

Summary of First Week E-Conference

Innovation systems for food security and nutrition: understanding the capacities needed - invitation to an e-conference

Discussions from 18 to 22 April on questions 1 and 2

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Question #1: Which policies or instruments would be effective for developing capacities of food security and nutrition-sensitive Agricultural Innovation System (FSN-AIS) at the organizational and systems levels?

Contributions to this questions emphasized the role of education and training programs, starting from youngsters, head of households, to agricultural professionals and policy makers. The need for incorporating nutrition aspects on the existing agriculture innovation systems framework was highlighted, specially opportunities with neglected and underutilized species (NUS). It was also discussed the responsibilities and challenges of the rural services in incorporating aspects of nutrition into existing activities. Participants also talked about the needs for better policies and improvements of organizations, specially the need for a coordination or facilitation body to bring the aspects of FSN-AIS together. Another aspect raised was the need to improve partnerships for collective action.

Question #2: Once the capacities have been developed, how can they be kept strong despite changes in management and staff turnover? Could you mention cases where capacities were successfully built and kept for at least five years? What were the factors for success?

Contributions to this questions emphasize the investments to be made on individuals knowledge and skills, as well as strengthening institutions and its partnerships. Sustaining capacities have a cost to it that is often undermined or not accounted at all.

The main points discussed, arranged by three categories, are presented below:

1. Education and training should be reformed to:

- Teach rural households and consumers about the benefits of a diversified agriculture and diets
- Help researchers and professors better understand the implications of the innovation systems framework for food security and nutrition
- Improve the capacity of policy makers (including donors) and research managers on AIS and its complexity
- Reform academic and training courses to better teach issues related to innovation systems, agriculture, food security and nutrition

2. Research and advisory services/agricultural extension

- Focus research activities on food security and nutrition, including water use efficiency and breeding for environmental constrains: drought and high temperature, and biofortified crops
- Help researchers to work within an innovation systems perspective

- The rural advisory services/agricultural extension systems should also refocus their strategies to better include food security and nutrition in their activities which should include, in addition to agricultural activities, a) food security, through food allocation management within rural households; b) nutrition, by training on farming diversification; and c) staples stock holding, by training on quantities of food required for consumption in comparison to the quantities marketed

3. Other national, state or local public organizations

- Strengthen their capacity to design and implement programs and projects that are gender sensitive and ensure wide access and utilization of nutritious (biofortified) foods along the value chain of specific biofortified crops (vitamin A cassava, vitamin A maize, vitamin A sweetpotato and iron rich beans)
- Strengthening policies should include improving infrastructure and salaries
- All offices related to the sector must be trained on the AIS new focus (Food security and nutrition)
- Stimulate partnerships and collective action (e.g. PPP)
- Address the financial requirements to sustain capacity by introducing high quality self-pollinating seed into smallholder communities for final multiplication and distribution within the communities; and by facilitating access to contract mechanization to expedite crop establish
- Involve a diversity of actors and entities that are not bounded to government changes, or coordinated by government