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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



VILLAGE KNOWLEDGE CENTRE (VKC) TRAINS FARMERS ON BRACHIARIA PRODUCTION IN KENYA

The VKC at Kangundo, Kenya organized a farmers training on Brachiaria grass production in November 2019.

Twenty-two farmers; 12 women and 10 men from different villages of Kangundo sub-county participated in the training. Most of these farmers were aware about the Brachiaria grass and its benefits from fellow farmers and friends.

The training focused on the establishment and management of Brachiaria grass. Farmers were taught on land preparation procedures, sowing, fertilizer application, weeding and harvesting.

They were informed about the suitability of the grass for grazing and cut-and-carry systems and for conservation as hay and silage. These farmers were also provided with Brachiaria seeds.

The training was facilitated by Ms. Mirriam Makato, the VKC Manager. The VKC is one of the innovative extension approaches tested in InnovAfrica for sharing knowledge and information with farmers and related stakeholders.



MAP MEMBERS DISCUSS IMPROVING FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IN MALAWI

On February 2020, InnovAfrica MAP members for Malawi, project partners met in Lilongwe to develop appropriate investment plans to strengthen the maize/millet-legume value chains and to prepare policy recommendations for ensuring food and nutrition security in Malawi.

Previously, the project had identified major barriers of the maize/millet-legume value chains, and some investment options. Some of these barriers were limited market access, low maize prices, limited access to credit, small land holdings and gender inequality.

Increased access to seeds and fertilizer, provision of trade and transport facilities from production site to food insecure regions, improvement of storage and processing infrastructure, and improvement of irrigation facilities were among the major recommendations.

Harmonized laws between the Ministry of Trade (where maize is a commodity), and the Ministry of Agriculture (where maize is meant to ensure food security) were policy solutions examined.



UP-SCALING BRACHIARIA GRASS TECHNOLOGY IN TANZANIA

InnovAfrica partner, Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) has been engaged in validation and promotion of Brachiaria grass technologies in Tanzania. Three cultivars: *Brachiaria brizantha* cv. Piata, *Brachiaria brizantha* cv. Xaraes and *Brachiaria decumbens* cv. Basilisk were evaluated along with local forage Napier grass. All three Brachiaria cultivars tested had a good adaptation and excellent agronomic performances. These activities were concentrated in and around Ilenge village in Rungwe District until very recently.

SUA initiated Brachiaria grass scaling activities in Iringa, Coast, and Morogoro regions. In Iringa, the Brachiaria demonstration plots was established in October 2018 in partnership with Kibebe Farm that deals with dairy production and breeding. It has been distributing Brachiaria grass tillers to customers who visit the farm to buy cattle.

Similarly, Brachiaria experimental plots were established at Kibaha Education Center in May 2019. Three Brachiaria cultivars were sown following standard protocol provided by ILRI. Data on growth attributes were collected monthly for three months, and cultivar Basilisk was the best performer.

The Brachiaria demonstration plots has been established at SUA Farm, Morogoro. These plots are used in training SUA students and to display improved forage to SUA visitors. Journalists from SUA and Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation documented success stories across Tanzania. These initiatives have helped the knowledge of Brachiaria grasses spread across Tanzania.



CORONA PANDEMIC IMPACTS ON MARKETING OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE IN KENYA

KALRO scientist collected information on the impact of the COVID - 19 pandemic on different farming activities at InnovAfrica project sites Machakos and Kirinyaga counties in Kenya.

In Machakos (Kangundo sub-county), farmers had challenges in marketing of their farm produce with horticultural crops taking the biggest hit. The demand for farm produce was low forcing farmers to sell at half the price. However, the price of milk remained relatively stable, and some farmers are getting more credit requests from their customers. The open-air markets at Tala and Kangundo urban centres were closed due to corona risk. This led to rise in roadside marketing of farm produce in a bid to bridge production and marketing gaps in the wake of the pandemic.

In the lower region of Kirinyaga County, farmers co-operatives are involved in marketing of farm produce. In Kirinyaga County, co-operatives aggregated agricultural produce and transported to Nairobi in large quantity.



BRACHIARIA GRASS TECHNOLOGY POPULARIZED IN CENTRAL HIGHLANDS OF KENYA

A Farmer Field Day was organized by Kirinyaga County Government at Kamweti Agricultural Training Centre (ATC), Kirinyaga in March 2020.

