Towards a Global Research and Learning Agenda for Inclusive Agribusiness

BUILDING COLLABORATION for learning in inclusive agribusiness

Caroline Ashley

INCLUSIVE AGRIBUSINESS ALLIANCE WORKSHOP
MARCH 7–8, 2017
IDS, BRIGHTON, UK
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Dear Reader...

As we all are faced with increasing opportunities to work in a range of collaborative structures, we need to be increasingly aware of any trends towards new formations in the market. No doubt you are looking at the agenda of this workshop thinking: Is this an orchestra in the making that I want to play in, or is this a siren's song to lure me from my real priorities?

Over the past years many discussions and some key research have pointed to major gaps in inclusive business. For many leading actors in this field, it is essential to up our collective game. Hence this workshop to discuss how to collaborate more effectively on a knowledge agenda, including where we want to focus our attention, and whether there is a clear need and opportunity we can take hold of and make manifest.

This thought paper aims to help you, the reader, clarify what you might need from collaboration. If an alliance is needed, what needs should it address? What form should it take? How would you like to see an alliance organized and run so that it works for you?

The ideas here stem from a range of experience, supplemented by some good literature on what makes networks and learning alliances work, and some interviews with collaborative initiatives both in agriculture and beyond. You may agree with them, or you may not; you may want to add your own ideas. This exercise is not about getting you to agree, but about making you think why you agree or not, and thereon strengthening your own propositions. The aim is that, when you join the conversation, either in March or later, you can be that much better equipped to help the group. We look forward to what you will bring to the party.

Caroline Ashley
2.1 A gap, or several gaps

As activity and investment in inclusive agribusiness has grown, in learning this trend has not kept pace. The current situation was well summarized in a recent landscape review of inclusive agribusiness for the GDPRD:

Currently learning and networking in the inclusive agribusiness field is rich but fragmented. There are thousands of inclusive agribusiness related projects, numerous initiatives by many businesses, much support being provided by NGOs and a diverse range of donor and philanthropic funding programs. There are numerous business platforms, and knowledge/networking platforms and many conferences and events on or related to the topic.

However, the field is inadequately supported by the applied research, knowledge synthesis, meta-analysis and structured communication needed to provide deeper evidence and insight for the questions raised above. Limited coordination between those who are working in this field means scarce resources are not necessarily being used in an optimal way. IDS 2016

What exactly are the learning needs, the gaps in quality or quantity, and what would address them? A variety of gaps, and propositions for what might be needed, are suggested below.

Distilling actionable lessons from experience

Many of us work effectively in individual initiatives, and many would say they are quite effective at learning about what’s working and what’s not within that initiative. At the same time, there is difficulty in distilling understanding and practical lessons from a broad range of experiences and making them relevant to practitioners in different contexts.

Proposition: There is a need to compare multiple experiences and data to build higher level analysis, as well as to share ideas on what is useful in terms what learning outputs to work towards.

Scalable peer exchange

There are plenty of examples of effective peer-to-peer learning in online or face-to-face settings. Yet peer-to-peer processes are costly in time and money and have limited scalability and reach.

Proposition: We need to figure out how to bring back insights and learning from one set of projects to a whole community, when you can't get them all together in person.

Wider application of useful tools and approaches

Many of us produce interesting tools, approaches and analytical models that draw on valuable experience which others might benefit from using. But often we discover there are other similar products already out there, or our own new product stays within our own network.

Proposition: We need to find, and be willing to use, the work of others, freeing time for adaptation and application of tools and approaches in new contexts.

Plugging evidence gaps

There are some key gaps in data to back up the propositions embedded in ‘inclusive business’. For example, what does it cost per farmer in a few typical contexts to deliver key missing services? What can we say about multiple values generated per dollar invested in new inclusive business models?

Proposition: We need to be able to generate agreed, reliable data that can answer probing questions to justify future investment in new ways of doing business.

Challenging and inspiring ourselves and each other

When working in isolation, often to a specific remit shaped by a funder’s specific priorities, we may struggle to know whether we are working on something relevant. And we may also struggle to recognize how reliable our data and analysis are. And in many of the settings where we gather together, we struggle to find time to drill deep into a topic, or to go beyond rehashing assumptions or what is already known.

