



Rwanda Country Programme

Rwanda Country Programme Work Plan (2009- 2011)

Explanatory Note (Updated Version January 2010)

1. Introduction

This paper presents the contribution of RIU-Rwanda to the understanding of when and under what circumstances different innovation narratives have relevance in the Rwanda context in order to enable agriculture research to contribute to innovation and development. The information provided will also facilitate to understand the EXCEL spread sheets that contain milestones, activities and tasks related to RIU the following key interventions in Rwanda: i) National Innovation Coalition; ii) Maize and Potato Platforms; iii) Phased out Platform(Cassava and Karongi platform); iv)Communication and Policy Dialogue; v) Flexibility Fund; vi) Programme management.

1.1. Background to the planning

The Research Into Use (RIU) Rwanda Country Programme has prepared a work plan that stretches from 1st July 2009 until 30th June 2011. The general objective of this document is to present RIU-Rwanda contribution to the research design as well as activities that will be implemented and related milestones and tasks.

Regular consultations, workshops, and other participatory methodologies were used to prepare this work plan.

1.2. The Process of planning

1.2.1. *Way forward from Nairobi Meeting:*

- ✓ The work plan is based on the new orientation of RIU Programme as discussed in the Nairobi Country Coordinators meeting. The results of the Nairobi meeting were presented to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry

of Agriculture and Animal Resources and to the Chairman and members of the National Innovation Coalition.

- ✓ Regarding the preparation of the new workplan, the NIC meeting of 14th August 2009 decided inter alia that a two days planning workshop be organized with participants from NIC, platforms and RIU partner projects.
- ✓ The NIC also decided that the RIU will support Maize and Potato Platforms and design an exit strategy for the other two platforms in order to avoid an abrupt termination of our support, which would impact negatively on RIU image and credibility.

1.2.2. Planning events

a) The Rwamagana planning workshop was organised from 25th to 26th August 2009 in Dereva Hotel. It was attended by 20 participants (5 from the NIC, 3 from each of maize and potato platform and 2 from each of Karongi and Cassava platforms, few resource persons). The facilitation was done by RIU Rwanda country coordination staff, and active interaction/ participation was highly encouraged. The following outputs were achieved:

- ✓ Participants were updated on recent changes that occurred in RIU Programme at central level and in Rwanda;
- ✓ A first set of milestones were agreed upon for the maize and Potato Platform and brainstorming on related tasks initiated;
- ✓ Representatives of the Cassava and Karongi platforms did not respond negatively on phasing out of RIU support and requested that a “soft landing package” be considered by RIU management, since they were determined to continue to operate as platforms;
- ✓ Brainstorming conducted on operationalisation of the “Flexibility Fund”
- ✓ It was decided that a special NIC working session be organised to agree on NIC specific milestones and tasks
- ✓ The Country team was tasked to elaborate more on these inputs and produce a first draft of the work plan and budget to be discussed within one week in a one day validation workshop to be held in Kigali.

b) The NIC meeting (3rd September 09) brainstormed on the reform of the institution and agreed to appoint soon an ad hoc committee to carry out reform process, specifically with regards to new membership, leadership positions, incentives and members’ contribution as well.

- ✓ The meeting discussed in depth how to achieve the new mandate of the institution as a policy dialogue platform at national level.
- ✓ Flexibility Fund management modalities were also discussed.
- ✓ It was decided that a validation workshop of the workplan will be organised on Thursday 10th September 2009.

c) Synthesis by Country Team

- ✓ Following the Rwamagana planning workshop, and the NIC meeting, the RIU-Rwanda Country Team held internal working sessions which aimed at refining the activities, milestones and tasks.
- ✓ A special attention was put on the relevance of all these intervention with regards to RIU outputs: i) *Promotion*: Enhancing the demand for and putting into use the outputs of RNRRS and other research for the benefit of poor, for example through creating agricultural enterprises; ii) *Learning*: Generating evidence about getting research into use and sharing lessons.
- ✓ Submission of the workplan and explanatory note to RIU-UK in September 2009.
- ✓ ***This new version of the explanatory note (January 2010) was produced in order to incorporate recommendations provided by the Central Research Team regarding conformity to RIU Research Design and more clarity about the ambition of RIU-Rwanda Country Programme.***

