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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 PARTNERS MEET VIRTUALLY FOR THE SIXTH CONSORTIUM MEETING

InnovAfrica project partners met virtually for their sixth consortium meeting on 17th and 18th November 2020, to review the project's progress, discuss the second mid-term project review report and prepare the activity plan for 2021.

Cathrine Ziyomo, InnovAfrica project's co-coordinator and the BeCA-ILRI Hub program lead welcomed meeting participants. This was followed by a presentation by Sita Ghimire on the European Union (EU)'s feedback on the second mid-term project review report, project progress and the deliverables that are due in the next six months.

Agnes Mwang'ombe and Yemi Akinbamijo, InnovAfrica board members, were present in the meeting. They congratulated the InnovAfrica team for their hard work and excellent feedback from the EU on the second mid-term project review report.

They also alerted the project team to ensure that the information garnered, and technologies generated during the InnovAfrica project continue to impact the livelihoods of people in the case countries and beyond even after the completion of InnovAfrica in May 2021.

The InnovAfrica project has reached to about 353,538 people through the various dissemination and communication events.

INNOVAFRICA RECEIVES POSITIVE FEEDBACK FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION

In September 2020, InnovAfrica received a positive feedback from the European Union external review committee stating that 'the project has fully achieved its objectives and milestones for the reporting period, and that the project has delivered exceptional results with significant immediate or potential impact'.

The committee further adds, 'After the first 36 months of the project period, significant and useful results are being generated. Through considerable effort to disseminate these results, the project is beginning to achieve the impact as planned.

Outputs target a broad range of stakeholders including farmers, advisory service workers, the scientific community and policy makers using a range of communication channels and dissemination tools including conferences and workshops, a website, social media and scientific publications'.

The project has benefitted over 20,000 farmers in the three-year period, and their awareness in climate change and adaptation of sustainable agricultural technologies has been improved. The project aims to put more effort towards reaching out to more smallholder farmers.



EASTERN FREE STATE FARMERS PARTICIPATE IN FARMERS' OPEN DAY

On February 26, 2020, the Free State Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Agricultural Research Council and University of the Free State jointly organized a Farmers' Open Day in Rietpan village, Phuthaditjhaba, South Africa.

The event was aimed at raising awareness on climate change/variability and the impact of climate change on crop production. It was additionally directed towards promoting strategies smallholder farmers can adopt to manage climate change adversities.

The event had 40 participants comprising of smallholder farmers, extension officers and researchers. Some of the issues discussed were the variability in frequency and amount of rainfall, the frequent and extended periods of drought and outbreaks of pests and diseases in relation to climate changes were discussed.

The InnovAfrica team raised awareness and promoted Sustainable Agricultural Intensification (SAI) technologies such as intercropping, mulching, crop rotation and minimum tillage that can be effectively used by smallholder farmers to cope with climate variability.

Some adaptation practices such as adjusting planting dates, use of new crops, crop diversification and rainwater harvest were also highlighted as strategy for mitigating adverse effects of climate change.



KENAFF CONTINUES TO SUPPORT FARMERS DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC

The smallholder farmers in Kenya have been severely affected by the lockdowns and movement restrictions imposed by the government in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

These measures have disrupted farm input supply in many parts of the country. It has greatly affected agricultural activities including planting of crops during 2020 long rainy season. The global pandemic has posed a serious threat to food and nutrition security in Kenya.

KENAFF has embarked a direct support system to assist member farmers. The support system includes distribution of farm inputs and sourcing and distribution of planting materials of various cereals, legumes and forage crops.

To complements the government's efforts to communicate public about COVID-19, KENAFF has rolled out media appearances such as press statements, radio and TV talk shows, and radio and TV interviews, WhatsApp and Twitter.



IMPROVED FORAGES INCREASE MILK PRODUCTION IN RWANDA

Farmers at Kirehe and Nyamagabe districts in Rwanda have started realizing the benefits of improved forages.

Currently, 253 dairy farmers from the southern and eastern provinces of Rwanda have planted Brachiaria grass. Cows fed on Brachiaria brizantha cv. Piata have produced up to 33% more milk than cows fed on Napier grass. Adoption of improved forages have substantially reduced the time that farmers (particularly women and children) spend in searching for natural forages.

All improved forages planted including Brachiaria, Rhodes grass and Desmodium increased milk yield. However, Brachiaria grass was notable among improved forages due to drought resilience and its suitability for frequent harvesting.