Proposition: There is a need for a safe but reflective and challenging space where practitioners can come together to discuss and exchange ideas.
What is the result of these gaps? The GDPRD report identifies two significant implications:

1. **Lack of overall evidence on impact and key trends:**
   Investments in the billions of dollars are being made into inclusive agribusiness by businesses and donors. Many initiatives have now been working for 5 years or more so substantial results should be starting to show. While many initiatives do monitor and evaluate their results, there is little coherence in the metrics of assessing inclusiveness and virtually no meta-analysis (evaluation) across these different initiatives.

2. **Limited sharing of experiences and lessons between inclusive agribusiness initiatives to drive innovation and improve performance:**
   Much of the knowledge about inclusive agribusiness rests with the practitioners who are directly involved in the businesses or development organizations implementing inclusive agribusiness. Such practitioners have limited time for reflecting on, documenting or sharing their experience and knowledge. There is also limited analysis of the commonalities in the lessons from different inclusive agribusiness which hampers a broader understanding of success factors that could inform both practitioners and those designing and funding support programs.

### 2.2 An opportune time

Several organizations have recently recognized inadequacies in the current learning agenda, and/or expressed interest in greater collaboration. Many of these are organizations that combine a mission to improve the agri-food sector, a focus on collaboration and implementation, with some elements of a learning agenda. Several are largely involved in generating or sharing lessons about inclusive agribusiness but see a need for the sector to ‘up its game’ and to do so in a way that goes beyond any one of the single organizations currently engaged.

### 2.3 And so, a need and opportunity?

So, what would ‘better’ look like? If there is a need to improve collaboration and invest more in learning and research, what would ‘good’ look like?

The forthcoming workshop is a chance to discuss what ‘good’ would look like. The remainder of this paper draws on existing practice, inside and outside agriculture, to frame some questions and options that would need to be considered to develop a collaborative learning agenda.

**READER QUESTIONS:**

Where do you agree or disagree? Is there inadequate investment in generating knowledge and synthesis? Is there insufficient coordination of fragmented learning and networking? Which are the priority gap(s)?
Where do learning and collaboration already happen?

3.1 Existing initiatives

Sector-wide research and learning activities could comprise many different activities. Some elements of learning, research, and knowledge exchange are already done by a vast range of organizations and each has a different balance and combination of:

- implementation/delivery;
- advocacy, building commitment to specific changes;
- generating new knowledge;
- disseminating knowledge;
- working collaboratively.

However, as we can see from the table below, there are many organizations that do some form of learning by doing, or learning/exchanging by collaboration, or both. Table 1 lists several specific activities that fall within learning and research, or overlap with it, with some (not comprehensive) examples of current activity.

In addition, there are new emerging actions that support further learning and research, including a newly proposed IFAD Financing for Agriculture Learning Network.

### TABLE 1: Examples of learning and collaboration activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>A SAMPLE OF CURRENT PLAYERS</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Innovation and testing of new initiatives in inclusive agribusiness</td>
<td>Companies, NGOs, trade associations (e.g. KTDA), collaborations within alliances such as IDH, Sustainable Food Lab, WBCSD, etc.</td>
<td>IDH investment in prototyping models <a href="https://www.idhsustainabletrade.com/">https://www.idhsustainabletrade.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection on what works</td>
<td>Work streams of Smallholder Food Lab, IDH, CIAT/CGIAR, VECO, IIED and many more</td>
<td>The Smallholder Working Group (Grow Africa) regular topic-focused member calls <a href="https://www.growafrica.com/groups/smallholder-working-group">https://www.growafrica.com/groups/smallholder-working-group</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate collaborative action with a strong learning element</td>
<td>WBCSD, SFL, IDH</td>
<td>CIAT South America Learning Alliance <a href="https://ciat.cgiar.org/">https://ciat.cgiar.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distillation of lessons into tools and guidance</td>
<td>IDH, SFL, WBCSD, SAI Platform, ISF, CIAT/CGIAR, VECO, BoP Lab’s</td>
<td>Farm Sustainability Tool <a href="http://www.fsatool.com/">http://www.fsatool.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research into inclusive agribusiness</td>
<td>Universities, CIAT/CGIAR, IIED, IDH</td>
<td>IIED Sector Governance Research <a href="http://pubs.iied.org/16583IIED/">http://pubs.iied.org/16583IIED/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is clear there is a lot happening. But is this enough and are efforts consolidated enough? Are there some issues that are not being answered, or some answers that are not being sufficiently shared?

