

Training to Innovate: Knowledge and Skills for Better Self-organization

Crop Livestock Integration and Marketing in Malawi (CLIM²)

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Rationale

The CLIM² project uses Innovation Platforms (IPs) to enable stakeholders within a specific area or value chain to identify and address problems.

- When empowered with information and awareness, stakeholders can find efficient ways to address problems rather than struggling to deal with technical/institutional problems individually.
- By incorporating feedback loops into the systems to bring about positive reinforcements, IPs work towards long-term sustainability.

When and who

In April 2017, the CLIM² project conducted a 2-day IP training in Zombe for 17 participants (SLLP staff, District Agriculture Development and Agriculture Extension Development Officers) from the selected EPAs, preparing them to facilitate CLIM² activities in project districts Balaka, Chiradzulu and Thyolo.

Activities

Trainees were introduced to the theory and practice behind use of IPs in agriculture and rural development.

Process

The training was designed to prepare teams for setting up IPs in the districts.

It anchors the IPs and innovation process, testing and evaluation of interventions and new approaches.

There will be a gradual shift from strong facilitation by the project to more active and confident engagement by the local field staff.

This will capacitate the IPs to set direction, inform entry-points for SMEs, and support high-potential value chains.



Approach

Introduction to the IP theory:

- Agriculture as complex systems; multiple knowledge systems; synergies and feedback loops
- Importance of multiple value chains and their contributions to sustainability and resilience

Tools for implementing innovation platforms:

- Problem identification, visioning, value chain mapping and gross margin analysis
- IP's organizational structure, facilitation and management, maintaining buy-ins
- IPs as mechanism for knowledge sharing, planning and learning, monitoring and evaluation

Participants' feedback

- Most participants agreed that the idea was a delicate one and would require more effort and commitment from various actors involved in the process.



Key messages

Facilitators of rural and agriculture development need new capacities and innovative ways to better address the multiple challenges that farmers face.

The IP approach can be powerful for solving problems in agriculture; developing cohesiveness among farmers and with the larger network; and improving coordination and communication among actors.



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