



RESEARCH PROGRAM ON
Livestock and Fish

Communication, advocacy and data and knowledge management: Background proposals for the CGIAR Research Program on Livestock and Fish

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This section sets out some ‘principles’ that will guide our investments in this area, briefly describes the expected ‘actors and clients’ for this component of the Program, and identifies four ‘areas of intervention’ and associated results where we will focus our efforts.

Knowledge, information and data—and the social and physical infrastructures that carry them—are widely recognized as key building blocks for more sustainable agriculture, effective agricultural science and productive partnerships among the global research community (Ballantyne et al. 2009).

Through investments in e-Science infrastructure and collaboration, and rapid developments in digital devices and connectivity in rural areas, the ways that scientists, academics and development workers create, share and apply agricultural knowledge is being transformed through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

These ICTs are being applied to all parts of the research for development continuum that connects agricultural science with agricultural and rural change: ‘e-Science’ (or e-Research) is characterized by global collaboration and the next generation of infrastructure that will enable it while ‘m-Agriculture’ uses mobile digital devices, such as phones, laptops and sensors, that puts ICTs, connectivity and applications into the hands of rural communities. Between these, ICTs are transforming agricultural extension, facilitating the delivery of education and learning through distance education, helping to empower the rural poor in developing countries, and powering a wide array of agricultural finance, credit, market, weather and other services delivered by public and private organizations.

The integration of data management, knowledge management, information sharing, communications and advocacy across the Program is thus an essential way to achieve the necessary synergies and collective action that will be required for the Program to have impact.

The CGIAR centres can do much in this area, but certainly not all. Particularly in the seven focus countries, a lot of ‘ground-truthing’ is required to match the general approach to local situations. To take on all the roles and tasks we envisage, we will need to draw on the skills and capacities of local and national partners as well as those of specialized partners. We will therefore include an assessment of capacities and opportunities in this

area as part of the proposed ‘participatory partnership analysis’ processes that will take place in each of the seven focus countries.

Principles

In the design of different interventions, we are guided by the following principles:

- *Knowledge generated by the Program will be open and public.* We will encourage all partners to document and share their work from the outset using open platforms and systems with the minimum of technical, financial and legal restrictions. This knowledge will be accessible to all as an international public good, so it can ‘travel’ and be put to use locally and globally.
- *We value the knowledge of our clients and partners.* The idea that everyone has useful knowledge to offer underpins the notion of innovation systems and the ‘social’ web. We will explicitly encourage different actors to contribute their different forms of knowledge to the program, avoiding too much ‘push’ from the centre.
- *Multi-purpose knowledge.* Recognizing that different actors and clients in and beyond the Program have different knowledge needs and interests and that they respond differently to messages in different formats, we will ‘re-purpose,’ re-format, adapt and translate different outputs and messages for different audiences and purposes.
- *Knowledge management: Collect, connect, converse.* We will ensure that the knowledge of the program is ‘collected’ and disseminated for re-use and posterity. We will ensure that the actors and partners in the program are ‘connected’ to one another and to sources of data and knowledge. We will catalyse ‘conversations,’ dialogue and interactions among stakeholders, mobilizing and listening to diverse perspectives.
- *Face-to-face communication.* We will use all suitable ways to generate and exchange information and knowledge, paying particular attention to effective face-to-face events that also reinforce the social and human relationships that are essential for good development.
- *Advocacy is everyone’s responsibility.* We recognize that different partners in the program have different strengths. Researchers are usually good at generating evidence; development partners are often better in providing avenues into policy and change processes. We will combine the strengths of both groups to advocate collectively for pro-poor change.
- *Communication inextricably linked to outcomes.* What we communicate, who to, and how will have a strong influence on program outcomes. We will integrate our communication activities into our outcome strategy.
- *Internal communication and M&E are part of our communication strategy.* We do not see communication solely as an ‘external’ activity towards external audiences. This Program aims to align and integrate the efforts of many people spread across four CGIAR centres, associated research partners, seven countries, and within them large multi-stakeholder networks of actors. We will maximize learning and communication across the Program as a value addition to other dispersed activities.
- *Partnerships are the key to impact.* We will mobilize the various skills and capabilities of the program’s partners to create, share, communicate and put data, information and knowledge to use. These skills do not exist in any one partner so we need to build on—and reinforce as necessary—the capacities of the whole Program.
- *Innovation and ICTs.* New information and communication technologies are revolutionizing both the ways we do science and the ways that the private sector, governments, and local communities engage in ‘development.’ We aim to grasp the opportunities these new tools provide to improve the ways we collect and create data and information; integrate, share and communicate this knowledge into our research and technology development activities; and get it into the hands of people directly working with the poor.