2. General Context

The RIU-Programme is operating in Rwanda in a favourable but challenging policy environment characterised by:

- A strong emphasis of the Rwanda Government on the transformation of the agriculture sector into a modern, professionally-managed and market-oriented economic undertaking and its contribution to food security and overall national development. The Crop Intensification Programme (CIP) was one of special programmes launched (with unprecedented internal government financial support and additional development partners' contribution) to increase production around priority value chain such as Maize, Wheat, Potato, Rice and Cassava.
- A continuous reform process that particularly targets innovations in institutional development both at national and decentralised level.
- A priority on private sector and its increased role in agriculture financing and rural entrepreneurship development.

As a research project, RIU-Rwanda Programme has designed its activities around innovation narratives as set out in the Research Design developed by the Central Research Team. We have primarily identified that the following Four(4) innovation narratives are most relevant to the Rwanda context due to the areas in which we are already involved: i) Capacity development led innovations; ii) Poor led innovations; iii) opportunity led innovations; iv) Communication led innovations. As the national and business environment will evolve, we will also identify under what conditions other innovations narratives can be explored.

Note that we present in Annex a separate document highlighting the integration of RIU-Rwanda Programme into the national agricultural development framework.

3. RIU-Rwanda Contribution to the Programme Research design

3.1. Prospects for Capacity development led Innovations

RIU-Programme focus in Rwanda is to develop innovation capacity mainly through support to the National Innovation Coalition (NIC) and Innovation Platforms.

3.1.1. National Innovation Coalition (NIC)

Context

The National Innovation Coalition was constituted as the custodian of the RIU Programme in Rwanda. Its composition reflects the main categories of actors involved in innovations in Agriculture in Rwanda (Government institutions, Private sector, Civil Society). Despite its commendable role in overseeing the implementation of the Programme, the NIC is constrained by poor participation of certain members and an overall lack of strategic approach/commitment in promoting/advocating for innovations at national level. However, NIC has a strong leadership and some members are determined to induce change in that institution for better performance.

The Research Questions:

What institutional and organisational changes are needed for NIC to be an effective policy dialogue platform at national level? How can NIC effectively support innovations at Platform level?

Work plan priorities.

- ✓ The most urgent deliverable is to complete NIC reform process as recommended by previous self-assessment sessions and highlighted by the RIU Review mission. It is expected that the reform process will be completed by 30th November 2009, with new members joining the Coalition and bringing in “fresh air” for innovative solutions to cope with current innovation challenges especially in platforms and policy advocacy/dialogue. A new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is scheduled to be signed because of the new roles of NIC members.
- ✓ In order to contribute to a better understanding of the re-positioning of RIU as an action research programme, the NIC will pilot the design of a “*Strategic Roadmap for enhancing demand for research outputs*”. This will be done

through working sessions with representatives of the RIU-CRT (Central Research Team) and the Research Fellows.

- ✓ NIC will above all, focus on evidence-based policy dialogue and policy relevant research topics will accordingly be identified and research conducted to produce appropriate documents (policy briefs) for policy dialogue. These briefs will also be based on lessons learned during the implementation of various tasks.
- ✓ In order to avoid the current meeting overload, NIC meetings will be organised quarterly in form of a 2-3 days workshop to review RIU implementation progress as well as NIC self assessment. At this level, lessons learned will be extracted to improve on performance. These workshops will also provide space for capacity development of NIC members where special sessions will be dedicated to pre-identified topics relevant to NIC work or development challenges/opportunities. Such sessions/trainings will be facilitated either by a NIC member or an external resource person hired to do the work.
- ✓ NIC support to platforms will be intensified, specifically with regard to championing some of their activities and playing an active and focused role in Platform performance assessment: RIU will support the NIC to organise inter-platform Learning events aimed at: i) Reviewing progress; ii) generating lessons; iii) Providing guidance on policy advocacy/dialogue and iv) advice on setting platform priorities. The expected outcome of such events is the way forwards for the activities will be agreed upon.

