

Innovation platforms for agricultural development case studies: Introduction, synthesis and conclusion module – Teaching notes

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Key themes covered

- Innovation Platforms (IPs) and their key characteristics.
- IPs and their ability to address problems related to agricultural research for development.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of IPs.
- The current state of IPs in A4RD.

Key learning outcomes

- Understand the framework that underpins ILRI's IP case study competition and the case studies included in Innovation platforms for agricultural development.
- Learn how ILRI evaluated and classified the case studies included in Innovation platforms for agricultural development.
- Synthesize the findings from the case studies included in Innovation platforms for agricultural development.
- Discuss the lessons learned from the case studies included in Innovation platforms for agricultural development.

Target audience, teaching time and format of the case

Target audience: the target audience for this case is development professionals or leaders of NGOs. They may or may not have worked with innovation platforms in agriculture before.

Teaching time: this lesson plan is designed to be taught in a 90 minute session. For convenience, the lesson plan is divided into short sections of 5-20 mins each. This makes the lesson plan easy to modify. The facilitator may thus pick and choose different sections depending on the abilities and needs of the audience.

Format: this teaching note is divided into sections. Each section has a brief description of the key topics covered and their importance. A key highlight of the lesson plan is that every section comes with discussion questions and the answers that most often come up when the questions were asked in past sessions. The facilitator can ask 2-3 discussion questions (listed in Questions and answers file) after each section to generate more debate and active participation in the class.

Resources

You have at your disposal a case study (which both the facilitator and participants should read before the training takes place), a teaching note for a 90 minute session, an interactive whiteboard presentation, and a PowerPoint presentation. In addition to these resources, facilitators tend to use flip charts for group discussions. It may also be useful to have a stopwatch/timer if you want to time each section. You will also need clickers or some other personal response system (PRS) device for multiple-choice questions. However, in case such devices are not readily available for the session, you may opt to have the class respond verbally to the questions or write down answers on the flip chart/sheets of paper.

Sources:

Dror, I., Cadilhon, J.-J., Schut, M., Misiko, M. and Maheswari, S. (eds). 2016. *Innovation platforms for agricultural development: Evaluating the mature innovation platform landscape*. Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Lesson plan for a session with development professionals/NGO leaders (90 min)

SECTION	TIME	FACILITATOR ACTIVITIES	LEARNER ACTIVITIES
Introduction			
Background	5 min	• Begin the session by sharing the key themes and key learning outcomes with the learners and ensure that everyone is on the same page. • Define innovation platforms. • Discuss the role of ongoing collaboration and problem solving in IPs. • Define and discuss the capacity to innovate. • Discuss IP performance and impact.	• active listening • participate in discussion • take notes
Case study competition process	10 min	• Discuss the IP case study competition. • Explain how submissions to the IP case study competition were evaluated. • Discuss the process that allowed editors to select cases for inclusion in Innovation platforms for agricultural development. • Optional but recommended activity: have participants work together to determine which categories they would include if they were designing a similar case study competition.	• active listening • participate in discussion • take notes
Case study characterization and readers' guide	20 min	• Discuss the geographical spread of case studies. • Discuss the life stages of IPs. • Discuss multi-stakeholder processes. • Discuss how editors evaluated content matter. • Discuss the role of platform support functions and success in R4D. • Discuss how editors assessed outcomes and impacts. • Optional but recommended activity: none of the case studies submitted to the ILRI IP case study competition addressed the ability	• active listening • participate in discussion • take notes

