

Africa RISING – CSISA M&E Meeting

November 11-13, 2013; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

This event brings together researchers from two major projects on the sustainable intensification of agricultural production: Africa Research in Sustainable Intensification for the Next Generation (“Africa RISING”) and the Cereal Systems Initiative for South Asia (CSISA). Africa RISING comprises three research-for-development projects to sustainably intensify key African farming systems in West Africa, East and Southern Africa, and the Ethiopian highlands. It is supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as part of the U.S. government’s Feed the Future (FTF) initiative. In 2012, the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) launched the Sustainable Intensification of Cereal-based Farming Systems in the Guinea Savannah Zone of West Africa and in East and Southern Africa, while ILRI began the Sustainable Intensification of Crop-livestock Systems to improve food security and farm income diversification in the Ethiopian highlands. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) is leading the monitoring and evaluation of all three projects.

CSISA is a joint initiative of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), IFPRI, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), and the WorldFish Center. The initiative, launched in 2009 with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and USAID, aims to promote more efficient, productive and sustainable technologies for the smallholder production systems of the Indo-Gangetic Plains (IGP) in South Asia.

In the interest of cross-program learning from sustainable intensification efforts of key production systems in Africa and South Asia, Africa RISING and CSISA are conducting a joint meeting on monitoring, learning, and evaluation. The meeting will address how the sister programs are innovating in technology development and promotion, managing data and information, addressing challenges related to M&E, assessing impact, and enabling field- and project-level learning.

This meeting is designed to encourage cross-project learning and to match interested researchers with new opportunities in both Africa RISING and CSISA. We hope to encourage meeting participants to view this as a learning opportunity and a chance to explore new ideas, encourage participants to discuss their successes and failures openly, and encourage participants to seek out collaborative research opportunities across organizations.

Monday, November 11th

Session 1: Welcoming remarks, project overviews and issues (9:00 – 10:15)

For both Africa RISING and CSISA, a speaker will give an overview of the project. Donors from USAID will focus on their priorities and interests in the projects, as well as the role of these projects in their agency's larger development portfolio. IITA, CIMMYT, and IFPRI representatives knowledgeable about Africa RISING and CSISA will discuss the projects' objectives, timeframe, geography, sites, and partners. They will also address the agricultural technologies and practices that best characterize the projects' approaches and how these technologies/practices are being delivered or promoted. Regarding both projects' M&E systems, they will address the main ways in which the projects are monitoring their activities and outputs, and the main ways in which the projects are evaluating their outcomes and impact. Based on their experiences with these M&E systems, they will discuss Africa RISING and CSISA's performance to date and challenges in monitoring, evaluation, and data management for the projects.

Chair: Iain Wright (ILRI)

Presenters: Tracy Powell (USAID), John McMurdy (USAID), Alwin Keil (CIMMYT), Beliyou Haile (IFPRI)

Question and answer period

Coffee Break (10:15 – 10:30)

Session 2: Discussion on learning from monitoring and evaluation (10:30 – 11:45)

We begin the cross-project learning process with a discussion in which a panel of experts will be asked the following questions: (1) What is the purpose of monitoring and evaluation? (2) What makes a good evaluation? (3) What constitutes valid evidence? We will then conduct a lively moderated debate between audience members and the panelists on their experiences and challenges with monitoring and evaluation in CSISA and Africa RISING.

