

INNOVAFRICA PROJECT LAUNCHED



Top: Participants of the InnovAfrica project inception workshop **Left:** Susan Msolla of Sokoine University of Agriculture-Tanzania talks to Bracharia grass farmer Charles Mulili from Kangundo, eastern Kenya **Center:** Juvenal Musine of the Federation of Farmers and Pastoralists in Rwanda (IMBARAGA) during the InnovAfrica launch **Right:** Donald Njarui of KALRO and Mounia Essefani of IAG-Germany during InnovAfrica inception workshop field trip

The **Innovations in Technology, Institutional and Extension Approaches towards Sustainable Agriculture and Enhanced Food and Nutritional Security in Africa (InnovAfrica) Project** was launched with a five-day workshop bringing together all partners at the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) Nairobi campus from 5-9 June 2017.

The ambitious project that is funded under the European Union (EU) Africa Research and Innovation Partnership—a partnership between EU and the African Union—aims at using innovative and integrated approaches to improve food and nutrition security for African smallholders through climate adaptability. The main objective of InnovAfrica is to improve food and nutrition security by integrating sustainable agriculture intensification systems (SAI), innovative institutional approaches with novel extension and advisory services and enhancing smallholder adaptive capacity in Sub-Saharan Africa.

InnovAfrica will test, integrate, and disseminate SAI systems suitable to smallholders, institutional approaches e.g. multi-actor platforms (MAPs), seed delivery systems and extension and advisory services e.g. dynamic knowledge platforms supported by smart phones, Village Knowledge Centers. The main outcomes of InnovAfrica include:

- i) Better understanding of the needs and opportunities of SAI systems in Africa.
- ii) Improved knowledge and innovation capacity of farmers to implement SAI systems supported by innovative institutional approaches and extension advisory services.
- iii) Improved product value chains through viable innovative institutional approaches benefiting women and youth.
- iv) Innovative policies, increased knowledge of public private partnerships to strengthen agri-business model in case countries with a view to up-scaling successes in other regions through functional MAPs.
- v) Wider dissemination of SAI systems to smallholders and women within and outside project areas through effective use of smart phones and social media.
- vi) Stronger EU-Africa Research and Innovation Partnership to achieve food and nutrition security.

InnovAfrica spans six African countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania and South Africa. It brings together a multidisciplinary team of experts from 16 institutions in Europe and Africa.

TANZANIA

8–11 August 2017

InnovAfrica in Tanzania was launched at the University of Dar es Salaam's Department of Civil and Structural Engineering, College of Engineering and Technology. The four-day meeting attracted over 20 participants from Tanzania's Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, extension staff teams from Lindi and Rungwe District Councils, farmers, and Tanzania Official Seed Certification Institute. Participants highlighted the importance of extensive consultations with key actors prior to implementation of project activities. They also emphasised the need to time project activities based on local cropping seasons. A one-day field visit to the Kibaha Education Centre responsible for dairy farming, 30 km west of Dar es Salaam revealed the huge opportunity to improve cattle feeding through improved pasture production in the area. Dr. Kissa Kajigili, the head of Extension at the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries who is also a MAP member welcomed the research and development interventions that promise guaranteed government support to the project.



Top: Innovafrica project Tanzania kick-off meeting participants discussing possible areas of involvement in the project **Bottom:** Farmer talking to Innovafrica team about manure in Lobi, Dedza District, Malawi

ETHIOPIA

21–24 August 2017

In Ethiopia, Innovafrica was launched at the Haramaya University at a four-day meeting involving researchers, academics, farmers, non-governmental organizations representatives and private sector players from the two project sites—Kombolcha and Meta districts of Oromia region in Ethiopia. The meeting was an opportunity to discuss potential innovative technologies, institutional changes and policies to tackle key agricultural constraints in the region including poor market access, poor water harvesting technologies, lack of quality seeds, need for improved livestock breeds, prevalence of pests and diseases and malnutrition. Among the innovative extension approaches to be scaled up by the Innovafrica Ethiopia team is the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) approach to helping farmers translate their vision into an integrated farm plan. The project team will also tap into the wealth of knowledge and experiences from the farmers in the Oromia region and beyond—e.g. local knowledge on water harvesting.

RWANDA

22–25 August 2017

In Rwanda, the project launch familiarized all Rwanda-based participants with the implementation plan and provided a platform for networking among the diverse stakeholder groups. Participants representing Kirehe district in eastern and Nyamagabe district in southern Rwanda identified project implementation sites based on agricultural potential and existing institutional frameworks in the two districts. In Kirehe district, the dairy, maize, sorghum, banana, soybean, bean, fish and coffee value chains were selected for inclusion in the project. In Nyamagabe district where crop and livestock farming are well integrated the main values chains included in the project in were forages (Brachiaria, Rhodes grass, Napier grass), sorghum, beans, coffee, cassava and forest products. Field trips to farms in Nasho and Mpanga sectors of Kirehe district demonstrated the need for improved forages as well as opportunities to improve the quality of crop residues.

