TROPICAL AGRICULTURE PLATFORM

CAPACITY FOR CHANGE

Common Framework on Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems

SYNTHESIS DOCUMENT

CAPACITY FOR CHANGE

Common Framework on Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems

SYNTHESIS DOCUMENT

Tropical Agriculture Platform
Rome, June 2016

Published by CABI on behalf of the Tropical Agriculture Platform

CABI
Nosworthy Way
Wallingford
Oxfordshire OX10 8DE
UK

Tel: +44 (0)1491 832111
Fax: +44 (0)1491 833508
E-mail: info@cabi.org
Website: www.cabi.org

CABI
745 Atlantic Avenue
8th Floor
Boston, MA 02111
USA

T: +1 (617)682-9015
E-mail: cabi-nao@cabi.org

Suggested citation:
Tropical Agriculture Platform (2016) *Common Framework on Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems: Synthesis Document*. CAB International, Wallingford, UK.

ISBN-13: 978-1-78639-118-6

Typeset by Simona Capocaccia.
Printed and bound in the UK by The Holywell Press Ltd, Oxford.

Contents

List of figures

List of boxes

Acknowledgements

The Synthesis Document is based on the Conceptual Background of the Common Framework on Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems, which was prepared by four experts (Julia Ekong, Ataharul Chowdhury, Maria Iskandarani and Eduardo Trigo) recruited under the Tropical Agriculture Platform (TAP) with contributions from the TAP Secretariat, FAO Research and Extension Unit (Karin Nichterlein, Christian Grovermann, Andrea Sonnino and Tommaso Carboni).

The TAP Secretariat acknowledges also the contribution provided by the members of the TAP Expert Group (Adel Abdel Rahim – AARINENA; Pedro Arcuri – Embrapa; Julian Bartual Martos – INIA; Tim Chancellor – NRI; Delgermaa Chuluunbaatar – FAO; Claire Coote – Agrinatura; Hans Dobson – Agrinatura; Botir Dosov – CACAARI; Javier Ekboir – CGIAR; Alexander Flor – GFRAS; Judith Francis – EFARD/CTA; Birgit Habermann – Agrinatura; Tom Hammett – USAID; Richard Hawkins – Agrinatura; Changshun Jiang – CATAS; Patrick Kalas – FAO; Carl Larssen – World Bank; Joerg Lohmann – GIZ; Bhag Mal – APAARI; Paul McNamara – USAID; Ana Mele – Agrinatura; Nidhi Nagabhatla – YPARD; Nelson Ojijo – FARA; Dannie Romney – CABI; Murat Sartas – EFARD; Tomohide Sugino – JIRCAS; Bernard Triomphe – Agrinatura; Mariana Wongtschowski – GFRAS; Myra Wopereis – Agrinatura) and by the members of the TAP Global Task Force (Adel Abdel Rahim – AARINENA; Mohammad Ajlouni - AARINENA; Guram Aleksidze - CACAARI; Pedro Arcuri – Embrapa; Clara Cohen – USAID; David Dolly - GFRAS; Iddo Dror – CGIAR; Judith Francis – EFARD/CTA; Raghunat Ghodake – APAARI; Christian Hoste – TAP Chair/Agreenium; John Kennelly – GCHERA; Guodao Liu – CATAS; Joerg Lohmann – GIZ; Trevor Nicholls – CABI; David Nielson – World Bank; Ruth Oniang'o – GFAR; Raphael Trejos - FORAGRO; Ren Wang – FAO).

The graphic design was realized by Simona Capocaccia. The Synthesis Document has been developed through the project "Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems (CDAIS)" jointly implemented by Agrinatura and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) with the financial assistance of the European Union (EU). The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the EU.

Background

Innovation in agriculture is a precondition for meeting the challenge of feeding the world's growing population in the face of a changing climate and degrading natural resources. It is fundamental to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of ending poverty and hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture. Innovation also has a role to play in achieving gender equality, ensuring healthy lives for all and contributing to economic growth. Many countries are however not fully exploiting their innovation potential. In order to do so, they must strengthen the capacity of individuals and organizations, create an enabling environment and, crucially, reinforced or make more effective Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS).

AIS, may be defined as complex networks of actors (individuals, organizations and enterprises), together with supporting institutions and policies that bring existing or new agricultural products, processes, and practices into social and economic use.

