

**Scouting and Sharing Innovations Initiative
in Western and Central Africa (SSI)**

<http://innovation.fidafrique.net>

**Summary of the electronic survey
18 October – 8 November 2007**

**An IFAD initiative with CSAO/OCDE, WARF, FIDAFRIQUE, UNIFEM, ROPPA
and CTA**

Participants in the first phase of this electronic survey:

1. **Babacar Sene**, journalist - Director of 'Journal Agropasteur', Senegal
2. **François Agnimou**, Executive Secretary of the Ivory Coast National Association of Agricultural Professional Organisations (ANOPACI) and **Innocent Sindikubwabo** (ANOPACI)
3. **Jean Gervais Ayissi**, Secretary-General of 'Volontaires du Développement', Cameroon
4. **Jean Luc Bosio**, Rural Development Specialist, Water and Rural Program, World Bank Institute - USA
5. **Mustapha Malki**, KariaNet Regional Coordinator, IDRC-MERO Office, Egypt
6. **Elmoctar Youssouf**, Secretary-General of the Chambers of Agriculture Network - RECA Niger
7. **Oumar Niangado**, Syngenta Foundation for Mali and West Africa delegate
8. **Andrew Bennett**, former Executive Director of the Syngenta Foundation
9. **Tharcisse Batungwanayo**, SODES, Burundi
10. **Seraph Medard Ntady**, Coordinator for the Congo National Dialogue of Farming and Agricultural Producers Organisations (CNOP - Congo)
11. **Njaga Jawo**, National Women Farmers' Association (NAWFA), The Gambia
12. **Jean-Marie Cordier**, Director, JTS Semences, France

Coordination and Moderation Team:

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- Gilles Mersadier, FIDAFrique,
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Following the electronic survey on "Scouting and Sharing Innovations Initiative-SSI" launched on 18 October, a summary of contributions made in the period leading up to 5 November 2007 is provided below.

The summary is based on a review of the different contributions, structured around the four (4) questions posed in the survey¹.

1. What agricultural innovations, with upscaling potential, capable of dissemination on a regional scale, could you identify based on your experience to date?

Several agricultural innovations with upscaling potential have been proposed, for example:

a. Technological and practical innovations

- The supply of inputs adapted to the development of home gardens. The experience of the company JTS Semences demonstrates that the development of home gardening and market gardening areas is possible, especially through the setting up of complementary technical solutions such as economic water management, planting of improved seeds, a preventive health campaign and well thought-out agronomic advice. The company has proposed a set of materials and equipment in response to these concerns. Training is necessary to ensure the adoption of this technology. However, the issues of accessing credit, import duties as well as the cost of development and dissemination needed for start up act as an obstacle, limiting access to this technology;
- Small-scale irrigation systems are profitable, especially for market gardening. In Niger, for example, studies undertaken on land areas equipped with motor-pumps show that two in three smallholders using this system could at least move onto either renewing or acquiring a second motor-pump within 4 years. Profits could be as much as 920 000 FCFA/hectare for market gardening in contrast to 260 000 FCFA/hectare for cultivating rice.

b. Institutional, organizational and methodological innovations

- The experience of advocacy undertaken by NAWFA to promote women's access to land in Gambia has resulted in a reduction in the number of women excluded in this field. NAWFA is convinced that this experience,

¹ The present summary does not include the information provided by the "World Bank Institute - WBI" who has provided valuable documents for the current initiative. Our sincere thanks to Jean Luc Bosio for having shared these with us.

- which has had some interesting results in promoting agricultural production, could easily be extended to other regions in West Africa.
- Several other case studies have been put forward by NAWFA drawing on their experience which. These could serve as a lesson to other countries. This is particularly the case concerning 'Farmer Field Schools', literacy programs (42 literacy centers have been opened in Gambia), the development of agro-enterprises as well as cereal and seed banks for vulnerable populations.
 - The establishment of a database of case studies of innovation as well as the development of communication and information sharing through new information and communication technology (ICT). CNOP Congo's experience in this area has proved interesting to promote food security. The poor rate of literacy and constraints of access to equipment by producers are factors which limit the adoption of this technology.

c. Policy innovations

Comment by the IRPI Coordination Team and the Moderators of the electronic consultation:

*Contributors have not directly addressed the question of policy innovations of this type, which include, for example: gender observatories and management of pastoral areas (PRODAM), the regional agricultural policy (ECOWAP), the new land policies involving all stakeholders in natural resource management (NRM), IFAD -IFPRI collaboration on the rural component of PRSPs (Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers) in the region (Cameroon, Senegal, Ghana & Burkina Faso with involvement of Benin). **In order to maximize the benefits of this electronic survey, it would be useful to learn of more examples and experience in this area.***

2. Based on your experience, what are the factors likely to either limit or encourage access to these innovations?

The main factors that either encourage or limit access to these innovations are the following:

a) Factors limiting access

- (i) *Infrastructure (access to the market, to equipment, to credit, etc)*
 - The difficulties of access by producers to small-scale equipment and communication tools such as radio, television and, for some producers, computers;
 - The availability of inputs and other equipment on-site;

