Royal Tropical Institute
KIT Development Policy & Practice

Developing a Strategic Framework for Innovation Platforms in Dryland Systems

CGIAR Research Program on Dryland Systems
Working Meeting

Daed Sea, Jordan
15-18 September 2014

Workshop objectives

- Create joint understanding of the theoretical background on agricultural innovation systems in general, and innovation platforms in particular, as well as the difference between a “system” and a “platform”.
- Share the relevant practical approaches on innovation platforms implemented previously within ICARDA, other CGIAR centres and elsewhere.
- Create commitment to implementation and experimentation with innovation platforms.
- Elaborate a joint CRP DS agenda and country strategies to design, facilitate and document the work with innovation platforms in the West Asia - North Africa (WANA)

Fears and expectations

Programme

Monday 15 September 2014	
09.00	Opening session
11.30	Introductory Session: Understanding and exploring experiences with Innovation platforms (IPs)
13.30	Lunch
14.30	Experiences from the CRP-DS: presentations by participants • community based development in the Mashreq-Maghreb project (Ali Nefzaoui) • experiences from Morocco, Tunis, Egypt and Jordan • drawing lessons and understanding contextual interpretations and challenges
17.00	Evaluation / closure of the day
	Coffee & Social time

Programme (2)

Tuesday 16 September 2014	
09.00	Recap day 1
09.15	IPs in WANA • IPs: expected outcomes • Institutional constraints identified • Role of research • Socio-cultural barriers to IPs and stakeholder engagement
11.30	Characteristics of IPs to-be in WANA countries • Underpinnings • Actors involved
13.30	Lunch

Programme (3)

Tuesday 16 September 2014	
14.30	Towards a mutually accepted CRP-DS strategy
16.00	Designing a process for establishing / strengthening the work on IPs
17.00	Evaluation / closure of the day
	Coffee & Social time

Programme (4)

Thursday 21 November	
09.00	Recap day 2
09.15	Designing a process for establishing / strengthening the work on IPs (continued)
11.30	Discussion on country level strategies for IP's
13.30	Lunch
14.30	What support do countries need? Joint action plan for 2014 and 2015 (next steps, reflection, follow up)
16.00	Evaluation and closure
	Coffee & Social time

Approach

- Building on your experiences
- Joint learning
- Participatory
- Diverse working methods
- Practical and action oriented

Workshop rules

- There is no wrong opinion
- Be informal!!
- Do at least one social event – it is supposed to be fun
- Avoid jargon
- Be innovative creative – share your ideas
- Be constructive
- Enough time for discussion
- Document ideas, build on previous days' work
- Give everyone the chance to talk
- Turn off phones
- Be on-time

What is Innovation?

Agricultural Innovation: making your own definition

1. **Buzz** in groups of 2 on the question: “What is innovation”?

   (10 minutes)
2. Write 3 key words you associate with agricultural innovation (one per card)
3. In plenary : based on key words define **agricultural innovation**

Agricultural Innovation: core characteristics

- a complex and unpredictable process
- Result from cross-fertilization of different experiences, ideas and opinions
- Requires a mix of technical (hardware), knowledge (software) and organizational (orgware) changes
- Driven by the search for social and economic progress by individuals, and the adaptation to newly emerging threats and opportunities.
- often results from new social, economic and environmental challenges and opportunities (changes in markets, regulations, climate, values and stakeholder interaction).
- science supports innovation but is not the only driver

Agricultural Innovation Systems

What is an Agricultural Innovation System (AIS)?

Based on (soft) **systems thinking**:

- Probing and dealing with complex situations that actors face in a particular domain / sector
- Emphasizes wholeness, interrelatedness and emergent properties
- Relationships and linkages among elements
- Arbitrary boundaries
- Focus on the actors, their perspectives, intentions, interrelationships,

Agricultural innovation system: a definition

"a network of organizations, enterprises, and individuals focused on bringing new products, new processes, and new forms of organization into economic use, together with the institutions and policies that affect their behaviour and performance" (FAO working definition, Adapted from World Bank and Hall)

Agricultural Innovation - Dryland Systems

What are the implications for your approach to Dryland Systems when adopting an Agricultural Innovation Systems perspective?

