

Innovation Africa Symposium

20th-23rd November 2006 Kampala, Uganda



Understanding how to catalyse and support innovation is the key to success for agricultural research and development organisations. Valuable experiences are being generated across the world on how to translate research ideas and products into innovations that benefit thousands of resource-poor rural people. The institutional arrangements that encourage these processes recognise the need for multiple sources of innovation and stimulating synergy between innovation system actors. Innovation processes by rural people themselves play a key role. To be effective in agricultural research and development, it is crucial to stay in touch with these rapidly evolving ideas from all over the world and across other sectors, and to understand how these are applicable in Africa.

The Innovation Africa Symposium will convene a group of internationally recognised experts on innovation systems to share their latest thinking with agricultural researchers and development partners. The Symposium will also provide an opportunity for participants to share their achievements in enhancing innovation processes.

The symposium will be organised in a format designed to maximise dynamic knowledge sharing by integrating formal plenary presentations, small group discussions, and reflection on practical experiences, including case studies. Mini-workshops will be organised to offer an open space for information exchange amongst special interest groups around symposium themes. Sessions will be designed to provide a balance between practice and theory. An innovation marketplace session will be used to share practical experiences on the ground.

This event is intended to catalyse the formation of “Communities of Practice” dedicated to highlighting and promoting successes with potential for innovation in African agriculture. The communities of practice will also recognise and support local peoples’ own initiatives in experimentation and innovation. These are too often overlooked or underestimated as engines of change in promoting broad-based agricultural-led economic growth and development.

The objectives of the Symposium are:

- To enable researchers, social entrepreneurs, private sector and development practitioners to interact and share experiences on the latest research and initiatives on innovation systems and their impacts.
 - To demonstrate the importance of building upon local peoples’ initiatives in experimentation and innovation
 - To understand the implications of an innovation systems perspective for agricultural research and development
 - To identify policy options, organisational solutions and capacity needs, and the way forward to strengthen the potential for greater pro-poor innovation
 - To catalyse new knowledge-sharing partnerships for developing south-south learning and networking of professionals working on innovation.
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Photo: Pascal Sanginga

Topics to be covered in the Symposium:

Within the broader framework of agricultural research and development, the main topics to be addressed in the Symposium will be:

1. Conceptual and methodological developments in agricultural innovation systems
2. Strengthening partnerships and other forms of social capital in agricultural innovation systems
3. Institutional arrangements, policy options, and knowledge-sharing mechanisms to support agricultural innovation systems
4. Enhancing local innovation processes
5. Market-led innovation in agriculture
6. Building capacity for integrating innovation systems approaches into agricultural research and development.

Output and dissemination:

A CD of Symposium highlights and key invited papers will be shared with all participants. All presentations, discussion group results and recommendations from the Symposium will be available on a web page. We will also explore opportunities to publish some selected papers in a special issue of a peer-reviewed journal.

Contributions are being sought from a number of donor organisations to cover the costs of the Symposium. Potential contributors may offer support in the form of grants, participant sponsorship, and publications.

Symposium organisers:



International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)

CIAT-Africa

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International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR)

Africa Regional Office

P.O. Box 66873 – 00800, Nairobi, Kenya



International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)

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International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)

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