In 2012, the Agriculture Ministers of the G20 called for the creation of a Tropical Agriculture Platform (TAP) to promote the development of national capacities for agricultural innovation in the tropics, where almost all low-income countries are located. The aim of TAP is to enhance the overall performance of AIS, with particular focus on small- and medium-scale producers and enterprises in the agribusiness sector. TAP's ultimate objective is to make agriculture more sustainable and improve livelihoods.[1]

Importantly, a survey conducted by TAP in 27 countries[2] found that Capacity Development (CD) is seldom designed and implemented in an integrated manner and consequently fails to capture the full complexity of innovation processes. Frequently, interventions are planned and delivered independently, are too small in scale and end up taking contradictory positions vis-à-vis any existing local innovation system. They also tend to neglect the high-level political and operational mechanisms needed to assure comprehensive and sustained efforts. Capacity development initiatives for effective AIS must be coordinated and aligned with country and regional policy and planning frameworks as well as with institutional needs.

In view of these observations, the 41 TAP partners agreed to develop a Common Framework on Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems (CD for AIS).[3] The objective of the TAP Common Framework is to harmonize and coordinate the different approaches to CD in support of agricultural innovation. Such harmonization would promote optimal use of the resources of different donors and technical cooperation agencies.

The development and thus the validation of the Common Framework is supported by the Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems (CDAIS) project, funded by the European Commission (EC) and jointly implemented by the The European Alliance on Agricultural knowledge for Development (AGRINATURA) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

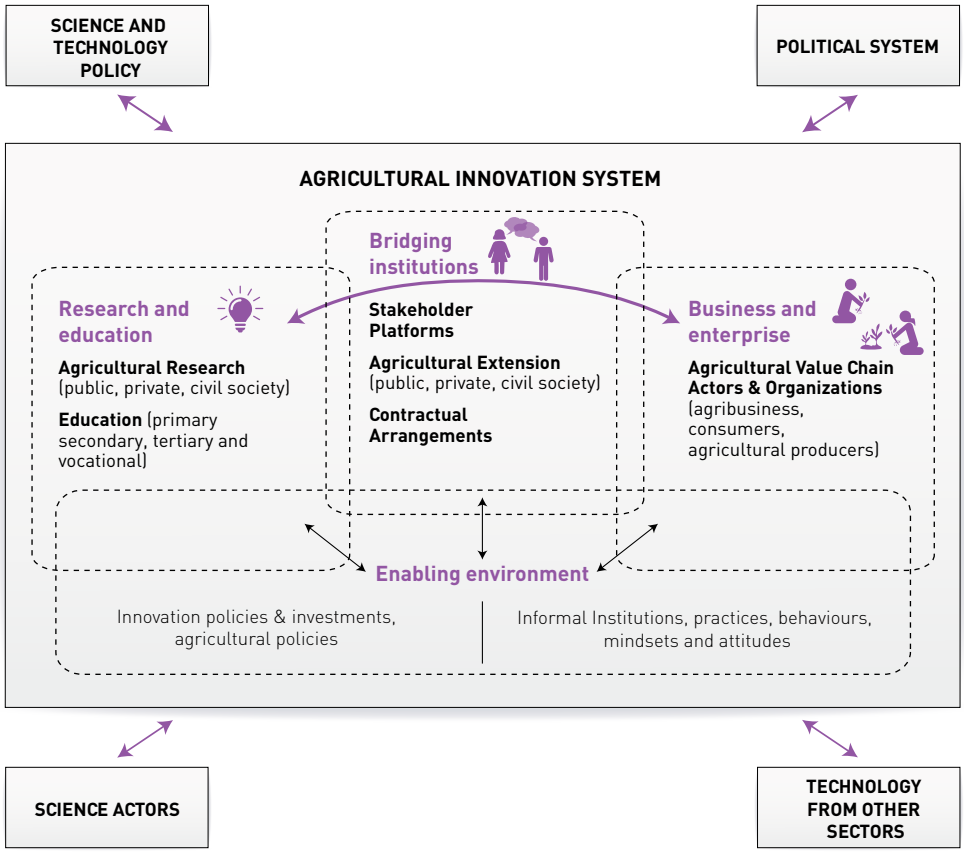
---

1 For a full description of the Tropical Agricultural Platform membership, objectives, overall approach and plan of work, see http://www.fao.org/in-action/tropical-agriculture-platform/en/

2 The full report 'Assessment of current capacities and needs for capacity development in agricultural innovation systems in low income tropical countries' is available at: http://www.fao.org/3/a-bc466e.pdf

3 For a full presentation of the approved TAP Action Plan see http://www.fao.org/3/a-bc455e.pdf

Figure 1 | **Conceptual diagram of an Agricultural Innovation Systems**



Source: adapted from Aerni *et al.*, 2015.

The Common Framework promotes a shift of mindsets and attitudes among the main actors and provides concepts, principles, methodologies and tools to understand better the architecture of AIS, to assess CD needs and to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate CD interventions. It emphasizes the crucial role facilitation, reflection, learning, documentation and kwnowledge management for enabling agricultural innovation. All this should lead to more sustainable and efficient AIS.

The Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS) Perspective

Innovation for agricultural development has long been dominated by the view that relevant knowledge is essentially generated by research and passed on to the extension system for adoption by farmers through a linear process of technology transfer. But this approach, successfully adopted during the Green Revolution, has largely failed to tackle contemporary agricultural development complexity. In fact, agriculture in the tropics is increasingly

Box 1 | **Mindset shifts promoted by the TAP Common Framework**

CD for AIS implies a shift from:

- considering knowledge generation as a final objective, to using it as a means to achieve change;
- understanding of the parts to systemic understanding of the relationships between the parts;
- using mainly 'hard systems analysis' (improving the mechanics of the system) to including 'soft systems analysis' (negotiating the meaning of the system and desirable transformations);
- seeing participation as a question of consulting beneficiaries to realizing it is about facilitating engagement for interactive learning between stakeholders, resulting in joint analysis, planning, and collective action;
- working individually to working with others, in constantly changing ad-hoc teams and partnerships; and
- teaching to learning; from being taught, to learning how to learn; from individual learning to social learning.

Finally, CD for AIS also means a shift in the culture of research and development (R&D) organizations from an exclusive focus on individual merit and competition to promoting collaboration and teamwork within and between organizations.

Source: ICRA - International Centre for development oriented Research in Agriculture.

transformed by the dynamic interaction of socio-economic and environmental factors such as the demand of global markets, urbanization, agricultural commercialization and intensification, climate change, concentration and vertical integration of food production. Other complicating factors include consumption patterns, food safety standards and the need to ensure equitable benefits to actors along value-chains. Addressing this complexity requires innovation in agriculture and rural development to be based on multi-stakeholder interaction that include non-conventional stakeholders (e.g. private sector, farmer. organizations, non-profit organizations and civil society organizations) and to be linked to other sectors, such as human health. The complex and dynamic nature of food and agricultural development also calls for consolidation of local, indigenous and formal scientific knowledge, viewing agriculture from multiple perspectives and disciplines, i.e. all the way from biological science to social, natural and policy research. It also requires establishing effective partnerships based on trust among a broad set of actors extending beyond formal science and development. This necessitates coordination and collaboration among a diversity of actors, with the aim of harnessing new ideas and mobilizing resources from both public and private sources.

The TAP Common Framework builds conceptually on the AIS perspective, which emphasizes that agricultural innovation, as opposed to linear approaches, results from a complex, multi-stakeholder process of interaction. Conceptually, the AIS, as outlined in Figure 1, comprises four components: research and education; business and enterprise, including smallholder famers; bridging institutions such as stakeholder platforms and advisory services; and the enabling en-

Figure 2 | **The 3 dimensions of Capacity Development**

Source: FAO 2010.

vironment, consisting of policies, practices, mindsets and attitudes. Innovation, in order to take off, requires the right mix of different actors, social mechanisms and policies. As an endogenous process, it cannot rely solely on spin-off from foreign research, but needs local capacities to generate knowledge and develop new technologies and business processes.

The Common Framework recognizes that in most cases some form of AIS already exists at local, regional and national levels and that the various elements required to drive it are usually in place. But, as such, the AIS are frequently not performing as well as they could. On the contrary, they often end up stifling innovation and denying opportunities. Although a complex web of inter-related actors is always present, this will tend to fail to produce results unless the diversity and complexity of the system is recognised and addressed. Also, for interventions strengthening AIS to be effectively designed and implemented, it is imperative that everyone involved at all levels recognize the nature of interdependencies and the roles they play in innovation processes. So far, however, the AIS approach has not been fully reflected in all national policies and capacity development efforts.

The Capacity for Change

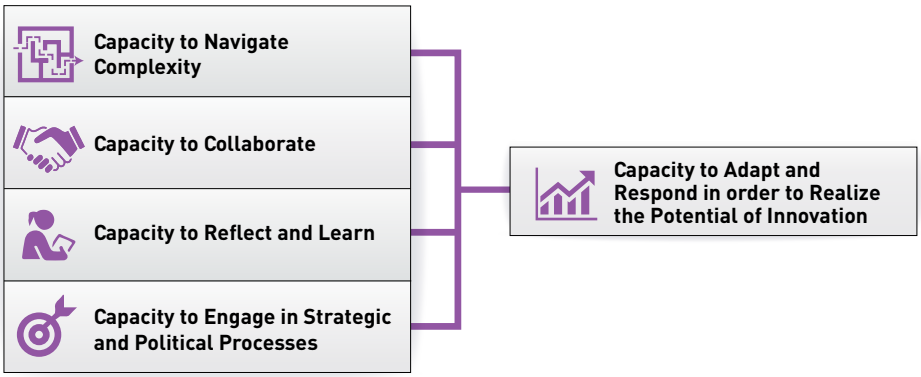
'Capacity' is defined simply as *'the ability of people, organizations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully'*.[4] And for that to happen, individuals, organizations and society as a whole need to acquire competencies – core knowledge, skills, attitudes and energies – through capacity development. One widely accepted definition of *'Capacity Development'* is that it *'is the process whereby people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time'*.[5]