Actors and clients

Everyone engaged in the Program is a potential creators and consumer of data, information, and knowledge. There is also a large audience beyond the Program—locally, nationally and internationally—that will be interested in its results.

Who are the people we will work with, and what are their knowledge needs?

- **Researchers**—within the Program and elsewhere need in-depth knowledge products, data, data sources, as well as methods and tools. We may need to help them produce a wider range of communication products than they are used to.
- **Development practitioners and partners**—public, non-governmental and private—need targeted knowledge products, dissemination products, training and capacity building products, decision-support tools, synthesized data and the chance to join events and dialogue. We will need to look carefully at communication between these groups and the researchers—there is frequently a cultural/communication gap that needs to be overcome. We also need to find innovative ways to capture and share their knowledge, recognizing that they may not be as used to publishing as are scientists.
- We aim to influence **decision-makers, investors and the global support community**. They need focused knowledge and advocacy products, awareness products, decision-support tools, and synthesized data. Influencing them requires targeted strategies that combine a range of approaches, as well as timely advice and inputs from people they trust and the media.
- **Value chain actors**—producers, traders, and the like—must also be reached. Here, we are likely to have greatest impact by working through other partners who are close to them, translating or adapting the program's outputs into locally accessible formats. National/local radio, print and television media will often be important partners in this. We will also join with organizations and initiatives that use more interactive tools that integrate web applications with mobile phones for example. These enable value chain actors to interact in real-time and to transact in more transparent ways.
- A vital 'internal' community of **Program managers and implementers** needs access to an effective M&E system, information on current program activities and events, shared methods and tools, data, training and capacity building products, outcome support tools, communication and collaboration spaces, and event planning tools.

Areas of intervention

The program will operate in four different 'spaces' comprising different actors and stakeholders and requiring different knowledge and communication support. These are introduced below.

i. Connecting and powering value chain development

Working through innovation platforms in seven countries, we will catalyse rich interactions and communication among the key actors and partners working on each value chain. We will facilitate interactions with each other and with the specialized research teams working to overcome the identified technology development constraints. We will assist them to communicate their findings for local, national and global uptake, facilitating their access to relevant information and knowledge, locally and globally.

Much of this communication will be face-to-face, requiring effective facilitation and innovative ways to engage multiple actors and their multiple interests. We expect to generate large amounts of 'raw' data and information that will be captured and organized for re-use. Many non-scientists will be involved in these activities, so we will use different approaches, incentives and tools to ensure that their different types of knowledge are also captured and incorporated in the process.

Particularly in this component, we are likely to generate a wide range of intermediate knowledge products and outputs—and few classic scientific articles, books, and the like.

We will capitalize on the increasingly widespread use of mobile phones and other devices that are now accessible and used in the remotest and poorest communities. We will partner with specialized partners—many from the private sector—that use these tools to apply relevant applications and content right across the value chain. By working with partners to integrate a range of different services and applications with mobile phones, we will enable poor and illiterate producers to better participate in the value chains and participate in local social networks.

In this area, we expect to contribute directly to the value chain development efforts by informing all the actors involved, mobilizing their knowledge and know-how, creating a level ‘knowledge space’ for them to access and share information, and helping document and communicate the lessons and results for use elsewhere. We see these communication activities performing an essential ‘gluing’ role that reinforces the operation, cohesion and reach of the innovation platforms.

ii. Enabling technology development

We will ensure that each research group that is conducting technology development across countries and value chains on a small number of issues has necessary support and tools to gain access to its specific global knowledge and data ‘base’, to communicate and share the results of its work with partners working in the targeted value chains, and to inform science and policy audiences globally.

Since the teams will be geographically dispersed, we will ensure that they are able to collaborate and ‘do science’ virtually across organizational, geographic and time boundaries. The communication products in this area are likely to be more ‘traditional’—reports, articles, data and the like. One challenge will be to complement these with more accessible formats and channels for other audiences. Experimenting with emerging social media and alternative ways to do ‘e-science’—for instance with the support of mobile phones—will maximize the potential for these products to travel and be taken up elsewhere. We foresee an important ‘translation’ and brokerage aspect to ensure that ‘science’ messages from this part of the Program are globally valued and are made accessible to ‘local’ stakeholders engaged in value chain development and associated activities.

We expect these activities will get research results into the public domain and into the hands of target actors in the seven focus countries and beyond. They will also contribute to the scientific process by supporting collaboration spaces and platforms and providing access to global knowledge and databases.

iii. Communicating and learning across the Program

We will establish mechanisms to facilitate and catalyse learning, knowledge sharing and communication among the various elements of the Program. Within the countries, the working groups of partners play a key role in this. We will support ‘routine’ information sharing and communication in support of the efficient running of the program’s components. We will also ensure that knowledge, data, and information is documented, captured, shared, synthesized, and put to good use across the program.

