



sharing lessons to enable innovation in agriculture

Impact Evaluation Steering Committee

Terms of Reference

Introduction

Department for International Development (DFID) financing of the Research Into Use (RIU) programme began in July 2006 and was designed as a five-year programme. DFID has committed £37.5m over a period of five years.

The programme has identified and supported over 30 research experiments based on their potential to contribute to sustained growth and poverty reduction. The inception period ran until June 2007 and it was envisaged that the implementation phase would run until 2011.

The aim of the programme is to accumulate and evaluate evidence to shape and share lessons on how best to enable innovation in the agricultural sector so as to achieve social and economic gains in diverse developing country settings.

RIU is primarily a research programme. In undertaking the research, however, RIU also aims to put existing research products into use at scale.

This is not simply a question of how better use can be made of the large stockpile of agricultural research products that remain on the shelf - although that was one of the original rationales for establishing RIU. Rather, the research focus of RIU is the relationship between agricultural research and innovation - working towards identifying better processes to get research into use, rather than how to put specific research products into use.

This approach responds to extensive evidence that suggests that agricultural innovation is very often not the result of simply transferring research products to farmers, entrepreneurs and policy makers. More often, research promotes innovation only when it is embedded in the wide set of relationships and processes which help shape ideas and put them into use.

The key objective of RIU is to determine the impact of a range of different approaches to making the best use of agricultural research as a policy instrument for development. This will involve looking at timing, settings, contexts, people, policies and institutions. In seeking answers to this complex question, RIU aims to provide guidance (but not a blueprint) to those seeking to make better use of agricultural research as a tool to bring about social and economic development, thereby helping to shape future practice and policy.

In terms of assessing programme impact, both RIU and DFID are committed to an evaluation process that is independent, robust, field-based, and focused on the areas of greatest strategic

value. To ensure these standards are met, RIU is in the process of establishing a number of mechanisms that will govern the impact evaluation. These include a peer review mechanism and the formation of an international steering committee consisting of senior technical and evaluation advisers.

The Evaluation Process

The evaluation of the RIU has been divided into three phases. In the first phase, the evaluation team will establish the scope, objectives and methods of the evaluation, resulting in an approach paper. The second, or implementation, phase includes surveys and other identified activities that will establish the impact of the project, and lead to the final, reporting phase.

A number of organizations with an international reputation of excellence will be recruited to design and implement specific modules for the evaluation e.g. Social Development Direct will focus on modules and methodologies on Social Exclusion, the IDLgroup will focus on modules and methodologies to evaluate enterprise development and organisational change, and TANGO International will develop modules and methodology to assess impact on livelihoods.

The evaluation will be structured around the following core principles:

Accountability

- Has the project delivered on the commitments outlined in its logframe and/or contracts?

Lessons Learned

- What are the key lessons that can be learned from the RIU implementation process?

Addressing DAC Evaluation Criteria

- Relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact

Evaluation Products

There will be three specific products from this evaluation. These are as follows:

An Evaluation Approach Paper: This will outline the design of the evaluation, including: Key evaluation questions, methodology, scope, terms of reference. This will be a public document.

An Interim Findings Paper: To be produced at the conclusion of the second phase. This will provide initial analysis of key issues, findings and possible conclusions. This will be an internal document.

Evaluation Paper: The final evaluation reports following the DFID agreed format. This will contain key findings (with supporting evidence), conclusions, key issues for the future and recommendations. This will be a public document.

Steering Committee Objectives

Support a robust and credible impact evaluation of the Research Into Use.

Identify key policy and programme implications from the implementation of Research Into Use.

Steering Committee Meetings

Four meetings will take over a period 12 months (July 2010 to June 2011). The meetings will last no longer than two hours.

Sir Gordon Conway, Professor of International Development, Centre for Environmental Policy, Imperial College, London will chair this meeting. RIU will provide an agenda and briefing notes prior to each meeting.

Where possible, steering committee members will be asked to attend. However, to reduce time commitments and carbon costs video conferencing or Tele conferencing will be deployed.

The specific inputs of the steering committee in the meeting will be as follows:

- Assist in prioritizing and determining the strategic focus of the evaluation. Specifically, ensure the evaluation effectively addresses the issues of accountability and focuses on issues of critical strategic relevance to wider policy debates on innovation in the agricultural sector.
- Assist in developing a robust and credible evaluation process. Provide comment on the appropriateness of the evaluation methodologies, case studies, etc.
- Assist in the identification of strategic themes arising from the initial evaluation findings. Specifically, ensure the products of the evaluation add value to the strategic/policy debates over agricultural innovation and research.

Outputs

Steering Committee members will be asked to provide either written or verbal comments on the following:

- Evaluation approach paper
- Initial findings paper
- Key findings, conclusion and recommendations arising from the draft evaluation paper

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Further information

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