As with agricultural innovation, capacity 'emerges' over time, driven by multiple factors. No single element such as incentives, leadership, financial support, trained staff, knowledge or structure can alone lead to the development of capacity. But if capacity is understood as involving collective learning and adaptation to numerous opportunities and challenges, then it cannot be designed and implemented by external actors with a well-defined and standardized set of products and services. Accepting this fact calls for a fundamental change in our perception of CD – not just as a vehicle for results but a way of facilitating processes enabling stakeholders to seize opportunities, build trust and take joint action.

Conventionally, capacity has often viewed as a sort of hierarchy with individual, organizational, inter-organizational and system-wide levels. It was widely assumed that competencies at individual level would, through a knock-on effect, enhance capacity at other levels, creating an enabling environment. But this

[4] OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation (2010) http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/dcdndep/41612905.pdf
[5] OECD/GAT 2006.

Figure 3 | **The 4 + 1 Capacities**



rather static categorization fails to describe the interconnections between the various dimensions involved. As shown in Figure 2, the TAP Common Framework recognizes three dimensions: Individuals, Organizations and the Enabling Environment. Within the context of AIS, it is pertinent to stress the crucial importance of partnerships and networks in creating that interconnectedness, and in bringing together the three dimensions to create new knowledge. The present Common Framework emphasizes the interdependent relationship between these dimensions as a way of strengthening 'system-wide' capacity.

For AIS to perform effectively, four key capacities are required:

- **Capacity to Navigate Complexity.** This involves a shift in mindsets, attitudes and behaviour to comprehend the larger system and to create an understanding of the whole system, as well as a shift from a mainly reductionist understanding of the parts to a systemic understanding of the relationships among the parts; viewing change as an emerging property that cannot be predicted or planned for in a linear fashion.
- **Capacity to Collaborate.** This involves enabling actors to understand each others perspectives and managing conflicts, managing diversity in order to combine individual skills and knowledge, and creating an awareness of their complementarity. It is also about building synergetic partnerships and networks to enhance collaboration, and about communication skills and strategies, both internally and externally.
- **Capacity to Reflect and Learn.** This capacity covers bringing stakeholders together, designing and leading processes of critical reflection and following a double-loop learning process leading to action and change. It requires respect for different opinions and an atmosphere of trust for those opinions to be voiced. It also requires a systematic tracking of processes and progress to enable reflection to take place. Interventions need to be sufficiently flexible and adaptable to changing conditions, and analysis should be undertaken in an iterative fashion so as to promote experimentation and adaptive capacities as new opportunities for learning emerge.
- **Capacity to Engage in Strategic and Political Processes.** CD for transformational change is inherently political, and involves questioning the status quo. Power relations need to be understood at various levels, including economic interests,

the balance of power among elites and civil society-state relations. Understanding and influencing the political and power relations between individuals, within organizations and in society as a whole, is crucial for bringing about new forms of interaction among stakeholders. This capacity is also about the conscious empowerment of vulnerable and often marginalized groups.

The four capacities are the core of an overarching **Capacity to Adapt and Respond in order to Realize the Potential of Innovation,** shifting focus from reactive problem solving to co-creating the future. This requires facilitative leadership to enable all of the above to happen. The five capacities together, illustrated in Figure 3, are interdependent and are relevant at each of the three dimensions of CD.

Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems

The concept of AIS not only calls for a shift in the roles of various actors in agricultural innovation, but also calls for innovative and systemic approaches to CD itself.

CD is necessary to enhance interaction, build trust and create synergy between research institutions and public and private sector actors, smallholder farmers and development organizations to enable them address a whole range of activities, investments and policies and avail of opportunities to make change happen.

Investments in capacity development can take years to yield significant results, partly because an organization's performance is influenced not only by the way it is structured internally, but also by its external environment. Thus, while the immediate aim of CD may be the improvement of performance, capacity should not be equated to, or reduced to performance alone.

As noted, the TAP Common Framework recognizes three dimensions of CD – Individuals, Organizations and the Enabling Environment – which must be viewed as interconnected and addressed concurrently. Particular importance is given to partnerships and networks, i.e. bringing together individuals and organizations to co-create new knowledge.

CD pays special attention to ways of bolstering the enabling environment, an area that is often neglected. In concrete terms, this means seeking and promoting effective coordination with those national institutions whose decisions and policies shape the way individuals and organisations in the system relate to and interact with each other.