		to learn from failure. Have participants work together to brainstorm a list of issues that could cause an IP to fail and describe what lessons researchers could learn as a result of failing.	
Synthesis			
Multi-stakeholder processes help achieve IP outcomes and impact	10 min	• Discuss cases that featured participatory processes and demand-driven activities. • Discuss cases that featured capacity development for collective agency and action. • Optional but recommended activity: several case studies in Innovation platforms for agricultural development illustrate the importance of participatory research and demand-driven activities. Have participants work individually or in groups to brainstorm strategies for implementing participatory processes among actors who might have different investments in an intervention.	• active listening • participate in discussion • take notes
Appropriate content matter leading to platform impact	15 min	• Discuss cases that featured productivity innovation. • Discuss cases that featured natural resource management. • Discuss cases that featured institutional innovations.	• active listening • participate in discussion • take notes
Well-designed platform support functions leading to impact	5 min	• Discuss cases that featured well-designed platform support	• active listening • participate in discussion • take notes
Synthesis: conclusion	5 min	• Discuss the effectiveness of the IPs included in Innovation platforms for agricultural development as defined by the measures of success set forth in ILRI's IP case study competition. • Discuss why ILRI's measures of success need to be revisited and refined.	• active listening • participate in discussion • take notes
Conclusion			

Success factors for IPs to achieve success	15 min	• Discuss how ILRI identified success factors for IPs. • Define vision and discuss why it is a success factor for IPs. • Define enabling environment and discuss why it is a success factor for IPs. • Define research for development orientation and discuss why it is a success factor for IPs.	• active listening • participate in discussion • take notes
Conclusion and final thoughts	5 min	• Discuss the current state of IPs in A4RD. • Discuss the authors' final thoughts and observations and their implications for IPs in A4RD. • Optional but recommended activity: have participants add to the authors' list of questions and observations about IPs and their suitability for solving problems and fostering development in agricultural settings.	• active listening • participate in discussion • take notes

Introduction: Background (5 min)

Note: for maximum effectiveness, have participants, especially those who are development professionals and NGO leaders, read and take notes on the case study before they attend the training session.

This case study focuses on ILRI's IP case study competition and the resulting edited collection it produced. Rather than focusing on a single case, it draws insight from the eight cases included in Innovation platforms for agricultural development.

Learning objectives

The facilitator may begin the session by discussing the learning objectives of the case and asking learners what they hope to get out of the session. This will help the facilitator modify the case according to the needs of the audience.

What are innovation platforms?

Innovation Platforms (IPs) build on experiences with earlier well-known multi-stakeholder approaches (including farmer field schools, participatory research, local agricultural research committees and natural resource management platforms) to foster agricultural innovation by strengthening interaction and sustained, long-term collaboration in networks of farmers, extension officers, policy makers, researchers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), development donors, the private sector and other stakeholder groups. IP interventions can be both technological and institutional in nature.

Ongoing collaboration and problem solving in IPs

IPs promote continuous involvement in identifying and solving agricultural problems for three reasons:

- First, different stakeholder groups can provide insights about the biophysical, technological and institutional dimensions of the problem and ascertain what innovations are economically, socially, culturally and politically viable.
- Second, stakeholder groups become aware of their interdependency on one another and recognize the need for concerted action to address their constraints and reach their objectives.
- Third, stakeholder groups are more likely to support and promote innovations when they have taken part in the decision-making or development process.

Capacity to innovate and IPs

The 'capacity to innovate' is the ability of individuals, groups or systems to continuously shape or adapt to change. If the capacity to innovate is high, individuals, groups and systems are better able to react proactively, flexibly and creatively to shocks, challenges and opportunities. By facilitating interaction between different stakeholder groups, IPs provide space not only for the exchange of knowledge and learning but also for negotiating and dealing with power dynamics. By bringing people together, IPs can strengthen capacity to innovate among interdependent groups of stakeholders to:

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

IP performance and impact

Multiple variables can affect an IP's performance and impact. The quality of platform organization and facilitation, communication within the IP and institutional embedding determine whether IPs can lead to real change and impact. It can be difficult to break from the pattern in which science develops and tests technologies that are then transferred to end users (generally farmers), and multiple researchers have found that working outside of linear, top-down systems can make it difficult to obtain resources to fund interventions. It is essential to understand the various factors and processes that contribute to an IP's impact and it is equally important to recognize that although IPs can foster meaningful innovation, they cannot provide a solution to all agricultural problems.