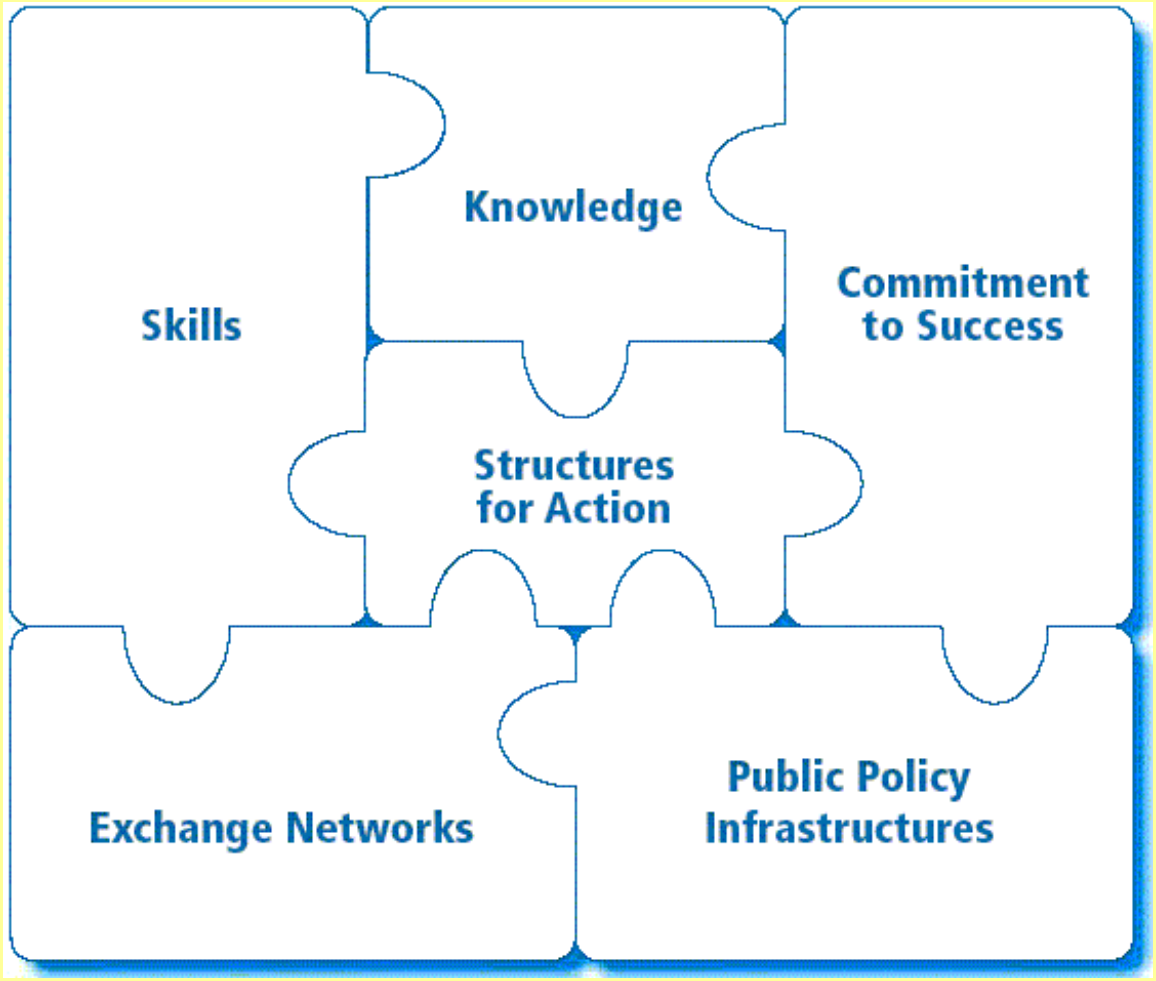
What is different in the AIS concept

- It puts innovation at the center, rather than the knowledge and services required for innovation
- It is actor-oriented
- It clearly acknowledges the complementing roles of multiple actors in innovation
- It breaks with the idea that research is the major source of knowledge
- It considers the technological, economic, organizational, and institutional aspects of innovation
- Uses ideas from various disciplines → multi-disciplinary
- It focuses on sustainable system improvement by giving attention to the context in which innovation takes place
- It recognizes innovation systems as social systems that can learn and adapt and evolve over time

Criticism on the AIS approach

- Innovation system concept is of little relevance to agriculture in developing countries
- Its use stops at the level of system analysis, and is not resulting in action on the ground
- Concept is too complex → it creates more confusion than that it clarifies
- AIS theory lacks scientific rigor
- It shifts the focus (and resources) away from agricultural research

Puzzling and fascinating …



Country presentations

- What did work?
- What did not work?

