

Strengthening knowledge ecosystems

Lessons from the DeSIRA Initiative

18 June 2025, Paulina Bizzotto Molina



Overview presentation

- The DeSIRA Initiative and DeSIRA-LIFT
- Zooming in on two concrete activities within DeSIRA-LIFT
- Lessons on knowledge ecosystems
- Questions for reflection

The DeSIRA Initiative

- Developing Smart Innovations Through Research in Agriculture (DeSIRA)
- EC INTPA Flagship programme: empowering sustainable agricultural transformation in developing regions
- EU funding of €340 million and €60 million from EU Member States
- Ran from 2019 until June 2025, covering 70+ projects in 50+ countries



The DeSIRA Initiative and DeSIRA-LIFT

DeSIRA-LIFT service facility

In support of the DeSIRA Initiative

Objective: to contribute to climate-relevant, productive and sustainable transformation of agriculture and food systems in low and middle-incomes countries

Developing Smart Innovation through Research in Agriculture (DeSIRA)

Pillar 1: Research & Innovation projects in agri-food systems

Pillar 2: Research infrastructure conducive to innovation at regional, continental and global level

Pillar 3: Knowledge & evidence to feed evidence to policy design

Support services

DeSIRA-LIFT

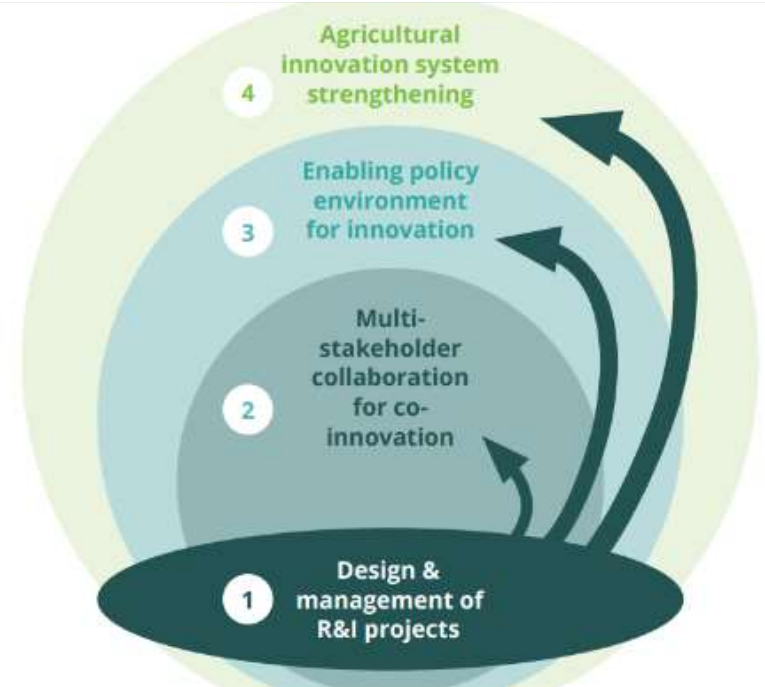
Service Area 1: Support R&I projects to prove & improve their impact

Service Area 2: Support CAADP-XP4 in AKIS-related roles, add value to TAP, GFAR

Service Area 3: Synthesis building, making knowledge work for policy

DeSIRA ambitions

- Explicit aim to strengthen agricultural innovation systems
- Strengthen research capacities *and* governance at national, regional, continental and global levels
- Support multi-actor and multi-level participatory action-research
- Ample attention for joint learning, co-innovation, policy and governance



Zooming in: Support services to R&I projects



Zooming in: collaboration with RUFORUM

- Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) is an association of 85 African universities operating within 35 countries across the African continent
- RUFORUM strengthened activities on
 - translating university R&I into business
 - co-certification mechanisms for training of innovation facilitators
 - e-learning platforms with self-paced training on innovation management and facilitation

DeSIRA lessons




- Long-term processes; projects not the best vehicle
- Important role for regional and continental R&I organisations...
- ...but impact is limited by capacity gaps
- Regional and continental organisations sometimes represent divergent priorities of their national members

Questions for reflection

Changing political and funding landscapes: what does it mean for support to knowledge ecosystems in LMICs?

- Increasing ownership and ensuring diversity of voices
- Blended finance: Rethinking the role of the private sector. Incubators, steward ownership, harnessing collective leadership
- Understanding and facilitating change processes. The role of and difficulty in facilitating transdisciplinary research

Thank you for
your attention!



To explore
the potential
of nature to
improve the
quality of life

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