Statement of ambition: RIU Rwanda ambition is to contribute to the development of a NIC that is effectively promoting innovations in agriculture in Rwanda, more specifically after the end of RIU direct support.

3.1.2. Maize and Potato Innovation Platforms

Context

The development of the Maize and Potato value chain was identified as a key priority by the Government of Rwanda within the National Crop Intensification Programme. Maize has particularly been targeted in Nyagatare District, Eastern Province whereas round Potato was set as a local priority in Gicumbi District/ Northern Province. The Maize and Potato Innovation Platforms have the potential to contribute significantly to that national/local development agenda, but they are still constrained by institutional and organisational weaknesses as well as other many challenges that are currently limiting their capacity to deliver.

Research Questions.

- i) *What institutional and organisational changes are needed for RIU supported Innovation Platform to become key players in the Maize and Potato value chains? ii)*

What mechanisms are most suitable for enhancing demand for research outputs at platform level?

Workplan priorities

a) *Basic Capacity strengthening of the Maize and Potato Platforms*

- ✓ The reorganization process of the two platforms is the first step for strengthening their capacity. The objective of this reorganization is for the platform members to (re)define their objective(s), what they want to achieve together and how. It is expected that through this process, platform members will: i) critically assess bottlenecks across their value chains; ii) understand and agree on their respective roles in removing these bottlenecks; iii) identify new opportunities for innovations; iv) redefine membership including identifying and bringing onboard new members. This will be achieved through participatory systemic capacity strengthening workshops.
- ✓ Two MoUs will be signed to streamline the collaboration amongst the members of each platform and between RIU and the platforms.
- ✓ It is also planned to facilitate Platforms to prepare their three year Business Plan. Such plans would facilitate members to share their long term strategic objectives and this will facilitate joint implementation through quarterly and annual workplans. A consultant will facilitate the work, and will have the task to develop an approach that ensures total ownership of the document by the platform.

b) *Enhancing demand for research outputs in both platforms* Enhancing demand for research outputs will be at the heart of this workplan. This implies a set of complementary interventions that target to remove specific bottlenecks identified by the Platforms. We present here the most important steps that are required in the initial phase, as the process will continue in order to cope with these emerging new bottlenecks/challenges.

- ✓ With regards to access to scientific knowledge, the Programme will recruit a consultant to undertake a comprehensive review of RNRRS and other research outputs that are relevant to maize and potato in Rwanda (Nyagatare and Gicumbi Districts in particular). A participatory process for assessing the relevance of these research outputs will lead to the selection of a few of them to be processed into user friendly materials for wide dissemination.
- ✓ The second priority will be on testing/evaluating different approaches, methodologies, mechanisms that can contribute to the removal of identified bottlenecks and create space for enhanced demand for research outputs. The following research topics will therefore retain our attention in the next future:
- ✓ For the Maize Platform in particular, it was proposed to set up at least three “Maize innovation centers” in specific areas where there is the highest

concentration of maize farmers, in NYAGATARE District. It is proposed to use a group of farms around the maize drying yard/sheds constructed under RIU support as a nucleus of the Innovation Center. The intention is not to construct any new building, but to use farmers fields and other existing infrastructure to *test/show case/demonstrate* a series of relevant research outputs and contribute to 'take up' of innovations. "Maize Innovation Centers" will also serve as community interaction fora for learning and sharing lessons. A concept document will define how different stakeholders will coordinate their interventions in order to develop this into a powerful "institutional innovation"

Statement of ambition: The RIU-Rwanda Country Programme plans to support the transformation of the Maize and the Potato Innovation Platforms into key players in their respective value chains, through introducing/promoting/sharing innovations for increased productivity, competitiveness and profitability. This will enable us to draw lessons on platform development and to influence adoption of such experiments by the Ministry of Agriculture and other national stakeholders.

3.1.3. Phased out platforms

Context:

During the planning workshop in Rwamagana on 26th August 2009, representatives of cassava and Karongi platforms expressed an impression of a strong commitment to continue operations and plan to hold a workshop at the end of September 2009 to discuss how they should continue.

