

# CCAFS Climate Change and Social Learning Strategy

## Introduction

The CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS)<sup>1</sup> is implementing a uniquely innovative and transformative research program that addresses agriculture and food security in the context of climate variability, climate change and uncertainty about future climate conditions.

CCAFS is designed to contribute to improved agricultural, natural resource management and food systems. It takes its mandate from the CGIAR vision,<sup>2</sup> namely, “To reduce poverty and hunger, improve human health and nutrition, and enhance ecosystem resilience through high-quality international agricultural research, partnership, and leadership.”

While much of the focus is on agricultural production, the entire food system – including institutional incentives, research investments, gender relations, etc. – is being targeted, as solutions to the challenges posed by climate change have to go beyond agricultural production. Working with national and regional partners, promising adaptation options are being identified and evaluated, and through modelling approaches their efficacy in adapting agricultural systems is being quantified and used to provide detailed adaptation pathways at the national, regional and global levels.

CCAFS is generating the knowledge base and toolsets needed to empower farmers, policy makers, researchers and civil society to manage agriculture and food systems successfully so as to strengthen food security, enhance rural

livelihoods and improve environmental health in the context of the challenges arising from current climate variability and progressive climate change. CCAFS is exploring and jointly applying approaches and methods that enhance knowledge-to-action linkages with a wide range of partners at local, regional and global levels.

One such approach that CCAFS is focusing on is social learning. Social learning helps facilitate knowledge sharing, joint learning and co-creation experiences between particular stakeholders around a shared purpose, taking learning and behaviour change beyond the individual to networks and systems. Through a facilitated iterative process of working together, in interactive dialogue, exchange, learning, action and reflection and on-going partnership, new shared ways of knowing emerge that lead to changes in practice.

The CCAFS Climate Change and Social Learning (CCSL) initiative is designed to understand what we — CGIAR and others — can learn from social learning methodologies that will provide better ways of adapting to climate change and ensuring food security, as well as providing explicit demonstrable improvement in delivering on CGIAR's development goals.

Climate Change is a “wicked” global problem that will require pooling collective knowledge, perspectives and skills – both scientific and experiential – at all levels, individual, household, community, local, national, regional and global, to ensure we can adapt and mitigate the seriousness of the impact.

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## About Us ••

The CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) brings together the world's best researchers in agricultural science, development research, climate science and Earth System science, to identify and address the most important interactions, synergies and tradeoffs between climate change, agriculture and food security. CCAFS is a strategic partnership of CGIAR and Future Earth, led by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT). [www.ccafs.cgiar.org](http://www.ccafs.cgiar.org)

<sup>1</sup> <http://ccafs.cgiar.org>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cgiarfund.org/node/33>



## Goal

The goal of this CCSL Strategy is for CGIAR centres and projects to be clear on how and where the use of social learning methodologies increases the potential for delivering on robust development outcomes that tackle climate change, agriculture and food security and to incorporate this methodology into their working practices and funding arrangements. It is also to share experience and knowledge with those who work in social learning, develop new partnerships and encourage different working practices with current partners where relevant.

## Objectives

This CCSL strategy aims to identify and share new ways of working – it will look to understand further how social learning methodologies will help in the fight against climate change and help to build a community of practice to enrich findings and co-create new learning. The strategy has the following objectives:

1. To demonstrate and document the potential for social learning to achieve a more effective and inclusive response to climate change adaptation and mitigation, agriculture and food security;
2. To provide evidence as to how social learning can ensure that CGIAR projects can improve and revise development targets by connecting scattered knowledge and expertise, and by ensuring that new research agendas can be more effective and relevant to community needs;
3. To provide tools, approaches and an evidence base for “mainstreaming” social learning methodologies into climate change, agriculture and food security projects where appropriate;
4. To do research on ways of evaluating social learning methodologies, articulating clear indicators for success;
5. To identify new implementing partnerships and new funding opportunities for projects that can explore or employ and evaluate social learning methodologies;

6. To identify areas where CGIAR projects and partners can learn together and take action together in developing projects that will build the evidence base for building confidence in social learning methodologies;
7. To organise a mechanism to elicit innovative approaches and feedback loops for joint working on social learning.

The success of the CCSL initiative will not rely on building new information portals or duplicating the work of its many partners. It is an approach focused on co-learning as it mirrors social learning methodology and built on alternative partnership mechanisms that encourage new ways of working. It hopes to learn from those already employing this kind of approach within CGIAR and beyond as well as sharing learning from its own work. It seeks to develop some shared language and stimulate institutional change in CCAFS, in CGIAR and outside it, but recognises that this methodology works best in certain situations and not others. It thus requires institutional support to encourage those outside the self-selecting community of practitioners to embrace social learning and use it where it can make a difference.

