

Technical Report

Africa RISING

Sustainable Intensification of Key Farming Systems in Eastern and Southern Africa

01 January to 31 March 2012

Submitted to

United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Contact person

Dr Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon
Project Coordinator
i.zeledon@cgiar.org

Introduction

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is supporting multi-stakeholder agricultural research projects to sustainably intensify key African farming systems as part of the U.S. government's 'Feed the Future' initiative to address global hunger and food security issues in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). It is also a way of bringing regional focus to the CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs) on Integrated Systems, especially CRPs 1.1 and 1.2.

The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) is the lead institute for developing and implementing the Eastern and Southern Africa project. This project primarily focuses on maize- and rice-based production systems in Tanzania but is intended to result in spill-over effects to other similar agroecological zones in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Feed the Future Tanzania focuses on reducing poverty and enhancing nutrition through key investments to improve availability and access to staple foods by enhancing the competitiveness of smallholders in rice, maize, and horticulture value chains; raising productivity through irrigation and rural roads; improving household nutrition; policy reforms; and developing national capacity for policy, planning and coordination, research and development and monitoring and evaluation (U.S. Government, 2010).

These investments are being geographically focused in areas with high agricultural potential bordering chronically food insecure districts: Morogoro (rice); Manyara and Dodoma (maize); and Arusha, Kilimanjaro, Tanga, Zanzibar, Dar es Salaam, Morogoro, Iringa and Mbeya (horticulture). Nutrition interventions are being focused in areas with high chronic malnutrition such as Dodoma region.

The FtF target areas are characterized by moderate to high levels of food insecurity and poverty but with high potential for growth due to proximity to transport corridors for market access and impact on nearby food insecure areas, lack of investment by other donors, good water resources and climatic conditions, opportunity for high impact on "productive" poor, prioritized by Government of Tanzania and private investors, and ability to achieve scalable high growth impact.

This project is expected to complement FtF investments in Tanzania with research on best-bet management practices for sustainable intensification and diversification of maize- and rice based farming systems. It should also expand existing activities such as the project on Sustainable Intensification of Maize-Legume Cropping Systems for Food Security in Eastern and Southern Africa (SIMLESA), initiatives in maize and legume systems in Eastern Zambia (SIMLEZA) supported by USAID-Zambia, and others.

The Project is part of a larger Program that will be implemented in three larger geographical regions of Africa: Eastern and Southern Africa, Ethiopian Highlands, and the Sudano-Sahelian Zone of West Africa. The Program was given the title ***Africa RISING - Africa Research in Sustainable Intensification for the Next Generation***.

The Project started in October 2011 when funds for year 1 were transferred to IITA.

Summary of progress during January to March 2012

1. Organization of project design/inception workshop

The Project Coordination Unit, in close collaboration with USAID, organized a project design/inception workshop from 6-9 February in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. It was attended by representatives from donor agencies, regional agricultural research and development organization, the USAID missions from Tanzania, Zambia, and South Africa, relevant ministries, research and extension organizations, NGOs, private sector, US and Tanzanian universities, CGIAR centers and other advanced national and international research institutions. The Honorable Minister of Agriculture and Food Security officially opened the workshop and thanked USAID for choosing Tanzania as the focal country for the project. He assured that his ministry will provide any support needed. In addition to officially launching the project, the purpose of this workshop was to seek the interest and support of other donor agencies and the USAID missions. Other objectives were to align the project with other

existing initiatives by the national authorities and international and regional organizations for greater impact.

A major decision at the workshop was to combine the three regional projects (West Africa, Ethiopian Highlands and Eastern/Southern Africa) under one Program. The Program was given the title *Africa RISING – Africa Research in Sustainable Intensification for the Next Generation*. It was decided to establish a small Program Coordination Team that advises USAID. Program coordination and facilitation will be headed by ILRI's communication team and each project will provide a budget for these activities. By end of the reporting period the requested communication strategy was not yet drafted and discussed across the three regions.

Following the decision on having a strong Program approach, it was needed to also decide that the so far separately developed projects on maize-based and rice-based systems will have to be merged and handled as one single project. The project will operate in three districts in Tanzania (Morogoro, Dodoma, Manyara), in Eastern Province of Zambia and in a few districts in Malawi, including Ntcheu. IFPRI will assist in determining the final locations.

Program targets, purpose, objectives, and outcomes were discussed but not finalized. This was planned for 29 February but no progress has been made. There is also need to reach agreement on these issues at the project level.

The meeting also elaborated on the project management structure and proposed a steering committee and stakeholder committee. Both committees are not yet in place.

It was re-emphasized that an overall rigorous research design was needed. In order to not delay implementation of the project, the group concluded that a call for small jumpstart project should be launched which should bring early wins by end of year 1 (September 2012). One reason was to buy more time to prepare the research design for all three regions of the program for the years 2-5. Secondly, the jumpstart projects are meant to contribute to lay the foundation for the sustainable intensification activities in the following years. Because of the fact that planting season had started already in some of the target locations, the projects can be independent from the planting season, e.g. desk studies, preparation of information materials, etc.

2. Jumpstart projects

A semi-open call was launched on 22 February for proposals on early wins. Only CGIAR centers and AVRDC were eligible to submit but collaboration with at least three partners was requested. Budget limit was US\$100,000-200,000 to allow approval of 8-10 projects, but also to avoid many small grants.

A total of 28 proposals were received by 12 March of which four did not fulfill the basic criteria for eligibility. In a few cases, the proposal evaluation team (USAID Washington with inputs from USAID missions, and the Project Coordinator) had to ask some submitting centers and their partners to merge their proposal because they were similar or complementary. In these cases, the budget was increased. Other centers had to revise their budgets. In early April, final approval will be made, sub-contracts signed and funds transferred so that implementation can be initiated.

3. Other collaboration

A sub-contract has been signed between IITA and Michigan State University (Prof. S. Snapp) and funds were released for the first 6 months of a longer-term research project *Take AIM: Agro-ecological Intensification in Malawi and Tanzania through Action Research with Women and Men Farmers*. The project will assess the range of SI options that fit the needs of the target farmers in variable rainfall regions. The long-term aim is to enhance farmer knowledge and support SI pathways for productivity gains in maize-legume systems through linkages to markets and nutrition education, and identifying resource use efficient conservation practices.

4. Project staff recruitment and office establishment

A consultancy for a systems agronomist was advertised and a suitable candidate recruited. He will start his assignment in mid April. He will in first place lead the revision of the concept note, monitor the progress of the jumpstart projects, assist in their implementation as needed, establish contacts with relevant Tanzanian partners, and liaise with the project partners on behalf of the Coordinator.

An agreement with AVRDC has been negotiated for the lease of partly furnished offices to Africa RISING at the AVRDC premises in Tengeru, Arusha, Tanzania. From 15 April onwards, three rooms will be available to the project and the establishment of the project office will progress. Office equipment (computers, printers, etc.) and a vehicle for project management activities have been ordered. Additional equipment and vehicles for field work have been also ordered for use by IITA staff in future.

Lessons

There has been and still is great enthusiasm by all partners to collaborate within this project. The development of the jumpstart project created new partnerships where otherwise individual organizations would prefer to work independently. However, for the Project Coordinator, the management of such a number of sub-contracts is an additional challenge. Also the sub-grantees need to further establish agreement with their partners at the jumpstart project level and monitor those. This represents a relatively high administrative burden for such small and short projects.

Due to the fact that USAID funds are flowing only on an annual basis, staff recruitment, office lease contracts, etc. can be made only until the end of each financial year. This adds to the administration work and costs and has impact on the ability to recruit the required level of staff.