



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



CDAIS Policy Dialogue: Concept Note

Background

Innovation in tropical rural areas is key to driving sustainable growth and poverty reduction through climate smart and socially inclusive agricultural systems.

It is also important in fulfilling the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG); especially SDG 1, and 2 – ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and the promotion of sustainable agriculture.

CDAIS – Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems – supports the development of policies and approaches at the global level, and tests these with national and local innovation partnerships. CDAIS is a partnership developed and implemented by Agrinatura and FAO, and is supported by the European Union.

In each of the 8 CDAIS pilot countries, 3 to 5 priority “innovation niches” (innovation partnerships) have been identified by national multi-stakeholder working groups/steering committees as cases to demonstrate capacity strengthening for innovation. A “capacity needs assessment (CNA)” has been undertaken for each niche/partnership, from which individual, organizational and policy constraints to innovation around a particular development issue have emerged and from which a challenge or opportunity has arisen. The issues arisen from the “capacity needs assessment” in the selected innovation niches/partnerships provide specific cases. These can be used to illustrate and analyse the more general features of the “enabling environment” for innovation in each pilot country – such as the degree to which relevant stakeholders have the capacity to engage in strategic and political processes that are integral to technical and organizational issues to promote innovation.

While the CDAIS project will address individual and organizational capacity needs through specific coaching activities, it must also contribute to influence and enhance the institutional framework (or enabling environment) if capacity to innovate sustainably is to be enhanced in a national Agricultural Innovation System. This note illustrates concepts, objectives and proposed process for the Policy Dialogue, which is one of the activities of CDAIS project aimed at addressing the policy constraints to agricultural innovation.

Concept and objectives

A Policy Dialogue is a reflective process that involves people from different interest groups who discuss an issue in which they have a mutual – but not necessarily common – interest. It assumes that people in different positions will have different perspectives, and maybe divergent interests, on the same problem.

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Important to note: policy dialogue is considered as a process that can culminate with, but is not limited to, round tables or a similar public meetings.

The purposes of the Policy Dialogue in each country is to contribute to:

- i. improvement of the process of development or implementation of changes of policies that promote agricultural innovation;
- ii. improvement of dialogue and interaction among key stakeholders to enhance clarity and coherence of national policies and the policy development process itself, as related to agricultural innovation; and, ultimately,
- iii. enhancement of the enabling environment for agricultural innovation.

The specific objectives of the CDAIS Policy Dialogue are therefore:

1. To *reach a common understanding* of the relevance of innovation and role of policy development and institutional issues in promoting agricultural innovation;
2. To *strengthen the capacity* of stakeholders involved in the innovation niche/partnership to influence strategic and political processes relevant to their objectives;
3. To *recommend improvements* in the institutional mechanisms and enabling environment (e.g. functioning of multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism; incentives/ disincentives for collaboration) that determine policies that promote agricultural innovation in each country, and thus create a vision of how to improve the enabling environment for agricultural innovation in general.

Proposed Process

The Policy Dialogue is an integral part of, and will be informed by, the CDAIS project activities. These include the CNA at niche/partnership and organizational level, the Marketplace (designed to match capacity needs of niches/partnerships with potential suppliers and funders of capacity development services), the training of National Innovation Facilitators (NIFs, who are assigned to each niche), and activities to strengthen multi-stakeholder platforms and processes at national level.

To support this overall process, FAO will provide 46 days of consultancy input, by a directly recruited **Policy Expert** in each country, spread over 2 phases, or a contracted **University or Research Center** with policy analysis and development competencies (service provider). The Policy Expert or University/Research Center will work closely with the Country Project Manager and National Project Coordinator, as well as with National Innovation Facilitators, FAO, and Agrinatura.

The activities of the policy expert or of the policy research centre will culminate in (at least) one public event, at the end of the first phase, while in the second phase an action plan will be developed to maintain the dialogue between key stakeholders and policy actors on the policy measures.

Preparatory Phase - Adaptation to Country Needs and Context

The National CDAIS Team (Country Project Manager, National Project Coordinator, Agrinatura Focal Point, FAO Country Focal Point) will be responsible for developing and submitting to the National Project Steering Committee a revised “**National CDAIS Concept Note for Policy Dialogue**”. This will include a detailed TOR for the proposed policy development expert/university or research center and timetable of proposed activities, based on this global concept note and adjusted to the national context.