## Supporting mechanisms

- A strategic delivery mechanism but also a powerful supporting mechanism for this strategy will be the development of a community of practice that includes a growing membership from within CGIAR and from external partners who work in this area. The CCSL “Sandbox”<sup>3</sup> – an online information hub and social media forum for discussion – is one part of this community of practice;
- A glossary of terms and a shared language for use within CCAFS will also help to maximise the impact of this methodology;
- An understanding of the kind of institutional change required to adopt a co-learning approach to complex wicked problems will also be a valuable support to the success of this strategy;

- An understanding of how this kind of learning can improve the chance of taking CGIAR’s development targets to scale;
- A set of guidelines and monitoring and evaluation tools that are appropriate for those using social learning methodologies;
- Contacts in the different CGIAR centres and external partners who are interested in continuing the conversation around social learning and how it supports the system level outcomes and intermediate development outcomes;

## Strategic elements

### Program level

In order to achieve the objectives set out above, CCAFS will strive to:

- Facilitate and support a more open, global Community of Practice through which it engages and co-learns more about social learning methodologies – both in theory and practice;
- Seed fund, through an Innovation Fund, a number of smaller projects designed to test social learning methodologies or social learning information campaigns;
- Raise awareness among CGIAR centres about CCSL and ways in which its overarching principles can both contribute to their work and provide learning to the community of practice;
- Learn from the centres about the work they do that incorporates social learning methodologies and evaluate their experience;
- Work with CGIAR partners to support opportunities for research engagement and participation using social learning methodologies;
- Focus research around five key change areas: documentation of outcome/ impact assessment, endogenous or context-specific processes, timescales, social differentiation within communities and building a community of practice;
- Build an evaluative framework/ template to help people keep track

<sup>3</sup> <http://ccsl.wikispaces.com>



of progress in developing and implementing social learning or triple loop projects.

### Centre level

CCAFS will encourage centres to proactively do the following:

- Make time to share their learning and experience of social learning methodologies;
- Contribute to a dialogue and discussion around five key change areas identified for a successful approach to Social Learning for CCAFS to pursue;
- Think about the kind of institutional change that CGIAR and other large global organisations may need to consider when dealing with wicked problems and developing relevant research agendas that can take transformational change to scale;
- Work together across centres to identify potential projects for evaluation and for building a shared glossary of terms.

### Partner level

CCAFS aims to work with groups and individuals outside CGIAR:

- To build new partnerships that encourage further working in the five change areas identified above;
- To build regional partnerships that add value and also provide links to national implementing partners.
- To build local partnerships at CCAFS sites that provide endogenous social learning opportunities and help build an evidence base of the value of social learning approaches.

### Implementation of Strategy

There are five key elements essential to the implementation of the CCSL strategy:

### 1. Establishing a dialogue – both inside and outside CGIAR

Within CGIAR there needs to be buy-in for an engagement and dialogue around social learning – whether and where it can, or cannot, support stringent developmental targets, how it can be mainstreamed in certain climate change projects, how local knowledge can be aligned with scientific knowledge, how the centres can become more “learning” organisations.

Externally CCAFS will continue to support a growing community of practice and to find ways to invite and encourage further participation and inclusiveness. Interacting with non CGIAR actors will strengthen any social learning approach. A ‘guerrilla team’ working across the centres to identify opportunities and build capacity to use social learning, to encourage and facilitate external partnerships, and an online “sandbox” for incubating and sharing ideas and actions are ways of institutionalising the CCSL community of practice.

### 2. Supporting further research into social learning methodologies

Further research is needed to provide evidence on why social learning can bring about transformational change and delivery on developmental targets. Impact assessment and a monitoring and evaluation template will allow us to determine in what contexts specific social learning methodologies are most effective.

Several areas that need further investigation have been identified – the role of endogenous processes, different timescales, importance of social differentiation and the impact of co-creation of knowledge and importantly how social learning can contribute to the delivery of stringent international development targets, to name a few. CCAFS could be instrumental in encouraging and articulating

these research needs and identifying opportunities to fulfil them.

### 3. Enabling opportunities for project implementation

CGIAR centres offer opportunities and partnerships where social learning methodologies could be tried and tested. CCAFS can stimulate these opportunities, help provide a common language for this shared work, help document results and help facilitate different partnerships for this to take place.

### 4. Finding funding

CCAFS and the CCSL initiative will work to identify and encourage further funding sources and partnerships to facilitate this new way of working. This will include supporting others to identify funding and seed-funding some activities that can contribute to this work – whether through other CGIAR centres, the CGIAR Consortium Office, or external partnerships. Seed funding through the community of practice will help to support some more innovative thinking that does not sit naturally at centre level. This will require lots of networking and opportunities for engaging on social learning.

### 5. A process of documentation

Good documentation of tools, approaches, and examples of impact that emerge from this co-learning will be an essential part of mainstreaming this methodology and cultivating a new way or working inside and outside CGIAR. Documentation could include primary research, literature reviews, an inventory of case studies, impact assessments, among other kinds.



### Acknowledgements

This strategy has been developed by Liz Carlile through consultation with the CCAFS team, the CCSL partners – IIED and IDS – and the members of the CCSL Sandbox community, which includes members of CGIAR centres and a number of independent experts from the wider communications and social learning community.

### CCSL Partners:



Institute of  
Development Studies