Enhancing capacity across the system involves fostering interaction between organizations and other stakeholders, and building trust between them. CD for AIS must help design and implement an appropriate institutional framework (or enabling environment) in which organizations and individuals can sustainably improve their own capacity and innovate. That, in turn, requires building incentives and political commitment.

In general terms, the "enabling environment" is the context in which individuals and organizations put their competencies and capabilities into play. It includes the institutional set-up of a country, its implicit and explicit rules, its power structures and the policy and legal environment in which individuals and organizations function. The concept of enabling environment includes "intangible" or informal components such as social conventions, values and beliefs, as well as "tangible" aspects to do with governance, formal rules and regulations, and policy aspects.

Since capacity development efforts take time to influence informal components, the Common Framework gives more emphasis to tangible or formal aspects. It is thus necessary to understand how existing laws, regu-

Box 2 | **Basic CD for AIS principles promoted by the TAP Common Framework**

1. CD for AIS interventions must respond to expressed needs of actors. It cannot be designed and implemented by external actors with a well-defined and standardized set of products and services.
2. CD for AIS is an endogenous process and ownership by ownership by local actors is paramount to its success; collective energy, motivation and commitment of stakeholders to engage in a process of change are crucial.
3. CD for AIS is not politically neutral, it involves questioning and sometimes upsetting the status quo and may lead to conflict; it therefore needs strong, facilitative leadership and commitment.
4. CD for AIS is an iterative process rather than a one-off time-bound intervention. Capacity needs of today will change tomorrow based on experience gained in the face of new challenges or emerging opportunities.
5. CD for AIS is a multi-dimensional and multi-actor process that goes well beyond the direct transfer of knowledge and skills at the individual level and addresses in an integrated manner organizational and institutional dimensions.
6. CD for AIS interventions go beyond improving immediate performance and develop the capacity to adapt to new and constantly changing environments, to learn and analyse the internal and external context and to relate and build partnerships and pro-actively plan the future.
7. CD for AIS is context-specific and no blueprint or one-size-fits-all recipe can be applied.
8. Finally, CD for AIS also means a shift in the culture of research and development (R&D) organizations from an exclusive focus on individual merit and competition to promoting collaboration and teamwork within and between organizations.

lations and policies affect specific innovation processes – either positively or negatively – and then identify possible responses. For operational purposes it is useful to concentrate on clearly identifiable gaps in the competencies, capacities and skills of governing, regulatory and policy-making structures affecting AIS. Strategies to narrow such gaps should then be developed and implemented.

Three main clusters of AIS enabling factors can be identified:

1. **agricultural and rural policies** aimed at improving infrastructure, credit, and markets;
2. **innovation policy and corresponding governance structures,** providing vision and priorities and linking AIS to the general knowledge infrastructure; and
3. **framework conditions,** which includes all the macro rules and regulations that define the country's business environment, guide resource allocation and drive production decisions.

Facilitation

The TAP Common Framework places particular importance on facilitation. Here, however, the concept of facilitation goes beyond conventional tasks such as communication and information-sharing to include the fostering of synergy between people and resources and enhancing the capacity for collective decision-making. Facilitation enhances interaction and relationships of individuals, organizations, and their social, cultural and political struc-

tures through a process of network building, social learning and negotiation. It should also foster entrepreneurship, help mobilize resources and overcome resistance to changes. CD for AIS facilitation requires specialized and skilled individuals who can act as mediators in complex situations, going beyond the conventional role of extension agents and advisory services.

Innovation Platforms are increasingly popular to bring together a broad range of actors around identified agricultural innovation challenges and opportunities at individual and organization level and facilitate joint solutions and action. The 'platform actors' involved are helped to overcome their often differing views and the fact that they are frequently competing for the same resources. The goal is to help them realize their objectives through dialogue and awareness of their interdependency.

Facilitating innovation also means supporting learning processes and enabling individuals to reflect on their experiences, to encourage critical thinking and challenge existing assumptions and preconditions.

Learning

Social or collaborative learning is often used to promote innovation processes, reflecting the fact that innovation involves a wide variety of actors. The theory is that learning occurs through dialogue and interaction. Concrete actions result in certain experiences, which are reflected upon and subsequently generate cognitive changes, from which new actions can emerge.

Learning occurs when people start getting to know each other, work together and concretely learn something through joint activities. The process aims at building trust and mutual understanding and at creating the right conditions for collective decision-making.

Sometimes known as Double-loop learning, the approach is designed to do more than fix problems or improve the existing system (which is what Single-loop learning does). Recognizing that the way a problem is defined and solved can be a source of the problem itself, Double-loop learning achieves results by questioning the underlying assumptions and beliefs of the actors.

