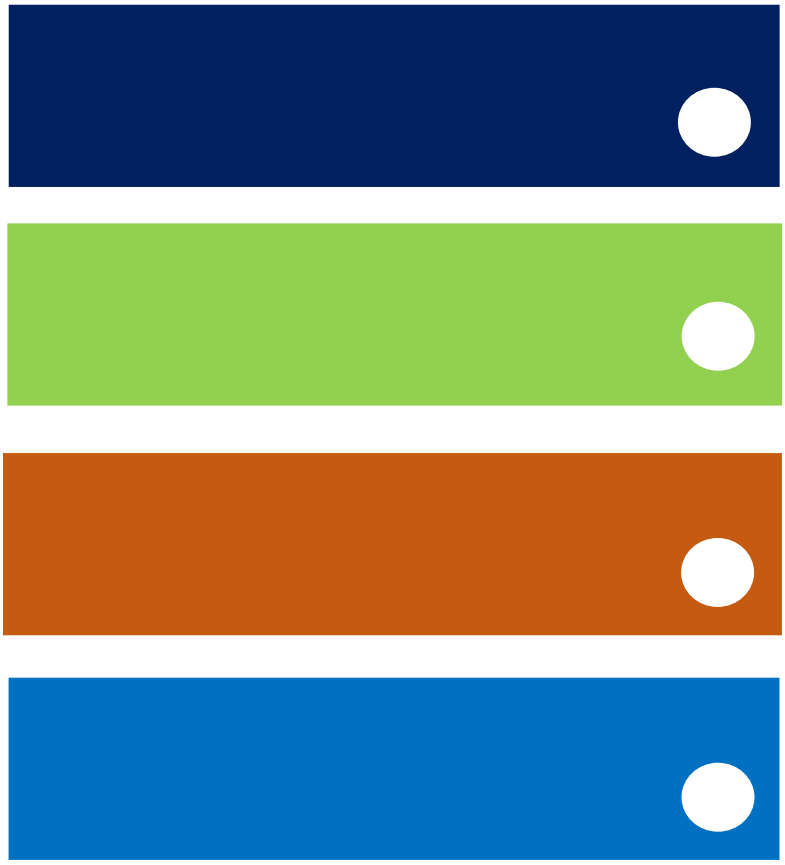
# Guide to documentation of innovations

*A stepwise approach to documentation of innovations on digital data resources for research and development actors.*

25 January 2022



Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) team aims to improve impact of research organizations. The MEL Team includes different areas of work such as Monitoring & Evaluation, Knowledge Management, Data curation and Research Software development. Each area has a coordinator relying on specialists and research fellows. The areas are managed by a Team leader and supported by a Team administrator and grant finance officer. Some team members may be shared with other organizations such WorldFish, International Potato Center or some areas are covered through strategic partnership like the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture and CodeObia. The MEL team forms new talents integrating research fellows within the team and nurtures them to progress towards team goals, to contribute through innovative perspectives and capacity building opportunities.

The main tool, supporting the MEL Team's work, is MEL multi-center and multi-CRP online platform for integrated management, monitoring, and reporting of projects, from planning to budgeting, risks' assessment, knowledge sharing and more. MEL creates synergy between research and development partners, bridging competences in a results-oriented platform. MEL allows saving resources and time, reducing paperwork, facilitating administrative steps, quickening project related communications and enabling near real-time data collection to inform decision-making.

*MEL team is affiliated to the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) and the platform is the result of the synergic efforts by CGIAR Research Program on Grain Legumes and Dryland Cereals (GLDC), CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB), CGIAR Research Program on Fish Agri-food Systems (FISH), The International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), The International Potato Center (CIP), The World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF), The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), the CGIAR Excellence in Agronomy 2030 (EiA) initiative in addition to external Funders like the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA), ICARDA Geoinformatics Unit (GU), and is powered by iMMAP, Codeobia, D-Space and Amazon Web Services.*

For more information, please visit:
Main website: https://mel.cgiar.org
YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIe4a86Rp-hcTt5C_x4YkHg/videos
Guide: https://cgiarmel.atlassian.net/wiki/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=8552452
Twitter: https://twitter.com/MEL_CGIAR

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[1] International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA)

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## Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| CIP | International Potato Center |
| CRP | CGIAR Research Program |
| DDGR | Deputy Director General Research |
| EiA | Excellence in Agronomy |
| F.A.Q. | Frequently Asked Questions |
| FISH | CGIAR Research Program on Fish Agri-food Systems |
| GLDC | CGIAR Research Program on Grain Legumes |
| GU | ICARDA Geoinformatics Unit |
| ICARDA | International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas |
| ICRAF | World Agroforestry Center |
| IFAD | International Fund for Agricultural Development |
| IITA | International Institute of Tropical Agriculture |
| MEL | Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning |
| PRIMA | Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area |
| SLM | Sustainable Land Management |
| SSTC | South-South Triangular Cooperation |
| RTB | CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas |
| WOCAT | World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies |
| UNCCD | United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification |

## Executive Summary

This guide covers challenges, benefits, and a stepwise approach on the how to document innovations in four digital data resources: the Rural Solution Portal, Panorama Solutions Portal, MEL Platform, and World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies' (WOCAT) Global SLM database. This sample reflects how the ecosystem of digital data resources for documentation is nuanced and diverse, addressing audiences ranging from public to practitioners. This guide covers (1) the purpose and audience of each digital resource, (2) the respective meaning of innovation/solution, (3) the criteria to having a solution accepted and published on each digital resource, and (4) suggested roles and responsibilities of those involved. This guide was developed during a Knowledge Management Fellowship with the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Team at ICARDA, focused on the documentation of ICARDA's main innovations.

The main challenge in documenting innovation is scattered information at project-level, no standardization of metadata across digital data resources, the lack of capitalization of results and impact from projects, inefficiency in sharing and centralizing knowledge, and methods to ensure adoption and accessibility of knowledge at local levels. Nonetheless, there are many benefits of documenting innovation, including:

- Increasing understanding and trust between stakeholders and funders
- Producing lessons learned for replication, scaling up, and pragmatic application of the innovations
- Demonstrating results and explicit knowledge
- Building interactive innovation communities
- Providing evidence-based decision-making to influence policy
- Scaling up what works
- Sustainability of knowledge on innovations
- Wider dissemination opportunities
- Better monitoring and evaluation and knowledge management systems and processes

To help you determine where innovations can be identified and documented, a decision tree may be found on page 18. Furthermore, this guide also shares lessons learned on the process of documentation itself, focusing on relevant content and maximizing retrieval of information on innovations. At the end, you may find helpful templates that can be used to maximize the retrieval of information on innovations.