- Based on the experiences, why (if at all) would you need multi-stakeholder interaction mechanisms at regional / sub-national level?
- What would be the functions of such mechanisms?
- What would be the expected outcomes?
- How would we call them (in Arab)

Innovation Platforms

"A diversity of interdependent actors who jointly attempt to positively change the way the operate by trying out new practices" (Nederlof et al, 2011)

"A group of individuals (who often represent organizations) with different backgrounds and interests coming together to diagnose problems, identify opportunities and find ways to achieve their goals. They may design and implement activities as a platform or as individuals" (Homman-Kee Tui et al, 2013)

An innovation platform...

- Is ONE of the mechanisms to operationalize AIS
- Enhancing stakeholder interaction
- Different types of interdependent actors
- Common, often complex problem (or opportunity or idea)
- Provides a space for exploring opportunities to address common issues, to jointly experiment and implement solutions

Initiation and facilitation

- Innovation platforms rarely emerge without external intervention
- facilitative action is required.
- Facilitators or innovation brokers act as catalysts
- Can (co-)exist at different levels
- Need for a concrete entry point
- Local level: focus on improving farming practices or value chains
- Higher level: focus more on creating an enabling institutional environment, including policy change
- Important to ensure linkages between higher level platforms with local actors (or local platforms)

Factors contributing to the establishment of innovation platforms

Underpinning factors	Myths and misconceptions
- Getting the right mix of actors on board - Ensure ownership from key actors right from the start - Actors share a common vision and an agreed set of operating modalities. - Strong linkages between different levels of platforms. - Alignment / complementarity with other development policies, programmes and projects.	- The innovation platform approach includes a predefined step-by-step sequence of activities. - Bringing all actors together is easy.

Effectiveness

Underpinning factors	Myths and misconceptions
- Identification of concrete entry points and initiate platform activities based on concrete actions. - Strong and appropriate representation of actor groups (see also gender and inclusion). - Equality among stakeholders rather than monopolisation by one or few members. - Openness and trust among stakeholders - Policy support. - Platform / stakeholders ability to interact with the external environment.	- Platforms are appropriate mechanisms to disseminate technologies at scale. - Platforms are suitable mechanisms to reach scale. - Platforms can transfer into joint commercial enterprises. - Once around the same table, all actors are “equal”. - -

Gender

- Inclusion is a part of resilience and sustainability.
- Women's participation and inclusion has the potential to address systemic issues related to access and control over resources
- Platforms tend to give insufficient attention to gender and social disparities.
- Inclusion is limited to "smallholder farmers" as a homogenous group

Gender

Underpinning factors	Myths and misconceptions
- Attention to gender contributes to meeting the food needs and improved welfare for the poor. - Inclusion and gender equity come at a cost. - Explicit learning approaches - Government and policy support in creating the space for marginalized groups to participate. - Gender and inclusion requires looking at the organizations involved, the incentives for different actors to participate, and the constraints – social, cultural, regulatory – to their participation in innovation processes.	- Women participation in farmers' groups and platform activities automatically improves their situation - Gender is about involving women farmers in production and innovation platform -

Governance

- “the rules, processes and behaviour by which interests are articulated, resources are managed, and power is exercised in society”. (EU 2003)

- Innovation platform: a mechanism or space
  - where stakeholders interact
  - where stakeholders voice their interests, ideas, and perspectives
  - where decisions are negotiated and translated into concrete actions
  - where accountability mechanisms become operational.
  - for governing agricultural development and innovation

Governance

Underpinning factors	Myths and misconceptions
- Better relationships among actors improves individual businesses through better communication and arrangements. - Changing relationships open up new avenues for engagement and allow different actors to influence change. - Higher-level platforms can function as mechanisms for lower-level platforms to influence policy and win policy support. - local and high-level platforms provide an opportunity to share knowledge and information with the outside and exercise influence. - Systematic M&E systems contribute to mutual accountability, operational management and joint learning.	- Elected stakeholder representatives voice their peers' interests. - Information trickles down to member groups automatically through their representatives. - Innovation platforms are free of power struggles. - In innovation platforms, all actors have automatically equal influence and power.

