Highlights from the main Discussions and Conclusions

Summary
The extension proposal workshop was held in Amman in 28-31 March, 2014 to discuss and prepare the content of Dryland Systems Extension Proposal which was finalized and sent on April 25 to the Consortium Office for approval.

The meeting brought together DS CG Center Focal Points, DS Target Region Coordinators and most other key CG scientists working in each of the five Target Regions 'Flagship Projects (FP)', to define a new organizational structure of the CRP and to revisit the mapping scheme of IDOs towards a new hierarchy of IDOs.

Participants also addressed the challenges they faced in 2013 while implementing the CRP DS and interacting with other CRPs. These challenges are related to funding, implementation of activities in the field, and collaboration with other CRPs. They also discussed the plan for the upcoming activities in 2014.

1. **Highlights from discussions**
Discussions were conducted in small groups to generate ideas and discuss specific themes. Afterwards, each group presented ideas and recommendations in plenary sessions.

Major themes were about theories of change (ToC), impact pathways, gender, IDO priorities and hierarchy, clusters of activities, reinforcement of partnerships and regional collaboration, and contribution of FPs to IDOs. In addition, there were sessions on communication, capacity development to ensure sustainability of future results.

A consensus was reached to organize the CRP-DS within and across the FPs on the basis of Agricultural Livelihood Systems (ALS) as the principal unit of analysis and treat those as the clusters within the FPs. Strategic Research Themes (STRs) 1-4[1] were also converted into ToCs and impact pathways.

Discussions led to four principal ALSs[2] with 80% communality amongst the FPs. This process offers the necessary opportunities for transferring knowledge, tools and approaches amongst the FPs for collective learning.

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[1] SRT1: Approaches to strengthening innovation systems, building stakeholder innovation capacity, and linking knowledge to policy action; SRT2: Reducing vulnerability and managing risk; SRT3: Sustainable intensification for more productive, profitable and diversified dryland agriculture with well-established linkages to markets; SRT4: Anticipating and measuring impacts and cross-regional synthesis.

[2] The four principal ALSs are: Pastoral Systems, Agro-pastoral systems, Intensive rain-fed systems, Tree-based systems. Other FP specific ALSs are: Irrigated crop systems, Homegardens systems and Traditional subsistence systems.

IDOs were restructured: Only two IDOs were maintained at the "n-level" and the remaining four IDOs were retained at the "n-1 level". One IDO (Capacity to Innovate) was imported from the Cali list, which includes the eight original DS IDOs (Image 1).

The outcome for each FP includes three to five ALS clusters, each of which was made to fit a common outcome pathway defined by four research phases: discovery (n-4), proof of concept (n-3), pilot testing (n-2), and up-scaling within the FPs (n-1)[3].

The transition from (n-1 level) to (n-level) is the **out-scaling phase** where impact in the extrapolation domain is expected. Participants agreed that DS could only play a facilitating role in the out-scaling process and would rely on strong regional partnerships for this important delivery process that also has validation research aspects.
In the conversion from SRTs to ToCs, SRT-1 dealt with the development of tools and system models which was captured in the discovery phase of this outcome pathway.
However, more region-specific discovery processes will be found in this science incubator phase as well. The agro-ecological designations of SRT 2 and 3 have now been further differentiated into the seven ALS to emphasize the system approach within the DS, and facilitate cross-CRP comparative studies.

The focus on **innovation platforms** (SRT 4) has now been broadened in scope and a key element has been elevated to a new IDO "Capacity to Innovate" at the (n-1 level). This will ensure that the concept of shared community learning as a means of improving ALS resilience and community wealth, equity and wellbeing is embedded in each Flagship project throughout the impact pathway.

The **DS partners** have individually or jointly made progress in adopting the systems approach and this experience is being shared across the FPs. However, the current mapping of the ALS activities to the agreed impact pathway structure, shown in the attached figure, promises very interesting research to be done across FPs, including the identification of gaps in characterization, information and science capacity.

2. **Communication**

The DS action plan for strategic communication and knowledge sharing has three components: *Strategic communication*; defining specific target groups to inform and influence, *knowledge sharing*; supporting the regions and action sites to capture, synthesize, share experience, and activate learning across regions, and *information management*; the processes and activities for gathering, structuring and providing access to all information generated by action sites and target regions.