## Acknowledgements

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- CGIAR scientists and partners
- ICARDA, Murat Sartas, Multi-stakeholder Network and Innovation Management Scientist
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- RTB, Paolo Sarfatti, Coordinator Innovation Catalog
- ICARDA, Victoria Clarke, Knowledge Management Research Fellow
- ICARDA, Laura Becker, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Research Fellow
- ICARDA, Enrico Bonaiuti, Research Team Leader - Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

## 1. Introduction

The guide was commissioned by the MEL Team at the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) during a knowledge management research fellowship focusing on documenting ICARDA's main innovations. The guide acts as a tool to support documentation of innovations. For documenting innovations, we chose to diversify the digital data resources[2] reflecting a broader understanding of innovations for different audiences. The sample of four digital data resources (Rural Solutions Portal, PANORAMA Solutions, WOCAT's Global SLM Database and MEL Platform) was used to experience the process and provide clear steps to documentation on each digital resource. The sample captures the nuances in the capacity to capitalize the information on innovations.

This guide aims to identity challenges, benefits, characteristics of the digital data resources used for documentation and elaborate clear steps to document information on innovations. Sectors which may benefit from this tool include agricultural and broader social development, with a focus on research and development actors. Finally, the guide also acts as a basis to enlarge the research of other digital data resources outside of the four sampled to ensure the sustainability, sharing and capitalization of knowledge.

The four sampled digital data resources ranged from a storytelling style to a more factsheet-based presentation of the information. This range highlights the importance of reaching a diversity of stakeholders and for stakeholders to increase support along the innovation development and management process. Thus, documentation helps visibility, adoption, and utilization of innovations.

### 1.1. Challenges

The process to documentation helped to identify five challenges, that refer to a lack of:

| Challenges |
|---|
| organized innovation information at project level |
| standardization of metadata used to document |
| capitalization of project results |
| efficiency in sharing knowledge |
| adoption of knowledge on innovations at local levels[3] |

### 1.2. Benefits

Going through the documentation process not only helped identify challenges, but also benefits. By breaking problems into potentially replicable solutions (or innovations) and providing clear guidance on how to carry them out in a stepwise[4] fashion, provides a way to help stakeholders recognize and process learnings. Innovation documentation ensures the sustainability, sharing and capitalization of knowledge in times when it is rapidly needed (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic). Furthermore, ready to use solutions or innovations that are documented on digital data resources may serve as proxies to replace impact targets that cannot be achieved in hardship times such as COVID-19 pandemic. From a broader perspective, recording data and documenting information allows the continuum and status of research. A full list of benefits can be found below:

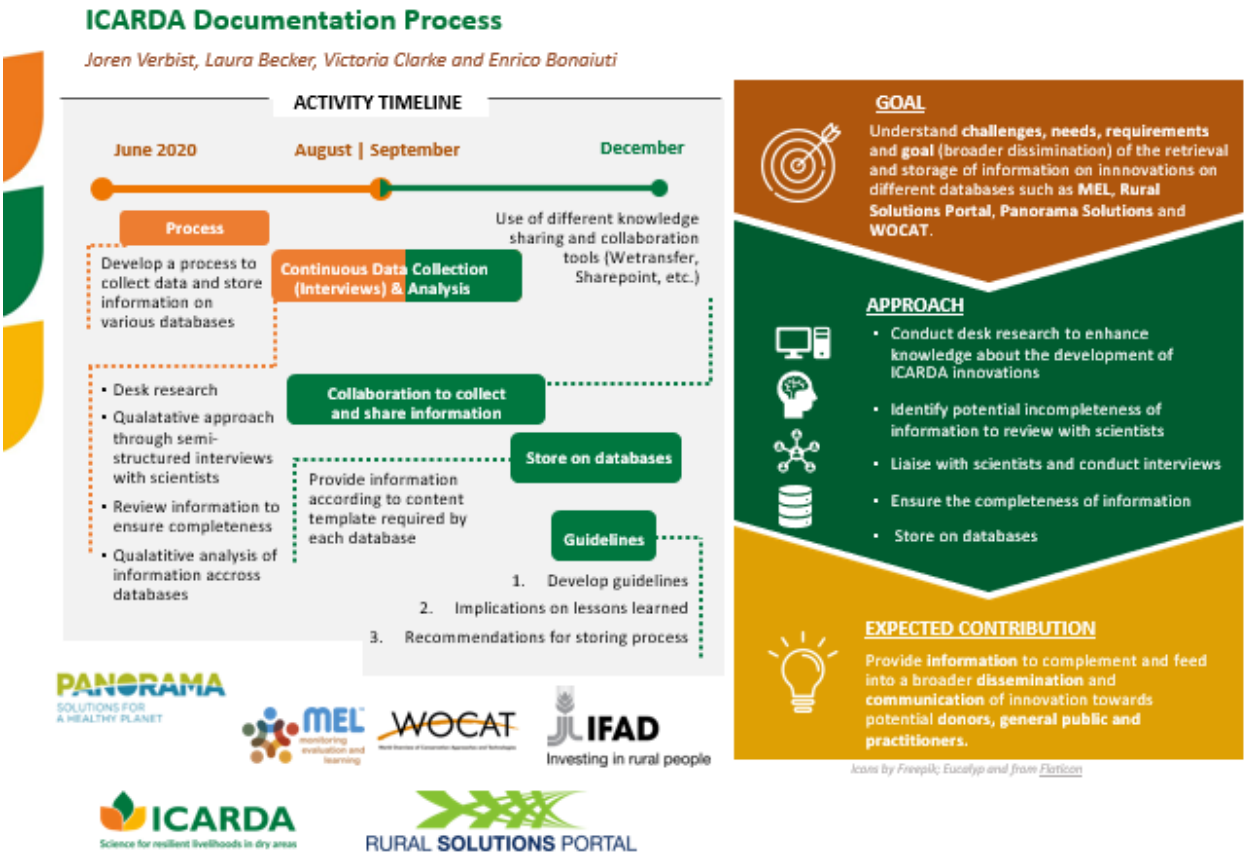
[2] Database, Platform, Portal, etc.
[3] https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/39155702/Innovations_Catalogue_FINAL.pdf/31df187d-63f4-f2e6-a3b4-2d760d6d249e
[4] Series of distinct stages, not continuously.

| Benefits of documentation[5] |
|---|
| **Generates trust** of results achieved |
| **Increases understanding** and peer learning through online communities and multi-stakeholder platforms |
| **Provides** lessons learned on experience and supports incorporation into current operations |
| **Enables innovation use** and replication in projects and policies, scaling up what works |
| **Increases funding opportunities** thanks to increased visibility |
| **Demonstrates results**, economic, environmental, and social impact |
| **Transforms tacit knowledge** (in people's minds) into explicit knowledge (documented), enabling dissemination |
| **Conceptualizes and visualizes solutions** and integrates in decision-making discussion, examples here and here |
| **Supports sustainability** of projects, programs, and organizations' results and current or future innovations |
| **Supports Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning** through standardized indicators, specialized methods of information gathering and fostering change |

## 2. The process to innovation documentation

The MEL Team defined a process to ensure the documentation of ICARDA innovations on the four digital data resources, summarized in the table below, followed with further detail in the next section. The templates used to retrieve innovation details through desk research and interviews with researchers may be found in Annex 3.

