



Organization of farmers for agricultural innovation

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Innovation – what it is NOT

- Invention
- New technique, never – ever – seen or applied before
- An outcome of pure research



Innovation – what it is... at least according to some of us

- Innovation is the application of knowledge of all types to achieve desired social and economic outcomes (WB, 2006)
- Hardware + Software + Orgware
- An emergent property of interaction between actors – putting together different kinds of knowledge and worldviews – beyond ARD
- Innovation capacity is the capacity to trigger change, adapt and self-renew.**



How does interaction come about?

- Purposefully: multi-stakeholder platforms, innovation platforms
- Spontaneously:
 - Actors coming together to solve a problem or take advantage of an opportunity, without a “formal” platform
 - Farmers (men, women, young, old, rich, poor) exchange and learn from each other



Role of farmers in agricultural innovation

1. To spot both problems and opportunities
2. Work together towards a successful innovation
3. Test and validate hardware and software
4. Collaborate in influencing policy/institutions
5. Facilitate (broker) interaction between stakeholders



Farmer organizations

- Support farmers in playing these different roles by:
 - Organizing farmer's inputs into a innovation process (experimentation, survey, trial-outs, pilots, etc)
 - Supporting linkages between farmers and other actors (research, advisory services, private-sector)
 - Providing advisory services themselves
 - Voicing farmers' opinions at higher level – policy debates



Farmer organizations

Local level:

- Community-Based organizations
- Farmer Field Schools

Bringing on local knowledge and ideas into the immediate agenda for action of AR&D

Build innovation capacity at local level

Provincial level/National level

- Cooperative unions
- Federations and syndicates

-Bringing on farmers' perspectives (needs, opportunities) into strategic policy debate – research priorities and funding on the longer term, general institutional willingness to cooperate with farmers, etc.



		Interfaces	Planning	Implementation	M&E
Local level FOs	Farmers', other interest groups and producer groups	FRGs, FEGs and FFSS	Priority setting for research and extension	Trials, demonstrations and training	Field visits of trials and demonstrations
	Community-based groups	Community groups	Priority setting for extension (and research)	Demonstrations, training (and trials)	
Provincial/district level FOs	Cooperative unions	Committees of commodity research centres Farmers' study groups	Priority setting, planning and resource allocation (levies)	Training by public and private sector Workshops	Open days at research centres
	Federations and syndicates	Committees of eco-regional research centres Farmers' study groups	Priority setting, planning and resource allocation (competitive funds)	Training by public sector and NGOs Workshops	Open days at research centres
National level FOs	Cooperative unions	Advisory committee	Strategic planning		Board and committee meetings
	Federations and syndicates	Board of directors	Budgeting		

Source: Wennink and Heemskerk, 2006, adated from Wuys-Fivamo, 1996



Easier said than done

Challenges:

- Top-down, linear models of AR&D still largely in place...
- Partnerships with private sector demand a different take at AR&D

- Tendency to go “high up” – sometimes local level organizations are better suited
- Diversity of farmers – the higher you go, the hardest it gets to “represent” them all and ensure downward accountability
- Weak representation of women
- Weak representation of very poor farmers