

SUMMARY OF SESSION 2

THEMATIC AREA 2: CONNECTING FARMERS TO TECHNOLOGIES – CHANGING THREATS TO OPPORTUNITIES

This session sought to understand how we can better connect farmers to advances in research and technology to help in the fight against drought and examined three main areas. Firstly, the reasons for the lag in technology adoption. These include, a combination of factors such as: capacity, investment, and the enabling environment. Secondly, the need for improved communication and targeting of technologies so that they can be used by both farmers and policymakers. Finally, the session unpicked the roles of different stakeholders in ensuring the adoption of technology at farm level. The panel and audience emphasised the collective responsibility for better linking advances in technology to farmers.

THE CHALLENGE: INNOVATION IN IMPLEMENTATION AND DISSEMINATION

Session participants agreed that multiple technologies are available to mitigate drought and that the challenge is not in the development of more technology. Instead, the bottleneck lies in the poor connection between research and technology and its use on farms. Efforts to get technology to farmers are hampered by access to information, communication strategies, low farmer capacity to use new information, and low levels of private sector participation. Specific challenges included:

- Low education levels in many farming communities which slowed the potential for dissemination of new technology – such as drought tolerant varieties -, particularly if the information was not clearly communicated.
- Poorly targeted forms of research communication, and the lack of incentives to disseminate technology and advice leads to limited access to information to support farmer decision-making.
- Limited private sector participation in technology transfer in developing countries as compared to active private sector participation in developed countries. Additionally, there is a question mark over the role of Intellectual Property Regimes and whether this is limiting access to technology for smallholder farmers.
- Poor understanding of informal commercial agriculture networks for the sale of seeds and other agricultural inputs. This leads to limited access to improved seeds by farmers in developing countries.

THE SOLUTIONS: INCENTIVES FOR FARMERS AND LOCALLY TAILORED TECHNOLOGIES AND KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION

Solutions focused on efforts to better communicate with farmers and incentivise the uptake of technology to mitigate drought risk. The participants highlighted the collective responsibility of stakeholders to ensure that farmers are better equipped to use advances in technology and best practice to mitigate drought impacts.

1. Provision of incentives to farmers to adopt new technologies.
2. Packaging extension information in simple form to ease adoption and use.
3. Develop locally appropriate technologies e.g. breeding varieties in the region of use.
4. Enhance engagement of private sector in technology transfer through private-public sector partnership.
5. Active involvement of the main stakeholders is necessary as the challenges require collective responsibility that includes understanding the responsibilities of the different stakeholders.
6. Breeding programs and seed companies need to refocus towards smallholders to increase their access to improved seeds.