

# Youth and Agricultural Innovation System (AIS)

*Outcomes of YPARD e-discussions - GCARD2 Youth discussions*

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The YPARD e-discussion was held September 2012, to provide youth input into the GCARD2. This summarizes the discussion on: **What are steps towards greater engagement with youth to create stronger agricultural innovation systems?**

The discussion raised the concern of the impact of the global economic recession and climate change on agriculture. This could lead to declining agricultural productivity, and low production further impacts the declining interest of youth in Agricultural activities. Agricultural Innovation System (hereafter referred as AIS) was a fresh topic to re-engage young workers in many economies round the world, to redefine the role of youth in leading the future of agriculture.

Below we summarize the insights of YPARD young professionals and their opinions on AIS.

## DEFINITION OF AIS

While it was agreed that AIS is a broad concept with several interpretations by different people, a simple definition in the context of Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) is “integration of different perspectives to seek new and better ways [through new or old tools or methods] of food production in order to address persisting issues of food security and livelihood stability.

*“A network between older farmers, extension workers and researchers are highly required to initiate innovation.”  
Azam, Bangladesh*

The participants were confident that the young generation is capable of effectively contributing to the AIS process, thereby improving future agricultural prospects. However, we must find the correct methods and policies to engage youth in the innovation ecosystem both in the roles of innovators and implementers. When identifying the challenges and opportunities of youth involvement in AIS, the following questions were raised and discussed:

*“...to create stronger agriculture innovation system requires change in policy, capacity building and promotion that specially target the youth.” Danwin, Liberia*

- Why are youth lagging behind in AIS and what keeps them from being actively engaged?
- How can youth be effectively involved to bridge the youth gap, and get them more involved?
- If we re-define the AIS framework to integrate the active involvement of youth ...will that help to make it more comprehensive?
- Will sharing and exchange help to stimulate engagement of youth in the AIS process?
- What are some success stories of youth participation in AIS?

## KEY CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- 1) Lacking or ineffective National Agricultural Innovation Systems (NAIS) at national or local level that should be promoting youth involvement and incorporating youth action.
- 2) Nonexistence of Youth in management or functional body of existing Agricultural Innovation System (AIS).

*“Farmers developed such ways from many years which might be 100years, transferred from their grand-grand fathers..... It is proved that innovation comes from indigenous knowledge and practices.” Azam, Bangladesh*

**Young Professionals’ Platform for Agricultural Research for Development**

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- 3) Lack of extension services that can cater to large population as well as hard to find documents, resources and recommendations developed and published by academics, research centers or by the farmers (improper knowledge dissemination of existing innovative tools and technologies that can be adopted by the farmers or agri-entrepreneurs)
- 4) Low priority for documentation and dissemination of traditional, indigenous and local knowledge
- 5) Gender Bias: traditional, cultural and social constraints against women to come forward in farming and leadership.
- 6) Absence of basic services like roads, hospitals, school, are threats and sometimes constraint to implement tools of ICTs (mobile phone, internet, radio, community radio, TV etc) and reluctance or inability of government to make these a priority.
- 7) Advanced theoretical with less facility for practical and field works) courses and programs are opening in academic institutions in underdeveloped countries. This may create a bigger gap between youth and farmers where the youth are distinctly linked to the grassroots farmers.
- 8) Lack of inspiration and incentives for youth to be in innovative and creative merged along with limited support in the international, private and public sector development programs.
- 9) Practically no policy about youth involvement in AIS or even ARD
- 10) Data and information on innovations that can benefit is costly

*"It is also necessary to note that most of the innovation systems are still dying at pilot stage. While impacts may be evident at micro-level, it is questionable as to whether that can happen at an economy wide scale....National/Regional System of Innovation requires a network of nodes that are nationwide not in a few agricultural research centers as has been in most countries." Maxwell, Malawi*

