

INNOVAFRICA PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER

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

ISSUE 08 MAY

2021





DISSEMINATION OF PROJECT RESULTS A HIGH PRIORITY FOR THE INNOVAFRICA PROJECT

The final phase of the InnovAfrica project is characterized by a heightened focus on dissemination of the project results to the end users.

The Brachiaria technology has reached nearly 20,000 farmers in Kenya, Rwanda, and Tanzania. Crop diversification through maize/millet-legume systems has provided multiple benefits to about 40,000 farmers in Malawi, Ethiopia, South Africa, and Tanzania.

The Village Knowledge Centre (VKC), an innovative Extension and Advisory Service (EAS) was piloted in Kenya and Tanzania and has enhanced farmer networking and farmer to farmer exchange of knowledge and experiences.

The stakeholder interaction through Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) is contributing to strengthen the science-stakeholderpolicy linkage in all six InnovAfrica case countries. Through value chain mapping, the project has identified key actors, gaps and barriers, and has helped link value chain actors and increased market access to farmers.

The project focused on dissemination to reach targeted end users during the last phase, especially through local farmer magazines, farmer workshops and conferences, MAP members, popular media, social media, scientific journals and policy dialog meetings.

INNOVAFRICA ORGANIZES POLICY DIALOGUE MEETING IN TANZANIA

On 14 April 2021, the InnovAfrica team at Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) organized a policy dialogue meeting to establish and strengthen science-policy linkages and to increase policy support for upscaling InnovAfrica technologies.

Thirty-six participants including farmers, government officials at Ward, District and Ministerial levels, researchers from Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute (TARI), representatives of Non-Government Organizations such as Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) and Research Community and Organizational Development Associates (RECODA), journalists from various media houses and SUA staff attended the meeting.

Key issues discussed in the meeting included availability of Brachiaria seeds and strategies for scaling Brachiaria grass and the VKC.

Major recommendations of policy dialog were to allow for the importation of seeds and make investment in seeds production; provide subsidy on seeds; promote participatory research and development approaches; strengthen capacity in pasture breeding and enhance the use and sustainability of VKC in the delivery of extension services through provision of subsidy on mobile service to farmers, empowering VKC workers through trainings, and exploring income generation opportunities for VKC.

INNOVAFRICA TEAM MEETS WITH KENYAN PRINCIPAL SECRETARY

On 11 May 2021, the InnovAfrica team from KENAFF, KALRO and BecA-ILRI Hub met Harry Kimtai, the Principal Secretary (PS), State Department for Livestock (SDL), Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Co-operatives to discuss evidence-based policy inputs on Brachiaria grass technology and Village Knowledge Centres (VKCs). The meeting was also attended by Bishar Fille Elmi, the Director of Livestock Production, and Joseph Ngugi, the Deputy Director of Livestock Production both from SDL.

Benjamin Omondi from KENAFF presented the InnovAfrica project overview and achievements. This was followed by presentations by Donald Njarui from KALRO each on the Brachiaria grass and VKC. Mr. Kimtai was impressed with the concept of VKC and its large database of Brachiaria and dairy farmers. He encouraged the team to consider having a farmer federation manage the VKCs and facilitate their expansion across the country since they have a large farmer network while the government would provide the necessary technical support.

The policy input from InnovAfrica was for the government's support for widescale adoption of forages for livestock feed,

This is a necessary step to achieve sustainable impact that can be achieved by developing a vibrant Brachiaria grass seed production system through public-private partnerships, and an increased investment on research and development activities targeted to local forage species.

This was a pre-policy dialogue in preparation for an upcoming policy dialogue meeting with a wider group of stakeholders. The meeting was concluded with following next steps recommended by the Principal Secretary:

- provide targeted farmer groups such as youth groups with technical skills that would help upscale Brachiaria grass and seed production and create a source of income for the groups. This would lead to a natural progression towards upscaling Brachiaria grass technology.
- more discussions between InnovAfrica and the State Department's technical team who could convert the inputs provided to a policy framework and to help understand how to revolutionize the project's findings into impactinducing results.

The Department is willing to support the process.



INNOVAFRICA UPDATES AND ACHIEVEMENTS



FARMERS ARE READY TO STAND-ALONE: EVIDENCE FROM SOUTH AFRICA

The final year of the InnovAfrica project focuses on wider dissemination and communication of project results to farmers and relevant stakeholders including extension officials, development partners and policy makers. The Agricultural Research Council (ARC) South Africa team stopped providing farm input support to farmers in 2021 and technical support has been provided upon request.

Majority of the farmers have adopted InnovAfrica technologies without any assistance from the ARC team. These technologies included sustainable agricultural practices like intercropping and crop rotation combined with good agronomic practices. Some farmers continue to monitor rainfall and recording farm activities. Farmers anticipate good harvest due to timely and well distributed rainfall this season.

These observations indicate that farmers have adopted the innovations promoted by the InnovAfrica project to increase their crop production.



KENAFF DISTRIBUTES BRACHIARIA GRASS IN KENYA

The Kenya National Farmers' Federation (KENAFF) distributed Brachiaria grass seeds to farmers in Bomet, Bungoma, Elgeyo-Marakwet, Homabay, Kakamega, Kericho, Nakuru, Nyeri, Uasin Gishu, and Vihiga counties of Kenya at the tail end of 2020, targeting the short rains season that occurs between October to December.

The rainfall during the short rains season was below average, and as a result, many farmers were unable to grow Brachiaria grass. In response, KENAFF provided Brachiaira seeds of four improved cultivars (Basilisk, MG4, Piata and Xaraes) to nurseries managed by KENAFF county leaders. These nurseries produced Brachiaria grass seedlings and distributed them to men, women and youth farmers.

Establishing Brachiaria fields using seedlings is easy, less likely to be invaded by weeds and grows faster than fields sown with seeds.



INNOVAFRICA PARTICIPATED IN THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY

The InnovAfrica organized a pre-conference mini symposium on 4th December as part of the 4th International Conference on Global Food Security. The mini symposium focused on innovation in technology, institutional and extension approaches towards sustainable agriculture and enhanced food and nutrition security in Africa.

The session was chaired by Udaya Sekhar Nagothu, project coordinator, InnovAfrica and moderated by Esther Bloem with project participants including: Sita Ghimire from BecA-ILRI Hub, Kenya; Mehreteab Tesfai from NIBIO, Norway; Henk Wosten from Wageningen University & Research, Netherlands; Donald Njarui from KALRO, Kenya; Giacomo Branca from Tuscia University, Italy; and Susan Msolla from SUA, Tanzania.

The 4th International Conference on Global Food Security was held online, through an interactive livestream from the 4th to the 9th of December 2020, 12:00 – 18:00 CET, Montpellier, France.

Upcoming events:

InnovAfrica Seventh Consortium Meeting will be held from 15 to 16 June 2021 in Zoom platform.

The project's final conference will be held in Nairobi, Kenya from 12-14 October 2021.

Deliverables in the next six months

D2.3 Six Policy briefs (Jun. 2021)
D3.2 Assessment reports of adopted technologies and EASs (Jul. 2021)
D4.4 Develop policy and institutional guidelines (Jul. 2021)
D5.5 Six policy briefs specifying effective governance models (Sept. 2021)
D6.3 Six policy dialogue workshops proceedings (Sept. 2021)
D6.4 InnovAfrica impact assessment report (Sept. 2021)
D6.5 Dissemination and exploitation evaluation report (Oct. 2021)





Horizon 2020 European Union Funding for Research & Innovation This project has received funding from the European Union's H2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 727201

HTTP://WWW.INNOVAFRICA.EU/