

## Overview **Stage 2: Visioning**



### IMPLEMENTING THE COMMON FRAMEWORK ON CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT (CD) FOR AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION SYSTEMS (AIS)

This factsheet is part of a series outlining tools and approaches to promote capacity development projects for agricultural innovation systems (AIS). The tools described in these pages are designed with a view to the practical implementation of the principles of the Common Framework of the Tropical Agriculture Platform (TAP), a G20 initiative. They have been applied in the Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems (CDAIS) project, funded by the EU and jointly implemented by Agrinatura and FAO in collaboration with national partners in Angola, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Laos and Rwanda.

## Background

Visioning is process whereby a shared vision (a single scenario) of a desired future is described, and the waypoints to its realization are marked out. It is at this stage that groups of actors declare what they want to accomplish in the medium term (5 years) or long term (10-20 years). Visioning is based both on individual and on collective aspirations, hopes and expectations.

The visioning process summons together all the different actors of an agricultural innovation system (AIS) and invites them to build on the collective understanding of the AIS that they reached at the galvanizing commitment phase. Visioning also sets the stage for the coordination of the capacity development efforts of the project participants. Sometimes the visioning exercise originates during the inception workshop, and it may extend over several events/meetings in the ensuing weeks.

### Visioning:

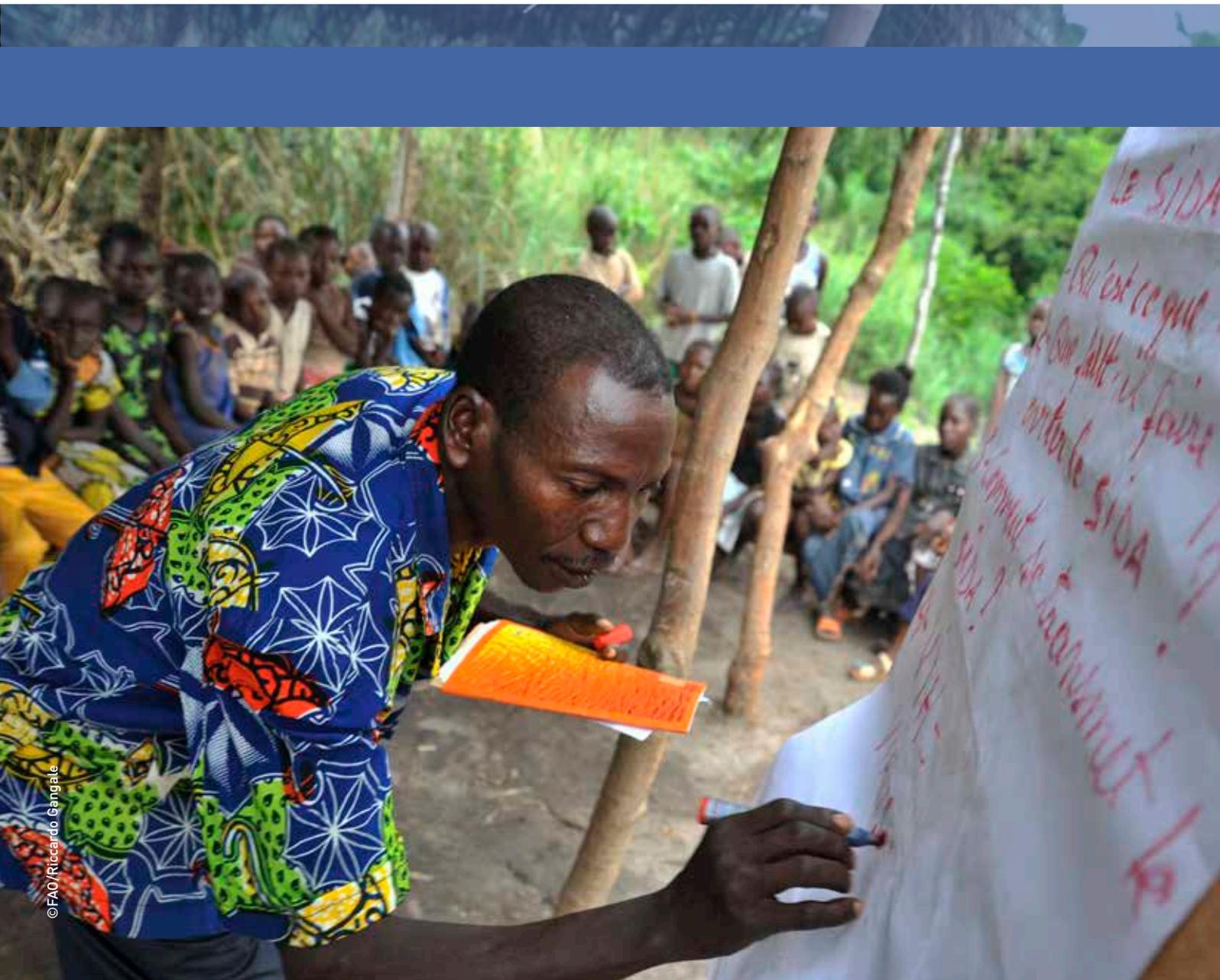
- Forges consensus among AIS actors about their vision of the future, and about the goals and values to which they aspire;
- Secures high-level commitment from a wide range of AIS actors;
- Identifies and selects innovation partnerships that can function as systems of learning and innovation;
- Specifies which organizations and institutions are necessary catalysts for reinforcing the AIS process, and which are particularly weak;
- Expands on existing or else builds new multi-stakeholder and innovation platforms or other multi-stakeholder processes that encourage interaction among AIS actors;
- Nominates a process leadership team to coordinate activities;
- Selects AIS “champions” who are enthusiastic and will make sure that key activities and steps are carried out.



