

ISC MEETING #6  
ROME 27 and 29 JUNE 2017

Item 9

Doc 4a

Unlocking FP2 from W1+2: ISC guidance note for the re-write

Note endorsed by the FTA-ISC by electronic procedure on 19 April 2017

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This note (endorsed by FTA's ISC) and later to be adjusted for conversion into the "cover note" for the ISPC lays out the main points that FTA will address in its resubmission.

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The rewrite will be substantial. It will *explain the whole reasoning, logic and evidence on the ways by which trees, if well managed, can be beneficial for livelihoods in a diversity of systems and the scientific and strategic rationale for the FP2 focus and approach. The claims made will be better explained and the circumstances under which they hold/don't hold fully stated, in order to provide a credible argument for how the FP could lead to the transformational impact it is claiming. The flagship claims that agroforestry in smallholders' systems will improve livelihoods: more detailed evidence will be provided about that, and how the research impact will be scaled up.*

In addition, the rewrite will explain how W1+2 resources will be key to support a critical set of activities and outputs for the FP, given the set of bilateral projects that contribute to it. In doing so we will address the "opportunistic" critique towards FP2's strong bilateral program, explaining why in fact W1+2 enable the research to be "demand-driven", prioritized, and aligned to the CRP's ToC.

Finally, the presentation of the scientists to be involved will be reviewed, with the objective of strengthening the visibility of social scientists.

*In doing so, FTA will especially consider the ISPC detailed review of June 2016.*

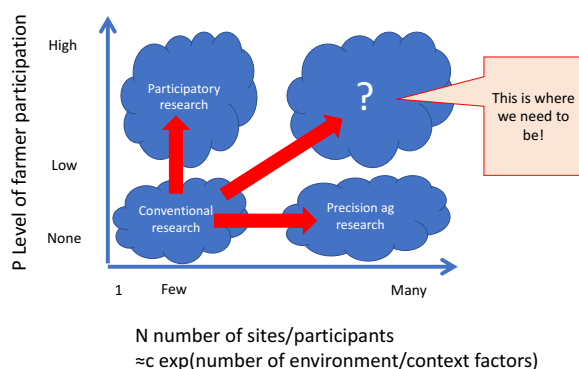
The revision will be undertaken to improve the FP in the following five main domains.

- 1) **We will strengthen the Theory of Change** (ToC) of the FP, clarifying related assumptions and explaining and how the ToCs of individual CoAs link to the FP ToC. This will address the “feasibility” concerns. This will be done by:
  - a. reducing the gap in the narrative between activities and scaling up – i.e. facilitation of changes in policies and institutions.
  - b. distinguishing between reach and adoption, and be clear on the hypothesis that enable “reached” farmers to “adopt” the solutions proposed (evidencing the barriers to adoption associated with agricultural and forest policy and how to overcome them, based on examples in an increasing range of contexts (India, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Peru) where FP2 has been involved in change of national, provincial and district level policy)
  - c. including more detailed explanation of why agroforestry will make impact, including a larger body of examples and a fuller quantification of what has been delivered so far
  - d. including more quantified emphasis on how trees contribute to climate adaptation and mitigation, and hence system resilience, as well as directly impacting poverty and food security
  - e. explaining more clearly how better management of trees enables sustainable intensification, resilience and at the same time enhances livelihood systems, with production of high value products (these impacts have rarely been economically assessed in their entirety and are not, therefore, well understood, but we have some quantified examples together with examples of new loan mechanisms (very large in some cases, e.g. with NABARD in India, that rest upon them)
  - f. explaining how new approaches to financing smallholder tree establishment can enable smallholders to invest in high value trees while overcoming the short term upfront and transition opportunity costs (foregone revenues during the transition period), and to finance the transition to a more resilient and higher productivity base in the long term.
  - g. Providing more details on the connections across research (see also point 4 below)
  
- 2) **We will review the set of aspirational objectives, indicators and targets** (by inserting a set of intermediate outcome/policy and institutional level indicators and targets) **and developing a comprehensive MEL** (monitoring, evaluation and learning) plan for FP2 that is explicit on connections along impact pathways with indicators at each step.

