

## Exploring capacity to innovate concepts and its assessment in Cameroon

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‘Capacity to innovate’ is an emerging concept, especially in agriculture and rural development. There is no universally agreed definition for this concept, but many authors agree that it refers generally to the ability of actors to continuously identify constraints and opportunities, and to mobilise capabilities and resources in response – *i.e.* to produce and sustain innovation processes in a dynamic systems environment. Increasingly, capacity to innovate (C2I) is recognised as playing a critical role in successfully responding to a changing external environment. Facilitating and building this capacity through Research and Development (R&D) interventions is therefore crucial for building farming systems’ adaptiveness and for improving the resilience and livelihoods of poor farmers and other rural actors. Yet there is no generally recognised set of metrics to assess C2I, nor is it clear how local actors understand and make use of C2I on the ground.

This poster presents the first results of a study that explores various components of C2I and how local actors perceive them, and aims to develop indicators to assess them. We looked at four interventions that have aimed to improve capacity to innovate in Cameroon (Table 1) to identify which capacities were developed and how the intervention approach facilitated that change (if at all).

A review of the literature was used as a starting point for developing an assessment framework to measure changes in C2I. We identified four ‘core’ capacities as being to a) envisage, create and be open to new ideas; b) to connect with others to access and understand new information and resources; c) to iteratively experiment, take risks, analyse and assess; and d) to work with others to achieve change. We conducted 61 semi-structured interviews and ten focus groups with producers, transformers, facilitators and researchers to explore these core capacities and their component sub-capacities. This included asking producers about specific times when having a particular capacity was essential, assessing stakeholders’ perceptions of capacity development over time (at the individual and group levels), and the relative importance of different capacities. We also aimed to identify “smart” potential indicators for measuring C2I which local actors could relate to.

Initial results show that depending on the specific intervention, producer groups involved in them have developed different aspects of C2I (Tables 2A–D), and that this has implications for how new innovations are adapted and adopted. Priority capacities as perceived by producers may often be different from those prioritised by researchers or emphasised in the literature, with producers valuing highly the capacity to form partnerships (particularly those related to marketing) while viewing capacity to experiment as a low priority, and vice versa (Table 3). This difference may be explained by the fact that interventions tend to focus on the initial stages of the innovation process (having and adapting a new idea for example), while producers tend to emphasize the later stages of the innovation trajectory, such as marketing and scaling up. Furthermore, producers emphasize skills closely related to capacities of a group to get things done, which do not limit themselves to innovation.

We are currently testing a set of 20 quantitative and qualitative C2I indicators to assess 10 capacities and sub-capacities (Table 4) and the individual and group level in the four case studies in Cameroon. This is part of an on-going project that aims to explore how intervention approach affects the degree and manner in which capacity to innovate is built and the subsequent impact for development outcomes. A better understanding of how, and under what circumstances, interventions contribute to building C2I may help practitioners to improve the ability of R&D interventions to achieve large-scale impact.

