

# **Assessing Scalability**

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***26 September 2018***

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# Key Points

1. Assessing scalability has multiple uses in research and implementation
2. Scalability: characteristics of innovation & context, context-specific
3. Most scalability assessments have no clear answer, not thumbs up or down. Identify strengths & weaknesses, what would be involved in scaling
4. Key question: 'is there a viable scaling pathway?' Can private sector fill roles in scaling, at scale? Capacity and Incentives? If not, public or NGOs?
5. A Scalability Assessment translates directly into scaling strategy to address weaknesses and gaps (spaces and drivers)
6. Decision on whether to invest in scale (or more research) based on tradeoff between cost, level of effort & potential results
7. Agricultural research projects often don't generate key information needed for a scalability assessment, both about innovation & context.

# Rationale and Potential Uses

- ❑ USAID Bureau of Food Security faced large number of research innovations moving through and emerging from the Feed the Future research pipeline. Which ones to (re)invest in next phase of research given limited resources? Which innovations to support scaling?
- ❑ Developed Agricultural Scalability Assessment Toolkit for USAID's Bureau of Food Security containing Decision Tree and Scalability Assessment Matrix
- ❑ Draws on 15 years of diffusion of innovation literature, MSI field work on scaling up generally, USAID case studies of successful scaling of agriculture innovations through commercial pathways

# Points where ASAT can be Used

## Can Be Used By:

BFS staff in DC

Donor Mission Staff

Researchers

Implementing Partners

Do we reinvest?  
Ensure SOW  
generating data  
for scaling

Portfolio?  
Risk? Location?  
Issue?

Invest in  
scaling? What  
role for donor?  
RFP, Design,  
Workplan, M&E  
indicators

Implementation,  
Strategic Pivots  
And Course  
Corrections

**Basic  
Research**

**Applied  
Research**  
(Field testing)

**Scaling Pilot**  
(creating  
preconditions &  
critical mass)

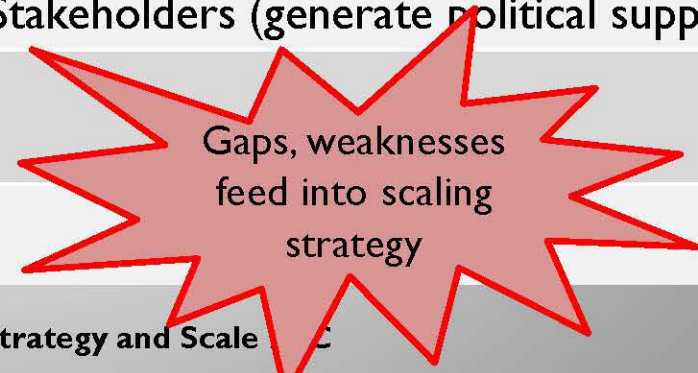
**Full Scaling**



# Which Pathway or Mechanism


- ❑ Key context question: 'is there a viable scaling pathway?'
- ❑ Prefer Private or Commercial Pathway given sustainability and resources, but always some role for Public Sector

| Roles                                    |   |
|--|---|
| Produce or Supply Innovation (inputs)    | <u>Downstream</u> : Create or Strengthen Processing and Processing Capacity                   |
| Distribute Innovation                    | <u>Downstream</u> : Create/Expand Demand for Increased Product Output                         |
| Create Demand (marketing, demos)         | <u>Political Space</u> : Approval and Compliance with Regulations, Licensing, Permits, etc.   |
| Provide Training, TA, Extension Support  | <u>Political Space</u> : Enroll, Coopt, or Overcome Stakeholders (generate political support) |
| Drive/Manage the Overall Scaling Process |   |



# Assessment Criteria

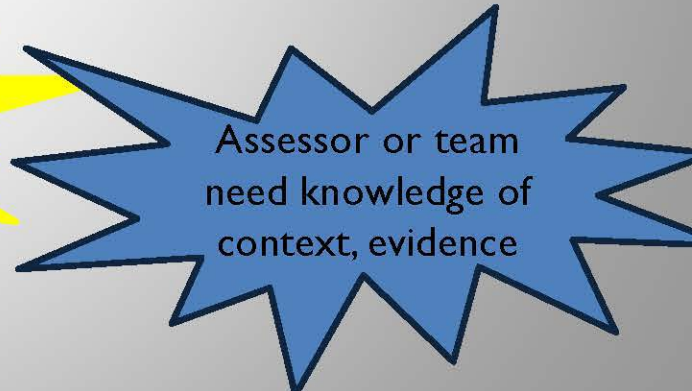
1. Potential Scale, Impact, Relevance to Policy goals
2. Relevance to Felt Needs of Adopters
3. Evidence/Credibility/Familiarity (in actual live context)
4. Net Benefits & Risk (Business Case), Incentives for Actors
5. Ease of Adoption & Robustness
6. Affordability
7. Strength of Market System, Upstream, Downstream value chain
8. Public Sector Enabling Environment



Gaps, weaknesses  
feed into scaling  
strategy



All but #5 are  
highly context  
specific



Assessor or team  
need knowledge of  
context, evidence

# Information Needed

1. Agricultural research projects often don't generate key information needed for a scalability assessment, both about the innovation & context
2. Innovation Example: Business Case for Adopters, Robustness (variance)
3. Context Example: What agricultural producers or importers who can make or distribute the innovation technically and with required capacity?  
Felt Needs of Potential Adopters, Current GAPs
4. Someone has to generate this data



# Information Needed

| Innovation  | Context   |
|---|---|
| Agro-ecological requirements (and performance variance)                     | Size of relevant agro-ecological zone, number of potential adopters |
| Financial Benefits (business case for potential adopters)                   | Crop budget equivalent, input and output prices and variance        |
| Comparative Agronomic & Financial Performance versus Competing Solutions    | Current Technology Being Used, its price and availability           |
| Good Agricultural Practices and Complementary Inputs Needed                 | Current agricultural practices and input use by potential adopters  |
| Robustness/Sensitivity of Performance to Full Adoption of Package, Fidelity | Diverse uses possible in this context                               |
| Total Cost of adoption, including complementary inputs and equipment        | Equipment currently in use, diffusion                               |
| Innovation Retail Prices  | Existence, and Capacity of Potential Local or Regional Producers    |
| Technical and capacity requirements to produce the innovation               | Existence, Strength, Coverage of Distribution Networks              |



# Conclusions

- Scalability assessment less about Yes vs. No and more about Potential Costs, Weaknesses, and Benefits
- Can be used at various stages from research to scaling pilots to full scale implementation
- Preference for Private Sector, challenge because many innovations are public goods or Social Benefits are greater than the private benefits
- Requires assessor or assessment team to have knowledge of potential scale, innovation and the context, further down the pipeline, more context
- Last but not least, someone has to generate a lot of data that is not currently generated by many research projects