



INNOVATION INVENTORY 2021

BEAN PROGRAM & PABRA AT 25 PRIORITIZING INNOVATIONS AND AREAS OF GROWTH



By Tonya Schuetz, Allison Poulos, Rowan Sharkey, Jean-Claude Rubyogo, Patricia Onyango, (Alliance Bioversity-CIAT) and the whole Beans Program & PABRA team

EXTERNAL SERIES, VOL. 3

October 2024

Key message



The innovation inventory brought forth 33 responses and 47 submitted innovations, the most common being products (57%), institutional arrangements (51%), and technologies (36%).



The distribution across four stages was even with roughly 25% across stage 1 discovery, stage 2 successful piloting, stage 3 availability for uptake, and stage 4 implementation of uptake by the next user.



The survey results show that the Bean Program & PABRA hold a wide variety of innovations considered of value added to a variety of stakeholders, like farmers, NARS, policy advisors and private sectors.



The team identified topics to work on further, i.e. refining innovations and adding on to the innovation database, e.g. strengthening digitization, climate change, and further innovating the team's delivery structure.

90% of respondents rated the innovations session with high marks, indicating that the session was successful and worked well for them.

Beans Program and the Pan African Bean Research Alliance (PABRA)

Established by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) in 1996, PABRA works with the whole range of actors involved in producing beans – one of the most actively traded commodities in Africa – to provide better beans for Africa. Visit PABRA's website

PABRA is made up of an international network of bean researchers, 29 national agricultural research institutions, and more than 350 partner organizations. As a result of PABRA's interventions, more farming families have access to improved and marketable bean varieties, new crop management techniques, micronutrient rich bean-based products, niche market varieties and products, and bean related skills and knowledge that help to increase incomes and boost food and nutrition security.

PABRA works in partnership with farmers, rural communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), traders and other private sector organizations to improve each aspect of the bean value chain, from production to market, using a market-led approach.

The promise of beans - Common beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) are an important staple food for more than 200 million Africans. Not only are they affordable, they provide a healthy mix of protein, complex carbohydrates and valuable micronutrients. Moreover, they improve soil fertility and are a significant and growing source of income for rural households.

Through joint priority-setting and planning, and agreed division of responsibilities, PABRA generates improved bean technologies on a much larger scale. This means, for example, that a new bean variety developed in one country is shared with countries that don't have active breeding programs.



METHODOLOGY

Building on One CGIAR Scaling Readiness Approach and collection of innovation offers, we aligned the questions in the survey. We adjusted the length and reduced the stage to ensure a short response time, and added a question on value addition. An innovation was defined as something new that came or is coming out of your work, like technology, service, product, or institutional arrangement. See Innovation Inventory survey here and list of questions below.

- a. Name of innovation
- b. Type of innovation (Product, Technology, Service, Institutional Arrangement, Other)
- c. Purpose and description of innovation
- d. Project associated with innovation
- e. Targeted audience for value addition [Global Drivers, Funders, Farmers, Private Sector, NARS, Policy Advisor/Policy Maker, other, please specify]
- f. Stage of innovation [Stage 1: discovery of concept, Stage 2: successful piloting, Stage 3: available for uptake, Stage 4: uptake by next user]
- g. Geographical focus of Innovations

The survey was sent to members of the Bean Program and PABRA team of the Alliance of Bioversity and CIAT by e-mail with the request for responses within five days.

The results from the survey were used as input for the small group discussions in sub teams, (1-Breeding, 2-Integrated Crop Management/Seed Systems, 3-Markets/Nutrition/Gender, 4-M&E/ Impact, and 5-Communication & Coordination) to place innovations along the ecocycle (at stages of birth, maturity, constructive destruction or renewal), identify and prioritize innovation and particular areas of growth.

In plenary after feedback from the groups, tasks for the work plan for the next 12-18 months were noted.



Insights from the survey results

- There is an even distribution of collected innovations across the four stages: discovery, successful piloting, availability for uptake, and implementation of uptake by the next user, which is an indication of a healthy pipeline.
- Respondents were asked to link their innovations back to projects which resulted in SDC (Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, 20%) and IBPMA (Improving Bean Production and Marketing in Africa, 20%) making up together 40% of the total distribution. While other innovations link to TAAT HIB (Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation, 11%) and GAC (Global Affairs Canada, 9%).
- 90% of innovations are products, institutional arrangements, and technologies, while the remaining 10% cover services, integration processes, webinars, digital services and alike.

- Primary stakeholders that receive added value through these innovations according to the respondents are Farmers (70%), NARS (60%), Policy Advisors (57%), and Private Sectors (57%)

Insights from conducting the survey

- We had a turnaround of five days for the survey, which resulted in 47 submitted innovations. It could be useful to have an open survey year round for members to submit innovations continually.
- The survey triggered an initial innovation inventory of what the Beans Program and PABRA have in stock, which helped to set up the discussion within the team about what they want to and need to prioritize for the next 12-18 months.





