

WORKING PAPER

Transition management and innovation systems for food security: Opportunities and challenges with focus on African biomass-based value webs

Coordinating Researchers:

Dr. Girma Kelboro Mensuro (Uni Bonn, Center for Development Research, ZEF) and Godwin Asumugha (NRCRI)

ABSTRACT

BiomassWeb project has been implemented in Sub-Saharan Africa by engaging stakeholders in Ethiopia, Ghana and Nigeria. How to achieve food security in the region has been a challenge among policy makers, scientists, practitioners and farmers mainly due to a missing link between innovation development and its practical use. Scientists worked together with farmers, development experts/practitioners and policy makers in the BiomassWeb project by combining qualitative and quantitative data collection tools through transdisciplinary approaches. The process of linking innovation development, transfer and use for food security calls for a continuous process of bringing knowledge and experience of multiple stakeholders. Food security studies in the region had so far focused mainly on technical solution of developing high yielding crop varieties giving little attention to preferences by end users. Institutions and leadership role of women in agricultural commodity markets in Ghana, for instance, were often overlooked by researchers and policy-makers. To break the cyclic food insecurity problem therefore, existing institutions and knowledge should be used as a base to build on and strengthened to manage the transition in innovation use as demonstrated through Push-Pull Technology (PPT) application in Ethiopia for crop insect pest and weed control, animal fodder production, and soil conservation. Lack of experience among stakeholders to work in a transdisciplinary environment requires closer engagement, giving space for discussion and knowledge exchange and experience-sharing among the parties involved. A further crucial element to transition management is capacity building of the farmers, researchers, policy makers, practitioners and other stakeholders.