**READER QUESTIONS:**

» Is there enough learning happening? Is the quality and quantity sufficient? Are there gaps?

» Given that activities rest with different organizations, are they consolidated enough? Are we making enough use of what is currently done? If not, why?

3.2 How do practitioners currently learn, share and incorporate new knowledge?

At present, we don’t understand enough about the methods that practitioners in inclusive agribusiness already use for learning and knowledge exchange. More information is needed on an important set of questions from a range of practitioners:

- Learning from your own work: How much learning takes place from your own work? What prompts/facilitates it?
- Sharing lessons: How do you share lessons with others? With whom?
- Learning from others: How do you access lessons learned by others in inclusive agribusiness? Is it through ad hoc conversations, events, online news, reports, participation, tools...?
- Do you like to access static knowledge provided by others (e.g. guides), or engage in discussions?
- Through what platforms or networks do you exchange views with others in inclusive agribusiness?
- What incentive do you have for learning? What are the barriers?
- What incentive do you have to collaborate with others for knowledge exchange? What are the barriers?
- Are there good practices for knowledge exchange that you use outside inclusive agribusiness that could be useful in this space?

**READER QUESTIONS:**

What do you use most for reflection or tapping into learning? What are your constraints and incentives?
If you’ve got this far and think there is a need for something more, what is the need? Any effective collaboration needs a clear understanding of the problem to be addressed and a shared goal. And there are many ways of structuring collaborations depending on the goal of the members and the niche of the collaboration.

4.1 Scope: how broad, how narrow

To define the problem, the scope, the possible structure of any collaboration:

1. Is collaboration needed only on learning and research or should it be wider, covering implementation or advocacy, and including learning and research?
2. Should the focus be specifically on inclusive agribusiness, or should it be wider or narrower?

4.2 Objectives

What would the priority objective be?

- To ultimately deliver change e.g. support delivery and scaling of effective inclusive agribusiness models (‘effective’ to be defined)?
- To guide decision-making and implementation, or influence policy?
- To improve capacity to learn, share, and make use of lessons in the sector, build demand for evidence?
- To provide practitioners with better knowledge and information to make informed decisions?
- To solve priority problems?
- To generate a better evidence base for judging the effectiveness of inclusive agribusiness?
- To enhance the value of existing initiatives?

Setting the objective relates to defining the core problem to be tackled: lack of knowledge, lack of means to generate the right knowledge, lack of exchange, low uptake of knowledge, lack of appetite or skills to use information, high transaction costs of knowledge exchange, lack of collaboration between different players?

4.3 What kind of learning initiative?

What value proposition?

There are many different ways in which learning and knowledge can be supported, whether by generating knowledge, exchanging it, or building an ecosystem for it. At one extreme, there is ‘just’ a knowledge portal, which boosts access to existing knowledge, and at the other is a research initiative which fills knowledge gaps. There are also very different ways of generating, curating or sharing knowledge, ranging from action research, to peer exchange, to meta-synthesis. Some very different options (which can be blended in different ways) are:

- A Resource Portal that signposts to existing knowledge and ensures it is better used (emphasis on dissemination and access across the ecosystem);
- A convenor, that brings players together to access high-quality resources and findings (emphasis on curated access and uptake plus networking);
- A Community of Practice that co-creates knowledge amongst engaged members? (emphasis on peer exchange and creation of new knowledge);
- A research initiative focused on knowledge generation (emphasis on building knowledge);
- A cross-network learning initiative that synthesises experience and lessons from others (emphasis on interpretation, meta-knowledge curation across the ecosystem);
- An iterative testing, learning, implementing approach that tests out a few initiatives to develop good practice (emphasis on collaborative problem-solving);
- Support for existing practitioners to do more reflection, learning and sharing of what they find (emphasis on ecosystem capacity for learning);
- A network of networks, to enable existing initiatives to collaborate better (emphasis on collaboration for increased efficiency/impact).