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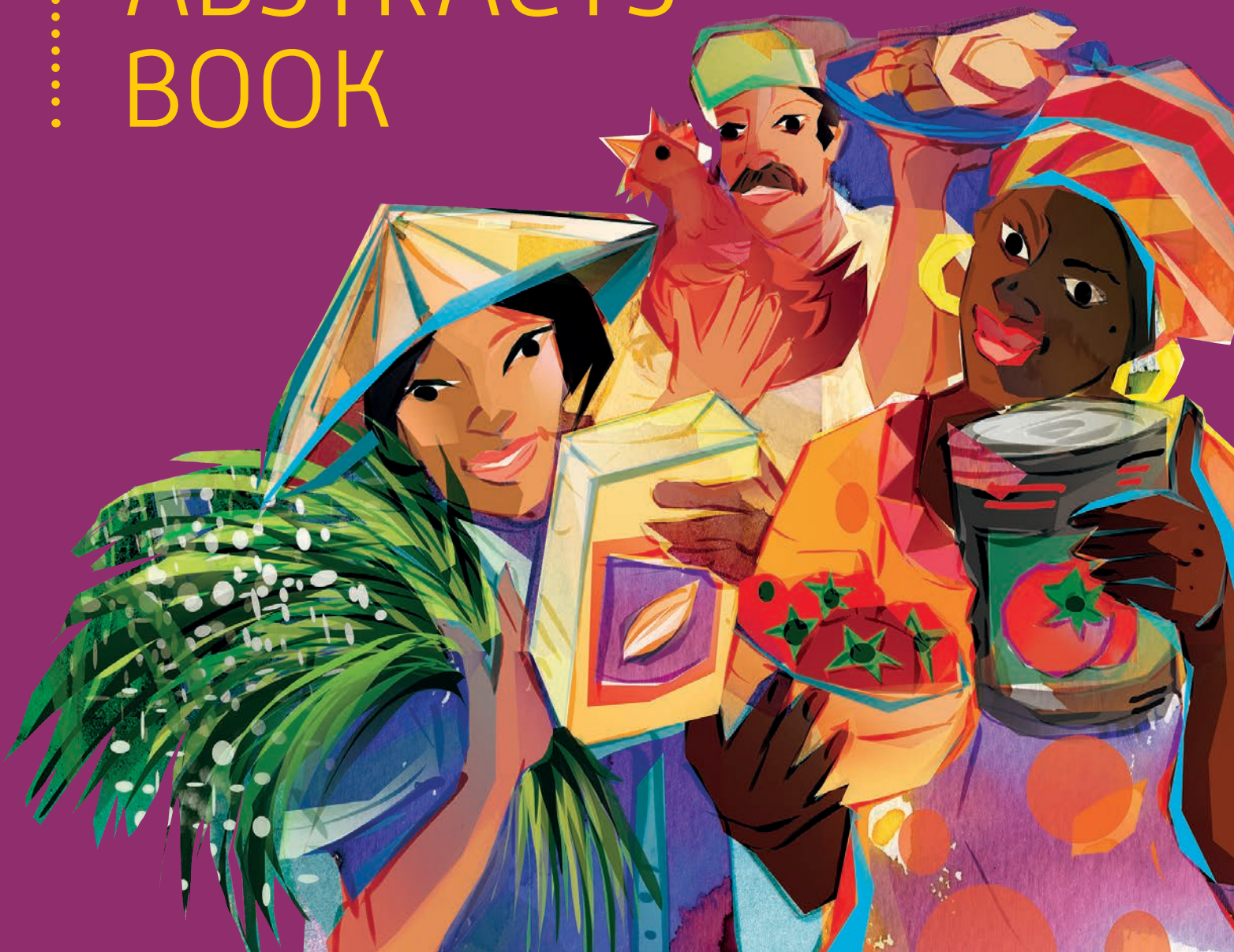
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# AC&SD 2016

Agri-Chains & Sustainable Development  
> *Linking local and global dynamics*

## ABSTRACTS BOOK



# WELCOME ADDRESS



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## Welcome to **AC&SD 2016**

On behalf of the Scientific and Organizing Committees, it is a great pleasure to welcome you to the International Conference on Agri-chains and Sustainable Development (**AC&SD 2016**). This conference aspires to widen the debate about the role of agricultural value chains towards sustainable development. Year 2015 was a critical political and diplomatic milestone: the member states of the United Nations signed a new agenda for development, with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) placing sustainability at the core of international efforts. Development and academic actors are since then exploring new avenues for translating the SDGs into reality and implementing global and local frameworks and partnerships. Our conference aims at joining these efforts, with the consideration that agricultural value chains form spaces where local and global challenges to sustainability connect and within which local and global actors experiment and negotiate innovative solutions.

The scientific committee has assembled a very attractive program for **AC&SD 2016** that seeks to cover and confront the diversity of realities behind agri-chains, from localized chains, embedded in specific places, to global value chains. In the parallel sessions, transformations of these agri-chains and their connections to sustainable development will be discussed by speakers from the academia, the civil society, the private sector and decision makers. This multi-stakeholder perspective will also be brought about in the plenary sessions. Here, world renowned keynotes and panelists to three high level round tables will discuss about the role and importance of evaluation, public and private institutions and innovations at different scales for transforming agri-chains towards sustainability transitions.

This edition gathers about 250 participants from 39 countries. **AC&SD 2016** owes a lot to the scientific and organizing committees for preparing the program, and particularly to Brigitte Cabantous, Chantal Carrasco and Nathalie Curiallet for all the logistics, as well as to our support team of Alpha Visa that we warmly thank for their help.

We wish us all a fascinating, successful, inspiring and enjoyable **AC&SD 2016** and we very much look forward to its result and to the strengthening of both a scientific community and a community of practice to implement the outcome!!

Estelle Biénabe, Patrick Caron and Flavia Fabiano,  
Cirad Co-chairs **AC&SD 2016**



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