Introduction: case study competition process (10 min)

IP case study competition

ILRI launched the IP case study competition to build upon key studies of innovation platforms by showcasing the most innovative ideas, best practices, actionable knowledge and strategies emerging from mature IPs in agricultural research for development (AR4D). The competition sought case studies that feature mature IPs that have had a proven, large-scale impact. ILRI also encouraged submissions that featured principles, methodologies and ideas that could be broadly applicable to a wide variety of contexts. Accordingly, they solicited case studies that addressed (1) systems trade-offs, (2) multiple-commodity platforms, (3) scalable agricultural innovations, and (4) lessons learned from failures.

Evaluating submissions

The 28 case studies were evaluated on three main categories:

- Content strength: case studies should clearly define the problems and challenges being addressed, construct a detailed and descriptive narrative of how various stakeholders used the IP to create solutions and encourage further thinking and debate on the topic.
- Quality of writing: case studies should be logically written, with a strong emphasis on good writing and presentation.
- Usefulness: case studies should feature only those interventions/programs that meet assessment criteria and that have demonstrated long-standing impact. Case studies must feature solutions that are replicable, scalable, sustainable, reliable and relevant from the broader agricultural community.

Selecting cases for innovation platforms for agricultural development

ILRI shortlisted the 12 case studies that addressed one (or more) of the four topics and met its evaluation criteria. The lead authors of these twelve cases were invited to attend a writeshop in Nairobi in February 2015. At this writeshop, authors received writing guidelines, mentoring from experts, training on developing a case outline, telling stories and identifying their case's selling points, as well as the opportunity to collaborate with subject matter experts and communication experts from different CGIAR centres. Writeshop participants were given three weeks to finalize and submit their case studies and after reviewing the 12 submissions using scoring criteria, the editorial team found that 8 of the 12 cases were suitable for publication.

Optional activity: the ILRI competition focused on four different topics: systems trade-offs, multiple commodities, scalability and learning from failure. Have participants work together to determine which categories they would include if they were designing a similar case study competition.

Introduction: Case study characterization and readers' guide (20 min)

Geographical spread

Innovation platforms for agricultural development includes case studies from three continents. One study covers Nicaragua in Central America, and two studies cover cases in India in Asia. Five case studies cover African nations. Four of these case studies address Eastern Africa, one case study on Ethiopia, one on Kenya, and two on Uganda, and one addresses the Central African nations of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda. The book organizes its case studies by geographical location, from West to East.

Life stages of IPs

Rather than focusing on age, the editors evaluated an IP's maturity on multiple aspects, including whether the platforms were embedding multiple commodities, addressing system trade-offs or had good inroads in terms of policy impact and scaling. In addition, the editors situated case studies along a continuum that gauged their level of maturity. A platform is born when it is established. In its childhood, a platform concentrates on identifying the problem it will collaboratively solve. The adolescent stage is marked by trials and errors in implementing innovative activities. IPs reach adulthood when its first impacts have been achieved and it starts scaling up its activities for further outreach. Maturity is achieved when IPs begin tackling other R&D problems and strive to scale their innovations even further. IPs die whenever they solve the issue they were meant to address or when external funding dries up and there are no internal resources to finance the platform. Each case study in Innovation platforms for agricultural development has reached or passed the adolescent stage.

Characteristics of multi-stakeholder processes

Multi-stakeholder collaboration in IPs are characterized by:

- Participatory and demand-driven research and development activities, which not only provides better insight into the information, technology and service needs for different groups and their communication and collaboration preferences towards achieving development impact, but which also increases buy-in among stakeholders, who are more likely to support and promote innovations when they have been part of the innovation and decision-making process. Participatory and demand-driven research also supports the continuous alignment of research and development strategies as contexts and stakeholder developments change. This requires adaptability on the part of participants. The CIALCA, MilkIT and Mukono-Wakiso cases offer good examples of how stakeholder participation and demand-driven research can strengthen the contribution of IPs to achieving development impact.
- The capacity for collective agency and action. When stakeholders collaborate in an IP, they recognize that they are interdependent on one another, which, in turn, highlights the need for concerted, collective action. The CIALCA, NLA and Bubaare case studies highlight collective agency and action.