Each of these has a slightly different value proposition to members, and would prioritise a different combination of activities. See Box 1 on next page for an example of how activities could be considered.
4.4 What kind of structure does this imply?

The old adage is ‘form should follow function’, so based on the prioritized functions of additional collaboration, what kind of structure is needed?

- A formalized learning alliance or network or platform;
- A loose collaboration of existing organizations;
- A single facilitator that joins dots;
- An expansion or new initiative within an existing organization;
- An online global collaboration, or an on-the-ground collaboration in several places, or both.

READER QUESTIONS:

Be ready with your views on all the above at the workshop – How broad is the scope? What should the priority objectives be? What kind of structure?

4.5 Designing for success

The following sections take forward the idea of some kind of collaborative alliance/network/platform. There is considerable amount of experience to draw on from others that have already experienced and tackled the challenges of developing networks and alliances, including those that have a learning component, and those that cover agriculture. Table 2 summarises some key success factors identified in existing literature, while the section below starts to explore key design issues that would have to be addressed in the workshop and beyond.
### Table 2: Key Success Factors for Networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Success Factors for Knowledge Platforms</th>
<th>Characteristics of Effective and Sustainable Networks (Note: not specific to learning networks)</th>
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</table>
| 1. Having a clear understanding of who their stakeholders are. | 1. Pre-existing social capital:  
    - Networks that build on/evolve from existing relationships (rather than engineered or top-down created networks)  
    - Networks that have built up a shared history that creates mutual trust (or at least a good understanding of points in common and differences) |
| 2. Being demand driven and designed with platform users to offer a set of core functions or services that align with their needs and behaviors. User involvement means resisting the temptation to be supply driven or offer services based on available technology. | 2. Strategic fit  
    - This includes the shared vision that network members have developed.  
    - This is a crucial aspect in the early stages of network formation and will have a strong impact on its effectiveness. It often requires a big investment from members.  
    - It also entails the value addition the network brings to all members. What is the network’s relevance to its members?  
    - Diversification of the value proposition (more entry points) makes the network stronger. |
| 3. Understanding the context a platform is working in. Successful platforms will have identified their niche in relation to other existing networks, platforms and spaces where their target audiences engage and have worked out how their activities support and complement that existing engagement. They are flexible and adaptive to changes in these contexts over time. | 3. Connectivity  
    - The quality, mix, spread, inclusiveness of the relationships and connections in relation to the purpose of the network  
    - Speak with one voice when it matters, developing a collective surge capacity |
| 4. Having properly assessed the resources required to generate and sustain user engagement, effective and sustainable ‘communities of practice’ actively manage their memberships and are responsive to their accessibility issues, working practices and concerns about privacy. | 4. Leadership  
    - Strong, non-hierarchical leadership that facilitates and fosters rather than top-down management  
    - Leadership that is shared and distributed among members |
| 5. Governance and management  
    - Control is shared and all members can influence management decisions  
    - Clear governance and management structures as well as well-defined rights and responsibilities of members  
    - Agree what success looks like and how it will be measured | 5. Governance and management  
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    - Clear governance and management structures as well as well-defined rights and responsibilities of members  
    - Agree what success looks like and how it will be measured |
| 6. Mutual trust  
    - Reciprocity – a mutual give and take that develops into trust  
    - Openness and willingness to share and learn | 6. Mutual trust  
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    - Openness and willingness to share and learn |
| 7. Accountability  
    - Members participate  
    - Members are represented  
    - Members are committed and have ownership | 7. Accountability  
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    - Members are represented  
    - Members are committed and have ownership |
| 8. Organizational effectiveness  
    - The network provides quality services  
    - The necessary skills and capacities are present  
    - Manages to tap into the capacity of its members (resources, time, talent) | 8. Organizational effectiveness  
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| 9. Adaptability  
    - Capacity to adapt to changing context and needs of the membership  
    - Continuous learning and feedback loops  
    - Dynamism | 9. Adaptability  
    - Capacity to adapt to changing context and needs of the membership  
    - Continuous learning and feedback loops  
    - Dynamism |
| 10. Joint learning  
    - Commitment to learn together | 10. Joint learning  
    - Commitment to learn together |