To contribute to this, we will :

- a. include a summary table of impact predictions for key development programs and policies that FP2 is influencing. For example, the Livelihoods Fund, Indian NABARD, the GEF IAP on food security and major IFAD loans to national programs in Kenya, Ethiopia, Mali and Niger.
- b. be more precise about how targets associated with our anticipated impacts on livelihoods that are associated with FP2 (that is, the poverty exit and other livelihood targets related to income, equity and food security) are to be met through time and under which conditional hypotheses, and how progress towards them will be monitored.
- c. explain how, due to FP2's 'RinD' approach, within which a substantial proportion of research is embedded in development praxis, its sphere of 'influence' is larger than for conventional research approaches and with outcome targets potentially more ambitious. In support of this we will also:
  - d. show more clearly how the bilateral project portfolio clusters FP2's research effort with development investments to ensure co-location of effort and scaling of impact,
  - e. use maps to show concentration of funding in key areas where we intend to make impact
  - f. make more explicit reference to our partnership strategy
  - g. include a figure showing the degree of participation versus the number of people engaged in research to highlight how the RinD approach positions the FP in a new quadrant of high participation with large numbers (broad coverage of context).

### The N x P space of research methods



- h. make clearer, towards impact, the constraints that need to be overcome in terms of strengthening farmer organizations and mechanisms to link them with research, particularly in relation to capacity building strategies

**3) We will be explicit about how the research in FP2 will generate a broader understanding of diverse contexts**, as a mean to deliver on IPGs, and to better document the capacity to deliver proposed targets.

This will build upon lessons learned about work in complex systems and on the ‘*options-by-context*’ approach to addressing fine scale variation in context through understanding relationships between contextual factors and the suitability of options (which include innovation in technology, extension systems and markets, and policies and institutions). We have a special journal issue on this in *Experimental Agriculture* with articles from a broad range of researchers within and beyond FTA.

To do so, we will

- a. provide more clarity about how the ‘options by context’ approach to addressing fine scale variation in context at local levels will be operationalized in a broader framework of larger agro ecological contexts, allowing us to frame extrapolation domains that are necessary for IPG generation. There are two sorts of IPGs involved here, a) development and proof of concept of generalizable methods and b) generation of understanding about how contextual factors (and combinations of them) condition the suitability of intervention options (that are generalizable beyond the locations where the relationships are discovered).
- b. clarify where we have put the balance between deep and focused science in some locations, and getting broad understanding of multiple situations.
- c. better show how this will also rely on the work in FP4 where the broader agro ecological contexts for FTA are defined - showing how the FP2 research is nested within representative agro ecologies defined in FP4 (the sentinel landscapes), including making reference to their representativeness of global contexts along tree cover transitions
- d. clarify the existence of published evidence of the novelty of implementing the options x context approach at scale in agroforestry (including the scientific debate about methods that it is generating)
- e. review Fig 1 linking the RinD with the O-by-C approach to make it easier to understand and more in line with the ToC of the FP

**4) We will provide a better scientific and strategic explanation of the FP2 research focal areas set of different production systems.**

The production systems selected refer to the four clusters of activity (CoA) that are on production systems – (CoA2) food, fuel and timber production and marketing; (CoA3) tree-crop commodities (cocoa, coffee, rubber and oil palm), (CoA4) trees in support of sustainable intensification and (CoA5) silvopastoral systems.

- a. We will link this explanation to the strengthened theory of change and elicit the set of criteria that led to our choice: degree of well conceptualized work, maturity of scientific background, potential for investments and scaling-up. Silvopastoral

systems (CoA5) is a new focus responding to the independent evaluation of FTA. The justification for each production system will be included in the ToC section

- b. We will also clarify how the production system focus in FP2 relates to broad agro ecologies identified in FP4. We will include a table that shows the extent of our focal production systems in each of the broad agro ecologies identified in FP4 so that the coherence and prioritization of localized research is clarified.

