



Innovation for rural development

A key factor in sustainable rural development is innovation. Innovation occurs through a successful mix of technological, social, organizational and institutional elements, and emerges through stakeholder interaction and learning. Therefore, it's vital that farmers' organizations, traders, the private sector, the public sector and policy makers act as partners in rural innovation.

A challenge is creating an environment that is conducive to continuous innovation and focussed on poverty reduction. For this, agricultural support services are needed that address the research, information and training needs of the rural poor and facilitate interaction between actors.

Our approach

An important method to enhance innovation is supporting stakeholders to join forces in reaching a common goal. KIT develops methods and programmes to equip stakeholders with the individual competences, organizational capacity and institutional arrangements that allow them to effectively take part in innovation processes. Special attention is paid to the empowerment of smallholder producers and their organizations because they often lack the clout to participate on an equal basis in market innovation, research and development initiatives. Multi-stakeholder-driven funding mechanisms are an important instrument for strengthening the influence of less advantaged groups on the agenda of research, advisory and training services.

KIT structures its rural innovation activities at three levels:

- 1 Engagement: improving the enabling environment for agricultural innovation through partnership projects in countries with developing economies.
- 2 Learning: generating knowledge on the conditions under which rural innovation occurs and contributes to the reduction of rural poverty.
- 3 Sharing: using this knowledge to develop and promote methods for strengthening rural innovation for the benefit of the rural poor.

In all three levels of activity, KIT works from an innovation system perspective, which integrates knowledge and information services, market services and policies.

Services

Strengthen agricultural research and information service provision through

- Capacity building of agricultural service providers at institutional, organizational and personal skill levels
- Inclusion of the private sector in research and development partnerships
- Multi-stakeholder-driven funding mechanisms
- Empowerment of smallholder farmers to steer agenda-setting of agricultural service provision

Support capacity enhancement of rural development actors in the fields of:

- Application of Agricultural Research for Development (IAR4D) principles
- Coaching agricultural innovation processes
- Innovation system analysis and change management

Design and support agricultural sub-sector development projects and programmes

- Advice on project and programme design and execution
- Organizational development, collective marketing and fair trade and organic certification to improve market integration of smallholder farmers

Knowledge development and publication in the field of agricultural innovation

- Meta-analysis of agricultural development initiatives
- Assessment and development of agricultural innovation methods

Key projects

Agricultural Innovation Coaching: development of a methodology for facilitating innovation for rural development through multi-stakeholder interaction, 2008-2012

Convergence of Sciences: provide on demand support and capacity building to the research associates of the programme, 2008-2013. WUR

Contribute to the Farmers Fighting Poverty Producers' Organizations Support Programme, 2007-2010. AgriCord Alliance

Integrated Agricultural Research for Development (IAR4D): Development of a capacity strengthening programme, 2008-2011. ASARECA

Formulation, appraisal and backstopping for implementation of a National Agricultural Extension Programme (PRONEA) in Mozambique, 2005-2011. Ministry of Agriculture and IFAD

Enabling context for innovation for rural development, 2008-2011. DGIS

Multi-stakeholder processes to facilitate innovation for rural development, 2008-2011. DGIS

Capacity strengthening on innovation for rural development, 2008-2011. DGIS

Key publications

Heemskerk W., N. Lema, B. Wennink, H. Gotoechan-Hodonou (2009) *Alternative funding mechanisms for local innovation systems*. In: Sanginga, P.C., Bayer, A.W., Kaaria, S., Njuki, J., Wettasinha, C. (eds.). *Innovation Africa: enriching farmers' livelihoods*, 203-219. London: Earthscan

Heemskerk, W., S. Nederlof and B. Wennink (2008). *KIT Bulletin 380 - Outsourcing agricultural advisory services. Enhancing rural innovation in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Amsterdam: KIT Publishers

Wennink, B., S. Nederlof and W. Heemskerk (eds.) (2007) *KIT Bulletin 376 - Access of the poor to agricultural services. The role of farmers' organizations in social inclusion*. Produced by FUPRO, MVIWATA, MVIWAMO, INGABO, KILICAFE and KIT. Amsterdam: KIT Publishers

Wennink, B. and W. Heemskerk (eds.) (2006) *KIT Bulletin 374 - Farmers' organizations and agricultural innovation. Case studies from Benin, Rwanda and Tanzania*. Produced by FUPRO, MVIWATA, MVIWAMO, ROPARWA and KIT. Amsterdam: KIT Publishers

Heemskerk, W. and B. Wennink (eds.) (2006) *KIT Bulletin 373 - Stakeholder-driven funding mechanisms for agricultural innovation. Case studies from Sub-Saharan Africa*. Produced by INRAB, DICAF, DRT, TaCRI and KIT. Amsterdam: KIT Publishers

Heemskerk, W. and B. Wennink (eds.) (2004) *KIT Bulletin 368 - Building social capital for agricultural innovation. Experiences with farmer groups in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Amsterdam: KIT Publishers

Heemskerk W., N. Lema, D. Guindo, C. Schouten, Z. Semgalawe, H. Verkuijl, B. de Steenhuijsen PETERS and P. Penninkhoff (2003) *A guide to demand-driven agricultural research*. The Client-Oriented Research Management Approach (CORMA). IER-Mali, DRT-Tanzania and KIT. Amsterdam: KIT Publishers

Engel, P. and M. L. Salomon (1997) *Facilitating innovation for development. A RAAKS resource box*. Published by KIT, CTA and STOAS

Rural Innovation Systems Portal: <http://portals.kit.nl/>

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