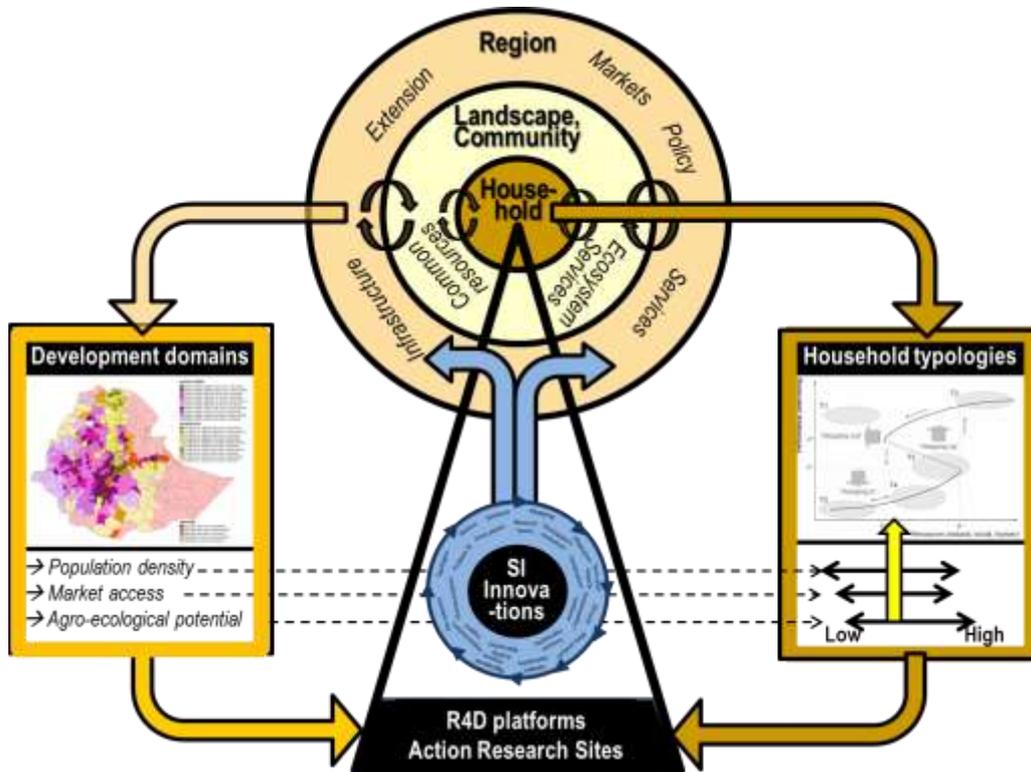


Africa RISING program framework: Conceptual framework and guiding principles



The Africa RISING program framework (URL) outlines the underlying principles of and implementation plan for the research that will be 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).

Conceptual framework

Africa RISING intervenes at the household level but acknowledges that households interact with and influence various dimensions beyond the household scale at the community, landscape, and regional level. Across the different countries, development domains will be constructed around three main drivers affecting intensification, i.e., population density, market access, and agro-ecological potential.

Within these domains, different farming systems will be identified in relation to human population and livestock

densities in addition to good agro-ecological and market potential for SI. These include: crop-based (e.g., maize sole, sorghum sole, wheat sole, etc.) systems; crop-livestock intensive (zero grazing) systems; crop-livestock extensive (free grazing) systems; and livestock-based systems.

Within these systems, farm typologies will be developed, and entry points towards sustainable intensification will be identified, based on the overall characteristics of a specific development domain and farming systems as well as the resources available to a specific household.

The figure above illustrates this conceptual framework highlighting the place of households in the overall rural landscape and the impact of large-scale (orange arrows) and household-level (brown arrows) drivers on the identification of specific sustainable intensification (SI) innovations through R4D platforms. The blue central circle refers to the overall research approach and the blue arrows moving up indicate the scaling activities beyond the Action Research Sites to the different target regions.

Guiding principles

Farm and household as focal domains

The farm household scale is the focal domain for Africa RISING's investments and activities. This is the scale at which household production decisions, gender and nutrition issues, and household welfare as well as soil health and productivity issues operate. Research activities at this scale focus on understanding household needs and incentives to support effective evaluation, adoption and adaptation of the most relevant interventions.

Sustainable intensification

'Sustainable intensification' (SI) has been defined as 'producing more output from the same area of land while reducing the negative environmental impacts and at the same time increasing contributions to natural capital and the flow of environmental services' (Pretty et al, 2011).

Stepwise progress towards SI

Ultimate intensification requires the adoption of various SI innovation components, each with their own challenges, towards large-scale uptake. Africa RISING acknowledges that farmers hardly ever take on simultaneously a suite of alternative or improved practices. It will evaluate the 'robustness' and 'riskiness' of specific interventions and then develop pathways to integrate more components as households move up the intensification ladder. Africa RISING also acknowledges that some components are required before other components can be promoted.

Development domains the main drivers for intensification

Overall environmental conditions and varying socio-economic circumstances influence the options and pathways available to smallholder farmers. Important drivers towards intensification include high population densities, good access to markets, and appropriate agro-ecological conditions. Within the Africa RISING sites, it is important to understand the current status of each of those drivers and construct development domains that encompass areas with similar conditions in order to ensure that scaling up processes and approaches integrate this crucial information.

Farm household typologies and intensification pathways

Within rural communities, access to farming resources for households is variable and determines, to a great extent, the options that these households have to intensify production and take risk. The program considers farming systems in the light of five possible broad rural household livelihoods strategies from poverty and hunger: (i) intensification of production; (ii) diversification of agricultural productivities for increased output value; (iii) increased farm size; (iv) expansion in off-farm income; (v) and complete step out of agriculture. Targeting specific households having a specific set of resources and livelihood objectives is a crucial strategy of Africa RISING.

R4D platforms for cooperation and co-learning

Since system interventions require the engagement of various research and development partners, R4D platforms will be constituted to facilitate meaningful and effective interactions that prioritize, guide, and evaluate the various research and development processes. The platforms will help connect farmers to profitable and efficient value chains. They will design, implement, evaluate project activities and disseminate and communicate research findings.

Identification and nature of critical entry points towards intensification

Demand-driven entry points towards sustainable intensification will result from the situation analysis, the *ex-ante* potential of certain interventions and technologies, and agreement among partners in the R4D platforms. Such entry points could consist of technologies or technology components aiming at productivity enhancement, natural resource management, income generation or knowledge management; most likely in combination. They can also include innovations related to social and institutional arrangements.

Integration of ethical principles

Since many activities involve the direct engagement of farming families and collection of private information, guidelines on good practice while working with farming families will be adopted.



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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