Research question: *Under what conditions phased out platforms will survive the termination of RIU direct support? What lessons can be derived for the sustainability of other platforms?*

Priority of the workplan: Drawing lessons on organisational behaviour from phased out platforms:

- ✓ RIU programme will facilitate Platform workshops in order to reach a common understanding on the future status of the platform following the withdrawal of the direct support.
- ✓ RIU will also support the availability of a framework on how the platform will behave during the 'transition period', objective of which is to draw lessons learned that could help other platforms' sustainability.

Statement of ambition

The Cassava Innovation Platform and the Karongi Rural Innovation Platforms will continue to operate after RIU direct involvement and new partners will be brought on board to support the two platforms.

3.2. Prospects for poor led innovations

Context :

The role of farmers as producers is central in value chain development. Our continuous interactions with maize, potato and cassava producers participating in RIU supported platforms highlighted a series of practices (not necessarily best practices), challenges and knowledge gaps that have a direct impact on agricultural output, resulting into low level of productivity and production. As part of the exploration of possible response to these issues, Platforms have stressed the importance to involve farmers themselves in the innovation process and making them part of the solution.

Research questions:

This thinking has lead to the following question(s): *Based on the Rwandese culture of solidarity and community involvement, how can “best performer” farmers be active change agents in their communities? How can them effectively contribute to knowledge sharing and enhance demand for research outputs? What organisational settings are required and under what conditions they can be successful?*

Workplan priorities

a. *Building innovation capacities at community level:* RIU Programme is supporting the Maize and Potato Platform to set up and develop a network of some 400 farmers who will provide alternative mentoring services to their community members related to maize and potato development. The type of RIU-Rwanda interventions/support is (will be) derived from the following practical questions: i) What is the appropriate process for identifying, and selecting these farmers; ii) How will be organised their interventions and what innovations will be (can be) promoted? iii) What are their training/capacity development needs and how to address them? iv) How will they collaborate with research and extension services and to what extend this will inform/influence the work of these institutions? v) What is the appropriate community based reward system?; vi) What performance assessment mechanisms?

Statement of ambition: We are starting with a network of 200 maize farmers in Nyagatare District/Eastern Province and 200 potato farmers in Gicumbi District/Northern Province for the current agricultural season. Given the high population density in Rwanda, we assume an individual target rate of 50 farmers, leading to a total of 20,000 farmers who will benefit from this intervention. Note that Famer Field School was identified as one of working modality that will enable these “mentors” to interact with their neighbours. We will continue to interact with the Platforms in order to identify/test other relevant intervention modalities.

b. *Strengthening informal seed systems (Potato and Cassava):*

The National Seed Policy recognise that the 'informal seed system' continue to play an important role in the agricultural system since the majority of farmers

save their own seed and/or exchange them with their neighbours. According to RIU Practice Notes, this is mostly because the coverage of commercial seed supply systems in Sub Saharan Africa is poor and the seed they supply is too expensive for poor farmers. From the farmers' perspective, seed obtained through the informal seed sector is readily available, affordable and comes from sources that they trust.

Regarding the value chains supported by RIU Programme in Rwanda, the importance of the informal seed sector is obviously crucial, especially for potato and cassava.

RIU-Rwanda intervention is designed for understanding/addressing the following questions: How can be improved the output of informal seed system for potato and cassava, both in terms of quality of the products and predictability of supply?

Another question of particular relevance for potato is: Given the high rural population density and the tendency for potato monoculture in certain areas of Gicumbi District, what methods/patterns of land use are the most suitable for controlling the rapid spread of bacterial and viral diseases?

→ *Piloting a sustainable community based production system of disease free cassava planting material in Gatsibo District.*

- The Cassava Platform has expressed the intention to achieve more impact from the previous RIU support for multiplication of planting material from new Cassava Mosaic resistant varieties. The initiative results from field observations indicating that there is no lasting availability of clean planting material with the previous multiplication schemes supported by some other projects.
- FFS was chosen because as group learning approach, it can build knowledge and capacity amongst farmers to enable them diagnose their problems, identify solutions and develop plans and implement them with or without support from outside. This will be the first application of FFS in Rwanda piloting strong community involvement for creating/maintaining sustainable cassava planting material.
- RIU will provide support in defining the concept/methodology and providing some resources (human and financial) for testing this initiative in collaboration with ISAR and the "Roots and Tubers" Programme.

