

# Applying Innovation System Concept in Agricultural Research for Development: A Report on Training Workshop

## Background

IPMS/ILRI, as part of its public sector capacity development efforts in Ethiopia, conducted a training workshop on “Applying Innovation System Concept in Agricultural Research for Development”, in Addis Ababa at CRDA (Christian Relief and Development Association) from 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> August 2008. Twenty eight participants (agricultural researchers and research centre managers) from Amhara, Oromia, Southern and Tigray Regional Agricultural Research Institutes attended the training workshop. Complete list of participants with their contact details is provided in Annex 1.

## Participants

The number of participants from different research centres are as follows:

Research center	Number of participants
Amhara Agricultural Research Institute	12
Oromia Agricultural Research Institute	8
Southern Agricultural Research Institute	6
Tigray Agricultural Research Institute	1
ILRI	1
Total	28

## The purpose of the training workshop:

- To strengthen the capacity of researchers in the understanding of the innovation systems approach and its application in AR4D for enhanced impact.

## The main objectives of the training were:

1. to discuss the evolution of Innovation Systems Perspective (ISP) and to clarify key concepts
2. to demonstrate the application of ISP in project planning, implementation and evaluation
3. to understand the implications of applying ISP in AR4D and research management
4. To provide necessary skills and tools to analyze innovation processes

## Participant expectations

- Sharing country wide experiences
- Understanding innovation system theory and principles
- Getting skills and tools on how to apply the concept in our own research projects

## Training Materials

The participants were provided with a complete set of training materials. The materials include trainers' guide, text, PowerPoint presentations, exercise and worksheets, and additional reading material.

## Training Workshop Process

The workshop was divided into nine sessions to enable logical flow of ideas and continuity. Each session included a brief and interactive presentation, followed by a group exercise and, plenary presentations and discussion. This ensured optimal participation and provided adequate time for interaction and experience sharing among participants. The groups were divided based on their organizational affiliations, and were encouraged to use cases of the research projects they were engaged in, for the group exercises. This allowed them to apply and relate the concepts they learnt to their real life experience, to demonstrate their utility and potential application.

## Workshop Evaluation results

Twenty seven participants completed the workshop evaluation forms, which assesses the training workshop in generally and the extent to which expectations of the participant were met, and whether specific session objectives were met. The participants gave positive ratings to the training workshop. It was rated excellent by 21 participants and good by the remaining six participants. Twenty five participants agreed that the workshop objectives were full met, and the objective was partially met according to the remaining two participants. The result of evaluation of specific sessions is presented in Table 2.

The summary of evaluation of specific sessions by workshop participants

Session objectives	Excellent (frequency)	Good (frequency)	Average (frequency)	Remark
Session 1	14/25	11/25	0	25 participants responded
Session 2	16/27	11/27	0	
Session 3	13/27	14/27	0	
Session 4	11/26	11/26	1/26	26 participants responded
Session 5	27/27	0	0	
Session 6	15/27	8/27	5/27	
Session 7	24/27	3/27	0	
Session 8	4/27	23/27	0	
Session 9	17/27	10/27	0	

## Strengths and Weaknesses of the training workshop (perceptions of participants)

### Strengths

- Well prepared training material.
- Timely and relevant training contents.
- Well organized training workshop, including good time management.
- Excellent accommodation and services.
- Smart trainers, knowledgeable and motivated to share.
- Excellent training approach, i.e. participatory with adequate practical exercises.
- Fair allocation of time between presentations and group tasks.
- Good interactions and sharing of experiences among the participants.

### Weaknesses

- Four days allocated for the training is too short given the topics covered.
- The training venue was remotely located, it was difficult to get dinner, internet services, etc.
- Sometimes participation went out of control and derailed from the main concern.
- Time given for group tasks was too short.
- The system for action plan preparation by the participants and feedback on the training workshop was not well designed.
- Absence of follow-up plan to trace the impact of the training workshop.
- Many research centres and other non-public actors were left out.

### Workshop wrap up session

Plenary discussion was held during the wrap up session. The discussion was structured around:

- How effective was the workshop- did it meet the workshop objectives and your expectations?
- Relevance- what changes would you like to see if such a workshop was conducted again- in terms of material, presentations, process, exercises etc.
- What additional assistance would you need to be able to apply these concepts and skills in your work when you go back to your organizations?
- Open Floor

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The participants found the innovation systems perspective very useful to improve relevance and enhance impact of agricultural research. They exchanged views on anticipated challenges and opportunities to institutionalize innovation systems approach. Finally, actions to be taken were identified:

- IPMS should organize workshop for sensitizing policymakers, senior agricultural research managers and university officials.
- IPMS should also expose the other key actors from universities, the remaining research centres, and NGOs to innovation system concept and its application in AR4D.

- Resource person from IPMS would be needed to support multi-stakeholder workshop and further training to staff.
- We would facilitate experience sharing through exchanging workshop and other materials, informal discussion and seminar.
- We would like to incorporate innovation systems concept in our on-going research activities and would pursue colleagues to do so while reviewing and designing new research projects.
- IPMS assistance would be needed in reviewing and revising on-going research and development activities in line with innovation systems concept.
- Feedback on action plans and M&E plans would be needed
- Developing materials in local languages would be useful for awareness creation among the wider stakeholders..

## Annex

## Participant List with Contact Address

No.	Name	Institution	Contact Address		
			Tel. No.	FAX	E
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