



Is there a local demand for sustainable intensification? The role of multi-stakeholder platforms to target smallholders' needs in Babati, Tanzania

Per Hillbur^{1*} and Caitlin McCormack²

¹Malmö University, Sweden/Research Consultant to International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA)

²

*Corresponding author: Per Hillbur, per.hillbur@mah.se

Abstract

This paper focuses on an evaluation of the organization, functioning and long-term sustainability of Research-for-Development (R4D) platforms established by the USAID Feed the Future programme Africa RISING (Research in Sustainable Intensification for the Next Generation). The case presented here is from Babati District in north-central Tanzania.

Strategies for sustainable management of agricultural resources by rural communities and farmers must be tailored to local conditions and should foster communication, collaboration and trust between stakeholders on the ground. This is particularly important for the benefits of groups with limited access to resources, including women and youth. Furthermore, R4D programs need to incorporate local knowledge and consider the particular challenges in specific contexts in order to design effective interventions and build the trust required for collaboration with local communities. This process of co-learning between local stakeholders and research programs needs to be initiated at an early stage.

Research-for-development (R4D) platforms were initiated as a model for institutional collaboration and co-learning for Africa RISING in 2014, and in Babati it was formally launched as the district level platform JUMBA (*Jukwaa la Utafiti kwa Maendeleo wilaya ya Babati*) in April 2014. This initiative summons all major stakeholders in agricultural development in Babati District and functions as a strategic body for coordination of research and development activities on crop and livestock farming and natural resource management in the district.

One of the challenges has been to follow up and measure the progress and impact of multi-stakeholder arrangements. Long-term benefits require strong commitment in the form of local ownership and leadership that fosters mutual trust between stakeholders as well as a commitment to the sustainability of farming into the future. What are the success criteria for demand-driven approaches? For what kind of interventions are R4D platforms suitable or necessary?

We assess these aspects in an evaluation of the JUMBA platform based on interviews with key stakeholders in the process. The analysis is framed around three dimensions of platform performance, namely 1) platform establishment, 2) platform functioning, and 3) platform outcome (cf. Damtew and Duncan 2015). In addition to these dimensions, and the related performance indicators, we have added a relational dimension to explore how platform members build networks and relations within and outside the platform itself. The relational dimension is essential to understand the platform's potential for long-term impact.

www.africa-rising.net