Assessing content matter

When evaluating the content matter, the editors looked at three types of agricultural innovations:

- Novel technologies and management practices to increase productivity. The CIALCA, SysCom, WeRATE and Mukono-Wakiso case studies address productivity innovation.
- Responsible natural resource management (NRM) that deal with low soil fertility, low yields, erosion, deforestation and climate change. The NBDC and SysCom cases deal with NRM innovations.

- Institutional innovation, which can include enhanced collaboration between stakeholders, social infrastructure, access to finance, certification, land tenure arrangements and public goods and markets. The CIALCA, MilkIT, and Bubaare case studies provide good examples of how IPs can contribute to institutional innovation.

In a systems approach, productivity, NRM and institutional innovations need to emerge in an integrated way, making smart use of available agro-ecological and human resources across different system levels. Both the CIALCA and SysCom cases address two of the three types of agricultural innovation that the editors were searching for when assessing content matter.

Platform support functions and success in R4D

Four major critical success functions are critical for success in R4D interventions:

- Facilitation, which is usually fulfilled with a small team of people. Facilitators ensure that there are sufficient linkages (or connections) among participants and other stakeholders and empower participants who are taking part in the process. The Mukono-Wakiso case from Uganda provides an in-depth description of facilitation and its impact on a platform.
- Organization, or the provision of logistical support, backstopping of events and administering the accountability of work. Organization includes tasks such as renting venues, providing lunch and handling finances. Both the Ugandan Bubaare and Mukono-Wakiso cases stand out in terms of their reflection on platform organization.
- Documentation, or the systematic and participatory capturing and reporting of events and developments. IP members should participate in monitoring and information should be gathered continuously and fed back quickly. Doing so provides a tool for reflection on both the platform and the process and its ability to develop solutions to concrete problems. The NLA and Mukono-Wakiso cases excel at documentation.
- Research, which is critical. In the current AR4D landscape, the enthusiasm of researchers who champion process research is highly correlated with sufficient prioritizing of learning tasks and funding the learning activities. The Mukono-Wakiso case provides particular attention to platform research, which stands out overall in terms of its attention to platform support functions.

Assessing outcomes and impact

The editors assessed outcomes and impacts using four categories:

- Systems trade-offs, or exploring synergies and competition between different interventions and strategies. Trade-offs can be financial, social or technological in nature. The NBDC case provides good examples of how IPs can support optimization of systems trade-offs.
- Multiple commodities, or managing complex interactions (such as crop-livestock-trees). The WeRATE case from Kenya and the Bubaare and Mukono-Wakiso cases from Uganda provide good examples of handling multiple commodities.
- Scaling up of agricultural innovations, or using new technologies, disseminating knowledge, collaborating between different stakeholder groups, providing access to markets etc. beyond the IP's original scope, geographical focus or target audience. The WeRATE case offers an excellent example of reaching impact at scale.
- Learning from failure, or the ability to glean lessons from failed platforms. There were no submissions to the competition that addressed this category.

Optional activity: none of the case studies submitted to the ILRI IP case study competition addressed the ability to learn from failure. Have participants work together to brainstorm a list of issues that could cause an IP to fail and describe what lessons researchers could learn as a result of failing.

Synthesis: Multi-stakeholder processes help achieve IP outcome and impact (10 min)

Participatory processes and demand-driven activities

Some of the case studies featured in this volume support previous findings of the importance of fostering a participatory process that will lead to demand-driven activities, which can, in turn, contribute to achieving expected outcomes. The most notable example of this is the CIALCA IP in Burundi, DRC and Rwanda, in which various national multi-stakeholder platforms emerged spontaneously to fulfil the mutual needs of farmers, government officials, the private sector and other agricultural stakeholders. As a result, different stakeholders joined the platform, which proved useful because the IP had different viewpoints, sources of knowledge and expertise at their disposal. MilkIT in India and Mukono-Wakiso in Uganda also demonstrate the roles that multi-stakeholder meetings can play in identifying resource and knowledge gaps. In contrast, NLA members in Nicaragua found themselves locked into a top-down model in which experts identified the solution and determined the nature of the intervention. The IP then provided training to the farmers, who had no say in the content of the agribusiness training delivered by the platform.