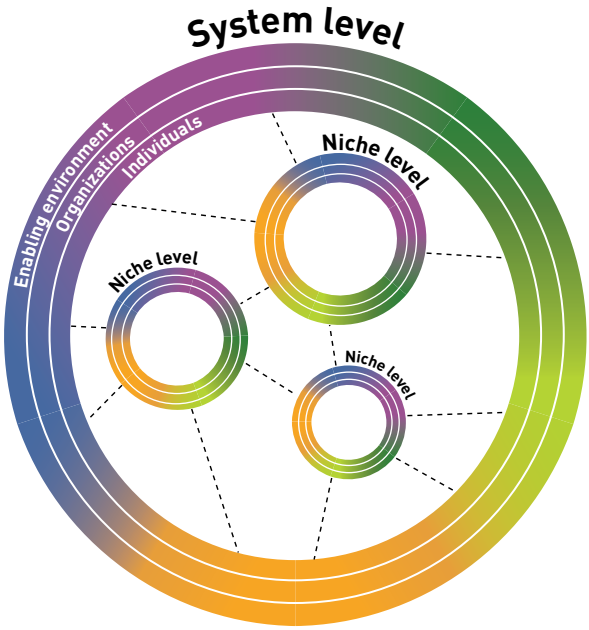
Documentation and Knowledge Management

Documentation and knowledge management are a core issue in CD for AIS, since this is central to joint learning. Considering that the AIS approach encompasses several dimensions, the task of identifying, capturing, evaluating and sharing relevant knowledge among stakeholders is much more complex than in traditional knowledge management approaches. In the AIS perspective, all actors are seen as potential sources of knowledge, and this includes not only new agricultural technologies, but also management issues and organizational matters such as market information and government policies.

All this requires a significant effort in terms of supporting knowledge management methods and techniques, including procedures that adequately capture local knowledge. Agricultural and development organizations frequently ignore or overlook the high value of local or "tacit" knowledge. Such knowledge is rooted in individual experiences and involves intangible factors, such as personal beliefs, perspectives, and value systems. It is relatively difficult to formalize, codify and/or communicate.

Knowledge management in AIS thus needs to focus on using tools and methods that are sensitive to both 'tacit' and 'explicit' knowledge, and that lead to an inclusive innovation process. For instance, video increasingly serves as a tool for documentation of knowledge and for stimulating group learning in an innovation systems context.

Figure 4 | **A conceptual approach to CD for AIS**



Knowledge exchange amongst individuals and organizations does not take place automatically: it needs to be supported by a process of negotiation and mediation among participants. Similarly, the institutional dimension of knowledge management needs to be considered.

Dual Pathways to CD for AIS

The conceptual model distinguishes two levels of CD:

- **Innovation Niche:** The locus of learning, experimentation and micro-level transformation, niches are environments in which innovation is developed with the potential, if managed strategically, to seed sustainable transformation. In innovation niches, groups of actors become part of a learning process in which alternative socio-technical practices can be experimented and developed so that they can subsequently inform and influence mainstream processes. The strength of the niche results from the interplay among three components: (1) articulation and negotiation of shared expectations by participating actors giving direction and legitimacy to the niche; (2) a growing social network, including all relevant types of actors within the niche, both creating opportunities for stakeholder interaction and a micro-market that provides the resources necessary for experimentation and temporary protection; and (3) a learning mechanism (between experiments, between actors, etc.) that is a vital ingredient for the establishment of new rules and design heuristics.
- **Systems:** The wider system of which the niche is a part consists of the multiple and diverse actors within the boundaries of a defined AIS. Learning from the innovation niche is one input informing actors at system level in their own interactions and

helping create an enabling environment for AIS. CD at system level recognizes social, cultural and political structures in which power relations, and social and institutional dimensions determine opportunities for different groups of actors to initiate an innovation niche, and then, acting upon the interventions, to attain sustainability.

A purposeful intervention is necessary in order to enhance the capacity to improve the enabling environment of individuals and organizations (actors in the innovation niche) on the one hand, as well as the capacity of other social, institutional and political actors on the other hand. The CD of individuals and organizations is linked to their involvement within niches or at system level, as shown in Figure 4.

CD for AIS - An Operational Approach

The TAP Common Framework is a key element of the TAP Action Plan. Its implementation will be facilitated by other TAP activities, such as TAPIPEDIA (a CD for AIS-related information sharing mechanism) and High Level policy Dialogue.

The Common Framework proposes a CD for AIS Cycle of 5 stages: "Galvanizing Commitment", "Visioning", "Capacity Needs Assessment", "CD Strategy Development" and "Implementation". The cycles are substantially identical for each of the three dimensions (Individuals, Organizations and the Enabling Environment) although the actors involved and the methods used may vary. Figure 5 shows how, moving forward in the cycle from one stage to another, capacities are continuously enhanced.

