

RESEARCH TO FEED AFRICA POLICY DIALOGUE: TAKING RESEARCH TO SCALE AND IMPACT

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Distinguished colleagues, it is a great pleasure to be here among such experienced and accomplished practitioners. Thank you to my colleagues at IDRC for inviting me to be part of this panel, and for our CultiAF partnership – even at this early stage it has been exciting & rewarding for us at ACIAR.

Feeding the planet well – ethically, inclusively, sustainably and efficiently – is a complicated undertaking. It involves many different sectors working together to create food systems to meet a range of needs. It is an agricultural issue but it is also a socio-economic issue, a gender and youth issue, a public health and education issue, an environmental issue, an energy issue, a geopolitical issue and a governance and policy issue (among others).

ACIAR is an agricultural research donor, broker and partner. Over time ACIAR has moved along the development continuum from just producing research outputs (usually a technology or practice to increase productivity) to focusing on areas to better ensure scale out and delivering development outcomes. This has required a change in approach and in partnerships. Our projects are now larger, multidisciplinary and more complex.

We have gained many lessons in research adoption, which have highlighted a number of key factors. I have chosen to lump them into 2 main categories - *Understanding farmer decision making (incentives and risk)* and *Partnerships*.

1. Understanding farmer decision making (incentives and risk)

One of the key ingredients we have learnt is the importance of understanding the factors that influence farmer decision making, the context of their biophysical and socio-economic environment, the system of incentives that impact on farmer level decision making and their approaches to risk management.

There is evidence that points to researchers and donors often overlooking the farmer level factors, when they should be understood at the get go and fed into the theory of change and research design for ensuring impact and successful adoption.

A review of 90 ACIAR adoption studies (conducted 5-10 years after research end) highlighted the lack of incentives as the primary factor inhibiting success.

- Researchers and farmers often have a difference in approaches

- o Many scientists focus on achieving optimization while farmers focus on lowering risk and delivering a range of outcomes. These things may not always be compatible.
- o Conservation Agriculture is a good example, while the scientists might be achieving great results in terms of yield increases on the research station, however, in a small village farm, in an area where there is free grazing, leaving 100% of the crop residue on the fields may not always be practical or economically feasible. We take an active management approach, changing the project design as awareness and understanding grows.
- Research outputs must make sense within overall system –
 - o are the natural, social, physical, human, financial asset capitals necessary to adopt the research accessible and do small holder farmers (SHFs) have the capacity to use them?
 - o Conversely, do we understand the non-profit reasons that pose a barrier to adoption? (example Newcastle Disease improved poultry husbandry for nutrition and livelihood outcomes – but need to understand taboos around non-consumption of poultry products.).
- Socioeconomic research - is needed to assist in understanding decision making, incentives and risks and in particular in understanding the role and importance of women – we are undertaking this to look at SAI technologies, with a focus on women and climate change, but hopefully the results will have wider application. Early results are showing that farmers are not a homogenous group and are providing hard data on the specifics and on gender differences. As Julio mentioned earlier, we need to undertake some ‘myth busting’.
- Building resilience - diluting risks through building resilience may make SHFs better able to engage with the agribusiness market. Examples include insurance, access to finance and access to climate and marketing information and working as farmer groups
- Understanding the value chain– the complexity of value chains, with many actors may serve to disenfranchise the SHF and limit their ability to know what the market needs are. From the other side - agribusinesses don't often look back past farm gate and therefore don't understand the farm system and community operating environments.

So how best can we address these challenges? As was so eloquently stated by the performers after lunch – “we need to join hands”

2. Partnerships

- Taking a SHF perspective, in order to improve engagement with agri-value chains, they will need to form a range of partnerships –
 - with the private sector
 - with others in their value chain through IPs, NGOs or brokers
 - with each other through small holder farmer groups and cooperatives, and
 - with government programs and policy
- Partnerships with the private sector:
 - Right now, capital investment flows to developing countries are 5 times larger than ODA, followed by remittances, and then ODA
 - The private sector brings not only capital but services, resources, markets and innovation to the developing world
 - However, the private sector needs assistance in understanding the challenges of working with SHFs in the developing world, and this is where partnerships with the public sector donors can assist - there is a convergence of interests, and donors are keen to leverage the resources of the private sector to achieve development outcomes
 - Thus, we need to broker these partnerships and unlock opportunities that have latent commercial potential and to share the costs and mitigate the risks
 - ACIAR works with the private sector to increase the impact of its research – primarily through enhancing adoption and scale out that can improve economic growth.
 - The private sector is realizing the benefits of shifting from just CSR to embedding development objectives in their core business strategy or inclusive business models (IBMs).
 - IBM's work with the SHF's as sources of supply, but also to turn them into consumers. For donors who have been trying to integrate SHFs (who have been traditionally excluded) into agri-business chains, partnering in IBMs offer a mechanism to achieve this. Triple win
 - In research for development, private sector partnerships are often in the pre-commercial space, for example, genotyping, pre-breeding, access to big data and information. In ACIAR, research partnerships often focus on overcoming barriers to small holder production
 1. Production barriers to meeting market demand
 2. Engagement barriers to working more effectively

- Partnerships within an IP can improve the success of the value chain. They comprise a dynamic membership drawn from the public, private and non-government sectors with interests in the success of the value chain and preparedness to work together to achieve individual and through-chain goals.
- Last, but by no means least, partnerships with government through providing evidence support to policy development or leveraging policy is a proven mechanism for scaling up research.

African leadership – at Pan-African, regional and national levels - for the 4 CAADP pillars and their goals has inspired optimism domestically and internationally about realising Africa's ability to feed itself and the world.

The Science Agenda for Agriculture in African is a critical mechanism to advance Africa's agricultural transformation. Its pedigree, of being African owned and African led, gives it authority and legitimacy.

It presents real opportunities for country-led initiatives and provides clear signals to us, as international research partners, on what Africa needs.

The Science Agenda and its subsequent implementation plans provide an unambiguous set of Pan-African and national level priorities for research, that we, as research partners, can respond to and support.

I encourage national governments to continue to support their commitments under CAADP to agriculture, and in particular, do so by enhancing domestic investment in science for agriculture, including capacity building for researchers and their institutions and putting in place measures to retain this expertise in country.

The Malabo Declaration is an indicator that African countries not only know what needs to be done to transform agriculture (a key driver of inclusive economic growth) but are also serious about enabling this through investment in agriculture and science.