



Africa RISING program framework: Core elements

The Africa RISING program framework outlines the underlying principles of and implementation plan for the research undertaken by the three Africa RISING projects in West Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa and the Ethiopian highlands. It identifies approaches that will deliver against its purpose of providing pathways out of hunger and poverty through sustainable intensification (SI).

Key features of the program are:

- The research is designed to test five hypotheses linked to outputs and associated developmental outcomes.
- Research activities will be problem-focused and driven by changes in market demand, evolving policy environments (e.g. food security and environmental mitigation) and changing social structures (resulting from migration / urbanization etc.). It will also meet the needs of farmers. It will support the integration of SI-related innovations from a wide range of sources (past research, ongoing adaptive research and indigenous solutions) into the farming systems that are targeted.
- It is built on a set of guiding principles that will help to ensure that its research outputs are targeted on development needs and are feasible for target farm households to implement.
- Scaling will be embedded in the program, at a pilot level (within the program's budget) and beyond through the development of investment plans with development agencies.

Hypotheses

The research in Africa RISING is designed to test 5 program-wide hypotheses. Individual projects will formulate their own research hypotheses at the next level of detail ensuring that they contribute to the testing of at least one program hypothesis.

Integration hypothesis (H1)

- Integrating technological components into SI systems confers more benefits to smallholder farmers than single components.
- Innovations with components that mutually reinforce whole farm performance/productivity produce greater and more sustained benefits than the joint adoption of equally effective single purpose technologies and practices.

Adoption hypothesis (H2)

- Integrating technological components into SI systems stimulates more adoption compared to single components.

Trade-off hypothesis (H3)

- Targeting better tailored interventions that suit the context specific environments and the diverse local conditions in smallholder farms/households will lower environmental damage.
- Effective targeting of innovations reduces the negative impacts of trade-offs between farm productivity and

environmental sustainability and helps to identify potential “win-win” options for SI.

Innovation sequencing and sustainable intensification pathways hypothesis (H4)

- The adoption of innovations that lead to SI is affected by the sequence in which the component technologies, practices, and knowledge are integrated and applied, whereby any step resulting in reduced farm-level outcomes will reduce the ultimate uptake of these innovations.

Scalability hypothesis (H5)

- Agricultural SI interventions that are tailored to diverse local conditions on smallholder farms are more likely to be scalable to similar populations and environmental settings.
- A research approach based on targeting and evaluating SI-related innovations, increases the relevance of findings from research sites and enhances their scalability to similar strata elsewhere (i.e. to similar development domains and household typologies in other locations).

Objectives and outcomes

To emphasize the research for development nature of Africa RISING, the program proposes four research- and development-oriented objectives and outcomes.

Research objectives

1. To identify and evaluate demand-driven options for sustainable intensification that contribute to rural poverty alleviation, improved nutrition and equity and ecosystem stability [H1, H2, H3, H4].
2. To evaluate, document and share experiences with approaches for delivering and integrating innovation for

sustainable intensification in a way that will promote their uptake beyond the Africa RISING research sites [H5].

Development objectives

1. To create opportunities for smallholder farm households, within Africa RISING action research sites, to move out of poverty and improve their nutritional status – especially of young children and mothers – while maintaining or improving ecosystem stability [H5].
2. To facilitate partner-led dissemination of integrated innovations for sustainable intensification beyond the Africa RISING action research sites [H5].

Program-level research outcomes

1. Integrated innovations increase production and/or improve productivity in a sustainable manner for the most relevant farm typologies within the Africa RISING research sites.
2. The aggregated impact of these farming practices at the household/farm levels contributes to an improved understanding of ecosystem stability at the landscape level.
3. Wider dissemination of integrated innovations for SI leads to similar impacts beyond the Africa RISING action research sites.

Program-level development outcomes

1. Wider adoption of innovations identified and tested by the program’s outputs within the Africa RISING action research sites enhances livelihoods through increased agricultural output, income diversity, reduced vulnerability to adverse environmental and economic challenges and improved nutrition and welfare; especially of young children and mothers.
2. The development community initiates programs, based on the knowledge tools and innovations developed and promoted by Africa RISING, that are directed at developmental goals that are consistent with the Africa RISING program purpose.



The Africa Research In Sustainable Intensification for the Next Generation (Africa RISING) program comprises three research-for-development projects supported by the United States Agency for International Development as part of the U.S. government’s Feed the Future initiative.

Through action research and development partnerships, Africa RISING will create opportunities for smallholder farm households to move out of hunger and poverty through sustainably intensified farming systems that improve food, nutrition, and income security, particularly for women and children, and conserve or enhance the natural resource base.

The three projects are led by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (in West Africa and East and Southern Africa) and the International Livestock Research Institute (in the Ethiopian Highlands). The International Food Policy Research Institute leads an associated project on monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment.

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