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INNOVAFRICA PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER

A Bi-annual Newsletter of the Innovations in Technology, Institutional & Extension Approaches towards Sustainable Agriculture & Enhanced Food and Nutritional Security in Africa

INNOVAFRICA UPDATES AND ACHIEVEMENTS



FOURTH CONSORTIUM MEETING OF INNOVAFRICA ORGANIZED IN MBEYA, TANZANIA

InnovAfrica's project partners met in Mbeya from 11-15th February to review the project's progress during the first mid-term (Jun 2017–Nov 2018). At the meeting the results achieved during the first mid-term period, challenges faced, and future plans were discussed. The meeting was hosted by the Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) with over 45 participants.

During the first mid-term, InnovAfrica focused on establishing base line, stakeholders engagement through Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) in all the six case countries, and the implementation of farmer led field demonstration of three sustainable agricultural intensification (SAI) systems: maize-legume, millets-legume, and Brachiaria forage technologies.

InnovAfrica also introduced Integrated Seed Delivery System, Village Knowledge Centres (VKCs), Integrated Farm Plan (PIP) and Farmer to Farmer (F2F) extension to enhance the adoption and upscaling of suitable agricultural technologies. Other achievements included mapping three agri food value chains and identification of adoption barriers and opportunities for upscaling SAI among the smallholder farmers.

The members of the Scientific Expert Advisory Board (SEAB) and Stakeholder Advisory Board (SAB) appraised the progress and the results achieved through the team's ongoing activities. They suggested project reporting to focus on the impacts achieved to benchmark the progress against overall indicators and Africa's development goals e.g. the Malabo Declaration, Agenda 2063 and Science, Technology and Innovation strategy for Africa (STISA).



THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION DELIVERS A POSITIVE REVIEW ON THE INNOVAFRICA PROJECT

The InnovAfrica project mid-term review was held in Brussels on the 21-22 of February 2019. The Project Coordinator Dr. Sekhar Nagothu presented an overview of the progress in the first mid-term, followed by Jacob Mignouna, the Co-coordinator summarizing the main policy implications.

The Work Package (WP) leaders presented on the tasks and activities taking place in their respective work packages and included the main results and future work plans. Results from each WP were discussed in detail, including their sustainability and relevance to achieve the expected project impacts.

The mid-term review concluded with positive notes from the European Commission project review committee stating "the project has been managed systematically, thoroughly and is well done so far".



IMPROVED PRODUCTIVITY AND CROP DIVERSITY IN MALAWI

During a visit to InnovAfrica the project sites in the Lobi, Malawi on 3rd June 2019, project team and MAP members visited various farmer-led demonstrations that showed improved crop productivity and crop diversity.

Intercropping maize, millet and sorghum with soybeans and groundnuts showed markedly better results than solo crops. The crops are grown on raised and flatbed ridges and fertilized with compost, locally made by farmers. Farmers participating in the project expressed that crop yields from the trials have improved since the InnovAfrica project interventions started in 2017. A woman farmer in Lobi reported better nutrition and health with consuming orange maize intercropped with legumes.

Nafasam, a MAP member involved in agricultural trading, promised farmers to open market access to groundnuts and beans as long as farmers produce enough quantity and keep the quality of products. Farmers showed interest in the proposition and asked for a contract as assurance for buying the produce.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO ACCELERATE UP-SCALING OF BRACHIARIA GRASS IN KENYA



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WE FARM WITH SCIENCE AT INNOVAFRICA

The intensification of crop production through intercropping and the systematic record keeping has grown into a fascination to farmers in Lobi, Dedza. Farmers are participating fully, not only in growing the crops but also systematic collection of data to compare yields from one season to another.

Stanley Kachali is a participating farmer from Lobi, Dedza. The villagers selected him to collect rainfall data from the rain-guage that the project provided. “Anandisankha kuti ndizilemba za mvula chifukwa choti ndimadziwa kuwerenga ndi kulemba. Tsiku liri lonse mvula ikagwa ndimabwera kudzalemba ma milimita amene rain guage ikuonetsa” – I was selected to write about the rain because I can read and write. When it rains, I record the millimetres as shown in the rain-guage.

InnovAfrica is approaching the farming activities by centring farmers in science as a way of empowering them with relevant knowledge.



INNOVAFRICA FEATURED AT HORIZON 2020 INFO-DAY IN NAIROBI, KENYA

On 20th March 2019, the European Commission (EC), the European Research Council (ERC) and the African Academy of Sciences (AAS) co-organised a Horizon 2020 Info-Day in Nairobi, Kenya. The participants included scientists from a wide range of fields of research in Kenya, staff of AAS and high-level delegates from the ERC and EC including the presidents of AAS and ERC.

The president of the ERC presented insights on activities and governance of the council. He related this to enhancing research on the frontiers of knowledge and progressing towards a dynamic knowledge society. Since its creation in 2007, the ERC through EU research programme has funded over 8900 research projects led by scientists across Europe.

Dr Donald Njarui presented InnovAfrica project activities and the project’s key achievements. He highlighted anticipated ecological, nutritional and social-economic impacts of the project. He also emphasised on mapping of institutions and agriculture policies related to the dissemination of agricultural innovations in Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi Rwanda, South Africa and Tanzania.



INNOVAFRICA PARTNERS TRAINED ON KIPUS FOR DATA COLLECTION

On 28th May 2019, the InnovAfrica project organized a KIPUS training session for the Brachiaria forage system in Nairobi, Kenya. The training was facilitated by Mr. Simon Striegel from KIAG, Germany.

The participants were drawn from KALRO and KENAFF - both organizations will be involved in the trial data collection.

The knowledge and skills gained from the training will be applied by the scientists to collect digital data in the field using KIPUS as a much more efficient data collection system than previous analogue methods.



MAP MEMBERS VISIT INNOVAFRICA SITES IN ETHIOPIA

InnovAfrica field activities are implemented in the Kombolcha and Meta woredas (districts) of the Oromia region. A multi-actor platform (MAP) meeting was organised by Haramaya University (HU) on June 11-13 to collect feedback from the farmers during the planned field visits and receive team updates on ongoing activities.

InnovAfrica's major activities on the ground are validation and/or up-scaling of maize-legume and Brachiaria grass technologies and an Integrated Farm Plan (PIP) approach.

The farmers spoke on their experiences with the benefits of the technologies introduced by the InnovAfrica project. They highlighted a lack of agricultural inputs (e.g. seeds and fertilizers), limited access to market and small farm size as major constraints for sustainable adoption and upscaling of InnovAfrica technologies.

A rigorous discussion was held on national agricultural policies and initiatives that aids up-scaling InnovAfrica technologies within and beyond project the woredas and the possible roles different stakeholders can play to facilitate access to agricultural inputs and markets.



INNOAFRICA IMPRESSES NON-PARTICIPATING FARMERS IN MALAWI

InnovAfrica researchers from University of Malawi and CIMMYT-Zimbabwe conducted a pre-harvest field day on 23 March 2019 at Lobi, Dedza to demonstrate maize-legume system. The field day was attended by about 200 farmers including some farmers from surrounding villages. Seven non-participating farmers reported to have adopted the InnovAfrica maize-legume system. The village head Maya commended InnovAfrica, for considering their village to participate in InnovAfrica activities, and secondly for encouraging farmers from neighboring villages to learn from the fields of those who are participating in the farming Innovations.

INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Upcoming events and activities

Next consortium meeting



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