The cycle is proposed as a guide for contextualized action rather than as a blueprint for achieving effective CD for AIS. Country approaches may differ significantly in content and process depending on context, opportunities, commitment and resources. The practicalities of the proposed approach need to be piloted and the CD for AIS Cycle further refined in the light of experience. But the key element common to all countries should be a systemic, dual pathways approach ensuring that all actors within the system have the opportunity to participate, to learn together and to formulate joint solutions.

Given the importance of skilled facilitators in the CD process, it is vital that the process described by the cycle is accompanied by the identification and strengthening of individuals and organizations that can act as effective agents of change. They can be extension services, private consulting firms, university departments, capacity building organizations or NGOs.

STAGE 1
Galvanizing Commitment

It is by no means straightforward to convince actors in AIS to question deeply ingrained attitudes and habits rooted in a "business as usual" mentality, and to persuade them to promote agricultural innovation through participation, reflection and joint learning, without the certainty of predictable results. It requires a systematic sensitization of key actors – knowledge providers and recipients, organizations and networks that bridge the knowledge divide, and institutions within the wider system responsible for creating an enabling environment.

In order to advance and strengthen CD for AIS it is important to ensure both a common understanding of the process as well as to create ownership and high-level support by those that head and lead representative bodies of actors within the system. Effort and conviction are needed to secure the commitment of relevant stakeholders at system level and ensure that they all understand what the dual pathways to CD for AIS involves.

Figure 5 | **The CD for AIS Cycle**

STAGE II
Visioning

The visioning process brings together representatives of actor groups within the AIS to build on their common understanding of AIS and the need for a coordinated approach. The process involves a wide spectrum of interested parties including ministries, legislative bodies and representatives of the private sector plus development partners and civil society.

The visioning process also serves to identify the innovation niches seeding learning and innovation and also inform learning and adaptation in the system. This might involve building on existing platforms around a single

commodity or value chain, or consist in establishing such multi-stakeholder platforms or processes from scratch.

While leadership of the visioning process may sit within a specific institution or organization, it is also necessary to identify AIS "champions" who are enthusiastic about the approach and will ensure that agreed steps are carried out.

STAGE III
Capacity Needs Assessment

Capacity needs assessment is at the core of the cycle and fundamental to strengthening the AIS. The Assessment aims to ascertain the level of technical and functional capacity, and in particular the capacity to adapt and respond in the various dimensions.

Within the AIS the number of actors and organizations can be enormous, making any attempt to systematically assess the capacity of all relevant organizations a herculean task. Assessment will therefore focus on select organizations and institutions that are catalytic for system development (e.g. national research organizations, ministries, parliamentary working groups, farmers' associations and cooperatives), or are linked to innovation niches or to the wider systems CD process.

The capacity needs assessment will provide an analysis across the sector to inform the setting of priorities and development of strategic CD interventions in areas such as strategic planning, leadership support and finance, or around more conceptual issues such as systems thinking. It will also serve as a baseline for monitoring and evaluating subsequent interventions.

An important input at this stage is undertaking a scoping study based on available documentation and interviews with key actors in the public and private sectors, non-profit organizations farmer organizations and also bi-lateral and multi-lateral development partners involved in agriculture.

As with the other steps in the CD for AIS Cycle, needs assessment is not a one-off activity because experience and exposure will call for the development of new capacities.

STAGE IV
CD Strategy Development and Action Plan

The leadership team of the CD project (possibly with the active involvement of other actors) will decide on goals, objectives, priorities and options for a systems-wide CD strategy. Options for CD interventions will depend on the country context, ongoing programmes and funding opportunities. Options might include cross-organizational initiatives such as leadership or change management programmes; training of trainers in multi-stakeholder processes; cross-ministry dialogue; policy dialogue with sector actors; orientation of legislators (e.g., of relevant parliamentary working groups); and the establishment of incentive funds to set up and facilitate multi-stakeholder processes. Prioritization should also include identification of activities that can take off immediately.

Three main criteria determine priorities within strategy development: existing initiatives in the country that may be included in the strategy; the commitment of various actors; and the availability or commitment of funding for identified activities. A CD strategy must also include a plan for mobilizing resources for various activities from domestic and external sources.

The Action Plan forms part of the strategic planning exercise. The process leadership group, with additional support if necessary, should design a "Master Action Matrix Plan" or "Action Map" outlining activities to be undertaken by different actors in the system.

STAGE V
Implementation

Those individuals or organizations who assume responsibility for a certain activity will be in charge of implementing the plan. The process leadership group should, however, maintain a coordinating role throughout the implementation phase.

An important part of implementation will be the cycle of learning and reflection not only within individual organizations and institutions and within innovation niches, but also across the sector. Opportunities to regularly reflect upon and reassess interventions in a given context should be embedded within projects and programmes.