[5] Tana Lala-Pritchard. (2015). Outcome Story Toolkit: Guidelines and Template




## 3. Overview of digital data resources

Below you may find an overview of the four digital data resources selected, capturing the unique properties of each resource. These specific digital data resources were selected to reflect the nuances that may be found in the digital resource landscape. Others were not considered due to time constraints and planned scope of work. However, outside of this sample, there are several other digital data resources that may be considered for analysis and innovations reporting and documentation. A list of 18 digital data resources can be found in the work conducted by the RTB program at One CGIAR.

| Digital data resources | Overview | Audience |
|---|---|---|
| Rural Solutions Portal | **Objectives:**<br>The Rural Solutions portal implemented by International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) aims to showcase inspiring solutions to adopt and replicate them elsewhere. The platform is structured by different solution stories themselves ordered by type, regions, and themes. It has an emphasis on South-South Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) and it connects providers ranging from NGOs, UN institutions, and the private sector.<br><br>**Main themes**: SSTC, Climate and Environment, Crops, Farmers Organizations, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Gender, | **Audience scope:** wide<br><br>**Format:** Storytelling |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Indigenous People, Land, Livestock and Rangeland, Market Access, Nutrition, Rural Finance, Water, Youth. | |
| PANORAMA Solutions | **Objectives:**<br>The PANORAMA Solution portal, implemented by a multi-stakeholder partnership[6], aims to showcase inspiring solutions to adopt and replicate them elsewhere. The platform is structured in different thematic communities of practice. It connects over 200 solution providers ranging from NGOs, UN institutions to the private sector.<br><br>**Main themes:** Biodiversity, Climate Change, Ecosystem conservation, Financing, Gender mainstreaming, Geodiverisity and Geoconservation, Governance, Human development, Infrastructure, Islands, Local communities, Management Planning, Outreach & communications, Science and Research, Sectors, Standards/certifications, Waste and resources efficiency, World Heritage. | **Audience scope:** wide<br><br>**Format:** Storytelling |
| Global SLM Database | **Objectives**: The Global Database on Sustainable Land Management (SLM) of WOCAT is a user-driven, open-access, globally used database providing the possibility to document SLM approaches and technologies. It offers stakeholders the opportunity to store and share information on SLM. The database is recommended[7] by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) for the reporting of SLM technologies and approaches.<br><br>**Main themes:** SLM such as water, land, animals, soil, and vegetation and the broader impact around human needs, ensuring long-term productive potential and sustaining the technologies and approaches through their environmental functions. | **Audience scope**: SLM stakeholders<br><br>**Format**: Technical/Elaborate data and information |

[6] German Federal Ministry for the Environment; Nature Conservation; Building and Nuclear Safety; Rare; Global Environment Facility (GEF); Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment; Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of the Federal Republic of Germany (BMU); World Bank; International Council on Monuments and Sites; International Union for Conservation of Nature; UN Environment; Organics International; GRID-Arendal.

[7] Under the COP14 Decision 19 efforts from WOCAT Secretariat were acknowledged in promoting the analysis, dissemination, and accessibility of sustainable land management best practices within the Global WOCAT SLM database, and as requested by UNCCD.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Platform** | **Objectives:** The MEL Platform is a multi-stakeholder effort[8] and the innovation portal is a factsheet type recording of innovations from One CGIAR[9]. The reporting of these innovations includes a description, scaling evidence, and involved partners.<br><br>**Main themes:** Objectives, Stage of development, Outcome impact case reports, policies, Contributing Organizations, Scope of Reach. | **Audience scope:** One CGIAR<br><br>**Format:** Technical/Limited data and information |

### 3.1. Rural Solutions Portal

#### 3.1.1. What is a Rural Solution?

Rural solutions can be innovations, technologies (e.g., sustainable energy source, a financial scheme), processes, and methodologies for rural areas.

**Example Technologies**: either new or pre-existing, such as the Flexi Biogas system, a portable technology for harvesting combustible gas from everyday biomass like kitchen waste and manure (https://ruralsolutionsportal.org/en/-/flexi-biogas).

- **Selection and documentation criteria** for the Rural Solutions Portal are listed below, with reproducibility being the priority criterion.

| Criteria | Definition/Implications |
|---|---|
| **Reproducibility** | The solution can be re-used, adapted, and adopted by others in similar socio-economic or environmental situations. |
| **Reliability** | The solution has been tried and tested, producing good results. In the case of an innovation that has not yielded clear results yet, the expected results should be clear, tangible and concrete, on food security, increased incomes, or contribution to agricultural sector. |
| **Rural Dimension** | The solution needs to be focused on solving a specific problem/challenge in rural areas. |
| **Relevance** | The solution addresses a clearly articulated development challenge. |
| **Effectiveness/efficacy** | Does the solution solve the problem/challenge? (i.e., does it remove the constraint? Does it help the target group address the development challenge they face?). |
| **Impact potential on rural poverty** | The solution effectively addresses a specific challenge related to rural poverty reduction within the target group. It has the potential to improve the living conditions of the target group, addressing rural poverty in the area where it is implemented. |

[8] CGIAR Research Program on Dryland Cereals and Legumes; CGIAR Research Program on Roots Tubers and Bananas; CGIAR Research Program Fish; Excellence in Agronomy; World Fish; World Agroforestory Center; International Potato Center; The International Crops Research Institute for semi-Arid Tropics; International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas; Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics; The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture.
[9] Strategy - CGIAR

| | |
|---|---|
| **Link to public goods** | The solution addresses challenges associated with regional or global public goods. |
| **Replicability in other development contexts** | The solution is of broad applicability/utility to different and diverse contexts. |
| **Replicability in other countries** | The solution has broad applicability/utility to different countries. Does it work only in the country where it has been implemented? |
| **Scaling up** | The solution has the potential for being improved or adopted elsewhere (scaled up). |
| **Innovation** | A solution featuring new technology, new business model or new implementation approach – institutional, process-related, or technical. |
| **Sustainability** | The solution can be maintained long-term, whether in financial terms (cost-effectiveness) or in broader social, political, or environmental terms. |
| **Private sector** | Non-government and for-profit actors are engaged in the solution. |
| **Communications and knowledge management** | The solution generated a broad body of literature or communication products. |

The solutions are assessed according to a 3-point scale in terms of how well they address the above criteria: high, medium, and low. However, the criteria are not the only factor considered in the decision of including/excluding a development solution from the Portal. The SSTC Team also evaluates complementary criteria such as:

- **Regional and thematic distribution**. Solutions that are implemented across regions where IFAD operates and consider for various thematic areas/topics/sectors that are targeted by IFAD.
- **South-South and Triangular Cooperation dimension.** The SSTC element comes in at the innovation uptake stage to connect stakeholders in the Southern Hemisphere for the benefit of rural communities everywhere.
- **Solutions vs projects/programs.** A rural development solution is not a synonym of "project" or "programme". Projects generally consist of several components, each of which targets a specific group and addresses a challenge. Rural solutions are specific initiatives/activities within a project.

