

Agri4D 2023: Building resilient food systems in uncertain times. Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences & Online — 26-28 September 2023

From Project interventions to Transformative Impacts: Charting Paths for Sustained Adoption of Agri-Food Innovations

Theme 2: Governance and rights in food systems: Leaving no one behind

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Abstract/Session concept note text: Sustainable agriculture and resilient food systems require farmers to adopt agri-food innovations. Many development initiatives have promoted promising innovations, but achieving sustained adoption is challenging. Project interventions often witness fleeting uptakes, with many farmers reverting to traditional practices when project cycles are over. This "project syndrome" phenomenon is a well-known issue in agricultural development, where farmers' adoption behavior is driven largely by project incentives rather than a genuine acceptance based on the potential benefits of the innovations, hindering widespread impacts and a desirable systemic change. It calls for a shift from a project-centric approach to a more transformative one that prioritizes farmers' buy-in, stakeholder engagement, and co-execution of innovation processes and outcomes.

This interactive dialogue session will bring together a diverse group of stakeholders, including researchers, practitioners, donors, policymakers, agro-dealers, and farmers, to discuss and chart the paths for sustained adoption of agri-food innovations. We will explore the incidence, underlying causes, and consequences of project syndrome and identify strategies to encourage organic and transformative adoption of Agri-Food innovations. The session will begin with a keynote presentation, setting the stage for subsequent interactions. Then, a panel discussion featuring experts from different regions with first-hand experience, insights, and recommendations to facilitate sustained adoption will follow. Among other relevant topics, the panel will provide perspectives on farmer-centered design and cocreation, local capacity-building, market incentives and value chains, and policy and governance frameworks. Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions to the panel, share ideas and experiences, and co-create strategies necessary to achieve sustained adoption of agri-food innovations, leading to a lasting impact on the lives of farmers and their communities. Overall, this dialogue session provides a valuable platform for advancing the discourse on the sustained adoption of agri-food innovations and for catalyzing collective action towards transformative change.