

Value proposition for CRP on Dryland Systems

The CRP will supersede the piecemeal approach that has dominated drylands research up to now by embracing both horizontal and vertical systems integration across sectors and scales. This fully integrated systems approach explicitly takes into account the economic, social and environmental co-benefits needed to achieve viable livelihoods, and ensure social and environmental well-being, especially for the 800 million rural poor in drylands.

It will strengthen the science-policy interface that has prevented governments and international bodies from delivering changes on the ground to rural people. A fully integrated systems approach is necessary to identify opportunities for the agricultural sector in concert with development of water and renewable energy resources, in the context of a new generation of national development plans that can reverse the chronic lack of investment in dryland areas.

The CRP will develop and test, with development partners, feasible combinations of technical, market, governance and policy options capable of kick starting and sustaining improvements in agricultural livelihoods by understanding the social, financial, technical and environmental contexts for which they are appropriate, thereby generating a knowledge base for better targeting interventions.

New science will be applied in systems research on how to cope with climate change and land degradation at the expected scale of impact; that is, with millions of farmers across millions of ha of dryland. This will be achieved through forging partnerships that can use planned comparisons in large N trials, with crowd sourced data for monitoring and evaluation, bringing recent developments in information science and technology to bear on the problems of the poor and vulnerable.

In the water sector, a systems approach will not only ensure its efficient use for agriculture, but also provide guidance on water allocations amongst different sectors from production, economic and employment perspectives.

Systems innovation platforms will be fostered that add to value chains by encouraging diversification and local income generation by harnessing local and 'scientific' knowledge that, when combined with responsible private sector investment, will result in local clusters of economic activity incorporating other livelihood options such as renewable energy, ecotourism, artisanal goods and biodiversity for pharmaceuticals.

This new 'research in development' approach will directly improve the effectiveness of development spending at local scales, at the same time as producing generalizable knowledge, and forging new partnerships, that will impact development of livelihood systems across the global drylands.