Moderator: David Spielman (IFPRI)

Roundtable discussants: Peter Thorne (ILRI), Maggie Gill (DFID), Alemayehu Seyoum Taffesse (IFPRI)

Question and answer period

World Café Discussions: Sessions 1 & 2 (11:45 – 12:45)

Facilitator: Ewen LeBorgne (ILRI)

Discussion Questions:

- ❖ *In what ways do physical scientists' and social scientists' goals for monitoring and evaluation converge? In what ways do they diverge? Which methods do they use?*
 - ❖ *How do results from controlled field experiments translate to real-world outcomes?*
 - ❖ *How does one differentiate the M&E requirements of a research project from those of a development project?*
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Lunch (12:45 – 13:45)

Session 3: Monitoring Tools (13:45 – 15:15)

Africa RISING and CSISA have developed a set of tools designed to monitor research activities on the ground and satisfy management reporting requirements. In this session, we explore how these tools work and how they help project staff and stakeholders better accomplish their objectives. We explore how the flow of information within a project can be managed efficiently and effectively, how FTF monitoring indicators are managed, and how web-based interfaces can help with functions, tasks, and responsibilities. We further explore ways to improve monitoring with other tools, applications, and security systems.

Chair: Carlo Azzarri (IFPRI)

Presenters: Melanie Bacou (IFPRI), Todd Slind (Spatial Development International)

Question and answer period

Coffee Break (15:15 – 15:30)

Session 4: Project monitoring and information management: Keeping track of activities and outputs (15:30 – 16:30)

Researchers from both Africa RISING and CSISA will give short presentations on how the project tracks its activities and outputs for donors, partners, and stakeholders. They will discuss the number and type of indicators their project tracks, including field trial, demonstration trial data, training events, training participants, and other relevant information. The presenters will also speak about the information they integrate from external sources, such as temperature and precipitation data, commodity prices, and facts about in-country infrastructure. In addition, they will address the need for custom indicators and discuss issues related to compilation, management, analysis, and reporting. An open discussion on solutions for better project monitoring and information management will follow.

Chair: Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon (IITA)

Presenters: Ainsley Charles (IFPRI), Festo Ngulu (IITA), Justice Ajaari (IFPRI), Alwin Keil (CIMMYT)

Question and answer period

Breakout Discussions: Sessions 3 & 4 (16:30 – 17:30)

Discussion Questions:

- ❖ *How can web tools be used more effectively to track project progress?*
 - ❖ *What kinds of custom indicators have been useful in South Asia and Africa?*
 - ❖ *How can we ensure better information and data management?*
 - ❖ *How do we integrate M&E with wider project management?*
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Tuesday, November 12th

Session 5: Characterizing landscapes, communities, and households (9:00 – 10:30)

This session will focus on the tools, methods, and data used to better understand the landscapes, communities and households that are part of Africa RISING and CSISA. Emphasis will be placed on understanding the different approaches to the measurement of key variables relating to agro-ecology, poverty, and vulnerability, which aid in answering questions such as: How suitable is a technology/practice to a particular setting? How poor/wealthy are potential beneficiaries? How vulnerable are they to shocks? Topics for discussion may include the following: farming systems analysis; poverty and vulnerability analysis; and the analysis of integrated household surveys and panel survey data.

Chair: Adam Silagyi (USAID)

Presenters: Mirja Michalscheck (Wageningen University), Roseline Remans (Vital Signs), Zhe Guo (IFPRI), Cleo Roberts (IFPRI), Pascale Schnitzer (IFPRI), Maria Comanescu (IFPRI)

Question and answer period

Coffee Break (10:30 – 10:45)

Session 6: Evaluating and forecasting technologies, practices, and dissemination/learning approaches (10:45 – 12:15)

A set of senior socio-economists and biophysical and economic modelers will talk about the analytical value and limitations of experimental approaches. They will discuss randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and their use in establishing causality, exploring trade-offs, eliminating bias, and quantifying impact, as well as their limitations and pitfalls. They will also address non-experimental approaches (propensity score matching (PSM), regression discontinuity (RD), or others), qualitative methods, and mixed methods -- and their place in evaluation. Additionally, they will discuss choice experiments, games, auctions, and the use of hypotheticals to evaluate preferences and willingness to pay.