### 3.1.2. Stepwise approach to innovation documentation

The documentation of a Rural Solution follows an iterative process to first capture the information from desk research using the template, then undergoing a review process before being showcased on the portal. The steps for ICARDA to submit a Rural Solution are depicted in the following diagram.

**Documenter**

Get to know the information needed to be collected, by:

- Screening the platform
- Familiarizing with its template

1

**Documenter**

Start desk research to know more about the innovation/solution. This will help you gather references to support documentation.

2

**Documenter**

Once familiar with the innovation/solution, contact the scientist/leader to fill in any knowledge gaps. You may proceed by exchanging emails or interviewing the scientist.

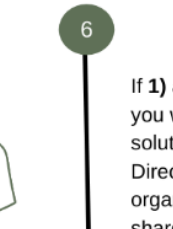
**Scientist**

3

**Documenter**

Once information complete you may revise the solution/innovation with South-South Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) Team at IFAD.

4



The solution is then uploaded to and published on the portal.
Well done, you may now see the results of your work! You may visit the Rural Solution Portal and see the result.

6

**Research Director**

If **1)** and **3)** then...
you will confirm the solution with the Research Director of your organization and then share the solution with the SSTC team that will then share with their editor.

**Documenter**

5

If **2) then...**
assess if the solution/innovation is fit for another portal.

If **4) then...**
re-ensure completeness of the information and liaise with scientist/leader if needed.

RURAL **SOLUTIONS** PORTAL

The SSTC team will conduct a first assessment of the solution to evaluate whether **1)** fit for the portal **2)** not fit for the portal **3)** information is complete and compliant with the portal **4)** information is not complete and compliant with the portal.

In parallel, the SSTC team will request you to provide **1)** an email that will be the focal point within your organization and to create a profile with that email on the portal or **2)** to provide the email of the solution provider and make sure the solution provider creates a profile on the portal.

NB: It will be requested to you to either create a profile for the solution holder or create general profile destined to a specific organization (e.g., ICARDA-solutions) regrouping different solution providers (e.g., researchers or innovation focal points). For the creation of the profile on the portal an email address is required.

## 4. Roles and Responsibilities

Different roles within the documentation process help ensure completeness and quality of information, including:

- **Documenter:** compiles the information according to a template.
- **Scientist**: reviews the information added by the Documenter.
- **Research Director:** confirms the solutions to be submitted to the portal.
- **IFAD SSTC Team:** the SSTC team has three roles including a) to provide a first assessment on the potential of selection; b) to review the solutions and request further information and c) to upload the solution to the portal.
- **IFAD Editor:** the Editor from IFAD reviews the wording, vocabulary, and clarity of language.

### 4.1.1. Audience

The audience for this portal concerns the following groups: general public, donors, policymakers, Researchers, farmers' associations, smallholders and family farmers, development practitioners, etc.

### 4.1.2. Contact point

If there are innovations, you desire to document in the Rural Solutions Portal please contact:

## 4.2. PANORAMA Solutions

### 4.2.1. What is a panorama solution?

Solutions are specific and applied examples of successful processes or approaches that have the potential to be replicated or upscaled. The solution definition can encompass either an entire project or a specific part of a project. Solutions are context-specific and can be leveraged and inspire learning across geographies and themes. Overall, the solutions documented respond to challenges in development such as maintaining human well-being, improving the health of biodiversity and ecosystems, helping to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and successful processes and approaches that have demonstrated positive impact for nature conservation and sustainable development.

PANORAMA Solutions documents two types of solutions: “full” and “snapshot” solutions. Full solutions include detailed documentation and a story (e.g., perspective from a beneficiary), whereas the snapshot includes a short description or abstract of the solution, a paragraph on impacts, and information on the organizations and individuals involved as well as links to further information.

- Selection and documentation criteria

For this portal, the aim is to be specific enough to make the information comprehensive for audience that might not be familiar with the concept, while staying general enough so that it may be applied elsewhere. The portal has three basic criteria and notes on what is not considered a solution:

| Criteria | What is entails |
|---|---|
| 1.Thematic relevance | Solutions respond to challenges to nature conservation, sustainable development, and human well-being and contribute to maintaining or improving the health of biodiversity, ecosystems, and the services they provide. A solution must be relevant to one of the thematic communities of PANORAMA, which may have defined additional selection criteria. |
| 2. Impact | • Provide a successful approach to problem-solving.<br>• Has an impact relevant for achieving SDGs and other targets under UN conventions (e.g., climate change, disaster risk reduction) and other global policy agendas.<br>• Promotes ecological, economic and/or social benefits. |
| 3.Replicable and scalable solution | Elements (building blocks) of the solution have the potential for adaptation, replication, or upscaling in other geographic, social, or sectoral contexts. |
| What is NOT a solution | If it takes an hour to explain the essence of your work, there might be multiple solutions contained in the work, but the work is not an appropriate single solution.<br>What is not necessarily a solution (but might be a raw material or a component):<br>• Publication, brochure, grant report, Research, Certifications, Network, Product or Person |

### 4.2.2. Stepwise approach to documentation

You will find below a stepwise approach to documenting the solution on the PANORAMA Solution Platform:

**Note:** you can propose your solution to be published under other thematically relevant portals, in addition to the "main portal" to which you submit it.

1. The coordinator of your solution's main thematic portal will ensure a consistent quality standard throughout PANORAMA and support you in producing a concise description of your solution.
2. Following the review, you can revise your text, based on the reviewer's comments. In total, 2-3 rounds of review and revision are to be expected.
3. Once both sides agree on a final description of your solution, it will be published.

Please find more on how to document a solution fit for PANORAMA Solution here.

**Documenter**

Get to know the information needed to be collected, by:

- Screening the platform
- Familiarizing with the full and snapshot template

1

**Documenter**

Start desk research to know more about the innovation/solution. This will help you gather references to support documentation.