**5) We will explain how FP2 research addresses the quality objectives along the 4 dimensions of “quality of research for development” laid down in the current ISPC work: credibility, legitimacy, relevance, effectiveness.**

- a) FP2 will list its main product lines (outputs by broad categories: from scientific papers to advice to development partners, policy engagement activities etc..) and explain how these products lines link to the different dimensions of QoR.
- b) FP2 will make a fuller presentation of the interdisciplinary coverage of its team of scientists, ensuring visibility of social scientists, and show how they cover the downstream parts of its ToC.
- c) FP2 will be explicit on how it will work in an integrated manner with the FTA MELIA cluster

**6) We will give more emphasis to the scientific and strategic argument.**

The proposal puts strong emphasis on the RinD process, which is indeed novel and needed, and the way to achieve large-scale impact. However, the proposal does not fully explain the scientific entry points. What are the key constraints and the key opportunities and what research is needed to address those? The FTA evaluation and each round of review on phase 2 concept notes and proposals have expressed concerns about scientific and strategic focus.<sup>1</sup>

While these criticisms are not directed at FP2 exclusively, the rewrite will address them head-on and include the following elements.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. From the June 2016 ISPC commentary:

p. 3: The introductory section is less well written than the equivalent section of the pre-proposal; it seeks to persuade the reader of the significance of FTA for the SLOs but fails to argue that FTA has identified the scientific questions that must be answered to achieve this. Supporting such claims with evidence would strengthen the proposal.

p.4: “The proposal does not clearly outline the process for priority-setting that led to the content of the flagships being presented. Furthermore, the concepts of “discovery” or “innovation” are not very visible. The impression is that the structure and direction of the CRP is shaped largely by the current portfolio of bilaterally-funded projects...”

- a. A clear analysis of the key constraints and opportunities in the sector to be addressed by FP2.
- b. An explanation of what is already being done in the sector, including investments, processes and key policy windows FP2 can leverage.
- c. A fuller presentation of the scientific and strategic rationale for the proposed FP2 research focus (generally and by CoA), including discussion of FTA/FPs comparative advantage.
- d. Explain why, agroforestry being a new field (scientifically), research has larger impact than for areas where there has been a far longer history of research and gains are levelling off.
- e. Explain/acknowledge that in the RiD mode of working proposed for a substantial part of the research, with direct engagement with development actors, a high degree of flexibility and responsiveness will be required.
- f. Strengthen the hypotheses and research questions in the CoA sections (do we need to keep the hypotheses – these were required for consistency within FTA as a whole?). In the final proposal, most of the hypotheses are really aims, and the research questions for CoA 2.1. 2.2 and 2.3 are quite general (but for 2.2 and 2.3 were praised by ISPC so probably it is only 2.1 that needs to be revised). They will be stated in a way that they are researchable. This will further strengthen the scientific credibility of the proposal and also help illuminate key elements of the ToC.
- g. Include a brief discussion of key partners, processes and geographic focal areas for each CoA.

In rewriting the FP, FTA will take the liberty to, if need be, adjust the flow of arguments and deviate from the 2016 template. This will be done in keeping all the elements that needed to be there, but heading for **a clearer outline or organization**, which will also contribute to avoid repetitions, so that the reader can better follow the text and understand where FTA is leading towards. This will help better delineating (i) Situations and Contexts, with links to phase 1 lessons, (ii) Objectives (including depicting who are the beneficiaries), (iii) Challenges/Constraints, with links to phase 1 lessons (iv) What, how: the research and actions, O-by-C, RiD, the CoAs (including risk analysis). Also, we will find better ways to present the wide number of references (which in the FP proposal appeared only very distantly, in the form of endnotes for the whole CRP).