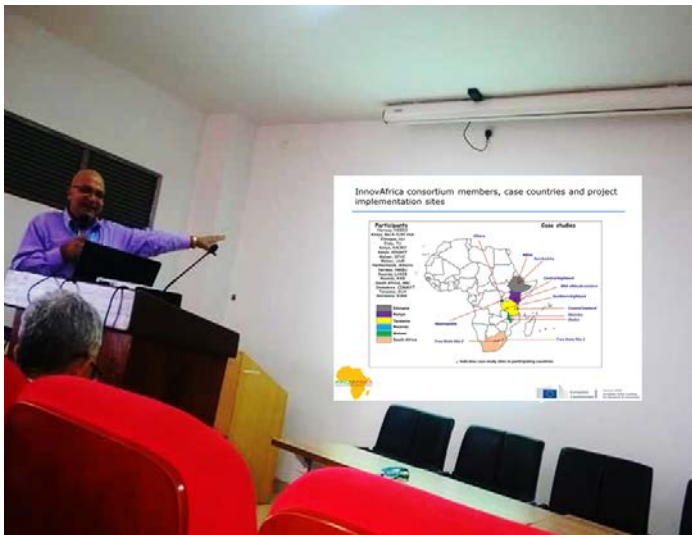
KALRO demonstrated four Brachiaria grass varieties: Basilisk, MG-4, Piata and Xaraes. Field day participants were informed about InnovAfrica project, visited Brachiaria demonstration plots and were given information on Brachiaria grass and its' importance to livestock productivity and environment.

The haymaking technology using handmade hay box was also demonstrated. KENAFF displayed its activities and services offered to member farmers including lobbying and advocacy. KENAFF also promoted an energy-efficient stove in the event.

INNOVAFRICA PARTICIPATED IN CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION IN AFRICA SYMPOSIUM

The Climate Change Adaptation in Africa symposium was held at the University of Nairobi, Kenya in January 2020. The symposium was an interdisciplinary event organized within the framework of the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2036 of the African Union. One hundred and ten participants from 15 countries from across the globe attended the symposium.

InnovAfrica consortium members Dr. Sita Ghimire and Dr. Donald Njarui from International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and Kenya Agricultural & Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) respectively, participated in the symposium. Sita Ghimire gave a plenary presentation on "Agricultural intensification for food and nutritional security and climate change adaptation in Sub-Saharan Africa" and Donald Njarui gave a presentation on "Brachiaria grass for climate-resilient and sustainable livestock production in Kenya".



INNOVAFRICA PARTNERS MET IN LILONGWE, MALAWI

The InnovAfrica fifth consortium meeting was held in Lilongwe in February 2020. In this meeting project partners reviewed the project progress and prepared activity plan for next six months. The main results were presented, discussed for the second mid-term report. Forty participants attended the meeting from several organizations from Africa and Europe. This meeting included two- and half-day presentation and discussion and one day field visit to the project villages in Dedza.

Three project Stakeholder Board members, Dr. Yemi Akinbamijo, Dr. Denis Kyetere and Prof. Agnes Mwang'ombe, participated in the meeting. The members appreciated the good work done so far in the project, the follow-up on the suggestions made from the last meeting and the overall progress.

The meeting was jointly hosted by the University of Malawi; SFHC, Malawi; NIBIO, the main project coordinator; and BecA-ILRI Hub, the co-coordinator of InnovAfrica.





INNOVAFRICA MAP MEMBER HONORED WITH OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE AWARD

Mr. Lebogang Mokoena, Innovafrica MAP Member from South Africa was awarded as the best agricultural advisor in the Free State Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. The award was presented by the South African Minister for Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Ms Thoko Didiza, during the National Extension and Advisory Services Awards ceremony held in Polokwane on 15 November 2019. This award carries a cash prize of R20 000 (USD 1368).

Mr. Mokoena is an extension officer and contributes to Innovafrica as MAP member. He ensures that the farmers prepare the land, take soil samples and plant crops on time by doing farm inspections. He is a good example of someone who has made many sacrifices and contributed tremendously to uplift the community, despite the challenges that extension services have been facing in the country.

Deliverables in the next six months

D3.3: Strategic document strengthening seed systems in the case countries - 31 December 2020

D3.4: Farmer manuals published on the Sustainable Agriculture Intensification (SAI) systems - 30 November 2020

D4.3 Comprehensive plan for investments - 30 November 2020



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