2

**Documenter**

Once familiar with the innovation/solution, contact the scientist/leader to fill in any knowledge gaps. You may proceed by exchanging emails or interviewing the scientist.

**Scientist**

3

**Documenter**

Once information gathered you will confirm the solution with the Research Director of your organization.

**Research Director**

4

**Documenter**

Once information complete you may draft the solutions on the portal using the Full solution template or the Snapshot Solution template. If not complete, you may liaise with the scientist/leader to ensure completeness.

5

If revisions are requested, you may liaise further with the scientist to ensure completeness of the information.

6

The solution is then published on the portal. Well done, you may now see the results of your work! You may visit Panorama Solutions and see the solution.

PANORAMA
SOLUTIONS FOR A HEALTHY PLANET

Once the solution/innovations is uploaded, Panorama solutions reviewer will either:
**1)** Validate the solution
**2)** Request revisions

**2)**

In parallel, you will have to create a profile for your organization or log-in with the credentials if your organization already disposes of a profile on the portal.

#### 4.2.3. Roles and Responsibilities

5. **Solution provider (documenter):** The person who documents the solution in the template and submits the solution to the portal. This person takes full responsibility for the solution description that will be published, including ensuring appropriate acknowledgment of all relevant contributors. Solution providers also agree to being contacted by other users of the platform and engage in exchange.

- **Scientist:** the person who reviews the solution to ensure the information is accurate.
- **Research Director:** confirms the solutions to be submitted to the portal.
- **Solution reviewer (from panorama solutions):** Internal (within the organization that is providing the solution) or external (on a voluntary basis and provided by PANORAMA Solution).

#### 5.1.1. Audience

The audience for this portal includes the following groups: general public, donors, policymakers, researchers, farmers' associations, smallholders and family farmers, development practitioners, etc.

#### 5.1.2. Contact point

Following this guidance, to contribute, you may subscribe or log-in to the platform and add solutions here. For more information on documenting solutions in Panorama Solutions, please contact contact@panorama.solutions.

### 5.2. SLM Global Database

#### 5.2.1. What is a SLM technology and approach?

**SLM Technology:** a physical practice in the field that controls land degradation and/or enhances productivity, consisting of one or several measures. A Technology consists of one or several measures, such as agronomic, vegetative, structural, and management measures.

**Example**: https://qcat.wocat.net/en/wocat/technologies/view/technologies_3359/

**SLM Approaches**: the ways and means used to implement one or several SLM Technologies, such as technical and material support and stakeholder engagement. An Approach can refer to a project/ program, or to activities initiated by land users themselves.

**Example**: https://qcat.wocat.net/en/wocat/approaches/view/approaches_3173/

An Approach should always be linked to one or several Technologies. Optional thematic modules provide in-depth information on specific topics (such as Climate Change Adaptation, Carbon Benefits / Climate Change Mitigation, Watershed and Runoff, and Mapping Land Degradation and Conservation).

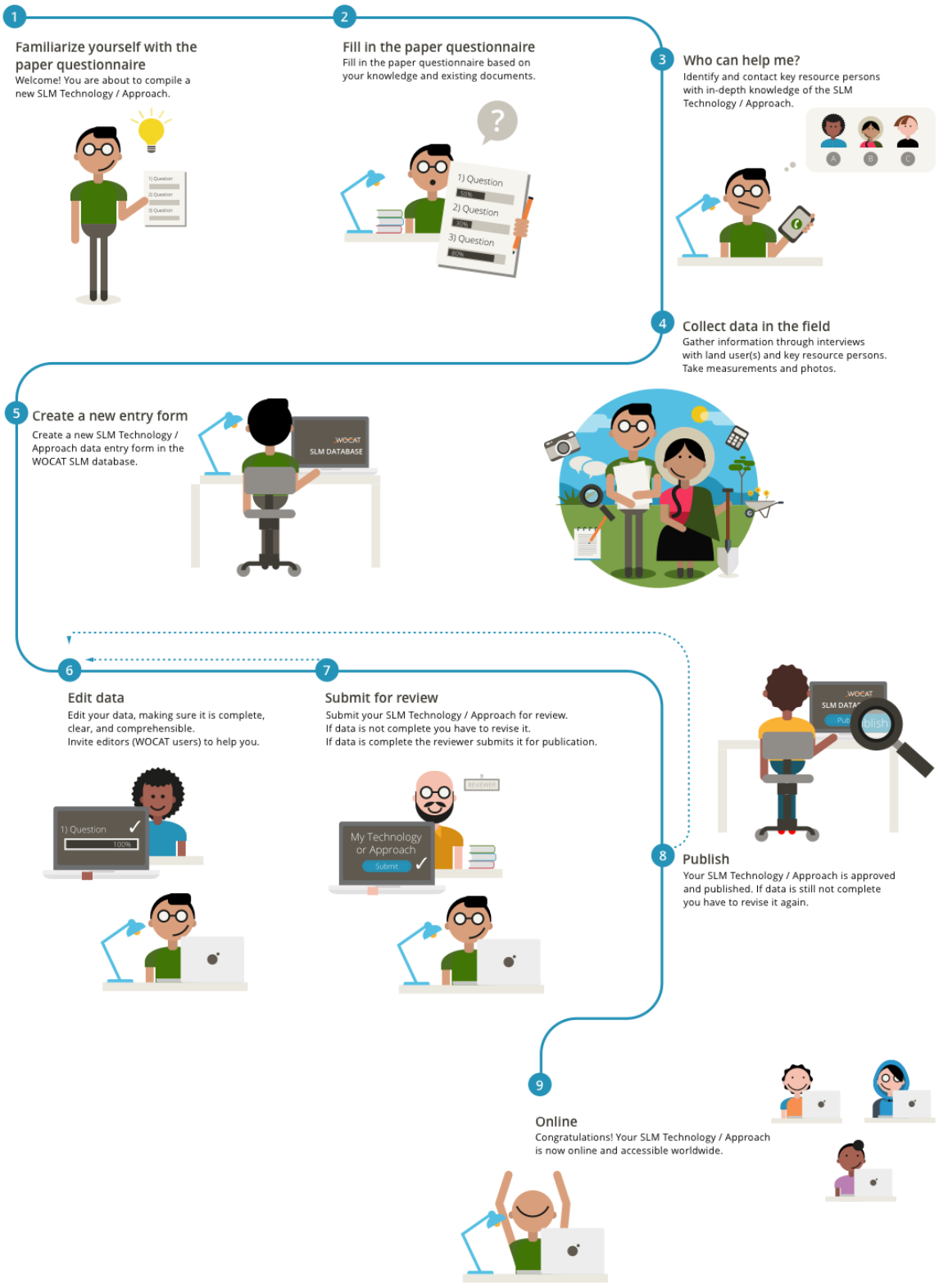
#### 5.2.2. Stepwise approach to documentation

According to the Global SLM database, the steps required to document an SLM technology or approach are listed in the following diagram.