Under the leadership of the National Project Coordinator supported by the Country Project Manager, the national team, project working group (task force) and NIFs will assist in organizing visits to the niches/partnerships, the priority policy themes, the relevant stakeholders at niche/partnership and national level to be involved. In principle, participants of the Policy Dialogue process will be policy-makers, selected from Ministers and senior public servants engaged in agricultural innovation policy and support, as well as Rectors and Vice-Chancellors of Universities, Directors of Agricultural Research Institutions and of Rural Advisory Services, and private sector actors. Policy makers should come from sectorial ministries and/or inter-ministerial offices. All participants should be contacted by the National Project Coordinator/Country Project Manager before the Policy Dialogue, to brief them on objectives and expected outputs of the dialogue process and meetings.

Phase 1

The first phase (44 days input of consultant/service provider) will start after completion of the CNA and will focus on policies related to each niche/partnership that cannot be addressed at niche level. For those that can be solved at niche level, a consultation with district level officials and niche representatives is proposed (local consultation). It will also review experiences of the niche/partnership stakeholders in influencing policy, analyse the institutional constraints faced by stakeholders in addressing policy issues, and propose actions to be taken to alleviate these constraints. Key activities will include:

Local/niche level:

1. Identification of key policies affecting the achievement of innovation objectives by the stakeholders in each niche and challenges in their implementation if relevant at two levels (can be addressed a. locally, b. only nationally).

This will build on results of the CNA and coaching plans developed and additional interaction with the key stakeholders of each niche, supported by relevant NIFs Interactions can include face to face discussions, interviews, electronic correspondence, meetings of interest groups, etc., and should result in the selection of one key policy per niche/partnership (not more than 2-3 policy issues per niche) for further review/analysis, identification of feasible and desirable policy objectives, identification of evidence needed to support the policy advocacy required, development of an draft engagement strategy to influence policy development¹.

The priority policy issue (s) selected and the engagement strategy should be discussed at a local consultation meeting with niche representatives and district level officials ideally at the end of the niche visit by the consultant, with the understanding that the engagement strategy will be validated after the review work of relevant policies at national level (expected 4 days per niche/partnership, including visiting niche and documentation: 20 days in total depending on number of niches);

National level:

2. Identification of relevant national organizations engaged in policy research related to the issues identified at niche/partnership level and compile short summary of their mandate and relevant policy studies (3 days);

¹ E.g. using the “Rapid Outcome Mapping Approach” as described by Young et al, 2014; available at: <http://www.roma.odi.org>. This interaction with the niche stakeholders should be integrated with the capacity development activities in each country organised by Agrinatura.

3. Review of (any) available policy documents and studies relating to the policy issues identified at niche level, to clarify current policies relevant to the issues identified in the niches/partnerships and compile a summary document on policies and their status of implementation (5 days, or 1 day per niche/theme);
4. Review, analysis and documentation of the (potential) role, constituency, main activities, achievements, and constraints of existing organizations and multi-stakeholder coordination/communication mechanisms (e.g. innovation platforms; value chain committees; sector networks) with the mandate or potential to develop and/or influence policies related to agricultural innovation (based on niche/partnership experience; 8 days);
5. Based on findings at national level, revision of draft engagement strategy for niches to influence policy development² based on feedback from niches, CDAIS country team and CDAIS working group/task force consulted and compiled by the Country Project Manager (2 days);
6. Based on the findings of activities 1-5 contribute to policy event (6 days, including preparation and documentation) that includes:
 - preparation of one short note per niche with key policy constraints and synthesize information for the policy brief covering key policy constraints of all niches/partnerships and recommendations on how to improve the institutional mechanisms and enabling environment to promote agricultural innovation for consideration of stakeholders (differentiate key constraints per niche);
 - presentation to the project working group/taskforce and finalization of the findings
 - follow-up with National Project Coordinator/FAO Office that policy briefs are send out to policy event participants at least 2 weeks before (Action: Country Project Manager)
 - presentation of the findings in a 1-day, “Policy Dialogue meeting”, involving the members of the national project working group (also called task force, in some countries) and key policy actors such as senior officials within the relevant Ministry/ies;
 - discussion on how possible policy measures, including the strengthening of existing multi-stakeholder coordination/communication mechanism, where they exist, or, in alternative, the establishment of new multi-stakeholder coordination/communication mechanism (e.g. Innovation Platform(s), value chain groups etc) would help overcome the identified problems; and
 - documentation of event.

