



Innovation, knowledge management and researchers' postures: exploring their linkages for improving the performance of innovation platforms



> Questions

In the agricultural innovation systems thinking (Klerks *et al.* 2012), innovation platforms (IPs) aim at strengthening the capacity to innovate throughout the agricultural production and marketing system thanks to the creation of spaces where to share and discuss ideas, listen and learn, think and talk, and collaborate. Knowledge and learning issues are central to IPs. However, scientists often wear multiple hats when intervening in IPs, such as facilitators, coordinators, experts or even evaluators. This raises questions about their legitimacy, skills and efficiency in being able to perform such diverse roles and functions, and about the possibility for them to produce generic and useful knowledge for supporting the learning processes that underlie innovation.

Objectives

Little is known about how learning processes and knowledge should be managed in IPs. Hall & Andriani (2003) showed that depending on the nature of innovation, knowledge gaps to be filled differ. And this in turn influences the nature of the knowledge transformation processes to be managed. Lopez-Nicolas & Merono-Cerdán (2011) showed that knowledge management (KM) strategies affect innovation and performance through an increase of stakeholders' innovation capability. But these relationships are not well-understood yet.

→ We explored relationships between innovation and KM strategies to propose a knowledge-based view of the performance of IPs, with a particular emphasis on the ability of researchers to face KM challenges

Materials and Methods

■ A comparative analysis of six IPs set up at different times between 2000 and nowadays in West Africa (CORAF OID, ABACO, CCV ferti, CARBAP), Meso America (ASOSID) and the Mediterranean area (Aquamed MSHP).

■ Each case study was described regarding i) main innovation features and knowledge gaps; ii) types of learning processes that were supported and the KM strategies used to overcome knowledge gaps; iii) researchers' posture and implication in the innovation and KM processes.

Results - Discussion

■ Four roles for KM, associated to different key perspectives of "knowledge" have been identified (tab.1).

■ The role given to KM and the way researchers who are involved in the IPs functioning conceptualized the relationships between knowledge system and innovation process appears to be well correlated (fig.1).

■ No links exist however with the features of targeted innovation or knowledge gaps to be filled.

■ Researchers' postures have changed overtime, as a consequence of the growing awareness of the role of multiple knowledge sources in innovation processes, the importance of situated learning for the production of useful knowledge and the existence of distributed knowledge systems. In practice it led researchers to increasingly support innovation process and commit themselves to contribute to achieving the expected results.

■ Our results did not give insights into the influence of KM strategies on innovation. They raised question on the capacity of researchers to operationalise KM concepts for agricultural innovation, so that their approaches and methods become more in line with innovation features, knowledge gaps to be filled in each situation and stakeholders' learning needs.

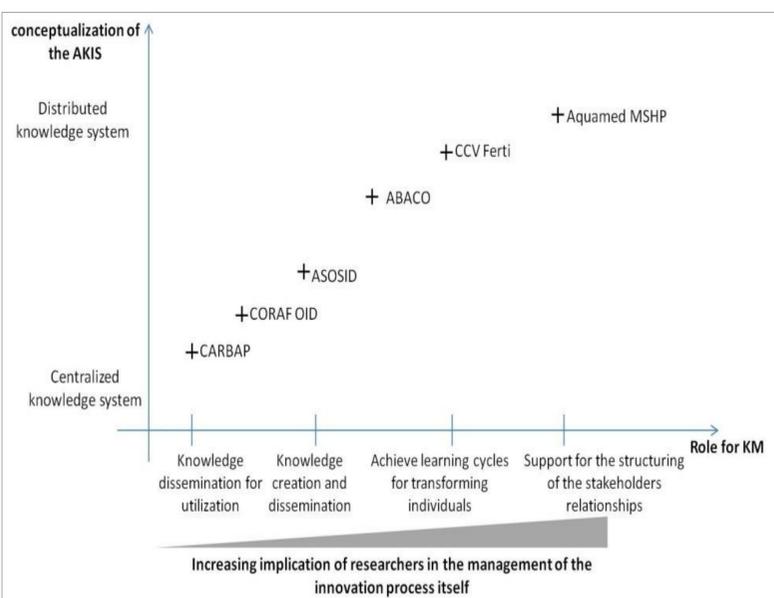


Fig.1. Correlation between the evolution of the understanding of AKIS (agricultural knowledge and innovation system) and the role given to knowledge management in innovation platforms

> RÉFÉRENCES

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Role of KM	Key perspective	Learning issues	Researchers' postures	Drawbacks
To structure stakeholders gathering and strengthen communication processes	Knowledge sharing between organizations	Create a shared vision and knowledge on innovation issues	Translator-researcher	Role of « safeguard », i.e. responsible for IP functioning and innovation outcomes Strong commitment to stakeholders
To achieve learning cycles	Knowledge process embedded in organizational processes People centric and practice-based co-learning	Transform stakeholders' know-how, routines, or perspectives	Entrepreneur-researcher	Difficulties to produce generic knowledge due to controversies on legitimate knowledge to be used for action. Risk to produce knowledge to justify the action itself
Knowledge creation and dissemination	Knowledge as commodities	Produce standard knowledge aiming at minimizing risks and uncertainties	Expert-researcher Posture of knowledge producer	Incomplete vision of the innovation processes and stakeholders' learning needs Space for individual values and ideology.
Knowledge dissemination and application				

Tab.1 : Knowledge management approaches, learning issues and researchers' postures associated to innovation processes in innovation platforms

> CONCLUSION

While IPs are very diverse in practice with respect to their composition or their objectives, knowledge and learning issues are at the heart of their functioning in multiple ways. Taking into account KM issues associated with innovation could help IP stakeholders to better define research needs and researchers' roles and could contribute to increase the performance of IPs. For this to happen, more research is needed to: i) test the efficiency of different KM approaches on innovation processes, ii) develop suitable tools and methods that will help stakeholders to define and implement a KM strategy.