**Note 1:** Fill in a separate questionnaire for each Technology and for each Approach.

**Note 2:** When creating translations, the content of the original language will be copied once into the

text fields, allowing you to translate the content. From there on, text changes must be done in all language versions. The checkboxes are linked across all translations, meaning they always change in all language versions.



#### 5.2.3. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Compiler (Documenter):** responsible for the data entry and can invite editors (WOCAT users) to support documentation. After data entry the compiler can submit it for review.
- **Scientist:** the person who reviews the solution to ensure the information is accurate.
- **Research Director:** confirms the solutions to be submitted to the portal.
- **Editor:** can edit, approve, and/or reject the SLM Technology / Approach.
- **Reviewer:** can approve or reject the SLM Technology / Approach and can edit it.
- **WOCAT**: the WOCAT Secretariat can review and publish the SLM Technology / Approach.

#### 5.2.4. Audience

The main audience for this portal includes practitioners and researchers

#### 5.2.5. Contact point

For more information on documenting Technologies and Approaches in Global SLM Database, please contact: wocat@cde.unibe.ch. Additional materials of guidance are provided here and here.

### 5.3. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Platform

#### 5.3.1. What is innovation?

Innovation is the package of complementary contributions needed to develop and take to scale products, services, and solutions – that happen within innovation systems of partnerships, networks, assets, and institutions. This leads to re-think the innovation not as a single variety or stand-alone but as the full package needed to generate an impact. This means that while it seems repetitive to count the same innovation (e.g., variety) for each country, there is a different context each time, hence classifying each as a separate innovation within this platform. The innovation can be reported as stand-alone or as a package (Innocent Bikara, 2021).

Innovations can also refer to significant research finding, improvement, method, or tool. A significant improvement is one that allows the management practice, knowledge, or technology to serve a new purpose or a new class of users to employ it, for example a new variety, a blend of fertilizer for a particular soil type, or a tool modified to suit a particular management practice.

- **Selection and documentation criteria**

The reporting of an innovation takes place at the end of each stage of development, to ensure it is captured and counted accurately. Project Managers will consult within their team reflecting over the previous year as to whether any of the projects have adapted research in new ways or created novel findings that should be categorized and reported as an innovation; or to see whether an existing innovation has moved from one stage to another.

The information required for documenting innovations in MEL include:

| Category | Information required |
|---|---|
| **Basic information** | Reporting Staff, Name of innovation, Description, Reporting Year, Sub-Intermediate Development Outcomes[10] targeted by this innovation |

[10] Direct benefits for the targeted population or environment and changes in the enabling environment (policies and institutions) are considered at this level.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Stages of innovation** | Stage of innovation on a four-tier scale, Description of stage reached, Lead Organization, Top 5 contributing organizations |
| **Evidence of stage reached**[11] | Supporting evidence[12] already reported in MEL or not (in case not, Citation and hyperlink are required). |
| **Contributing Program** | The information on the Program under which the innovation is mapped and the list of additional partners contributing to the innovation. |
| **Partners** | The main implementing organizations and collaborating partners. |
| **Scope**[13] | The geographical scope of the innovation. |

Further details on required may be found here.

### 5.3.2. Stepwise approach to documentation

Every six months, new or updated innovations between Projects Leaders and their team are discussed. If they are updated, as standard practice, reporting is conducted at the end of the following phases: Stage 1 (after research phase), Stage 2 (after real world assessment and piloting) Stage 3 (when ready for uptake) and Stage 4 (when uptaken).

If you are to add an innovation selected or confirmed by the Project Manager, you will take the role as a recorder and you will follow the process below.

[11] Evidence should be presented to validate the specific claims made about the innovation and they depend on the stage of the innovation. Report the most recent evidence, if possible.
[12] Innovations at different stages require different types of evidence. For example, stage 1 to 2 requires self-reported evidence; wherever possible, links should be provided to relevant project reports or publications. Stage 3 requires documentation that demonstrates a degree of 'completeness' and 'readiness' of the innovation to be taken up, for example certification process, report, or journal article. Stage 4 requires an outcome case study supported by appropriate evidence.
[13] The scope of research, testing, intended area of use or actual uptake at the time the innovation is recorded.

**Documenter**

Get to know the information requested, by:

- Screening the platform and innovation section
- Familiarizing with its template
- Creating a template to gather information

1

**Documenter**

Start desk research to know more about the innovation/solution. This will help you gather references to support documentation and know more about the stage fo development at which the innovation is at.

2

**Documenter**

Once familiar with the innovation/solution, contact the scientist/leader to fill in any knowledge gaps or updates. You may proceed by exchanging emails or interviewing the scientist.

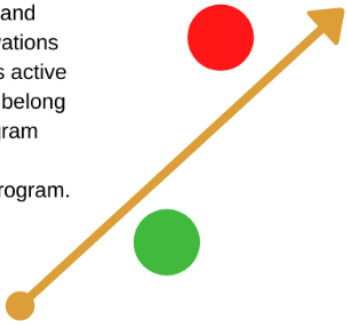
**Scientist**

3

**Documenter**

Once information gathered is complete, as documenter/reviewer you will draft your innovation in MEL and save or if you are updating an innovation (e.g. an innovation progresses from stage 1 to 2 or 3 to 4) you may revise the innovation in MEL and save.

4



**Documenter**

Once your innovation is saved as a draft, contact the scientist to review the information and confirm if you may submit it for approval. Once you have the green light by scientist you can submit your innovation to the workflow. If you receive a red light this implies you will have to make changes to ensure accuracy of information.

5

The drafted innovation template will be sent to the workflow for review and approval. The Innovations approval workflow is active for those users that belong to the group of Program Managers in an Organization or a Program.

6

**Reviewer**

A reviewer will confirm the innovation, request edits, or cancel the innovation. Once completed and confirmed by the reviewer, the innovation will appear as “approved”.

The solution is then visible on MEL Platform and can be retrieved in **Open Facts** section then **Innovations**. The portal allows you to update your innovation as it progresses through stages, please monitor the development of your innovation and the evidence it is producing to ensure completeness of information over time.

For more information contact MEL-support@cgiar.org

As a user of MEL you are entitled to create an innovation if the icon New Innovation ✚ appears on your dashboard in **Reporting** then **CRP**.

Creating records for innovation reports are allowed for cluster leaders, which can then be assigned to the activity leader or focal scientist who will complete the reporting of the innovation.