This ‘sharing’ space will thus produce efficient information flows among the program’s actors and partners. It will also capitalize on and reinforce learning across the various levels of the program. As in the other spaces, we will use emerging social and other media to ensure that these tasks are done in as open and accessible ways as possible.

iv. Communicating for wider impact

We aim to get our results and messages out beyond the program. We will establish necessary advocacy and communication products and approaches to ensure that these results and messages reach, and influence, national and international audiences. The public awareness end of the spectrum will include use of print, video and radio to deliver information and messages packaged appropriately for a range of stakeholders including farmers, extension workers, policymakers and scientists.

We expect most of the outputs in this area will be synthesized, polished or adapted for non-specialist audiences.

These activities need to be spread across the whole Program, with responsibilities for specific value chain advocacy and public awareness based in countries, but linked to an overall coordinated approach.

Dealing with data

The Program will use a common data platform, collecting and collating data from the diverse systems under study. Data collection will be system specific and embedded within each value chain, but by requiring that it conforms to common standards of format and content, we will allow it to be used by common analysis tools across the program.

Integration, synthesis and communication of research data will be centralized where appropriate. This will allow lessons to be drawn across different value chains. The data management platform will ensure that data is made readily available in as near real-time as possible to researchers across the Program through the provision of web-based tools to extract information from the underlying databases.

All data will be placed in the public domain as early as possible. There will be practical and ethical constraints in some cases; for example we may not allow information to be traced back to an individual farmer and we may not release information that would require national approval, such as evidence of a notifiable disease. But within these constraints, the overriding principle will be to make data available and to encourage its use and examination by the broad community.

Communication channels and tools

Our communication approaches and tools will be used to: co-create knowledge and information with our partners; inform and influence many audiences (directly or via partner 'infomediaries'); integrate, translate and adapt knowledge for different uses; and reinforce the potential 'network effect' of the program. We will also use these tools to help coordinate and manage the Program. Especially among national partners, we expect these tools to reinforce their communication capacities and provide a legacy of skills and expertise that can be spilled over into other activities.

In general, we will use the following **main channels**:

- The Internet will be the most critical communication tool that we will use—from the exchange of basic email and SMS messages, through collaborative work spaces for teams and sharing learning, online video and blogs, mobile phones and other devices, to targeted dissemination and outreach to audiences worldwide.

- Face-to-face and interpersonal discussions and meetings are critical; we will ensure that they are well-facilitated to foster excellent dialogue and interaction; we will also use social reporting approaches to capture and share the essence of these discussions promptly.
- Traditional mass media like television, radio and newspapers still play an important role in reaching wide audiences—beyond the web—and we will seek out partners and expertise to ensure that our messages reach targeted audiences.
- Traditional science communication and publishing—articles, books, posters and papers—will be a strong element of the overall program, especially the technology development component. We aim to better integrate such scientific products with a wide range of other communication channels and products that may better influence pro-poor policy and development change.
- We will experiment and innovate with tools like mobile phones—as ways to collect and share data, to interact with and reach many people, to get beyond the web, to link spatial information with other applications, and to connect various information and advisory services and applications (such as questions and answers, voice services, expertise networks, market prices and weather) with value chain actors. These applications also offer avenues for program monitoring and quality control systems that involve all stakeholders.

We will also pay particular attention to five **tools and approaches that reinforce communication**:

- Mobile devices—that bridge and integrate local needs and demands with specialized information, advice, and knowledge services. We already have various experiences in this area; we will extend and deepen these with specialized partners.
- Social media—that enable many actors to easily create, share and communicate information and knowledge to various audiences. Some partners have started using these tools to enhance the reach of their research; we need to extend these uses across the entire program.
- Networking and community/network tools—that connect the partners and actors in networks and communities in support of learning and sharing across the program. To fully engage our partners, we will put these in place early, providing easy to use facilities for all partners to contribute and be informed.
- Information and data repositories—that capture and make accessible the knowledge created and compiled and allow local and global re-use and permanent access to these assets. We will need to re-align and re-purpose some of the resources we already have, looking to integrate better different systems and content with emerging needs. We will also explore how they can be connected and presented to new audiences through, for example, mobile phones or enhanced graphic and mapping applications that enable better visualization of data and information.
- ‘Crowd sourcing’—a way of approaching data and information creation and maintenance that draws on the contributions of many participants, amateur and expert. Using widely available ICTs (especially phones), these approaches allow us to draw in knowledge from many sources, reinforcing the multi-actor emphasis of the program and our intention to draw on all of their knowledge.

A key element in the successful use of these tools and approaches is that participants adopt ‘open’ and ‘pro-sharing’ mindsets and attitudes. We will work towards this from the start, building on the positive lessons we gained developing the Program through an open process of consultation and engagement with multiple stakeholders.

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