

Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems

A 3-Step Process for Evaluating Livestock & Nutrition Research for Development Projects

Evaluation Purpose

To obtain a comprehensive understanding of the short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes of project efforts, and to improve the understanding of the processes necessary for conducting impactful research for development.

Evaluation Team

Lead Implementing Institution: Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems
Evaluation Team: Dr. Marjatta Eilittä (former Deputy Director); Dr. Sebastian Galindo (Evaluation Faculty Advisor); Ms. Brigitte Pfluger (Evaluation Specialist); Dr. Zeleke Mekuriaw (Regional Coordinator, East Africa); Mr. Varijaksha Panicker Padmakumar (Regional Coordinator, Asia); Dr. Moctar Karimou (Country Coordinator, Niger); and Dr. Isidore Gnanda (Regional Coordinator, Burkina Faso)

Evaluation Locations

Implementation Locations: Ethiopia (Step 1: July 2017), Rwanda (Step 1: July 2017), Nepal (Step 1: January 2018; Step 2: April 2019), Cambodia (Step 1 (midpoint: October 2018), Burkina Faso, Niger

Roadmap to Livestock & Nutrition-Focused Evaluations

1

STEP 1: Innovation Evaluation

Investigate the research process & innovation relevance & characteristics

Methods: Field & exit interviews;
archival research & desk reviews

Project midpoint and near end to end of project completion

2

STEP 2: Dissemination Studies

Examine awareness & application of the innovations & their roadblocks

Methods: Field studies; desk reviews;
Innovation Platform meetings

Approximately 6 months after project completion

3

Step 3: Impact Evaluation

Assess longer-term changes at the local level as a result of the innovations

Methods: Field studies; desk reviews;
tracking policy changes

Near end to end of project completion

- Step 1, Innovation Evaluation, investigates the livestock research for development processes by assessing the relevance and characteristics of each new or adapted innovation (i.e., technologies and practices).
- This will involve looking at the compatibility of all researched technologies and practices to consider their possible uptake given the local contexts.
- Step 1 will document the practices and processes used by each project, which will form the basis for identifying the best practices for conducting and managing livestock research for development projects.
- This knowledge sharing will also facilitate reflection of the project process and lessons learned through which future plans and processes could be adapted.

- Step 2, Dissemination Studies, investigates if uptake of the research for development efforts has initiated by organizations or institutions across the countries where the Livestock Systems Innovation Lab works, or if there is a need for action, including communicating about the innovation to organizations interested in its dissemination.
- The results of these studies will indicate if the essential components for impact are present.
- For example, these could include, the level of engagement by organizations conducting extension or private sector buy-in, the level of interest and engagement by the stakeholders, a detailed understanding of the technology or practice by the stakeholders and those carrying out the extension efforts, and the assessments of the characteristics of the "early adopters," among others.

- Step 3, Impact Evaluation, will be limited in scope and number, because:
 - Evaluation of impact should be conducted a considerable amount of time after the research projects have ended, yet the Livestock Systems Innovation Lab is only a five-year project with many Reach grants finishing at near end of Livestock Systems Innovation Lab project period.
 - Implementation of extension activities is beyond the scope of the Innovation Lab.
- These will be conducted with a view to informing future research efforts and will produce qualitative evidence of changes (both positive and negative) as a result of the project.
- Impact evaluations will be done by comparing the project's intended outcomes or theory of change with the actual changes as a result of the adoption of the innovation.



(1) Left: Prena Karki, Coordinator for the Nepal-based project working on Mastitis Control and Prevention (PI: Keshav Sah, Heifer Project International) holds a focus group discussion during implementation of Step 1 of the evaluation cycle. (2) Right: Dr. Zeleke Mekuriaw, East Africa Regional Coordinator for the Livestock Systems Innovation Lab) conducts an interview as part of the Step 1 evaluation efforts with a farmer who participated in the Rwanda-based project working on Milk Quality and Production Practices (PI: Jean Baptiste Ndahetuye, University of Rwanda).

Framework Origins

The overall aim of the Livestock Systems Innovation Lab's evaluation framework is to improve program performance and to assess progress towards achieving the program's goal to enhance the production, marketing, and consumption of safe and nutritious animal-source foods (ASF) in the target countries in order to increase the incomes, livelihoods, nutrition, and health of households, especially those of vulnerable women and children. The development of the evaluation framework is original work developed by the monitoring and evaluation team of the Livestock Systems Innovation Lab, and its associated tools were informed by Rogers' diffusion of innovations theory (2003). Specifically, the four main elements of diffusion (i.e., the actual innovation, the communication channels, the social system, and the effect of time) and the five attributes of innovations (i.e., relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability) were fundamental for the conceptualization and creation of the framework and tools. This framework is unlike others as it spans the livestock research for development continuum – research processes and implementation; innovation and results dissemination; and program and capacity building impacts.

Extension Implications

The evaluation framework developed and implemented by the Livestock Systems Innovation Lab has significant implications for extension work including, but not limited to, the following:

- Through the use of participatory approaches that enhance communication and collaboration among diverse stakeholders, extensionists, and researchers that implement the evaluation framework can achieve a better understanding of how their work should intersect and complement each other.
- The utilization of key theoretical concepts from Rogers' diffusion of innovations to inform and focus the evaluation on innovations, communication channels, and social systems allows for an evaluation design that can be immediately utilized by extension to design and implement its efforts.
- The evaluation framework is designed to serve as a learning tool for the Livestock Systems Innovation Lab, its sub-awardees, USAID, and partner institutions. This evaluation approach resonates and is culturally relevant to extensionists that can use the framework as a vehicle for learning to improve performance and outcomes.

References

•Rogers, E.M. 2003. Diffusion of Innovations. New York: The Free Press. 5th ed.

This study is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and its Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems managed by the University of Florida and the International Livestock Research Institute. The contents are the responsibility of the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems
University of Florida | Email: livestock-lab@ufl.edu | Website: <http://livestocklab.ifas.ufl.edu/>