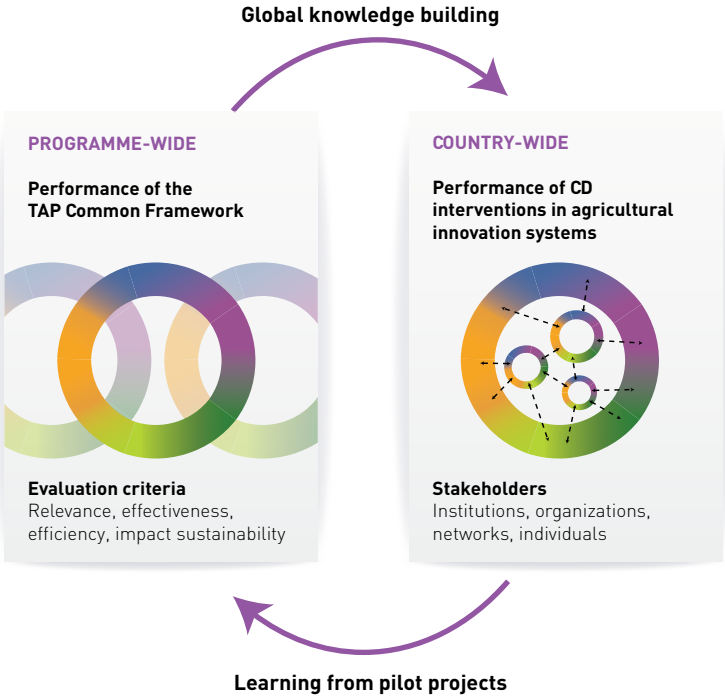
Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation in CD for AIS

Typically, an M&E architecture is built on a logical results chain, assessing progress and results at different stages of the chain. In addition, the M&E architecture proposed here attempts to establish:

- a system for monitoring and evaluating CD for AIS at **country level;** and
- a system for monitoring and evaluating the performance of the TAP Common Framework at **programme level.**

The first element refers to M&E of progress and results in each of the five CD stages set out within the TAP Common Framework, whereas the second element evaluates the success of the Common Framework ap-

Figure 6 | **The M&E architecture of the TAP Common Framework**



proach in its entirety (its overall performance as a new approach to CD for AIS). The two elements of the M&E architecture are integrated: empirical evidence, findings and learning from one element feed into the other and vice versa. The implementation of the Common Framework undergoes continuous adaption by using M&E approaches that encourage and facilitate collective knowledge building and adaptive learning. This allows for improving approaches and interventions and making necessary adjustments. To track progress in a comprehensive manner, changes in all five key capacities (Capacity to Navigate Complexity, Capacity to Collaborate, Capacity to Reflect and Learn, Capacity to Engage in Strategic and Political Processes and Capacity to Adapt and Respond in order to Realize the Potential of Innovation) need to be considered for effective M&E in CD for AIS. A consistent M&E methodology, starting from the needs assessment, is designed for comparing the effectiveness of CD interventions across time and space.

Conclusions

Rising to the complex challenges facing agriculture in the 21st Century requires strengthening the capacity of AIS across the three dimensions: individual, organisational and the enabling environment. That requires major changes in the prevailing policies for CD for AIS.

In particular, international development agencies and the donor community are called on to:

- increase and sustain the level of development assistance devoted to CD for AIS;
- align CD for AIS initiatives with country and regional policy and planning frameworks as well as expressed CD needs;
- plan and deliver interventions in tight coordination with existing CD initiatives; and
- design and implement CD for AIS initiatives in an integrated manner, considering the individual and organizational dimensions of CD, as well as the enabling environment.

Policymakers at national level are thus called on to:

- increase and sustain the level of national investments in CD for AIS;
- shift the focus from reactive problem-solving to joining together to achieve transformation;
- create the space and incentives for actors of AIS to come together to interact, understand the whole of which they are a part, question the status quo if necessary, and jointly work to bring about the changes needed; and
- be able and willing to learn from initiatives (innovation niches), making it possible to put in place the necessary incentives and enabling environment required to stimulate creativity and innovation, and bring about a better future for all.

The implementation of the TAP Action plan is supported by the EU-funded project Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems (CDAIS) jointly implemented by AGRINATURA and FAO.
The TAP Secretariat is hosted at FAO HQ in Rome, Italy

The 41 partners of the Tropical Agricultural Platform agreed to develop a Common Framework on Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems (CD for AIS). The objective of the TAP Common Framework is to harmonize and coordinate the different approaches to CD in support of agricultural innovation. Such harmonization would promote optimal use of the resources of different donors and technical cooperation agencies. The development and thus the validation of the Common Framework is supported by the Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems (CDAIS) project, funded by the European Commission (EC) and jointly implemented by the European agricultural research alliance AGRINATURA and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The present "Synthesis Document" summarizes the content of the volumes "Conceptual Background" and "Guidance Note on Operationalization".