Capacity development for collective agency and action

The NLA case from Nicaragua provides the best example of an IP investing in the capacity development of its members to provide them with more autonomy. Because the NLA's objective was to develop capacities in agribusiness management among farmers' cooperatives and smallholder farmers, the NLA provided training on managing farmers' groups to representatives of national farmers' groups, who then snowballed the training within their own networks of local farmers' groups down to individual farmers. As a result, the NLA training reached representatives in 77 producers' organizations and 19,347 households throughout Nicaragua, who were then empowered to interact with market stakeholders. Thus the NLA and its capacity development process had a tangible impact at scale through the large number of Nicaraguan farmers trained.

Optional activity: several case studies in Innovation platforms for agricultural development illustrate the importance of participatory research and demand-driven activities. Have participants work individually or in groups to brainstorm strategies for implementing participatory processes among actors who might have different investments in an intervention.

Synthesis: Appropriate content matter leading to platform impact (15 min)

Productivity innovation

Of the case studies included in Innovation platforms for agricultural development, WeRATE in West Kenya. The IP conducted farmer field trials for inoculant-fertilizer blend technology for a soybean variety. The IP reached 37,000 farmer households and there was a 64% adoption rate over four years of the N2Africa project in which WeRATE participated. This case embodies the impact at scale that so many other IPs strive to achieve, thanks partly to its demonstrated superior technology, which was responsible for increases in farm productivity. In turn, this led to the widespread adoption and commercialization of some of the inputs or farming techniques developed by WeRATE partners.

SysCom and MilkIT, both of which were implemented in India, show a similar impact, but at a smaller scale, on cotton and milk production, respectively. SysCom's productivity innovation trials to test innovative soil fertility management techniques were key to documenting the pros and cons of organic cotton production systems, which allowed farmers to make an informed decision about the trade-offs of conventional and organic cotton production systems.

Similarly, CIALCA proved instrumental in reintroducing banana-coffee intercropping in Rwanda after their field trials yielded superior quality coffee, a development that could potentially introduce a heavier labour burden on women.

Natural resource management

Only two of the eight case studies included in Innovation platforms for agricultural development did not address environmental issues directly: Bubaare and NLA. The remaining six all incorporated NRM into their IP. Of these, the NBDC project in the Ethiopian Highlands proved especially effective. Building water bunds along steep slopes and implementing new fodder production techniques shared by the project's researchers increased protection against soil erosion and increased community awareness of the links between production, marketing and NRM. The intervention was small in scale, but the local government wishes to replicate this intervention in other districts that are also affected by soil degradation and erosion.

SysCom in India, which developed innovative methods for organic phosphorous fertilizer production for cotton, also provides a good example of an IP's ability to influence NRM. CIALCA demonstrated how integrating various crops onto Central Africa's hilly landscapes can reduce soil erosion and lead to more resilient cropping systems.

Institutional innovations

Three case studies do an especially good job of highlighting how institutional innovation contributes to development outcomes and impacts:

- CIALCA provides a good example of how to adapt collaborative arrangements with local partners according to the local institutional context, which in turn can impact national policy making. In Rwanda, government institutions are relatively strong and have a good presence throughout the country, the government's research and extension system acted as key partners. More complex arrangements linked government services and NGOs to allow innovations to reach potential end users Burundi and DRC. In each of these countries, CIALCA tailored its messages to suit the local context. This, combined with its efforts to train future policy makers, made CIALCA effective at influencing policy in the three countries.
- The institutional collaboration fostered by the MilkIT IPs in Northern India led to local government and agricultural support services to better coordinate their activities to improve

dairy production and marketing. MilkIT also modelled institutional innovation by linking smallholder farmers to markets. MilkIT's marketing IPs fostered farmers' cooperatives and milk collection centres, which led to increased milk production, new milk collectors and processors developing supply chains to remote farm communities in the mountains of Uttarakhand and increased income throughout the dairy value chain.

