working together with LEI, ETC EcoCulture - ProInnova, ICRA in Europe and decentralised networks coordinated in West, East and Southern Africa by University of Abomey-Calavi (UAC) in Benin, Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) and University of Pretoria (UP) / Institute of Natural Resources (INR) in South Africa, respectively.

References

- World Bank 2006. *Enhancing agricultural innovation. How to go beyond the strengthening of research systems*. Washington DC.
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