## Who to involve

Participants in the visioning process/ workshop should be drawn from a broad spectrum of interested parties, such as ministries, legislative bodies, private sector entities (i.e. the suppliers, processors and retailers of inputs), commodity-based associations, cooperatives, farming associations, financial institutions, business developers, extension services, development partners and civil society.

Individuals participating as representatives of institutions should be mandated to take decisions on their behalf.





## Approach

This factsheet offers a practical guide to the visioning process. It indicates the key activities/outputs and suggests a number of tools for attaining them. The central players are the participants, as it is they who assess the current status of AIS and indicate the direction they want the initiative to take. The visioning exercise depends on the input of a team of experienced facilitators, who must be well respected by the actors involved. Prominent experts who are familiar with CD for AIS processes and are able to add value might be invited to take part.

The tools of analysis and methodologies used in the visioning exercise are described in the next pages (Rich Picture, World Café, SWOT Analysis).

As the Common Framework “Guidance Note on Operationalization” indicates, the visioning exercise is designed to produce the following outputs:

### Output 1. Setting the boundaries of the system

The first task of the visioning exercise is to describe the system and its salient features. The system may hinge on specific commodity or on several commodities; it may consist of an entire agricultural sector (such as livestock or horticulture); it may consist of a value chain; it may refer to a given geographic area; or, finally, it may be made up of key organizations in need of reinforcement, such as research institutes, farming organizations, ministerial departments or agriculture advisory services.

### Output 2. Identification of the innovation partnership(s)

The interactions between the diverse participants form the basis for innovation partnerships, in which small groups or networks of AIS actors become part of a single learning process. Certain parties may take on the role of “change agents” or “champions” who secure commitments from other participants and resources from within their own organizations. Where innovation partnerships or multi-stakeholder platforms are already in place, this phase may be dedicated to expanding them. The innovation partnerships should conform to clearly articulated criteria upon which the workshop participants have jointly agreed.

The two main **criteria** for creating innovation partnerships for capacity development work are:

- The process must be proactive, in the sense that participating individuals and organizations should be encouraged to develop “story lines” reflecting the roles of individuals, organizational and enabling conditions in the innovation performance;
- The conditions of production, the market and the policy framework all need to be fully intelligible to all participants so that information acquired through the innovation partnerships can be fed back into the learning loop;
- The usefulness of an innovation partnership should not be judged solely with reference to its partnership impact, but also with reference to the contribution it makes to learning in general and to the CD initiative as a whole.



