

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS FOR INCLUSIVE AGRIBUSINESS

Aspirational issues and priorities for collaboration

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1 SUMMARY OF ISSUES

Complex current issues in global food systems are leading to increasing collaboration between different actors to tackle shared issues from different angles. Rapidly changing global demands and pressures in the agrifood sector, and concomitant issues, are increasingly complex as there is a need to work with multiple nexuses of climate – water – food/nutrition – urbanisation – inequity – etc. Tackling such complexity has led to growing realisation that no single actor is able to control the complexity, making it necessary to collaborate.

The premise is that collaboration leads to greater progress in addressing complexity than any individual actor would have the ability, legitimacy or incentive to achieve on its own. The need for collaborative action is now even embedded in Sustainable Development Goal 17, “Partnerships for the goals”. This states: “the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can only be realized with a strong commitment to global partnership and cooperation”.

As a result multi-stakeholder platforms, networks, alliances and partnerships are popping out of ground everywhere. They range from informal, pragmatic single issue, single sector, narrow geographic scope to globally reaching formal networks trying to address enabling conditions on a wide range of issues. With that growth comes a matching heavy investment of time, resources and goodwill.

Yet we still have to understand when it makes sense, and when it is nonsense, to invest so heavily in a paradigm of collaboration. Key areas we have poor understanding of include:

- 1. When is collaboration really necessary, when not?** Platforms or partnerships are often poorly thought through at launch, and can be politically driven, opportunistic or be the current trend. More careful thought is needed on the problems to be tackled or goals achieved, what competencies and actors are needed, and why some kind of partnership is essential.
- 2. Finding better ways to credibly assess the effectiveness of collaborative forms.** Collaborations operate in complex environments where it is hard to assess who is contributing what to any progress being made. Efforts to assess effectiveness are also often more driven by funders’ needs than to make the partnerships stay more focused. The ultimate accountability towards those whose livelihoods should be improved is often not built into monitoring and reporting processes.
- 3. Improving the way collaborations are set up and run with the right players.** Simplistic calling together of all stakeholders in particular issues can lead to complicated structures, lack of shared focus, lack of clarity of roles and lost willingness to act together. It can also create tensions between different basic motives of government, business and civil society actors.
- 4. Being realistic about how partnerships can and need to be funded.** As most partnership structures have a strong public good objective, and an indirect return on investment for businesses, they almost always require public/donor funding to get started and continue. Such financial dependency on donor money can be a problem when public financing decreases. Yet viable financing models are rare.

2 ASPIRATIONAL ISSUES FOR A COMMON AGENDA

- Analyse how appropriate different structures for collaboration are for different goals and contexts.
- Formulate monitoring and reporting processes and indicators to build the evidence base around partnership effectiveness.
- Identify good practice for identifying need, initiating and running effective platforms and partnerships.
- Work on models for improving the viability and stability of partnerships.

3 POTENTIAL RESEARCH AND LEARNING QUESTIONS

3.1 Research questions

- What do MSPartnerships contribute to sustainability and livelihood improvement goals?
- What are the implications for partner choice, focus and activities of MSPs that intend to support the growth of inclusive agribusiness?
- What are the key factors, principles and modalities for effective inclusive agribusiness partnerships at different levels?
- What could be the new business models for inclusive agribusiness MSPs?
- How can such partnerships be developed in a transparent way that adheres to principles of responsible investments?
- How to assess the effectiveness of MSPs?
- What kind of and how much partnership is needed for agrifood system transformation?
- What are the system dynamics that facilitate MSPs?

3.2 Learning questions

- How can MSPs make sure they really focus on the poorest farmers/workers that have most need for more inclusive agribusiness?
- What sorts of public-private partnerships can drive the pace and scale of inclusive agribusiness initiatives?
- How to establish collaboration in fragile environments to stimulate inclusive agribusiness?
- What kind of capacities are essential to run effective agrifood oriented MSPs?