### 5.3.3. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Documenter:** Screens the platform, familiarizes with the template of the platform, creates a template to gather information, conducts research and fills in the template with information. The documenter transfers the information to the MEL Platform and receives green or red light from scientist to approve or not the innovation.
- **Scientist:** Receives the template from documenter and fills in knowledge gaps or provides updates to the development of the innovation. Reviews the innovation in MEL before submission.
- **Creator:** Project Managers, Cluster leaders, Program Management Officers and CRP Administrators, have the right to create new "Innovation reports". Once created, an innovation report can be assigned to any other user.
- **User/Recorder/Documenter:** The user that has been assigned as reporting staff for a particular innovation report will have access to it and will be able to create new reports for the same innovation. Only one report per year can be created.
- **Reviewer:** Program Management Unit will review and reporting staff Researcher
- **Approver:** The Program Management Unit will add comments if needed and approve it. When an innovation is approved, the information will not be editable.

### 5.3.4. Audience

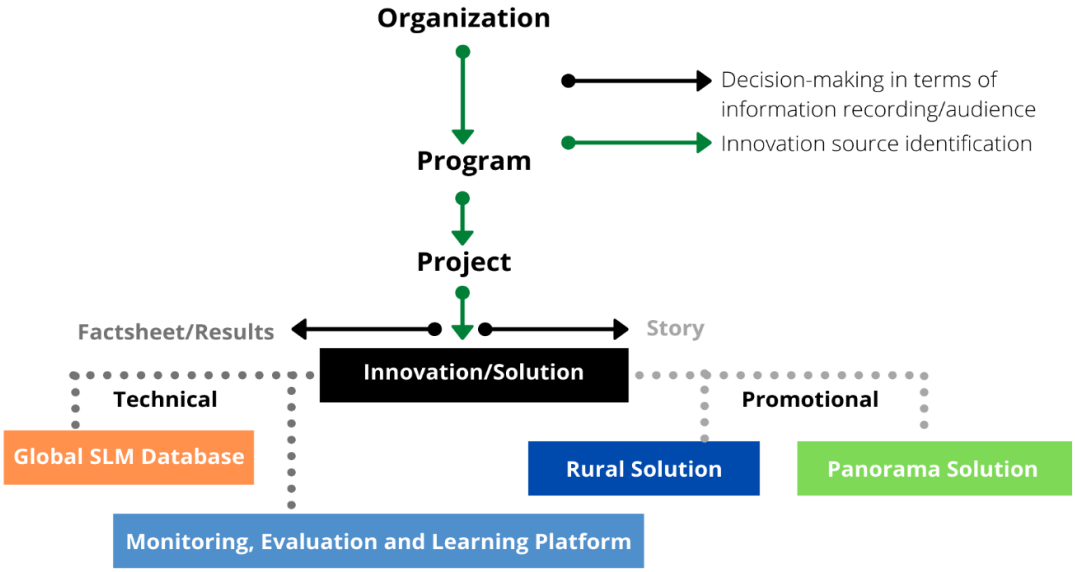
The main audience for this portal includes the following groups: development practitioners, internal MEL users, researchers.

### 5.3.5. Contact point

For more information on documenting innovations in the MEL Platform, please contact the support team. Additional materials of guidance are provided in the MEL user guide here.

## 6. Decision tree

The decision tree below shows where an innovation can be retrieved from in green arrows, and which decision can be made to document the solution in the best fit portal for the best fit audience in black and dotted lines.



## 7. Lessons Learned

Lessons learned are ordered in chronological order:

- **Targets**. Set targets for uploading to the platform, as for certain digital data resources it takes at least one month for review.
- **Focal points.** Request contact points for each digital resource to ensure you are aware of information that may not be present to the public on the portals (e.g., the portal may offer an editor to edit your drafted solution.)
- **Template**. Follow the template (Annex 3.) to increase efficiency in collecting information and coherence.
- **Efficiency.** Choose one innovation to focus on across digital data resources rather than starting several innovations for different digital data resources at the same time.
- **Start with the most straight-to-the-point digital data resource** (i.e., MEL) to give you context of the stage of the innovation, then in parallel go into a more in-depth and technical collection for WOCAT, or simplified knowledge collection through PANORAMA Solutions and Rural Solution Portal.
- **Check information.** Double check completeness and correctness of information, as well as ensuring the final version of the file before submitting.
- **Titles.** Make sure titles are informative and straightforward.
- **Description.** Focus on the main finding(s), how it works, and who are the target users. Focus on the innovation itself, and not on the project.
- **Digestible content.** Double check wording against the audience of the digital resource, when needed make it more understandable for non-specialist readers.
- **Citations.** Check how the uploaded innovations may be cited in future publications.
- **Contributors**. Ensure the innovation is affiliated to the correct, clearly cited contributors.
- **Abbreviations.** The abbreviations, acronyms, and specific terms must be explained according to the audience.
- **Handle links**. Ensure that links provided for evidence are handle links from MEL.space.
- **Photo credits**. Ensure photos have a caption and credits.
- **Photo format**. Ensure correct format of photos in high quality (300 dpi) images. Ensure photos are contextualizing well the innovation.

## 8. Categorization of digital data resources

After documentation, a summary table was produced to categorize the digital data resources studied on different qualities. They were classified based on the following rubric:

**Technicity:**

- **Low:** the information must be understood by the general public.
- **Medium:** the information combines understanding by the general public and practitioners.
- **High:** the information is only destined to practitioners.

**Audience:**

- **General public:** the digital resource addresses its format, wording, and approach to public.
- **Technical:** the digital resource addresses its format, wording, and approach to technical practitioners.

**Knowledge product**

- **Communication:** the digital resource requires communication and multimedia products.
- **Scientific Literature:** the digital resource requires technical information such as journal articles, technical reports, etc.

**Approach**

- **Story:** the template and digital resource focus on text and communication for the recording of innovations.
- **Factsheet/Documentation:** the template and digital resource are based on results and facts more than text.

**Solution:**

- **Specific:** the digital resource uses specific terminologies referring to innovations such as technology, approaches, genetic, etc.
- **General:** the digital resource uses only a generic term, such as "solution" or "innovation".

**Results-focused:**

- **Low:** the results section does not occupy a large section of the template.
- **Medium:** the results section takes up a fair amount of the template.
- **High:** the results occupy ½ the template.

