



Building provincial capacity for sustainable agricultural mechanisation in Nepal

Overview

The activities within the Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio (SDIP) have highlighted the potential for Conservation Agriculture-based Sustainable Intensification (CASI) practices to improve the livelihoods of those in rural areas of the Eastern Gangetic Plains. This has led to the development of substantial recommendations to create enabling environments that facilitate the uptake of CASI in farming communities. Yet there remains a gap in how to ‘put into action’ such recommendations, and as such there remain significant researchable questions relating how to strategically plan for and implement transformational change at provincial levels.

This project aims to address this gap through the production of participatory roadmaps. Roadmapping is a flexible planning technique to support strategic planning and programming. This process will be developed and applied to two newly formed provinces in Nepal. It will explore the pathways for increased CASI mechanisation through a series of activities that aim to improve linkages and capacity to create and maintain enabling environments. CASI mechanisation is integral to the wider sustainable intensification of the region, and there remains particular scope to engage with and develop provincial level institutions to increase effective policy, planning and programming related to CASI mechanisation. The project addresses a core need in developing processes that engage stakeholders at multiple scales to facilitate broad impact from agricultural mechanisation.

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| ACIAR project number | WAC/2018/220 |
| Start date and duration (years) | February 2019 (18 months) |
| Location | Nepal Terai |
| Budget | AU\$250,000 |

Project leader(s) and Commissioned Organisation

Dr Brendan Brown, CIMMYT

Partner country project leaders and their institutions

Dr Ram Krishna Shrestha,
 Department of Agriculture, Nepal
 Surya Prasad Adhikari,
 Nepal Agricultural Research Council

ACIAR Research Program Manager

Dr Robyn Johnston

Research

The research question to be explored is: ‘what is needed to strategically develop, implement and sustain transformative agricultural change’, using agricultural mechanisation as a case study.

This project will be implemented in two newly formed Nepali provinces (Provinces 1 and 2 with a focus on the Nepali Terai), applying learnings from the wider South Asian region.



The specific objectives are:

1. To formally map and understand the institutional landscape for CASI mechanisation at provincial level;
2. To facilitate the development of provincially focused CASI mechanisation multi-stakeholder platforms; and
3. To mentor the development of a road map approach that leads to enhanced enabling environments for CASI mechanisation.

The research activities to be undertaken include:

Activity 1 - Understand: Learning from previous and ongoing interventions that have been both successes and failures relating to CASI mechanisation (essentially, what worked where and why?). It will also map the institutional environment (baseline assessment) and interact with emerging service providers to understand what they need for an enabling environment to take them to the next level. Finally, a set of protocols for roadmap development will also be finalised based on ongoing innovation platform activities.

Activity 2 - Engage: Establish a multi-stakeholder platform, based on the learnings from activity 1. Groups will be formed with members including government officers, service providers and other value chain actors.

Activity 3 - Plan: Roadmap development will be undertaken as part of a multi-stakeholder planning exercise that includes needs assessment, alliance-mapping and a regional learning process. Participants will undertake capacity development activities, primarily around strategic programming, building mutually beneficial alliances and developing gender sensitive mechanisation strategies. A field visit to selected locations of success, most likely in Bihar and West Bengal (but to be informed by activity 1) will also be conducted.

Activity 4 - Implement: Roadmaps will be implemented through continual revision and alliance brokering.

Activity 5 - Learn: Through a synthesis of objectives 1 to 4, publishable outputs will be produced for broader impact beyond the two Nepali provinces. There will also be an end-line assessment of the policy context in order to assess any changes that may have been made throughout the course of the project.

Anticipated outcomes

This project will build capacity to jointly develop strategies that are mutually beneficial to stakeholders and then progress these strategies through the development of clear roadmaps for facilitating change, using agricultural machinery as a case study. It is envisaged that the learnings from this case study will be useful in understanding the development and implementation of provincial level enabling environments for success more broadly in follow on work.

Impact pathway

By targeting sub-national governments as change makers, this project will explore how to strategically plan for and implement roadmaps for change through systems-oriented action research. While these sub-national governments will be the focus, they will be mandated and upskilled to interact with value chain actors as a core participant in the planning and implementation process.

The project will combine *ex-post* analysis of successful interventions with situational learning from the development, implementation and evaluation of strategic and participatory roadmaps. These roadmaps will provide the institutional mandate to explore locally-specific impact pathways developed on the basis of participatory innovation platforms, but at a higher, sub-national level. This research therefore fills an important gap between work currently ongoing at community ('node') level and in national policy dialogues regarding sustainable intensification.

There is significant potential to facilitate change through sub-national governance interventions. With a growing decentralisation of governments in the region, especially in India and Nepal, provincial governments are increasingly empowered with resources and mandates to target interventions that improve the livelihoods of their constituents. This creates an opportunity to move away from national and trans-national visioning exercises and ambitious wish-lists without exploration of pathways for implementation. Instead, the project will build capacity to jointly develop strategies that are mutually beneficial to stakeholders and then progress these strategies through the development of clear roadmaps for facilitating change. This will be applied in Nepal, where provincial governments are currently undergoing substantial change in implementing a new federal structure and there exists a demand and need to develop capacity in strategic programming and planning.