They will also discuss how they use information from the field to calibrate models that forecast future scenarios. They will discuss the importance of translating micro-level household data into data at a landscape or national scale that predicts both patterns and impact of large-scale uptake. Furthermore, they will address the importance of integrated bio-economic modeling and system dynamics to integrate global climate model (GCM), land use, crop, livestock, water use, and partial/general equilibrium economic models to capture the many moving parts of a system. Examples of forecasting approaches include IMPACT, AGMIP, HarvestChoice, etc.

Chair: Mirja Michalscheck (Wageningen University)

Presenters: David Spielman (IFPRI), Carlo Azzarri (IFPRI), Jawoo Koo (IFPRI), Alwin Keil (CIMMYT)

Question and answer period

Lunch (12:15 – 13:15)

World Café: Sessions 5 & 6 (13:15 – 14:30)

Discussion Questions:

- ❖ *How can socio-economic and biophysical modeling be integrated?*
 - ❖ *How can we embed farmer behavior in forecasting models and do we have the capacity to do it?*
 - ❖ *What are the pros and cons of farming system approaches?*
 - ❖ *What are the pros and cons of baseline/endline surveys and panel data?*
 - ❖ *What are the pros and cons of experimental approaches to evaluation?*
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Coffee Break (14:30 – 14:45)

Session 7: Review and Presentation of Discussions (14:45 – 16:00)

In a gallery run, presenters from the World Café and breakout groups will present the discussions from each of the sessions, with major ideas that each group shared.

Facilitator: Ewen LeBorgne (ILRI)

Social Event – Cocktail at ILRI Campus (18:00 – 20:00)

Wednesday, November 13th (Africa RISING Discussions)

Session 8: Reflections (9:00 – 9:30)

The Africa RISING team will look back on the previous two days' discussions and select priority points.

Session 9: Project Mapping Tool (9:30 – 10:30)

IFPRI and its collaborator Spatial Development International will have a more in-depth look at the project mapping tool (PMT).

Presenter: Melanie Bacou (IFPRI), Todd Slind (Spatial Development International)

Discussion: What (additional) features do we like the PMT to have? What does it take to make the PMT useful for all stakeholders? What (potential) issues of concern are there in using the PMT? How do we address them?

Coffee Break (10:30 – 10:45)

Session 10: M&E of Africa RISING: General and Mega-site-specific Successes and Challenges (10:45 – 12:00)

In a fishbowl format, project coordinators from the three mega-sites will share goals and challenges and discuss about how AR household survey data can be used to help inform the research teams. M&E coordinators will share experiences, challenges, M&E plan and, when available, talk about preliminary results from AR baseline household surveys.

Chair: Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon (IITA)

Presenters: Ainsley Charles (IFPRI), Justice Ajaari (IFPRI), Beliyou Haile (IFPRI)

Lunch (12:00 – 13:00)

Session 11: Africa RISING Breakout Sessions (13:00 – 14:00)

M&E coordinators from the three Africa RISING mega-sites will share in greater detail their experiences and facilitate discussion about site-specific issues. IFPRI M&E coordinators will be joined by a representative from the research team to provide insight on monitoring-related issues faced by the research teams.

East and Southern Africa (ESA)

Facilitators: Ainsley Charles (IFPRI), Festo Ngulu (IITA)

West Africa (WA)

Facilitators: Justice Ajaari (IFPRI), Shaibu Mellon Bedi (IITA)

Ethiopian Highlands (EH)

Facilitators: Beliyou Haile (IFPRI), Kindu Mekonnen (ILRI)

Session 12: Final Discussions and Concluding Remarks (14:00 – 15:00)

Coffee Break (15:00 – 15:15)

Session 13: Africa RISING Joint Mega-site Meeting (15:15 – 16:45)

Senior representatives from Africa RISING donors, implementers, and M&E team will meet to discuss successes, challenges, and next steps for the M&E system.

(Participants: Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon, Justice Ajaari, Ainsley Charles, Mateete Bekunda, Asamoah Larbi, Tracy Powell, Carlo Azzarri, Beliyou Haile)