Insights from the group discussion

- In group discussions, the participants ranked nearly all innovations as highly important. The innovations that were given the highest priority rating were those relating to data quality and availability.
- The majority of innovations were placed in the "Birth, Maturity, and Renewal" stages of ecocycle planning¹. Very few were placed in the "Creative Destruction" phase.

Enabling factors for success

- The survey, while bearing significant broad results, enabled further in depth discussions on the collected innovations and comments from the team.
- The three-phased structure (prior-during- after) to the exercise i.e. survey scouting prior to a virtual team meeting with dedicated time for discussions and then the compilation into the work planning afterwards, enabled participants to think and digest innovations from different perspectives, i.e. brainstorm, deep dive, so what?

Challenges Encountered

- The session was only two hours long, with 45 minutes for breakout sessions. This time left room for further collaboration and some of the teams needed longer to unpack innovations and prioritized them in an equitable participatory manner.
- While the technology for holding this meeting virtually was surprisingly reliable and allowed people to contribute, in person meetings could have enabled more interaction and over longer sessions.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- These innovations, while diverse, were not evenly distributed among the ecocycle. Only two out of 47 innovations were mapped to the 'creative destruction' phase of ecocycle planning. Therefore, it could be interesting to unpack this further and see if there are any barriers that keep the team from moving throughout the whole cycle. Reflecting on whether the team might have more innovations that could be disregarded and are carried on as baggage might be worth considering.
- A follow-up space for the team to share and present innovations in a bit more detail was mentioned by participants and the team. Therefore, it may be useful to think about holding a session around innovations presentations.
- Leaving the innovations inventory survey open and sending a note to the team members to add new innovations on a regular basis could become a mechanism for collecting innovations early on and sharing the inventory across the team.

Reference Materials

Link to the report once it is finalized and have it up on CG space with a unique identifier | [PABRA Innovation Survey](#) | [PABRA Innovation Survey Results](#)

¹ See <https://www.liberatingstructures.com/31-ecocycle-planning/>

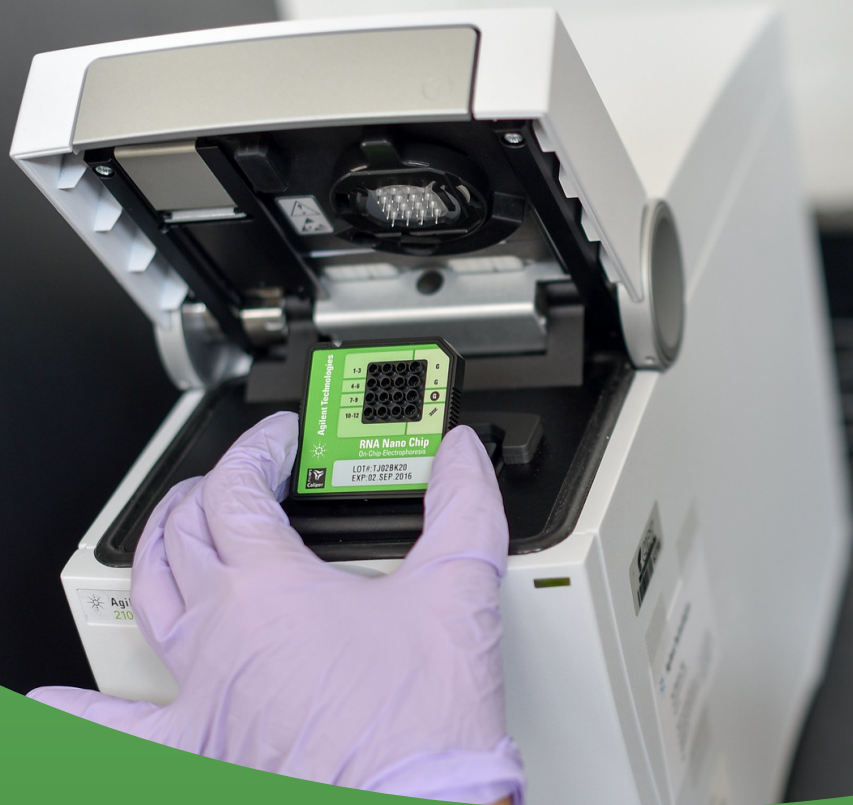


Photo: CIAT / Neil Palmer

About Insight Notes

Insight Notes are one of the Bioversity-CIAT Alliance's spaces for sharing learning and results and stimulating conversation and lessons' exchange across our programs and projects. The Performance, Innovation and Strategic Analysis for Impact (PISA4I), Strategic Performance and Results Management (SPRM) Team works with the project and program research teams distills learning insights. These are derived from working with methodologies and networks, or working along the continuum of our project and Initiative impact pathways. These embrace inputs (e.g. proposal development), outputs (data/ information management and open science) outcomes (changes in state) and impact delivery (performance and results presentation, strategic system integration towards business intelligence).

Get in touch

Any suggestions and support to develop your own InsightNote can be found by reaching out to the Alliance Monitoring and Evaluation Expertise at ALLIANCEglobalMEL@cgiar.org