Statement of ambition: The targeted areas are selected in four sectors of Gatsibo District (Murambi, Kiramuruzi and Kiziguro, Kabarore). An initial core group of 100 farmers is directly participating in the Programme. It is expected that the action will reach 5,000 farmers through farmer field learning events and/or access to new improved cassava varieties. It is also expected that the lessons learned will be shared with local stakeholders as well as the Ministry of Agriculture for wider use.

→ *Promoting a “Community based positive selection system” for Potato seeds in Gicumbi District*

The Potato value chain is currently in crisis following an acute shortage of quality seeds and inadequate crop husbandry. This is not a new phenomenon, since farmers have been struggling against it for the last decade. The challenge is for the Potato Platform to bring in some technical/organisational/commercial innovations in order to induce a significant change in the value chain.

Organising a comprehensive community based “positive selection” system was identified by the Potato Platform as one of the interventions to cope with this issue. The questions to be addressed are: i) What organisational capacities are needed at community level? ii) What suitable system for quality control at local community level?

Statement of ambition: The planning workshop organised with the Potato platform in January 2010 has indicated that at least 500 farmers will participate in that exercise. It expected that at least 2,500 tons of potato seeds will be produced at the end of season B 2010 (July 2010). This will enable additional 5,000 farmers to access seeds for the following season (A 2011). A review of the activity at the end of the season will form the basis for further interventions.

3.3. Prospects for Opportunity led innovation

Context

The development of the Maize and Potato value chain was identified as a key priority by the Government of Rwanda within the National Crop Intensification Programme. Maize has particularly been targeted in Nyagatare District, Eastern Province whereas round Potato was set as a local priority in Gicumbi District/Northern Province. These two Districts represent focus areas for RIU Programme in Rwanda.

We consider that innovation along value chains is a key feature for opportunity led innovations.

Research question: *What interventions do platforms require for turning identified value chain bottlenecks/challenges into business opportunities?*

Workplan priorities

- ✓ Inadequate trading/marketing systems were identified as one of key bottlenecks for maize development in Nyagatare District. This has a limiting impact on poverty reduction since traders and other intermediaries are exploiting maize producers. In order to address that problem, the Maize Innovation Platform has initiated the creation of the Nyagatare Maize Investment Group (NYAMIG) as a business arm that will deal with maize trading/marketing aspects in a win-win approach for all platform members. RIU

Programme will therefore provide capacity development support to NYAMIG in order to enable it to play this important role. The statement of ambition is that NYAMIG will have a business plan with innovative services to its members by March 2010 and will contribute to securing competitive prices to maize producers.

- ✓ In the context of the national Crop Intensification Programme, the Government is currently playing a preeminent role in importing bulk quantities of fertilisers and delivering them to traders via a subsidised auction scheme.
 - The small fertiliser's traders operating at local level are now playing a very little role in that business.
 - However, As the Ministry of Agriculture plans to gradually decrease subsidy for fertilisers and promote more involvement/ownership by the private sector, what will be the readiness of the small traders members of the Maize and Potato Platform for tapping into this opportunity? What role can play the Nyagatare Maize Investment Group (NYAMIG)?
 - Strengthening the capacity of NYAMIG and fertilisers dealers to achieve success in this venture will be one of the roles of RIU Programme.
 - But we shall also monitor how the operation is implemented and draw lessons to inform the Ministry of Agriculture on how to improve and/or extend such business partnerships in the future. The statement of ambition is that by June 2011, inputs supply will be owned by locally competitive companies.

- ✓ Platforms will be facilitated in initiating stakeholder coordination mechanisms (eg better planning for planting seasons...) and developing new partnerships with the private sector for adequate and timely supply of agro inputs to farmers.

