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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



INNOVAFRICA PARTICIPATES IN AFRICAN MACRO REGIONAL AGRICULTURE POLICY WORKSHOP

The African Centre for Technology Studies, in partnership with the International Institute for Environment and Development, UK HighClere Consulting, Romania and African partners under the European Union's Horizon 2020 funded Small Farms, Small Food Businesses and Sustainable Food Security (SALSA) project organized a one-day policy dialogue in Nairobi in October 2019. The workshop was themed the African Macro Regional Agriculture Policy Workshop.

The workshop brought together SALSA project partners in Africa and Europe, African Regional Economic Communities representatives, national policymakers, practitioners, researchers, farmer associations, private sector, academia and non-governmental organizations with to contribute to recommendations regarding the most appropriate contemporary policy interventions for maintaining and enhancing the integration of small farms and small food businesses into modern agri-food value chains.

Dr Jessica Ndubi, from InnovAfrica was among the panellists presenting on the agricultural policies that favour diffusion and establishment of agriculture innovations.



MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORM (MAP) MEMBERS VISIT INNOVAFRICA SITES IN ETHIOPIA

Haramaya University organized a MAP meeting in June 2019. The aim of the meeting was to update MAP members on ongoing project activities and to collect feedback from the farmers on the InnovAfrica interventions.

The meeting was attended by MAP members from East Hararghe Zone Office of Agriculture and Natural Resource, Oromia Agricultural Research Institute, Afran Qalo Cooperative Union and Oromia Agricultural Output Market Enterprises; farmers from Kombolcha and Meta woredas; a member of Integrated Seed Sector Development Project; the HU InnovAfrica team; and the InnovAfrica partners NIBIO, BecA-ILRI Hub and Altera. InnovAfrica's major activities on the ground were validation and/or up-scaling of maize-legume and Brachiaria grass technologies and an Integrated Farm Plan (PIP) approach. Farmers shared their experiences on benefits of InnovAfrica technologies.

Lack of agricultural inputs particularly seeds and fertilizers, limited access to market and small farm size were stated as major constraints for sustainable adoption and upscaling of these technologies.



FARMERS IN KISII, KENYA INTRODUCED TO BRACHIARIA GRASS

KENAFF in collaboration with Kisii County organized a two-day field event in October 2019. The event was attended by 100 farmers from six dairy groups namely; Nyamangundo Dairy Group, Gomba Dairy Group, Kiseo Dairy Group, Kikapu Women Dairy Group, Morambo Dairy Group and Elimu Women Self Help Group. The women constitute 60% of these groups. A representative from Kenya Crop and Dairy Marketing Systems (KCDMS) was also in attendance. The event was organised to introduce and advocate for improved Brachiaria grass cultivars to farmers in Kisii County to build on the success of Small Holder Dairy Commercialization Program (SDCP) in which KENAFF was engaged in as a Technical Service Provider (TSP) to train dairy groups and apex organizations. The project aimed to improve income from market-oriented production and trade activities of farmers through improved information on market opportunities, cost reduction, value addition and more reliable trade relations.

During the event the importance of Brachiaria grass in addressing fodder shortage in Kenya was explained and the ecological advantage of Brachiaria grass to mitigate negative impact of climate change was highlighted. Suitability of Brachiaria grass for hay and silage making was communicated along with use of Brachiaria grass for income generation by farmers in Kirinyaga and Machakos counties.

This event fulfils part of KENAFF's role in InnovAfrica to communicate results and disseminate technologies to a wider farming community in Kenya.



ENHANCED CROP PRODUCTIVITY AND DIVERSITY IN MALAWI

InnovAfrica MAP members (Malawi) visited various farmer-led demonstrations in Dediza/Lobi area of Malawi in June 2019.

Intercropping maize, millet and sorghum with soybeans and groundnuts showed markedly better results than solo crops.

Farmers participating in the project expressed that crop yields from the trials have improved since the InnovAfrica project interventions started in 2017. Farmers have positive responses to the interventions brought by the project and its contributions to food diversity and nutrition. A woman farmer in Lobi reported better nutrition and health with consuming orange maize intercropped with legumes. This MAP visit concluded enhanced crop productivity and diversity in the project site.



BRACHIARIA GRASS TECHNOLOGY EXHIBITED IN AGRICULTURAL SHOW IN KENYA

InnovAfrica participated for the second time in Machakos Agricultural Show and Trade Fair in June 2019. Improved Brachiaria grass cultivars Basilisk and Xaraes were demonstrated at the KALRO stand, and information on management, nutritive value and benefits to livestock production was shared. A leaflet containing information about InnovAfrica project was distributed to visitors.

The Brachiaria plots attracted large number of visitors with an estimated 1147 farmers, scholars and students visiting the stand compared to 770 in 2018.

The Machakos Agricultural show is an annual event that provides a platform for farmers to learn new innovations and technologies in conventional and innovative agriculture value chains and provides avenues for networking.

INNOVAFRICA PARTNERS TRAINED ON DIGITAL DATA COLLECTION

One day digital data collection training (KIPUS) was organised for the Brachiaria forage-Livestock system in Nairobi in June 2019. The training was facilitated by Simon Striegel from KIAG, the InnovAfrica ICT framework provider. Scientists from KALRO and KENAFF who are involved in field data collected participated in the training.

KIPUS is more efficient data collection system than previous analogue methods. It is a browser-based web-application and is designed to be used on android devices such as tablets and smartphones. The key benefits of using KIPUS include improved real-time data for monitoring and analysis, matching of SAI trial data with HHQ for time-series analyses, the creation of a joint, digital data base accessible to all InnovAfrica partners and, thus, improved potential for data analysis for all stakeholders.



VILLAGE KNOWLEDGE CENTRES (VKCS) IN KENYA AND TANZANIA CONNECTING FARMERS AND PROMOTING KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

InnovAfrica has set up two VKCs in Kenya and in Tanzania. The project introduced this innovation to Africa from India. The extension agent/or knowledge worker stationed at the VKC have provided advisory services to more than 100 livestock and crop farmers. The VKC additionally maintains Brachiaria demo plots at the Ward Resource Centre and Primary School for farmer exposure and training to learn about Brachiaria forage production and scale-out the technology.

Farmers' groups supported by Heifer International and ASAS are main users of VKC. A group of livestock and crop farmers were established and meet every Thursday from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm to discuss and share success stories and agricultural challenges. Twenty visitors (neither crop nor livestock farmers) have also visited the VKC to learn how it is managed.

A youth group that has been engaged in vegetable production activities uses VKC facilities to access relevant information on vegetable production.



DELIVERABLES SUBMITTED TO EU IN THIS REPORTING PERIOD

Deliverable 3.1: Farmer-led experimentation with sustainable agricultural intensification technologies for improved food and nutrition security in Africa - Cereal-Legume Cropping Systems and Brachiaria forage systems (September 2019)

Deliverable 5.2: A technical brief with a Venn diagram (November 2019)

Upcoming events and activities

The fifth InnovAfrica Consortium Meeting will be held in Lilongwe, Malawi from 12 to 15 February 2020.

Sita Ghimire and Donald Njarui will participate and present InnovAfrica in Africa 2030 – Strengthening Capacity of African Countries to Handle the Challenges of a Changing Environment, the Third Symposium on Climate Change Adaptation in Nairobi, Kenya from 23rd to 24th January 2020.



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