- The Bubaare case from Uganda features the legal innovation of registering an IP as a new multi-purpose cooperative society that mixes the benefits of farmers' cooperatives and multi-stakeholder groups. As in regular farmers' cooperatives, farmers are still allowed to group input purchases and output sales, but this new entity also enables this grouping for several commodities. In addition, the IP's past multi-stakeholder activities have created a loose network of suppliers, customers and other value-chain stakeholders who help commercialize the farmers' products around the cooperative. By becoming a legal entity, farmers in the IP can not only sell their products to higher-end markets in Kampala, but they can also do business with suppliers and customers at a larger scale and have improved access to other services, including loans. This has increased the attraction of IP membership for farmers: more than 1,000 individual farmers joined the IP after just five years. During that same period, membership of farmers' groups increased from 32 groups to 1,121 groups due to the IP's marketing services. This innovative legal framework sets a useful precedent for other countries sharing a common-law judicial tradition and serves as a model for already existing legal statuses for multi-stakeholder commodity associations.

Synthesis: Well-designed platform support functions leading to impact (5 min)

Platform support functions

While the Bubaare IP in Uganda, the NLA in Nicaragua, the MilkIT project in India all perform strongly with platform support functions, the Mukono-Wakiso IP in Uganda embodies all the aspects of platform support functions. Its facilitator from Makerere University helped the platform members to consider the needs of farmer to identify their priority entry points and to characterize the agricultural system combinations that would work within the set of entry points selected. The platform, which was facilitated from a systems perspective from the start, agreed to work on an integrated system of crops, livestock and trees to help solve farmers' challenges. As a result, the IP currently works on multiple commodities. From a reporting perspective, a report stating major decisions taken is generated after all Mukono-Wakiso IP events (and not just formal platform meetings), and this report is shared with all members and beyond, mainly using online repositories. As a result, the chairman, facilitator and secretariat can follow up on tasks and keep activities going. Reports also allow newcomers to catch up on previous activities and decisions. The Mukono-Wakiso's use of multi-stakeholder processes is also being studied by the Humidtropics program's social scientists. This ongoing research will help the platform reflect on its content, process and support functions in order to create impact in the future.

Synthesis: Conclusion (5 min)

Assessing IPs

Overall, how well did the IPs covered in Innovation platforms for agricultural development meet the components and sub-components of ILRI's conceptual framework for successful IPs? While most of the IPs featured fostered two out of the four components of the conceptual framework, only two, Bubaare and Mukono-Wakiso, scored highly on all four. However, neither Bubaare nor Mukono-Wakiso showed success in all nine-subcomponents of successful IPs or met all three sub-components of outcomes and impact, which are expected of mature IPs.

Revisiting measures of success

The editors deemed process, content and platform support insufficient measures of IP success. While these criteria are all essential factors for an IP to be able to run and produce sustainable multi-stakeholder innovations, they are not enough to provide guaranteed impact at scale.

Conclusion: Success factors for IPs to achieve success (15 min)

Identifying success factors

In addition to analysing their framework, ILRI also conducted interviews and facilitated exercises with each author to determine what they considered to be the most important factors leading to a successful IP. A common thread running through each interview focused on three complementary factors: vision, enabling environment and a research for development orientation.