- The problem of a setting in which people are reluctant to commit themselves to the development-distribution costs when they have still not begun to absorb their set-up and production costs;
 - The difficulty for women farmers to access credit.
- (ii) *Social, institutional and legislative context (existing laws, taxes, possibility of creating synergies with other local stakeholders etc)*
- High rate of illiteracy;
 - Lack of organization by rural poor to defend their interests;
 - High import taxes for inputs and equipment;
 - The absence of a national policies in relation to innovation and in general, an unsuitable policy framework to promote innovation;
 - The fact that donors do not systematically include the promotion of innovation in their programs;
 - The impatience of donors and political decision-makers in relation to research results. These should be included in long term objectives and cannot be considered as short-term objectives;
 - The low rate of female representation in institutional and political decision making fora which manage access to innovations, research and dissemination priorities, and the policies that regulate access to innovations.
- (iii) *Features of the innovations themselves (complexity of reproduction and replication, difficult and complicated methodology etc.)*
- The fear of possible conflicts of interest between promoters of innovations and researchers;
 - Complex and unsuitable methodologies for producers;

b) Factors encouraging access to these innovations

- (i) *Infrastructures (access to the market and to equipment, access to credit, etc)*
- Access to equipment and to credit;
 - The development of infrastructures such as roads and other transport and communication facilities, and of other equipment used in the cold chain.
 - Tools for an efficient information and communication strategy;
- (ii) *Social, institutional and legislative context (existing laws, taxes, possibility of creating synergies with other local stakeholders etc.)*
- Good organization and "networking" of rural and farmers' and producer organizations (FOs);
 - Integrated training of FOs;
 - Well targeted policies adapted to the needs and constraints of women;

- A participative approach to the development of innovation for example, through the setting up or the development of " rural integrated centres," which respond to rural stakeholders' demands;
- Literacy and other training for women;
- The organization of local, national and/or regional fairs;

(iii) Characteristics of the innovation itself (ease of reproduction and replication, simple methodology etc.)

- Ease of implementation, low-cost simple technology, existing local infrastructure;
- Open dialogue and regular contact with the rural poor;
- The setting up of an observatory or a innovations database in order to benefit other regions;
- Avoid short-circuiting the natural progression of the adoption of technologies. For example, extending the size of vegetable gardens should be accompanied by as much training in staff management as in financial management. Progressivity allows innovators/producers to strengthen mechanisms to supply labor, working capital, access to inputs as well as market prospecting to sell their produce. Through trial and error, without suffering any heavy financial loss, producers will be able to gradually develop solutions to all constraints and be aware of any technological risks. In irrigation the following sequence of activities is suggested as an example to ensure a gradual and progressive approach: (i) traditional well, rope and bucket & boring; (ii) hand pump (iii) small network of bore holes (iv) motor-pump (v) increase of 'Californian' network.

3. How to foster a "culture of innovation" ?

To foster a culture of innovation, the large majority of participants in the consultation stressed **the importance of integrating an innovation component in the conception and execution of development projects**. Amongst other propositions made were the following:

- Training and awareness-raising amongst funders;
- Practical training of users;
- Setting up large-scale media campaigns on expected results;
- Setting up a fund supported by different projects designed for innovation scouting structures. These structures should be responsible for the dissemination of these innovations in other regions. However, the question is then to know if these structures exist and how could these projects work with these structures;
- The establishment of training funds under the umbrella of interprofessional organisations to make the most of good practice in projects;

- Integration of the innovating factor in the planning and execution of development projects, with an "innovation" category in all projects financed;
- Training of the rural poor and the evaluation of "farmer research";
- The adoption of an approach, which fosters a spirit of participation amongst beneficiaries in order to ensure innovation sustainability;
- The strengthening of existing FO structures to foster a culture of innovation.

4. What policies are needed to promote access to innovation for rural populations on a local, national and/or regional scale?

The proposals made in terms of policies needed to promote smallholder access to innovation are the following:

- The use of rural radio stations on a massive scale;
- The introduction of innovations in school programs;
- The setting up of techno-commercial distribution networks;
- Give technicians more say within the framework of development action;
- The introduction of a reliable and efficient information system to regulate prices and so motivate farmers;
- Good governance policies, taking into account the most vulnerable populations in particular;
- Well targeted advertising (radio, television) can play a crucial role in the promotion of technology. This is well received by producers including those living in very remote areas, as testified by the number of pumps and bore holing equipment sold without any means of credit or subsidies.
- On-site demonstrations, in fairs and in markets play a crucial role.

To ensure innovation sharing, it is not just the innovating factor, which is needed. One innovation alone does not allow the situation of producers to be 'solved' or improved. In most cases the rural poor are often aware of these innovations, but the environment in which they operate does not allow them to make the most of these innovations. In the last few years, for example, certain institutional innovations have directly benefited producers involved, allowing them to both produce and sell better (inventory credit, input supply shops, cereal markets, etc.). But it still remains very difficult for a producer to transfer this type of innovation elsewhere, without specific support.

5. Key questions that merit deeper review in the consultation

- What are concrete experiences and successes that address the gender linked to the innovation process?
- What policies - strategies - methodologies have succeeded - or could succeed - in promoting the dynamics of innovation in the region?
- What are the respective roles, synergies and possible partnerships between public and private stakeholders (examples: producers, rural organizations and private companies) in fostering innovation? Please give specific examples of innovations.
- What innovative techniques and practices of potential large scale impact have you identified in your development and investment programs or in those of your partners, that have a real potential for being replicated, adapted and multiplied large-scale elsewhere?