## SCOPE OF YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN AIS

- 1) Formation of Youth body (a hierarchy network from international down to national, states, districts, municipal and village levels) in NAIS and National Policy Frame nominated by stakeholder associations, research institute, academics and NGOs and as well as youth mobilized network at national level.
- 2) Youth are most likely to adapt new technologies such biotechnology, ICT, nanotechnology; in research and development, commercialization, marketing and demand of the products and services.
- 3) Community radio programs involving youth (graduate students), farmers and expert as discussion sessions can be effective.
- 4) Young women are better able to communicate with other women at the grassroots level, due to social and traditional norms.
- 5) Youth can create documentation centers in rural areas and be in charge to explain or translate new and heavily jargoned issues to farmers.
- 6) Identify, publicize and catalyze support for youth programmes with in the international private and public sector through funding or subsidies.
- 7) Green campus initiatives in school and secondary levels; compulsory attachment with farmers (1-2 weeks) during completion of graduation and evaluation of knowledge through reporting.
- 8) Mini-Agricultural Research Centers at all primary, secondary and tertiary institutions linked to the Agricultural Research Platforms/National Agricultural Innovation Platforms and other international platforms.
- 9) Youth Agriculture Club in villages and special incentives for their innovative works
- 10) Effective involvement of farmers *via* AIS in rural development strategies.
- 11) Special position or post in political parties for young agriculturists.

*"The advantage of involving the youth is that the youth generally embraces ideas much earlier, hence the need to promote new technologies amongst the youth." Shakespear, Zimbabwe*

## EXAMPLES AND EXPERIENCE OF YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN AIS

1. National System of Innovation in Malawi and target specific research
2. Tapping Frugal innovations in India: A dialogue
3. Youth's initiative for small documentation center e.g. In Cameroon Service d'Appui aux initiative Local de développement (SAILD); newspaper called Farmer's voice. In this NGO fresh graduates get part time jobs and are happy to help farmers in their activities.
4. Empowering rural women-, e.g. women owned farm organizations. For example in "Nka'a", a small village in West Cameroon, women are champions to popularize agricultural innovation. Other examples on application of Mobile (phone) in Agricultural Extension in Cameroon ([www.acdic.net](http://www.acdic.net)), community radio in Brazil and India also support the above argument.
5. Youth can involve in advocating open access to knowledge to produce more innovations: For example: open Access fora in India, The Right to Research Coalition (<http://www.righttoresearch.org/>) and CIARD RING (<http://ring.ciard.net/>).

*"...by implicating family farmers via AIS rural development strategies, they will feel themselves involved, and the strategies will be better appropriated." Ngouambe, Cameroon*

## A WAY FORWARD: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

### For government:

- i. Initiate NAIS and youth body unit linked with national agriculture networks.
- ii. Promote better application of ICT for agriculturists especially for information sharing.
- iii. Academic curricula of agriculture needs to be more practical oriented and industry linked. Create job opportunities for fresher's and youths' initiatives like training, workshops, etc.
- iv. Mini-Agriculture centers and green campus initiatives in academia can stimulate AIS.
- v. Develop an AIS network and implement of documentation centers.
- vi. Research on indigenous and traditional knowledge.
- vii. Empower women in farming and for adopting of AIS.
- viii. Policy support is key for effective implementation of AIS.

### For the private sector:

- i. Awareness for open access to data and information
- ii. Research on youth policy and innovation systems
- iii. Encourage young women empowerment projects for innovative ideas.
- iv. Fund and grants on agro-based innovative projects that can involve fresh graduates (internship).

*"We should build knowledge repositories and from the meaningful analysis would empower us and would lead to innovations." Sridhar, India*

The exchange largely focused on the experience from Africa and South Asia, whilst the reflection from north, other parts of Asia and Latin American region was missing, some very, applicable and holistic concerns are noted. Highlighted was the evolving role of AIS for the future of agriculture and how it could be bettered by involving youth. This discussion reflected the current insights of young working force and how they feel they could be engaged to contribute in national economic growth. While the presented insights are preliminary endorsements, a detailed synthesis of gaps and opportunities in involving youth in regional and local level would be pertinent.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Discussions were launched the 3<sup>rd</sup> September and closed the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2012.

### The report was

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**Reviewed by:** Dr Nidhi Nagabhatla (Germany), the discussion Moderator

During these 11 days there were 28 posts on the site coming from 7 participants for the discussion on AIS.

We thank the participants to these e-discussions:

• <i>Nestor Ngouambe</i> , Cameroon	• <i>Maxwell Gibson Mkondiwa</i> , Malawi
• <i>Dans Kiamue Johnson</i> , Liberia	• <i>Shakespear Mudombi</i> , Zimbabwe
• <i>Dr Nidhi Nagabhatla</i> (as moderator), Germany	• <i>Dr Sridhar Gutam</i> , India
• <i>Fardous Mohammad Safiul Azam</i> , Bangladesh	