### Output 3. Choosing the organizations and institutions for the capacity needs assessment

Working together, the participants in the visioning exercise determine which organizations and institutions are best suited to be linked to the proposed partnership or stakeholder platform. The organizations in question may contribute to the innovation partnerships by training, mentoring and coaching facilitators, or they may help design the leadership programme. Whether the partnership involves representatives from key organizations or is part of a university-led programme, the important thing is that they are committed to and enthusiastic about the CD for AIS initiative.



### Output 4. Initial assessment of capacities

All the participants in the visioning exercise must undergo a preliminary assessment of their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the five functional capacities. The point of this preliminary assessment is to ascertain how the organizations or institutions identified in the previous step can be integrated into the innovation partnerships. A SWOT analysis or a capacity-focused problem tree can be used for the purpose.



### Output 5. Identification of leadership team and champions

The visioning process should choose a team leader to guide the process on to the next step, as well as enthusiastic and committed champions of AIS who can cultivate participation and make sure that agreed-upon actions are carried out.

### Output 6. Defining the scope of the assessment and team

During the visioning exercise, the scope of the capacity needs assessment should be spelled out, and the process leadership team should select the persons who can carry out the assessment (CD assessment team). The assessment team should be highly representative and its skills should cover a variety of disciplines.

The scope, objectives and requirements of the team should be set out in a terms of reference (ToR) document.



### Output 7. Designing a learning architecture

The participants must mark out the forms of (horizontal) interaction and the hierarchical relationship between the innovation partnership and system-level participants, as well as the (vertical) interaction and hierarchical relationship between the innovation partnerships and the system as a whole.

Arrangements should be made for events and occasions for knowledge-sharing and learning, which may be held in virtual spaces and may involve members of different innovation partnerships acting as facilitators for others.

## USEFUL TOOLS



### Rich Picture

The participants draw a “rich picture” to illustrate both the present circumstances and the future shape of the AIS. The usefulness of this technique is that people need a clear-cut and well-articulated understanding of the issue/situation before they can characterize it in the form of an image. The technique demands creativity, and can be more direct than words.

#### Objectives:

- To develop an unstructured description of the realities of the current situation;
- To recap what has been discussed and to help participants join the dots between the various things they have learned.



### World Café

The World Café is a whole-group interactive exercise in which conversations focus on questions of importance. A café conversation is a brainstorming process that weaves together the ideas and opinions of a network of people who talk to one another, share knowledge and envision possible actions.

Four to eight people sit around a table and discuss one or more questions. At the end of each round of discussion, one person remains at the table as host while the others move on to other tables. As people move around and engage in several rounds of discussion, ideas, questions and themes begin to emerge and crystallize.

#### Objectives:

- To share stories about and experiences of a given issue;
- To gather different views and opinions;
- To enlist participants in more engaging and interactive discussions than offered by a traditional questions & answers session.



### SWOT Analysis

A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis is a useful decision-making tool deployed by organizations or partnerships.

The strengths and weaknesses are the intrinsic and internal attributes of the organizations and actors in the system, and may refer to capacities or motivation. The opportunities and threats, by contrast, derive from external factors, such as the objective circumstances, the situation of the stakeholders and the rules governing the project.

#### Objectives:

- To discover and leverage internal strengths to pursue external opportunities while mitigating weaknesses and threats;
- To raise issues for discussion and develop strategies.

## For further information

**Tropical Agriculture Platform (TAP):** <http://www.fao.org/in-action/tropical-agriculture-platform/en>

**Email:** [Tropagplatform@fao.org](mailto:Tropagplatform@fao.org)

**TAPipedia:** <http://tapipedia.org> • **Email:** [info@tapipedia.org](mailto:info@tapipedia.org)

**Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems Project (CDAIS):** <http://cdais.net> • **Email:** [info@cdais.net](mailto:info@cdais.net)



© FAO/Riccardo Gangale

### Common Framework products:



*Conceptual  
Background*



*Guidance Note on  
Operationalization*



*Synthesis  
Document*

*The implementation of the TAP Action Plan is supported by the EU-funded project  
Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems (CDAIS).*

*The Common Framework documents are also available in French and Spanish  
on the Common Framework pages of TAPipedia.*



**Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations**



This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union.

The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union.