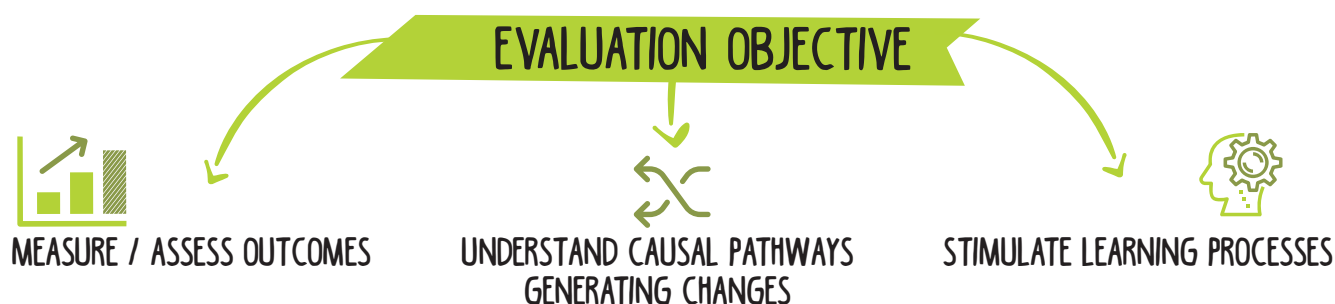


FARMER-CENTRED INNOVATION

• ADAPTING EVALUATION APPROACHES •

Farmer-centred innovation (FCI) approaches promote crucial outcomes, such as empowerment and capacity building, which conventional evaluation approaches struggle to deal with. Multiple methodologies are available to evaluate initiatives, aiming to measure, understand or learn* Policy makers (PMs) and funders, however, traditionally require measures of practice change or acquired knowledge as evidence of an effective approach or initiative. Those evaluation approaches rarely capture the learning and reflection that occurs amongst all actors in FCI initiatives.

Evaluation approaches therefore need to integrate different objectives, methods and priorities to sufficiently capture the effectiveness and outcomes of FCI initiatives.



The objective of the evaluation affects the method chosen and type of evidence collected and accepted to demonstrate outcomes: quantitative (cohort studies, RCT, models) to qualitative (case studies, interviews). However, an interactive and integrated approach where farmers, PMs and other innovation actors are engaged early in the design is needed to support learning processes and capture more complex and ongoing effects from FCI.

Matching objectives and evidence needed to evaluate FCI initiatives

MEASURE

Policy makers
New metrics
 tools for integrating QL and QT data
 e.g. social network analysis

New concepts
 Visualisations
 Impact pathways

UNDERSTAND

LEARN

OBJECTIVES - Involve farmers in deciding what to evaluate and agree with them on objectives and evaluation methods to match at the start, presenting evaluation options in clear, non-abstract language. Evaluation, by and with farmers. Create dialogue with PMs and aim to make the evaluation adaptable to PMs needs as well as researcher interests.

OUTCOMES - Design evaluation measures to account for social dimensions: individual and community well-being and benefits, like motivation, attitude changes to innovation, capacity building and network development. Learning should be considered as a process rather than a product / result.

TOOLS - Utilise tools to convert qualitative data into quantitative (social network analysis, baseline scoring, Q Methodology) to meet PMs need for evidence. Use figures, visualisations, infographics in a creative way to tell a story as well as case studies and impact pathways to illustrate change.

* (Berriet-Sollic, Marielle, Pierre Labarthe, and Catherine Laurent. "Goals of evaluation and types of evidence." Evaluation 20.2 (2014): 195-213.

Challenges in collecting evidence of FCI outcomes and effects

'DO'S' OF FCI EVALUATION



- 🕒 Farmers and other relevant actors involved in the farmer-centred innovation process should be fully engaged in the process
- 🕒 Be clear about evaluation goals and objectives and be respectful of farmers' time.
- 🕒 Attempt to eliminate evaluator bias re: valuing only certain outcomes or ignore others.
- 🕒 Collaborate and gain approval from other advisors and organisations around evidence collection so the assessment doesn't interfere with their workshops and overload farmers.
- 🕒 Extract information about learning outcomes to satisfy PMs evidentiary needs, but the evaluation process should empower farmers, e.g., learn and progress through their participation.

WHAT SHOULD WE ASSESS?



- ✔️ Baseline status quo pre-FCI and needs/opportunities for interventions through strengthened farmer-researcher dialogue, self-assessment, focus groups and interviews.
- ✔️ Farmers' expectations and reflexivity through in-depth qualitative interviews to tailor FCI to their needs and show more complex learning.
- ✔️ Increases in innovation capacity, e.g., strengthened awareness and ability to take decisions, judge opportunities, participate in the community, etc.
- ✔️ Long-term AND short-term outcomes, as well as 'spillover effects' beyond FCI learning.
- ✔️ FCI models applied by PMs to help them learn and improve as a key FCI actor.



Attribution gap: may be difficult to directly attribute outcomes to FCI without assessment of net effects due to various inputs contributing to farmers' knowledge and capacity; therefore, cumulative or developmental assessments should be used to highlight multiple factors within the innovation process

METHODS AND OUTCOMES CONSIDERATIONS

- ✔️ Assessment must be ongoing during and after the initiative given the lag-time for some effects to manifest, in which case funding post-project is necessary.
- ✔️ 'Critical friend method' would allow for an iterative cycle whereby the FCI initiative integrates the evaluator's suggestions and is then reviewed again, creating a constructive dialogue.
- ✔️ Social benefits from FCI may be critical even if the economic effects are limited.



Evaluation lessons to influence PM and funders

- Evaluations typically focus on evidence demonstrating presence (e.g., public investments supported and fast / easily communicated results about stakeholders affected) and effects (e.g., value for money, innovations claimed, policy objectives achieved) of farmer-learning initiatives. Quantitative metrics have largely been used to demonstrate effectiveness in affecting results.

New metrics are needed, however, to evaluate and demonstrate the more difficult to quantify results of the

- FCI initiatives, such as the extent to which farmers' expectations were addressed and/or whether the types of innovations applied are supporting transformation within farming systems. These should be understandable and disseminated to the wider public in visual formats, e.g., stories told through videos, photos, best practice case studies.

Evaluators' competence, methods and tools for FCI assessment should be strengthened. PMs and funders must increase their awareness about the various benefits of FCI, but also the need for new and different evaluation methodologies that enable all stakeholders to be reflective and learn, including PMs as actors who play an essential role within the innovation system.