**Source:**  
Oxfam. 2016.  
A critical ingredient for the success of a collaboration or network, is clarity on who the members are, and responsiveness to them.

5.1 Narrow or broad membership? Passive vs engaged?

Some knowledge hubs, such as an online portal, aim to serve an entire sector and reach thousands or even millions of users. These tend to be uni-directional portals for disseminating knowledge, and success depends on users finding what they need. But a collaboration that aims to support generation, distillation, exchange and uptake of knowledge will require a more specific and engaged community. The value proposition has to be strong enough for members to actively engage.

So the options are:

- A narrow and clearly defined membership, with active engagement and a level of commitment to shaping, generating and using knowledge;
- Broad and self-selected members or target audience, as passive users of knowledge;
- Some combination of the above, with different levels or types of members.

There are several examples of collaborations that have multiple tiers of membership or engagement. The Global Impact Investing Network is an industry-building membership organization:

- The Investors’ Council is limited to investors (not intermediaries), and is an active forum for exchange and discussion, and influential in setting the GIIN agenda.
- GIIN members include investors and intermediaries. Members pay an annual fee and get privileged access to GIIN resources, data and events. Members can join specific ‘Program Tracks’ to get more involved in specific issues.
- Open access information, which includes research reports, is well-used by the wider community.

The Consultative Group to Assist the Poor, C-GAP also balances small membership with large audiences:

- Over 30 organizations are members. They contribute resources, ascribe to C-Gap mission and are part of the Council of 30 membership organizations.
- C-GAP supports the micro-finance gateway, which has over a million visits per year, 150,000 downloads, and 18,000 subscribers.

MEMBERSHIP – How you expect to balance objectives in relation to quality versus quantity of your members. We have learned that with greater numbers, overall participation rates drop and ‘participation inequality’ increases. We generally keep our membership as low as possible, as this strengthens relationships within the group and raises participation. Whilst we believe starting from a default position of openness, particularly with respect to the wider availability of the knowledge products that are produced by platforms is always appropriate, we do recognize that managing knowledge platforms (or at least parts of them) as closed CoPs for partners can be beneficial in some cases. Clearly, having a transparent process for selecting and approving members which includes guidance on inclusion and practical issues such as monitoring conflicts of interest is essential in these cases. Similarly, being clear about the role and responsibility of partners is important and should ideally be documented through Terms of Reference and Memoranda of Understanding. IDS, 2016
5.2 Who are priority stakeholders or members?

If a defined set of members or partners is needed, to enable more active engagement, then who are they? Who most needs a collaborative learning alliance? Who is most needed in order to make such a collaboration effective?

- Donors
- Governments
- Entrepreneurs/companies
- Market intermediaries: associations, consultants, NGOs, mission-driven organizations
- Does geography matter? A balance of northern and southern?
- Across which languages?

5.3 What would drive member engagement?

Why would members put in time and effort into such a collaboration? Why would you? This is a critical question to discuss.

Based on experience of other networks, some factors that drive engagement include:

- A sense of ownership, an ability to guide the network priorities;
- Responsiveness of the network to member needs;
- Size: smaller-sized networks generally have higher engagement;
- The network fills a priority need of the member, e.g. solving a problem, providing access to otherwise unattainable but useful information, providing a way to disseminate own material to others;
- Proactive facilitation to maintain momentum and highlight specific valuable opportunities to engage;
- Ease of access (timeliness, online/location, technological ease);
- Appropriate privacy settings;
- Trust in the network, credibility;
- Relevance and style e.g. blogs and other resources packaged specifically to respond to key external events or milestones can increase interaction.
6 Early considerations for governance and management

6.1 Governance

There are many different models for governance and management of a collaborative initiative. Two important decisions are:

- Is there a Secretariat or Coordinator responsible for setting up and operating the collaboration? If so, who funds it, and how big is it? If not, who makes the collaboration work and will it survive?
- Governance: Is governance by funders, all members, or representatives of key stakeholder groups?