**Content:**

- **Low:** the length of the template does not require substantial information.
- **Medium:** the length of the template requires average quantity of information.
- **High:** the length of the template requires high quantity and detailed information.

| Databases / Criteria's | Rural Portal Solutions | PANORAMA Solutions | WOCAT | MEL Platform |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Technicity** | Low | Low | High | Medium |
| **Main Audience** | General public/Donors | General public/Donors | Practitioners | Practitioners |
| **Knowledge product type** | Communication | Communication | Technical | Technical |
| **Approach** | Story type | Story type | Documentation | Documentation |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Solution[14] / Innovation type** | • Technology<br>• Process | • Full solution<br>• Snapshot solution | • SLM Technology<br>• SLM Approach | • Genetic<br>• Production Systems Management Practices<br>• Social science<br>• Biophysical research<br>• Research communication methodologies and tools[15] |
| **Solution/Innovation type** | Specific | General[16] | Specific | Specific |
| **Focus on themes** | • South-South and Triangular Cooperation<br>• Regional and thematic | Protected Areas | • Sustainable Land Management<br>• Cost benefit<br>• Environment | • Scaling<br>• Maturity[17] |
| **Geographical distribution** | Regional | Regional | Local | Global and regional |
| **Search by** | • Geographical focus (Location [18] and Country)<br>• Topic<br>• Solution Type<br>• Countries | • Geographical focus (Region)<br>• Ecosystem<br>• Theme<br>• Challenges<br>• Building blocks<br>• Thematic communities | • Key words<br>• Geographical focus (Country)<br>• Project<br>• Institution<br>• Language<br>• Technology<br>• Approach | • Organization<br>• CRP<br>• Type<br>• Year<br>• Flagship<br>• Cluster |
| **Logo** | RURAL SOLUTIONS PORTA | PANORAMA SOLUTIONS FOR A HEALTHY PLANET | WOCAT | MEL monitoring evaluation and learning |
| **Context focus** | Development context | Ecosystem | Environmental context | Research context |
| **Results focused** | Medium | Medium | High | High |

[14] Solution is a general term for innovation. Technology is a specific term and a solution or innovation type. A solution can be a technology but can also be something else. A technology is a technology and cannot be something else.
[15] In this section, we do not intend to differentiate databases per types as done for knowledge products but list them as presented in respective digital data resources. These definitions can sometime mean the same (e.g., solution / technologies) and we invite you to visit the different database to understand more.
[16] A solution or innovation is more general than a technology, process, approach or production system and management practice, etc., as the former refers to the general term and the latter to a subcategory.
[17] Please see Annex 1. Glossary for more information.

[18] Location is at local level.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Time of information collection** | Medium | Medium | High | Low |
| **Content** | Medium | Medium | High | Low |
| **Beneficiary type** | Rural population | Communities | Land user | End User[19] |
| **Main use** | Project Management | Investment management | Impact research | Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning |
| **SDG** | SDG1, SDG2, SDG5, SDG8, SDG10, SDG13, SDG15, SDG17 | All | SDG15 | All |

[19] Please see Annex 1. Glossary for more information.

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## Annex 1. Glossary

This section is destined to the different terminologies used. To know more please visit the following glossaries: *Glossary (cgiar.org)*, WOCAT and *PANORAMA Manual | PANORAMA*.

**Building blocks:** Core elements of a solution, such as instruments, tools, approaches, partnerships or processes, that determine its success. Building blocks may be adapted and, if appropriate, recombined with others to address specific challenges in different socio-cultural and ecological contexts, sectors, or geographies.

**End user:** Correspond to farmers or service providers and are the next logical beneficiary after next user (research institutions, NGO, extension services, etc.)

**Full Solution**: Full solutions are documented using the complete solutions case study template. This includes a detailed description of the context in which the solution is applied (region, ecosystem etc.) and further details about the solution (challenges addresses, beneficiaries etc.). Most importantly, the full solution template allows for describing the solution's replicable key components, or "building blocks". Furthermore, the full solution template includes a section for a personal "story", which describes how the solution works, possibly from the perspective of a beneficiary, and using less technical, more subjective language.

**Innovation:** Research and development innovations are new or significantly improved (adaptive) outputs or groups of outputs - including management practices, knowledge, or technologies. This could also refer to a significant research finding, method or tool. A significant improvement is one that allows the management practice, knowledge, or technology to serve a new purpose or a new class of users to employ it, for example a new variety, a blend of fertilizer for a particular soil type, or a tool.

**Maturity:** Three levels define maturity. At level 1, the innovation/solution witness a change in discourse or behavior. At level 2, the innovation/solution manifests a policy or practice change. At level 3, the innovation/solution witnesses' impact or adoption at scale.

**PANORAMA solution:** Successful approach that addresses a conservation and sustainable development challenge with a proven impact.

**Rural solutions**: specific initiatives/activities within a project/program. Not a program or a project. These are innovations, technologies (e.g., sustainable energy source, a financial scheme), processes and methodologies for the rural world.

**Scaling[20]:** Scaling up/out relate to expanding, replicating, adapting, and sustaining successful policies, programs, or projects in geographic space or over time to reach a greater number of people. Scaling is typically preceded by piloting the model, idea or approach initially in a small scale. Scaling-out may refer specifically to the adoption and adaptation to local circumstances by users; while scaling-up may refer to extension and institutional support related to scaling.

**Snapshot Solution:** Solutions documented in an abbreviated version of the Solutions template, allowing Solution Providers to contribute to PANORAMA easily and quickly and explore the added value of the format. The snapshot solution template includes sections for abstract, impacts; and information on the organizations and individuals involved as well as links to further information.

[20] Glossary (cgiar.org)

**Solution provider**: Person involved in the implementation of the solution, who documents the solution in the PANORAMA case study template. This person has in-depth knowledge of the solution. The solution provider will be visibly acknowledged with his/her name, contact details and affiliation on the web platform, and takes full responsibility for the solution description that will be published, including ensuring appropriate acknowledgment of all relevant institutions and individuals. Solution providers also agree to being contacted by other users of the platform and engage in exchange.

**Solution seeker:** Person facing a challenge in his or her work context and looking for inspiration on how to address this challenge without "re-inventing the wheel".

**Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Approach**: An SLM Approach defines the ways and means used to implement one or several SLM Technologies. It includes technical and material support, as well as involvement and roles of different stakeholders, etc. An Approach can refer to a project/ program or to activities initiated by land users themselves.

**Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Technology**: An SLM Technology is a practice applied in the field that controls land degradation and/ or enhances productivity. It consists of one or several measures, such as agronomic, vegetative, structural, and management measures.

**Thematic community**: Thematic communities of PANORAMA cluster solutions relevant to different user groups. They are reflected on the web platform through "thematic portals". Each thematic community is managed by a Thematic Community Coordinator.

## Annex 2. Templates for documentation

The documentation of innovations across the digital data resources cited above inspired the following templates:

- **RTB Innovation Catalog template** to record innovation here.
- **MEL Documentation template** to record innovations here.