- ✓ The Potato value chain is currently in crisis following an acute shortage of quality seeds and inadequate crop husbandry. This is not a new phenomenon, since farmers have been struggling against it for the last decade. The challenge is for the Potato Platform to bring in some technical/organisational/commercial innovations in order to induce a significant change in the value chain. Despite these challenges, the potato market presents many opportunities both in Rwanda and in the East African region.
 - In collaboration with the biotechnology unit in ISAR, RIU- Programme will provide support to the creation of specialised units for the production of potato seed mini-tubers in order to adequately respond to the high demand in quality basic seeds.
 - *A detailed feasibility study will evaluate expect impact from this particular intervention.*

- ✓ As lack of access to financing was identified as another key challenge for both platforms, the RIU-Programme will pilot with financial institutions pro-poor services tailored to specific needs of farmers and other platform members.

- ✓ Hillside irrigation is not developed in Rwanda despite availability of water resources.
 - As part of the “Soft landing support to Karongi Platform” a hillside irrigation micro project was assessed as innovative due to the following features: i) market opportunity for a youth “Innovation Cell” that initiated production of handmade irrigation pumps at an affordable price; ii) commitment from farmers to contribute in the maintenance of the hillside irrigation infrastructures, iv) demand for new knowledge on vegetable production under irrigation during the dry season; v) competitive advantage of supplying Kigali city market with vegetables when competitors are not in production phase; v) open opportunity to access export market for red pepper through a partnership with a Rwandese business company that is already in negotiation with the platform.
 - For RIU-Rwanda, it is important to complete this initiative at least for one season, since it is expected to be used for demonstration and learning purposes. The local community will be strengthened for mobilising more resources from other sources and ensure scaling out and scaling up of their experience.

2.4. Research communication led innovation

Context:

Communication plays a key role in dissemination of and access to knowledge. This has also a particular importance for enhancing demand for research outputs as well as in fostering policy dialogue.

There is also huge difference in communication needs for RIU-Rwanda beneficiaries and partners as they are ranging from public institutions involved in policy making to smallholder farmers and their organisations.

Research Question

What are the circumstances under which information limits decision making? and What are the most appreciate communication tools to fill this gap? What patterns of networking between researchers, decision makers and others complement communication?

Workplan priorities.

- With regards to communications, an overall strategy will be developed and implemented with a special focus on: i) Taking into consideration local and national target groups; ii) using a wide range of media and communication tools; iii) linking communications to knowledge sharing and policy dialogue.

- Strong improvement is to be achieved in documentation. During the implementation of different activities in the platforms, various lessons will be generated, documented and widely shared. These will be professional audio-visual as well as paper documentation. A framework for learning, communication will be established with the support of RIU.
- Though Maize and Potato innovation Platforms do not necessarily need sophisticated Communications and policy advocacy strategies, they will be facilitated to design a simple community tailored communications framework defining how, why, with who and when to communicate. This framework will be innovative as they did not have it before and this bottleneck has to be removed. The use of local community radio/ local News papers/Newsletters; participation in local events as well as using community based mechanisms for communication will trigger increased demand/sharing/dissemination of information/knowledge on agriculture.
- An annual “Maize Innovation Day” will be organised in Nyagatare District: this special event is intended to provide an opportunity for all stakeholders in the value chain to present/show/share information on their innovative achievements. Competitions will be organized and prizes given to the best innovators as well. Wide media coverage will ensure adequate dissemination/broadcasting of information. A concept note will be prepared to define the objective, process and expected outcomes of the Maize Innovation Day.
- Two Self assessment sessions will be organised per year by each Platform with the participation of NIC members and RIU Country team as well. The first day will be dedicated to an on-farm assessment and the second day conducted as discussion/brainstorming sessions where activities will be fine-tuned and lessons generated/learned discussed and agreed on.
- A special emphasis will be put on more involvement of platforms in policy dialogue activities at district/sector level. This is in line with the new decentralisation context where local government entities (District and Sectors) have been empowered and are responsible for all local development issues. Regular consultations between Platform representatives and local authorities as well as active participation in *Joint Action Forum* meeting will be encouraged/ facilitated.