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[3] Discovery phase: new concept of product, service or process; proof of concept phase: testing of proof of concept in real world / controlled conditions; Pilot phase: multi-location release/trials for smallholder' benefit; Scaling up phase: release for scaling up & adoption in different locations

DS communication strategy has five action areas:
  a. Marketing communication: to ensure high visibility and branding of Dryland Systems.
  b. Strategic communication and advocacy: to inform and influence specific groups worldwide.
  c. Website: to provide broad access to concepts, key messages and results of Dryland Systems.
  d. Information management: to provide guidance for capturing, organizing (cataloging) and providing open access to all data and information generated by Dryland Systems.
  e. Knowledge sharing and learning: establish processes and techniques to capture and synthesize the learning from the research process as it progresses.

Activities in 2014:
In 2014 activities are planned towards increasing visibility and rolling web campaigns
  a. **Phase 1 (late 2013-to date)**
      i. Focus on increasing visibility.
      ii. Rolling weekly campaigns: The result is increased number of audiences.

  a. **Phase 2 (January 2014 onwards)**
      i. Intensify regular communication
      ii. Create first science communication products.
      iii. Start advocacy activities – value of drylands research investment.
      iv. Engage and influence specific groups: To be implemented by the communication team at global level with local input by the focal points working in the regions.

Knowledge sharing and information management
Research material should be captured and assembled in one cyperspace to be accessible for everybody to match the needs of the flagship projects.

Partnership is crucial, because it provides a chance for better information sharing for everyone around the world.

3. **Capacity building**
Capacity development is inherently embedded in CRPs, and this commitment is already estimated to amount to 5-10% of the DS budget. There is a substantial need for capacity development in the field of systems research, as well as Innovation Platforms and learning to foster change in the dry lands. The DS leadership is aware of this fact and has decided to undertake a needs assessment on this topic, both within Dryland Systems and FPs and Action Sites within Dryland Systems, and for wider institutional partnership level. This inventory should provide a basis for the elaboration of a DS capacity development program that will ensure the necessary uptake of the Dryland Systems approach for up- and out-scaling purposes.

Key activities in 2014:
  a. Conduct capacity assessment for potential beneficiaries with focus on gender and youth.
  b. Develop the capacity development strategy in-line with the Plan of Work and Budget (POWB) proposed for 2014.
  c. Advice focal points on capacity development as an integral part of a systems approach and on the results of the needs assessment exercise.
  d. Propose policy options for timely planning and periodical and final reporting.
  e. Facilitate capitalization of experience in capacity development for up-scaling and out-scaling of successful experiences.
  f. Engage across the CGIAR through the Capacity Development Community of Practice (CoP) and contribute to the capacity development activities as requested.
  g. Develop an open web platform in collaboration with CODIS[4] to collect training information.
  h. Mobilize resources for capacity development to identify and facilitate contacts with potential donors.

4. **Gender**

Dryland Systems has developed a Gender Strategy, which was approved by the Consortium Office. The prominence of this strategy is reflected in the IDOs at the FP level related to gender in the domains of food security as well as empowerment. Gender's strategic focus is to embed gender conceptually in the CRP's systems framework and technically and operationally in each research cycle. It also aims at integrating gender in M&E and data management.

Major Gender activities for 2014 are:
  a. Workshop for gender focal points of all Dryland Systems Center Focal Points, FP Coordinators in May 26-28 2014 to establish an implementation approach for the gender strategy in the FPs, Action Sites, and achieve technological innovation of development programs that include gender mainstreaming.
  b. Representation of the Gender Team in the Dryland Systems Science and Implementation Meeting during later June to early July 2014. The end-goal is to develop/agree on the methodology for participatory action research to promote transformative change in gender inequality, and select one or more Action Sites for piloting relevant methodologies.
  c. Identify capacity development needs for scientists and for gender specialists.
  d. Knowledge sharing: document successful implementation of gender integration in technology development and adaptation, and contribute with one or more case studies to the Consortium Office's Gender and Agriculture Research Network cross-CRPs on the transformation of gender norms in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management.

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[4] ICARDA department of Communication, Documentation, and Information Services (CODIS)

Dryland Systems Results and Management Framework - This example shows how the program integrates the program's Activities and Outputs, and the 4-phased pathway for research results to progress to six intermediate development outcomes, and on to SLOs. It also shows entry points between Dryland Systems and other CRPs and how donors can target investments at specific parts of the program.