The introduction and adoption of integrated farm planning (PIP) approach has enabled most participating farmers to realize increased milk production by planting improved forages simultaneously increasing yields of other crops using the best agronomic practices.

FARMERS INCREASE ACREAGE UNDER BRACHIARIA GRASS IN KENYA

Kenyan farmers have adopted improved Brachiaria grass to enhance fodder availability, increase milk production and generate household incomes. Many farmers in Kenya have small land sizes and are therefore expanding Brachiaria acreage at the expense of acreage of less profitable crops.

Ms. Grace Muthii from Kirinyaga has allocated more land for Brachiaria grass in place of the maize acreage she previously had. She says, 'I received three packets of Brachiaria grass seeds: Piata, Xaraes, and Basilisk, each 40 grams. I planted in small plots to observe the growth. I followed the guidelines provided in the brochure to establish my plots. After the first harvest my dairy cattle increased milk by 2 to 3 liters. I have decided to reduce the areas under maize and plant Basilisk because it grows faster and produces more forage.'

Mr. Francis Mwaniki from Kirinyaga intercroops Brachiaria grass with bananas. He has increased the area under Brachiaria to about 0.4 ha.



INNOAFRICA MARKS THE WORLD FOOD DAY 2020

On World Food Day 2020, the InnovAfrica team marks the importance of supporting thousands of farmers by promoting sustainable food system approaches with innovative technologies and novel extension approaches.

InnovAfrica uses an integrated approach with emphasis placed at different stages of the three food value chains. The approaches used are; the maize-legume, millet-legume and Brachiaria fodder grass and through these, the project has helped farmers to increase productivity in the 12 project areas that represent different agro-ecological zones.

The project has benefitted approximately 20,000 smallholders in six countries in eastern and southern Africa.



Upcoming events:

InnovAfrica will organize Mini Symposium on 4th December, 2020 as part of the 4th International Conference on Global Food Security: Achieving local and global food security: at what costs?

<http://www.globalfoodsecurityconference.com/>

Deliverables in the next six months

D3.3 Strategic document strengthening seed systems in the case countries (Dec. 2020)

D5.4 A policy manual with guidelines (Dec. 2020)

D3.2 Assessment reports of adopted technologies and EASs (Jan. 2021)

D2.3 Six policy briefs (related to SAIs, EASs & IIAs) (Feb. 2021)

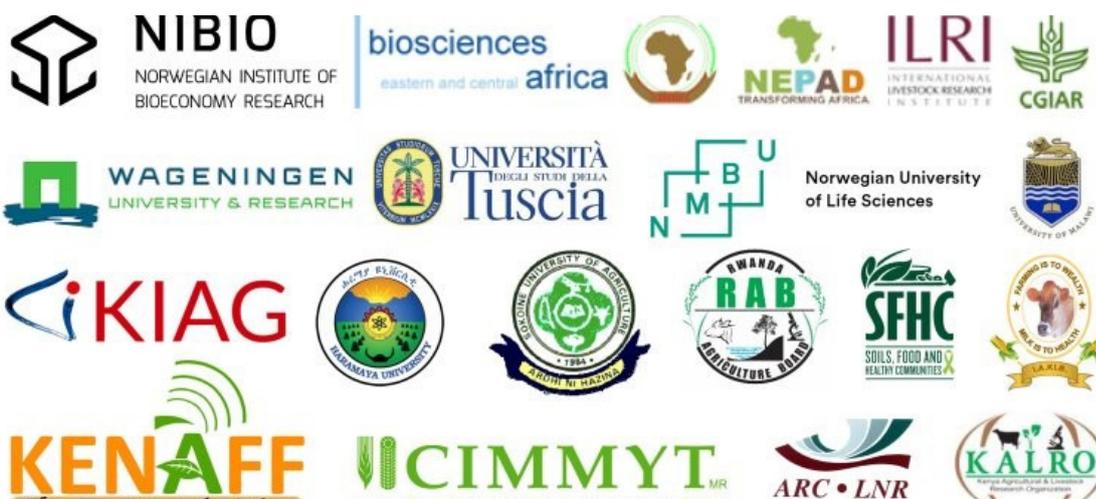
D4.4 Develop policy and institutional guidelines (Feb. 2021)

D5.5 Six policy briefs specifying effective governance models (Feb. 2021)

D6.3 Six policy dialogue workshops proceedings (Feb.2021)

D6.4 Impact assessment report (Mar. 2021)

D6.5 Dissemination & exploitation evaluation report (Apr. 2021)



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