



Australian Government

Australian Centre for
International Agricultural Research

Forestry

Developing value chain innovation platforms to improve food security in East and Southern Africa

Overview

Although smallholder farmers are responsible for most agricultural production in sub-Saharan Africa, the majority of them remain poor and marginalised. Innovation platforms offer a way to enhance smallholder farmers' ability to access high-value markets for agricultural products.

A decade of economic growth throughout East and Southern Africa is reshaping food value chains, as incomes, urbanisation and demographics influence agricultural markets. But opportunities remain elusive for many smallholders, especially women, to benefit from these value chains. One widely acknowledged reason for this relates to the failures of traditional approaches to innovation in agriculture, especially the top down, linear design of extension services.

To increase adoption, recent agricultural innovation programs have created 'coalitions of stakeholders' to identify and address local agricultural development problems. These stakeholders form an innovation platform – 'a network of organizations, enterprises and individuals focused on bringing new products, new processes and new forms of organisation into economic use, together with the institutions and policies that affect their behaviour and performance'. Evaluations throughout Africa suggest that such platforms, which engage local producer knowledge in a collaborative framework with value chain partners, are more successful than traditional research and extension systems.



KEY FACTS

ACIAR Project No. FST/2014/093

Duration: June 2015 to November 2019 (4 years)

Target areas: Uganda and Zambia

Budget: AU\$3,000,000

Project Leader

Dr Clement Okia, World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)

Key partners

- University of Adelaide
- African Landcare Network and Landcare International
- National Forestry Resources Research Institute (NaFORRI)
- Makerere University
- Kapchorwa District Landcare Chapter (KADLACC)
- Zambia Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI)
- Copperbelt University

ACIAR Research Program Manager

Dr Nora Devoe

Research/Objective

The project aims to identify principles and drivers that support the scalable establishment of effective and equitable innovation platforms that enhance food security through greater engagement of smallholder farmers with markets.

The specific objectives are to:

- Assess smallholder livelihoods and institutional arrangements across scales, and identify drivers that enable value chain innovation platform development for sustainable agricultural commercialisation.
- Identify best fit value chain development strategies and market information delivery systems, and examine their influence on the success of value chain innovation platforms in enhancing rural enterprise development.
- Develop and evaluate scalable approaches for promoting value chain innovation platforms among smallholders and other stakeholders in ways that generate inclusive and sustainable economic benefits.
- Engage with and strengthen the capacity of key stakeholder groups to both enhance the research process and promote the widespread scaling up of approaches generated by the project.
- Systematically monitor and review project implementation and evaluate its outcomes and impacts.

Expected scientific results

- Evidence and guidelines to assist government agencies, international donors and non-governmental organisations to invest in scaling up value chain innovation platforms.
- Guidelines identifying best fit strategies for developing value chain innovation platforms, including insights on the role that market information delivery systems play in promoting more effective value chain innovation platforms.
- Recommendations on options for enhanced policy instruments, regulations and investment incentives to support retail linkages with smallholders, especially women and young farmers.
- Communication and outreach programs to enhance coordination and policy engagement with value chain innovation platforms.

- Enhanced capacity of partners in developing institutional arrangements, market access and development of effective value chain innovation platforms.

Expected outcomes

- Economic impacts include: (i) higher incomes and food security for smallholders; (ii) greater profitability for women producers, traders, processors and retailers; (iii) improved productivity and quality products; (iv) more efficient and competitive value chains; (v) more jobs for rural landless wage earners from expanded local rural enterprises; (vi) higher daily wages for rural workers; (vii) more diversified income sources for small producer households; and (viii) more spending in local communities, increasing the non-farm rural economy.
- Expected social impacts include: (i) more women and rural households lifted out of poverty; (ii) less outward migration from rural zones; (iii) new management and organisational skills for innovation platform participants; and (iv) more disposable income for spending on children's education.
- Expected environmental impacts include: (i) improved watershed management enabled by more profitable farming; (ii) stronger agroforestry-related environmental benefits due to collaboration with the Australian International Food Security Research Centre's Trees for Food Security project; (iii) improved soil nutrient and erosion outcomes linked to requirements of higher value products; and (iv) improved on-farm management practices gained through farmer networking.

