Case Study 7 – Coffee under pressure

The International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) is working with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) CAFE Livelihoods programme to help gather data and run workshops with coffee producing communities to better understand effects of climate change on coffee and facilitate adaptation strategies.

Lead institution: CIAT with CRS

CIAT is an agricultural research institution. It focuses on scientific solutions to hunger in the tropics, believing that eco-efficient agriculture—developing sustainable methods of food production—is the best way to eradicate hunger and improve livelihoods in the region. CIAT is also about partnerships and works together with likeminded organizations to enhance impact.

Climate communication aims

The communications aims of the project are to share knowledge on climate change impacts relevant to coffee producers in such a way as to foster interest, trust, and build local adaptive strategies.

Fit with categorical considerations for climate communication (see Table 1)

Inform and educate individuals about climate change - inform on science (including level of consensus and magnitude of the problem); inform on causes; inform on current and potential impacts; Inform on possible solutions

Achieve some type and level of social engagement/action - encourage action which helps people to adapt or reduce their vulnerability and/or exposure; encourage action/behavior that encourages' forward-learning'/adaptation

Bring about changes in social norms and cultural values - - Influencing values through early education

Communications/social learning characteristics

CIAT have formed a partnership with CRS to better reach the community level. They have been running workshops with CRS to raise awareness of climate change and discuss adaptation strategies specifically around coffee resilience, using their modelling software as a support tool. Climate change and resilience issues have been introduced by ensuring a context that is of interest to farmers – one of improving their livelihoods and coffee growing strategies – and building dialogue and awareness from this initial interest. This is an example of a push/pull project where awareness raising (push) has been done through livelihood aspects of interest to farmers (pull). Information has been well received – and there is evidence of fledgling double loop learning where CIAT/CRS has learned how to better foster interest in climate change and then react better to subsequent demands on information types. As a result of the process, farmers themselves have also been involved in discourses as to how to better communicate climate change and coffee adaptation issues to peers.

CIAT is also using a web-based tool called Cropster to encourage exchanges on climate change issues. Cropster is an existing tool developed by CIAT and others to bring together different stakeholders in the coffee supply chain in order to get the chain working better and

support smallholder groups. The idea is that farmers are using this anyway so it can act as an existing platform on which to add discussion on climate change issues related to coffee, however, this tool is web-based and only in English, which would exclude a significant number of farmers in the Central American region.

CIAT/CRS have also identified issues of scaling for this workshop-based model because of the amount of resource it requires (even given the CRS local network). To try to scale further they have been engaging in training sessions with agricultural extension service workers as to how to integrate this methodology in to their own work. Results have been mixed.

Linear/Looped scorecard: 2/3

Audience

Coffee Under Pressure targets smallholder coffee farmers in Central America and Mexico with the aim of helping adapt to the impacts of climate change. Farmers are certainly being reached with this initiative and awareness of climate change and impacts on coffee crops made "real" to farmers. Working with the CRS network which is locally embedded has helped with this engagement process.

Getting research into use (how this case study does or does not contribute to that)

This is a good example of an attempt to engage at some scale at the community level, with research tools being brought down to the community and presented in a context that appears relevant to local groups.

Evolution of the project (how has the project evolved or developed if known)

CIAT have increasingly sophisticated tools for mapping the effects of climate change on crops. However these tools have not been so well used outside of the research sphere. CIAT wanted to provide a context for ensuring its research and analysis would be more relevant for users at the local level. Hence quality and quantity of coffee was perceived as something farmers would be interested in.

Challenges and questions

- Scaling – the design of the project included thinking on scaling, however efforts to bring to scale have met with limited success. What other avenues can be explored for this resource intensive activity?
- Facilitating changes in practice - how can the project integrate communication of information with resources for action? e.g. planting new strains
- Linking more closely with wider adaptation considerations – can this very coffee specific initiative link with other adaptation communication efforts to provide more comprehensive strategies and communication approaches to adaptation?

Take aways

A key way into the adaptation and climate change discussion with this group is through a discussion of the immediate demands of their livelihood and what is happening in the short term is even more key. So discussion has to come from that direction first. What can we learn here for the design and implementation of other projects?

CCAFS theme: This initiative fits broadly under theme 1 and theme 4

Links

Coffee under Pressure http://ongoing-research.cgiar.org/factsheets/coffee-under-pressure-cup-adapting-to-climate-change-in-mesoamerica/