Sustainability

Sustainability of what?

- of the changes that happen through the platform (“the innovations”);
- of the innovation platform itself as a mechanism or entity
- of the capacity to innovate.

Sustainability

Underpinning factors	Myths and misconceptions
- Sustained facilitation capacity. - Policy support to IPs and its activities - Sustained motivation and participation of stakeholder groups. - Sustained relevance of the platform. - Incentives, resources, leadership and relationships are all necessary to sustain a platform.	- Platforms have to be sustained in order to sustain the capacity to innovate. - Platforms have to be formalised and registered to be performant.

Learning as embedded components

- Learning is a key component of innovation platforms.
- Learning-by-doing
- Need for competencies and skills as pre-requisite for effective co-learning.
- Capacity strengthening can target individual, organizational, institutional and systems levels
- Can be directed towards both technical competence and skills enhancement.
- Can address management, the facilitation of experiential learning or the sharing of best practices.

Researchers functions in innovation platforms

- Providing relevant knowledge and information
- Helping people reflect on and analyse their situation, problems and opportunities identify possible actions (action-research)
- Identifying research questions for different disciplines
- Helping people experiment with a variety of options and analyse trade-offs
- Be the facilitator of the innovation platform
- (evidence-based) Advocacy

Underpinning factors	Myths and misconceptions
- Complexity and uncertainty demand learning-oriented monitoring and evaluation strategies. - Innovation requires individual, organisational and institutional learning. - Learning implies the need for reflection and recognizing learning from failure. - Participatory M&E offers stakeholders the opportunity to learn from each other and to provide their view on the innovation process. - Process documentation can provide valuable insights in innovation processes. - Research can provide insight into the effectiveness of innovation platforms as well as the platform processes	- Researchers are needed in every single Innovation Platform. - Researchers are in platforms to provide ready-made solutions. - Learning always occurs, and does not need to be “supported” or “facilitated”. -

Considerations…..

- Is an innovation platform always the most effective towards institutional change?
- How to ensure cross-fertilization, exchange of information and learning between platforms operating at different levels?
- Higher level platform need to avoid becoming talk-shops; strengthening their action-orientation. How to make that happen in the context of CRP-DS' work?
- How can CRP-DS and its research partners best support platforms? What roles are they best fit to play?
- How to ensure that platforms take into consideration how issues it deals with affects women and men differently?
- What will be the strategy towards increasing the meaningful participation (i.e. empowerment) of women who sit in these platforms?

- What kind of governance mechanism can be put in place that – whereas remaining as informal as possible – still provides the platforms with the cloud it needs?
- How to monitor and document the work (to be) done, without overwhelming all actors involved, whereas still providing meaning inputs towards internal learning?
- What kinds of support do platform facilitators' need? How will they learn from each other?

The system's capacity to innovate

- the capacity to continuously identify and prioritize problems and opportunities in a dynamic systems environment
- the capacity to take risks, experiment with social and technical options, and assess the trade-offs that arise from these
- the capacity to mobilise resources and form effective support coalitions around promising options and visions for the future
- the capacity to link with others in order to access, share and process relevant information and knowledge in support of the above
- the capacity to collaborate and coordinate with others during the above, and achieve effective concerted action

The system's capacity to innovate

- In supporting the above, those with a mandate or willingness to catalyse system innovation processes will need to develop:
- a conceptual understanding of how change comes about in complex systems and how to intervene effectively;
- the ability to orchestrate and facilitate interaction in support of the above;
- the ability to inform societal agents and embed research activity in ongoing processes of change.
- Together, these capacities form a system's capacity to innovate

(Results from the workshop on Innovation Platforms in Systems CRP, Leeuwis et al, 2014).

Functions

- identify and prioritize problems and opportunities
- experiment with social and technical options, and assess the trade-offs that arise from these
- mobilise resources and form effective support coalitions around promising options and visions for the future
- link with others in order to access, share and process relevant information and knowledge
- collaborate and coordinate with others, and achieve effective concerted action
- inform other (external) actors
- provide other research activities with a new framework.