4 POTENTIAL PRIORITY AREAS

- **Building an appropriate evidence base** for effectiveness of MSPs.
- **Identify when MSPs are appropriate** and when not to stimulate inclusive agribusiness, and link that to larger political agenda's.
- **Strengthen leadership and trust** that can initiate and lead MSPs for inclusive agribusiness.
- **Build general capacity** to run effective, efficient partnerships.
- **Clarify necessary roles and (financial) contributions** of different actors, at different phases in the evolution of MSPs.



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5 ONGOING WORK

Business Platforms

Inclusive Agribusiness:

- World Economic Forum's New Vision for Agriculture
 - GrowAfrica
 - GrowAsia
- Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI) Platform
- World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)
- Global Agri-business Alliance (GAA)
- Smallholder Working Group (SWG)
- Round Tables

Practitioner Networks

Inclusive Agribusiness:

- Sustainable Food Lab
- Transformation Leaders Network
- Seas of Change

Inclusive Business/Market Systems:

- BEAM Exchange
- SEEP Network
- Development Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED)
- The Practitioner Hub for Inclusive Business

Multi-Donor Initiatives

- Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP)
- African Enterprise Challenge Fund (AECF)
- Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)
- New Alliance for Food Security & Nutrition

Other agri-food initiatives

- Feed the Future (USAID)
- Connect to Grow (DFID)
- Business Partnership Action (The Partnering Initiative)
- DeveloPPP.de (BMZ)

6 RESOURCES AND PREVIOUS WORK

1. **CDI.** 2016. *The MSP Guide: How to design and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships*, by Brouwer, H. and Woodhill, J.

A guide which integrates practical knowledge with theoretical foundations and principles for design and facilitation of MSPs, including an online knowledge co-creation portal (www.mspguide.org).

2. **IBLF.** 2011. *The Partnering Toolbox. An essential guide to cross-sector partnering*, by Tennyson, R.

The Partnering Toolbox builds on the experience of those who have been at the forefront of innovative partnerships and offers a concise overview of the essential elements that make for effective partnering.

3. **IFAD.** 2016. *How to do Public-Private-Producer Partnerships (4Ps) in Agricultural Value Chains*, by Camagni, M. and Kherallah, M.

This report describes the complexity of designing and implementing inclusive 4Ps in agricultural value chains (building blocks and enabling factors).

4. **PPPLab.** 2016. *Insight Series*

The PPPLab Insight series offers a set of publications on key definitions and concepts around public-private partnerships. So far five booklets have been published.

5. **WEF's New Vision for Agriculture.** 2016. *Building Partnerships for Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security. A Guide to Country-led Action*

This guide aims to provide a dynamic resource that will empower and inspire leaders who can build on and further develop learning to drive a transformation of the world's agriculture and food systems.

6. **William Davidson Institute.** 2016. *Partnering for Scale. Collaborating to more effectively engage smallholder farmers*, by London, T. and Fay, C.

This report focusses on the opportunity for IB leaders to leverage partnerships to overcome the challenges they face in seeking sustainability at scale with the Partnership Ecosystem Framework (PEF).

This paper is part of a set of six that explore the six themes covered in the design workshop “Towards a Global Research and Learning Agenda for Inclusive Agribusiness”. Over two days 40 senior practitioners looked at how to deepen understanding and improve practice through more structured collaboration. While the themes do not cover all that is important in inclusive agribusiness, they are part of the potential for structural and systemic change inherent in many initiatives.

Each paper aims to trigger thinking on what could be done through collective action. It does not provide a complete picture of the theme but indicates the bandwidth of possibilities that could be worked on. We hope it will help you think where working with others can make your work easier, more interesting or more useful. For more information or if you have ideas please get in touch with joost.guijt@wur.nl.

The workshop was a good example of the value of combining skills and resources, and came out of joint thinking, time and funding from Wageningen University & Research, Global Donor Platform for Rural Development, Food & Business Knowledge Platform and BEAM Exchange.

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This paper is part of a series of papers on inclusive agribusiness written for the “Towards a Global Research and Learning Agenda for Inclusive Agribusiness” workshop in March 2017. Read all the papers as well as a series of blogs on ‘What’s new in inclusive agribusiness’ here: <http://www.inclusivebusinesshub.org/inclusive-agribusiness/>