Vision

By having a vision, an IP is clear about where it wants to go and how it wants to get there. Leadership should not only embody and encourage this vision but should also be empowered and accountable for ensuring that the IP focus of work emerges from the commitment and common interest of participants instead of being established through an external drive to tackle a problem. Skilful facilitation is also key to an IP's vision. Facilitators take power dynamics into account and foster the participation of grass-roots actors from the bottom up. To foster trust, this facilitator should be physically present to participate regularly in platform activities. Along with leadership and facilitation, equity and transparency are essential to an IP's vision. To ensure equity and transparency, all actors in the platform should be consulted in a similar way and all decisions taken should be discussed with the well-being of all actors in mind. Equity and transparency in the platform vision help strengthen the linkages between actors, who are then further motivated to participate.

Enabling environment

An enabling environment allows IPs to thrive. There are three components to a successful enabling environment:

- Linkages with public policies. This will vary by context. In some contexts, aligning platform objectives with public policies has helped platforms become essential to policymakers' engagement with grass-roots stakeholders. In other cases, IPs have supported the strengthening of public policies that were not appropriate to local contexts by triggering the development of more appropriate policies. This might involve leveraging existing networks of stakeholders to foster innovations instead of creating new platforms that duplicate work being done in parallel multi-stakeholder groups.
- The willingness and capacity of members to participate in the innovation process. Skilful facilitation and identifying relevant incentives is key to keeping all participants invested in the process, which can lead to the reproduction and dissemination of innovations to other potential beneficiaries.
- Incentives to keep participants interested in contributing. These will generally consist of a mix of short- and long-term benefits, but short-term monetary incentives are often necessary to attract smallholder farmers and their membership.

Research for development orientation

A research for development orientation requires participants to develop and try innovative science practices. Applying scientific principles to solve real-life, concrete problems, combined with the participatory nature of research trials, creates a meaningful link between science and practices. IPs should begin by applying science to a joint and concrete problem faced by platform members, then prioritize research activities that are likely to generate quick results in order to foster interest among participants and provide incentives for their continued participation. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is useful in facilitating embedded research for development.

Conclusion: Conclusion and final thoughts (5 min)

The state of IPs in AR4D

The case studies submitted to the competition and those included in Innovation platforms for agricultural development suggest that the IP sector has yet to mature. Not only did the competition receive no entrants in the 'learning from failures' category, but the entrants to the other categories often failed to demonstrate key qualities of the category in a 'pure' fashion. For example, cases in the rather than truly offering a multi-commodity approach, cases submitted to that category often dealt with multiple crops, not the holistic crop-livestock-tree interaction advocated by researchers. Likewise, scaling cases often reached the low thousands in direct outreach. While this is an impressive feat in difficult environments, it is nowhere near as large as the billions of farmers that large-scale initiatives aim to reach.

Final thoughts

To conclude, the authors offer four main questions and thoughts:

- They ask, 'Why is the landscape the way it is?' They report that while most platforms are set up instead of emerging from contexts, they nevertheless maintain a narrow focus that is disconnected from the holistic objectives promoted by those who set up these IPs. Proposed causes for this include short project cycles, the desire to show quick results, a focus on short-term financial incentives or the narrow focus of anchor projects, which limits the ability to integrate broader, sustainable incentives. The case studies indicate that it is key to avoiding narrow processes and instead become multifunctional by embracing multi-dimensional processes.
- They ask, 'Are IPs the most appropriate instrument to foster agricultural development?' As the authors point out, IPs can have an impact, but are the solutions they offer scalable and replicable? A more rigorous framework and more extensive data are needed to compare and assess IP work with a range of other intervention strategies.
- When analysing the cases and framework findings, the authors felt that IPs could act as a potentially powerful 'bridge' between local approaches that embody participatory, demand-driven and community-led initiatives and global 'large-scale impact' technology-driven initiatives.
- IP conceptual frameworks require a more balanced approach if they are to act as a bridge and assume an integrative role alongside other approaches for inclusive agricultural development. These frameworks should take local innovations into account, but also consider whether they would be suitable for larger-scale replication. They must also take a hard look at both direct and indirect costs to produce a more accurate analysis of benefits per dollar invested.

Optional activity: have participants add to the authors' list of questions and observations about IPs and their suitability for solving problems and fostering development in agricultural settings.