MALAWI

24–27 August 2017

The Malawi case country kick-off meeting saw the successful induction of the project's case-country advisory and steering group on innovations called. The meeting which took place at Ufulu Gardens Hotel in Lilongwe attracted a cross-section of stakeholders from government, private industry, academia, local area leadership and non-governmental organisations. An exciting component of the project launch was the field visit which presented an opportunity to meet with farmers in Thambolagwa village in Lobi, Dedza and Kacheche area in Ekwendeni, Mzimba. The farmers received the project enthusiastically, sharing indigenous knowledge of locally grown crops like bambara nuts and updating the project team on experiences of those who had tried out crop production intensification by intercropping cereals like maize, sorghum and millet, with legumes such as beans, soy bean, ground nuts, pigeon peas and green gram.

SOUTH AFRICA

28–31 August 2017

The South Africa case country meetings in Free State Province provided an active platform for interaction between MAP members, scientists and farmers. The case country meeting and field visits to various farms in the Free State province of South Africa exposed the MAP members and project partners to the opportunities and challenges that smallholders in the province are facing. Lack of job opportunities in the urban areas has led to the increased involvement of youth and women in farming. However, smallholder farmers and especially youth face a number of constraints including limited access to finance, technology and mechanized farming methods, as well as lack of training and capacity building in best farming practices. Some of these challenges will be addressed through the InnovAfrica project initiatives in the region.

KENYA

5–8 September 2017

The Kenya case country meeting brought together a cross-section of project stakeholders to sensitize them on the expected project outcome and involve them in developing the annual work plan, communication and information dissemination plans. The discussion workshops were hosted by the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO)-Katumani Center in eastern Kenya and involved 35 participants from the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries; Kenya Seed Company, dairy farmers cooperatives operating in the project sites; farmers' representative; and local government extension agents as well as the case country implementing partners KALRO, the BecA-ILRI Hub and the Kenya National Farmers Federation (KENAFF). Field trips to dairy farms in central and eastern Kenya facilitated the identification of sites for the up scaling of climate-smart Brachiaria forage feed system.

International Engagements

PRESENTING INNOVAFRICA IN BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

The Horizon 2020 Project Coordinator's Day

On 22 June 2017, Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO) senior research scientist and professor Udaya Sekhar Nagothu, who coordinates InnovAfrica presented the project framework, expected results, outcomes and impacts at the Horizon 2020 Project Coordinator's Day in Brussels, Belgium. During his presentation, Udaya emphasized the project's approach of actively involving relevant actors and end users, smallholder farmers, throughout the project's life cycle through MAPs. The project focusses on dissemination, and communication of results to the end users, policy makers and the broader public. The meeting was an opportunity for coordinators of EU Horizon 2020 funded projects to share experiences and explore opportunities for collaboration.



Jacob Mignouna, BecA-ILRI Hub director presents the InnovAfrica project during a side event at the EU Africa High Level Policy Dialogue on Science Technology and Innovation Stakeholder meeting

EU-Africa High Level Policy Dialogue (HLPD) on Science, Technology and Innovation Stakeholder meeting

From 17–19 October 2017, the Biosciences eastern and central Africa-International Livestock Research Institute (BecA-ILRI) Hub director Jacob Mignouna who is a co-coordinator of the InnovAfrica project attended a series of meetings at The EU-Africa High Level Policy Dialogue (HLPD) on Science, Technology and Innovation Stakeholder meeting in Brussels, Belgium. During the meetings he gave presentations on the InnovAfrica project, in which the BecA-ILRI Hub is a co-coordinator with NIBIO. He also facilitated a side-event based on the project that explored the opportunities of improving product value chains and smallholder income in sub Saharan Africa through MAPs and the priority short-to medium-term investments that will sustain impact and upscale project outcomes from Africa–EU Research and Innovation (R&I) Partnership projects.

What the European Commission would like to see from the InnovAfrica project is the uptake of research products

Agnieszka Romanowicz, European Commission research programming and policy officer

THE INNOVAFRICA PARTNERSHIP

Activity Progress

Deliverables submitted during the first 6 months of the project:

- Project website www.innovafrika.eu launched.
- Project Management Board (PMB), Scientific Expert Advisory Board (SEAB) and Stakeholder Advisory Board (SAB) established.
- Work Plan, Risk Management Plan, Gender Action Plan and Dissemination Plan approved and uploaded to the EU.
- All six case countries induct MAPs members
- Survey questionnaire to be implemented in developing socio-economic baseline indicators for smallholder farms compiled and ready for use
- KIPUS Knowledge Platform under development and to be established by end November 2017.

Project Partners

InnovAfrica is jointly coordinated by NIBIO and the BecA-ILRI Hub and brings together a multidisciplinary team of experts from:

- Agricultural Research Council (South Africa)
- Haramaya University (Ethiopia)
- International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center, South Africa Regional Office (Zimbabwe)
- Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (Kenya)
- Kenya National Farmers' Federation (Kenya)
- Knowledge Intelligence Applications GmbH (Germany)
- Modern Dairy Farmers' Cooperative (Rwanda)
- Norwegian University of Life Sciences (Norway)
- Rwanda Agriculture Board (Rwanda)
- Soils Food and Healthy Communities (Malawi)
- Sokoine University of Agriculture (Tanzania)
- Stichting Dienst Landbouwkundig Onderzoek (the Netherlands)
- University of Malawi (Malawi)
- University of Tuscia (Italy)



KALRO partners look at value-added dairy products displayed by farmers from Mukuruweini in Central Kenya during the InnovAfrica Kenya kick-off meeting field trip.

Upcoming activities and events:

- The next InnovAfrica project meeting will be held in Kigali, Rwanda from 13-16 February 2018



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