Institutional and Governance Framework for Participatory Technology Enterprise Development in Uganda

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Most observers agree that small holder agricultural development hold the potential of being the most effective strategy of reducing rural poverty in Africa. However, there continue to be considerable disagreement over how to stimulate agricultural enterprise development.
Agricultural technology development interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa have largely been based on an economic and instrumental understanding of technology developed in western industrial societies. Technological development takes place with science as a neutral component and input and is integrated in the economical system in accordance with market demands and the relative market price of other production factors. This economic approach basically operates with three influential components in technological development; capabilities of science, market demands and the relative market price of production factors. Even though these components are all important, they do not explain the very constitution of technology generation and dissemination processes or why some technologies develop in certain directions instead of others and how technology develops by means of social constructing processes.
However, while the use participatory approaches for need identification and involvement of farmers in technology development has increasingly become standard practices of research stations, a similar institutional change has not yet taken place with regards to technology dissemination. A theoretical replacement of the ToT model for technology dissemination has only been partially conceptualised and is not widely understood and accepted by stakeholders who support smallholder agricultural development in East and Southern Africa.
Local government and extension reforms in Uganda have devolved authority over financial and human resources and decision-making with regards to prioritizing technology development to farmer institutions at the sub-district (sub-county, Parish and group) level. A new method has emerged in which needs are assessed through a dialogue that take place between farmers, service providers, politicians, community leaders and private service providers through a system of stepwise consultative meetings beginning with farmer groups at village level to parish and sub county. Based on comprehensive fieldwork 2001-2010 in Soroti district, Uganda, this paper show how en enabling institutional and governance framework can result in successful agricultural enterprise development with significant production and poverty impact. The effective management of this participatory governance to technology development processes, in Soroti has led to the development of well considered and viable technologies that have caused significant rural transformation in the district. Farmers have become agents rather than objects of planning and this has built ownership and trust among stakeholders in the PTD and enterprise promotion process.