



Session: Strengthening RAS links and institutions in agricultural innovation systems

Agricultural Innovation Systems in Family Farming and the role of Innovation Brokerage - FAO e-conference results

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The Role of Rural Advisory Services in Agricultural Innovation Systems
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Outline

- ✓ SOFA
- ✓ E-Conference and its participants
- ✓ Main issues discussed, and outcomes
- ✓ Innovation brokerage
- ✓ Areas for further exploration



SOFA on AIS in FF

✓ 2014 State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) publication on 'Agricultural Innovation in Family Farming' by FAO

- the UN General Assembly declared 2014 to be the International Year of Family Farming

Participatory SOFA process:

- Expert Consultation on AIS and family farming at FAO HQ (March 2012)
- e-mail conference on "Ensuring the full participation of family farmers in agricultural innovation systems: Key issues and case studies" (4 June to 1 July 2012)
- FAO Technical Workshop on "Family farming for sustainable food security, agriculture and rural development" - *The role of policies, institutions and Diaspora communities*, (10 - 11 Sept. 2012)
- Other events, high number of experts contributions to the writing of the SOFA

✓ Further information:

- <http://www.fao.org/oek/research-extension-systems/ais-ff/es/>



E-conference on AIS in FF

- ✓ John Ruane as E-conference facilitator; 558 subscribers
- ✓ Total of 242 messages received from 114 people
- ✓ Regional origin of the messages:
 - 42% came from people living in Africa
 - 28% from Asia
 - 19% from Europe
 - 8% from Latin America and the Caribbean
 - 3% from North America and
 - 1 message from Oceania.
- ✓ 77% of messages were posted by people living in developing countries.
- ✓ People were from 48 different countries.



E-conference on AIS in FF

- ✓ **Background of the active participants (242 messages):**
 - 26% came from people working in research centers (58 in national institutes and 4 in CGIAR centers);
 - 20% from people working in universities;
 - 17% from people in non-governmental organizations;
 - 16% from people working in Government ministries or bodies;
 - 9% from people in the private sector;
 - 6% from people working at FAO headquarters or in FAO offices around the world;
 - 4% from independent consultants;
 - 1% from farmers and 1% from other development agencies



Main issues discussed and results

1. **Farmer innovations** are important and should be better documented. Closer links to formal research were called for to allow scientific validation as well as to learn and build on farmer innovations.
2. The full integration of **Farmer Organizations** in AIS was largely emphasized. Their empowerment through collective action in FOs would provide family farmers a wide range of advantages in key areas of AIS.
3. **Access to markets** - Availability of market opportunities is of crucial importance for adoption of innovation by family farmers.
4. **Research and extension** has to become more demand-driven. Their roles need to change so that research, extension and farmers were more closely interlinked with better communication and coordination.
 - Incentive systems
 - Dedicated brokering



Main issues discussed and results

5. **Risk associated with innovation:**
 - Resource poor farmers wish to minimize risk which has major impact on the adoption of innovations
6. **Greater recognition to women farmers**
 - Equal and full attention should be given to men and women farmers to enable them to participate in and benefit from AIS
7. **Importance of young farmers**
 - Emphasis should be placed on farm profitability and entrepreneurship development
 - Perception of farming needs to be improved
 - Use of ICTs in farming can increase the appeal of agriculture to young people
8. **Information and Communication Technologies**
 - ICTs can enhance full participation of family farmers in AIS
 - Emphasis on mobile phone, e.g. for linking farmers closer to markets, to each other and to extension agents, and for documentation of farmer innovations
 - Radio was underlined given its acceptability, availability, low cost and use of local languages



9. Innovation brokers

- ✓ To make AIS (= complex systems) work better, participants saw a key role for innovation brokers
- ✓ “The core idea of innovation systems is interaction, collaboration, but also often negotiation among multiple stakeholders”
- ✓ “We cannot call it a system as long as actors are on their quiet and peaceful islands”
- ✓ “ ... The broader and more complete the actors are organized as a community around specific food and agriculture systems, the better AIS can be built in a sustainable way”
- ✓ There seemed to be consensus that innovation brokers did not have to be specialized organizations and that different kinds of AIS stakeholders could potentially play this role.



Key roles for innovation brokers

- ✓ “Lubricants of the innovation engine”
- ✓ “Vital in linking multi-stakeholders in the different value chains”
- ✓ “The more innovation brokers we have, in more organizations, the more innovation will be possible”
- ✓ One participant argued that decision-makers might need to be exposed to innovation brokering before they really appreciated its value
- ✓ The PAEPARD experiences also indicated that:
 - it is essential for the broker to play an independent role within the consortium;
 - the broker should not be a member of the lead institution; and
 - she/he should be acceptable to all the consortium members.



Innovation brokers

- Who should they be?

- ✓ The existing advisors do not provide this role
- ✓ Innovation brokers do not have to be specialized organizations
- ✓ Different kinds of AIS stakeholders could potentially play this role
- ✓ Brokering might involve a network of individuals with different roles, rather than a single individual or organization
- ✓ Discussion on specialists in brokering versus brokering by advisors
 - Depends on the complexity of the task and the institutions involved
 - Specific training required



Who should pay for these services ?

No consensus on this aspect

- ✓ It is generally hard to get funding for brokering in AIS
 - Brokering services are rarely paid fully by the public sector anywhere in the world
 - AIS actors are normally reluctant to pay when their own direct interests are not involved;
 - Research institutions, civil society organizations or farmer organization will rarely pay for external brokers
- ✓ Since innovation projects are often led by research organizations, it was also argued that funding for innovation processes and brokering are not prioritized.



Areas for further exploration

- ✓ **Innovation brokerage**
 - Learning from organizations doing specific brokerage
- ✓ **What is unique about AIS ?**
 - Do farmer organizations have a unique role to play in AIS?
- ✓ **Learning from successful AIS**
- ✓ **Differentiating farmers**
 - Risk averse and commercial/market-oriented farmers
 - What should policies be like to cater for the two groups, while not harming either one



Thank you for your attention

<http://www.fao.org/oek/research-extension-systems/res-home/en/>