The **deliverables** of this activity will be:

1. a consensus document (policy brief) on specific political measures proposed to overcome the barriers to innovation in all the niches/partnerships in the country. The policy brief will specify who is responsible for each proposed measure. The policy brief will include a series of recommendations on how to improve the institutional mechanisms and enabling environment to promote agricultural innovation, and thus create a vision of how to improve the enabling environment for agricultural innovation in general.

² E.g. using the “Rapid Outcome Mapping Approach” as described by Young et al, 2014; available at: <http://www.roma.odi.org>. This interaction with the niche stakeholders should be integrated with the capacity development activities in each country organised by Agrinatura.

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2. Task force meeting for feedback on policy briefs and report.
3. A policy dialogue meeting during which the brief is presented and policy measures discussed and report.

The **outcomes** of this phase will be:

- (i) increased awareness among policy makers of the relevance of innovation for sustainable development and of the role of policy development and institutional issues in agricultural innovation;
- (ii) stakeholders improve their capacity to innovate by engaging in strategic and policy processes for agricultural innovation.

Phase 2- Follow up (2 days input of consultant/service provider)

In this phase the consultant/service provider will develop an action plan with steps to take after the 1 day Policy Dialogue meeting. The action plan will detail the key meetings, people to consult, by whom and events to attend in the coming months by the country project team in order to keep the momentum and maintain the dialogue on the policy measures and recommendations emerged from the policy brief.

The deliverable of this activity would be an Action Plan with actions and responsible organizations/people.

The National Project Coordinator supported by the Country Project Manager will follow up with the project working group/task force and project steering committee the implementation of the action plan.

The outcome of this phase would be that dialogue between key stakeholders and policy actors is maintained in order to achieve their desired objectives in terms of creating an enabling environment for agricultural innovation.

Logistical Considerations

As per Protocol, invitation letters to the Policy Dialogue event, prepared by the National CDAIS Team, will be sent by the CDAIS host organization, typically the Ministry of Agriculture to the relevant stakeholders. The letter should include self-explanatory information related to the CDAIS project in general and the Policy Dialogue in particular, in order to enable the invitees to understand what they can expect from the event. If needed, invitees could be contacted directly to provide them with more detailed information.

FAO country offices will be entrusted with organizing logistics of the Policy Roundtable, including the arrangement of travel and lodging of participants when necessary. The main logistical tasks under FAO's responsibility are the following:

- Selection of one or more **facilitators**³, who can plan and facilitate appropriate group processes during the policy dialogue to ensure that its objectives are met effectively, with clear thinking, good participation and buy in from all participants.
- Arrange for **secretarial support** before and during the event to address logistical aspects.

³ Facilitators for the Policy Roundtable event could be identified from the group of national innovation facilitators (NIFs).

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- Identify and rent a **proper venue** at an early stage. The **date** could be in connection with another national CDAIS event.
- Prepare the **meeting facilities** (interpreters if needed, furniture, equipment, materials such as flipcharts, poster boards, food and refreshments, etc.);
- Prepare **welcome folder** (agenda, CDAIS flyer, CDAIS factsheets, Executive Summaries of niche/partnership activities and results, all with CDAIS logo);
- Prepare a **press release** and arrange for documentation of the event (incl. **photos**);
- Arrange for **taking notes** during the sessions. In addition, at the end of the event, the feedback of the participants can be recorded through questionnaires.

Sources of useful information

- The Common Framework on Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems
 - Conceptual: background: <http://www.cabi.org/Uploads/CABI/about-us/4.8.5-other-business-policies-and-strategies/tap-conceptual-background.pdf>
 - Guidance note: <http://www.cabi.org/Uploads/CABI/about-us/4.8.5-other-business-policies-and-strategies/tap-guidance-note.pdf>
 - Synthesis document: <http://www.cabi.org/Uploads/CABI/about-us/4.8.5-other-business-policies-and-strategies/tap-synthesis-document.pdf>
- CDAIS – Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems. <http://cdais.net/home/>
- The Tropical Agriculture Platform. <http://www.fao.org/in-action/tropical-agriculture-platform/en/>
- ODI: Research & Policy in Development. Available at: <https://www.odi.org/programmes/rapid>
- ROMA: a guide to policy engagement and policy influence. Available at: <http://www.roma.odi.org>
- 10 things to know about how to influence policy with research. Briefing paper. January 2017 Helen Tilley, Louise Shaxson, Joanna Rea, Louise Ball, John Young. Available at: <https://www.odi.org/publications/10671-10-things-know-about-how-influence-policy-research>