If there is a management team or secretariat, a host of decisions need to be made about its size and composition (including possible secondments from member organizations), skill sets, location (including north vs south and co-located or dispersed), and their function vis-a-vis members and partners.

BOX 2 Governance models

Governance models of collaborative initiatives can be more or less top-down or decentralized. Broad options are:

1. Agenda set and governed by one expert organization, or small group of partners permanently
   ADVANTAGES: Quick decisions, efficient, long-term engagement from organization who is bought into platform success.
   DISADVANTAGES: Doesn’t engage stakeholders/members in setting agenda. Must choose the right partners who have the time, motivation and organizational capabilities required to engage.

2. Rotating or elected committees/secretariat responsible for strategic decisions over a set period of time
   ADVANTAGES: Quick decisions, efficiency.
   DISADVANTAGES: Could lead to change in direction of organization every few years. Inefficiencies in changing leadership.

3. All members responsible for key strategic decisions through a Council
   ADVANTAGE: Inclusive of all members.
   DISADVANTAGES: Time-consuming for all members, inefficient.

NB. With either top-down or decentralized governance models, the operations can either be within one organization (or a new organization of permanent staff) or spread between partners.

In practice, organizations often combine multiple layers to achieve a balance of efficiency and engagement. For example, the SAI Platform¹. A secretariat runs the platform’s operational activities, committees and working groups deal with specific issues. The general assembly is made up of all members and elects the executive committee. The executive committee, elected every two years, works with the secretariat, to ensure quality and financial sustainability. The advisory council consists of members from the wider community (NGOs, farmers’ organizations, research institutes) to provide advice and direction. It is composed of six members elected for three years.

¹ SAI Platform http://www.saiplatform.org/about-us/governance-3
6.2 Resourcing

One of the lessons flagged by many existing collaboration and learning initiatives is ‘don’t underestimate the effort required’. The activities involved in any kind of knowledge collaboration are time-consuming:

- Building collaboration and managing partnerships requires huge amounts of communication and is extremely time-consuming.
- Creating, curating, facilitating, synthesizing, or disseminating knowledge requires a keen eye for detail, and a combination of sound content and process – in other words, a need for sound human resources.

Some knowledge networks run with a team of two, three or four people or FTE, e.g. the Practitioner Hub, Seas of Change. A minimal online platform can run with just a few hundred thousand dollars per year. Some collaborative initiatives with a wider agenda have a double-digit organizational team, spread across action and research, e.g. Sustainable Food Lab. Some of the largest, most ambitious, or long-standing platforms have invested millions of dollars to date, often drawing on extensive donor commitments, such as the Climate Development Knowledge Network and CGAP:

- The Climate Development Knowledge Networks combines knowledge-generation with advocacy, and technical support. The annual budget has varied from £4 million in Year 1, to a peak of £21 million, and now £13 million (2016). Of the £87 million spent to date, £9 million is tagged as knowledge management, £22 million as research. The largest item is technical assistance (£38 million). To date it has organized 289 events and run 221 projects, published 278 peer-reviewed research outputs, and as of 2016 has had over 13,000 unique visitors to the website per month. It is funded by multiple donors.

- CGAP is a global partnership working to increase access to financial services by the poor. It now runs on a budget of around $19 million per year, from multiple members/donors. The website lists 54 staff. Last year, CGAP published 38 new publications in five languages, and hosted 36 events in 7 countries. The CGAP website had over 700,000 site visits, and the Microfinance Gateway (the knowledge-sharing platform) lists almost 11,000 publications from 4,000 organizations, with over one million annual website visits.

² Oxfam, 2016

It is often assumed that user-driven platforms manage themselves and require lower ongoing resourcing than more content-driven platforms. In fact the opposite is usually true. More centralized management models for platforms tend to be more efficient and low-risk but can be seen as ‘top-down’ to the detriment of user engagement. More decentralized partnership models are higher risk and more resource-intensive but usually deliver a higher-quality platform with greater relevance for stakeholders.

It is our experience that knowledge platforms fairly routinely over-promise in terms of what they can deliver with the organizational and resourcing constraints that they face. IDS, 2016

Of course, resourcing is no panacea for effectiveness of sustainability. Sustainability will depend on delivering a strong value proposition to members, sufficient leadership, good execution, and capacity of the network to adapt to a dynamic and changing environment, review vision and strategies, and reinvent itself going forward².
The experience of other collaborative initiatives and learning alliances highlights key issues that would need to be tackled in order to develop further collaboration for a learning agenda on inclusive business. There is no ‘right’ answer, but whether and how to move forward will require clear discussion and ultimately agreement on:

- a shared mission: identification of a gap that needs to be met and is a priority;
- understanding constraints that currently inhibit resolution of this gap;
- a niche for what evolves so that it fits well into the current space, enhancing not duplicating what exists;
- a strong value proposition for members, making engagement worth the effort;
- clarity on what kind of collaboration is required, what scope and structure;
- clarity on who it is for: priority actors and secondary audiences;
- easy and attractive engagement opportunities for key stakeholders;
- understanding of current practices of stakeholders for learning and reflection, what is good and inadequate about them;
- governance structure;
- resources;
- implementation/facilitation capacity.
# Annex 1

## The difference between a Knowledge Portal and Community of Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles of a Knowledge Portal</th>
<th>Roles of a Community of Practice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research repositories</strong>: Searchable databases signposting key research and policy documents organized around key themes or topics.</td>
<td>Identifying, selecting and convening the right group of participants, of the appropriate size and caliber, to address the purpose:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>News services</strong>: Keeping stakeholders up-to-date with relevant and timely information.</td>
<td>• Fostering a safe, respectful and rewarding experience for all;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Translation services</strong>: Repackaging the findings of, for example, academic research papers to make them more accessible to non-specialist or non-technical audiences.</td>
<td>• Providing engaging, supportive and credible facilitation;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synthesis products</strong>: Reviewing the body of evidence on a particular issue and providing analysis highlighting key messages. Synthesis services are a widely adopted means of making knowledge accessible – particularly for policy audiences, which are often characterized as being ‘time-poor’, and might not have the required background or capacity to use more academic knowledge.</td>
<td>• Capturing and sharing knowledge generated and shared in appropriate and effective ways;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning platforms</strong>: Presenting structured training and learning resources. Learning platforms can be an effective way of addressing stakeholders’ needs concerning their longer-term professional development and capacity, and also a useful incentive for stimulating engagement with knowledge platforms.</td>
<td>• Brokering relationships and match-making those with shared interests; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Helpdesks</strong>: Providing a responsive service to directly address a particular user inquiry. Helpdesks can provide a highly effective means of engaging with stakeholders which, again, responds to their capacity needs and professional development but in a more immediate way than learning platforms. The key consideration with helpdesks is how to predict and manage demand.</td>
<td>• Managing events and activities that further the aims of the group and its individual members.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Example of a Community of Practice (CoP)

Sustainable Food Lab runs a community of practice on measurement in agricultural supply chains. It brings together companies, development organizations, lenders, and certification organizations to share cases and lessons and to develop consensus on a common approach to smallholder performance measurement. Specific activities include:

- Workshops and peer-to-peer discussions on measurement that focus on sharing what works and what doesn’t when assessing the sustainability of smallholder supply chains;
- Development of the framework called ‘A Shared Approach to Smallholder Performance Measurement’; and,
- Fieldwork to test indicators and metrics.

An early output is a guidance document for gathering and reporting metrics on the farm economy in a more aligned way. The CoP members hold face-to-face events. Around 70 organizations belong to the community.

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Footnote:
