

Connecting people to catalyze African agricultural innovations

Regional agricultural information and learning systems (RAILS) of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA)

Our environment

Africa has several institutions working on agricultural information generation and dissemination, all geared towards contributing to improving agricultural productivity, competitiveness and access to markets. These information systems vary in terms of information gathered, targeted end-users and accessibility.

Our objective

RAILS allows linkages among information generators and users to create an agriculture information value chain allowing multiple information access, processing and uses.

What we do

RAILS provides an open space where agricultural information systems link ARD innovations to users and learners. It catalyzes the creation of learning teams capable of analyzing information gaps of individual members and institutions.



The RAILS learning teams are trained to be facilitators within the agriculture information value chain. They are provided with infrastructural support to ensure reliable information and communication systems. They are linked with appropriate government institutions and operate as a network.

The teams are equipped with a tool-box containing relevant tools (e.g. Dgroups) for interaction. They are trained to establish an integrated information system that can collect information tailored to specific individual and institutional needs. Each team member is skilled to add or remove features within the information system as and when they need it. Specific topics from outside the network are only added if there is demand. The concept is to put online as much information as required from as many diverse resources which will allow various unique applications resulting in agricultural innovations. Online access is supplemented with radio and mobile phone to reach local communities. Madagascar is spearheading this initiative that will be implemented in 38 countries in Sub Saharan Africa with funding from the African Development Bank.

Early lessons learnt showed great diversity in each participating countries, resulting to variances in implementation. Regular online discussions among the RAILS focal points, facilitates sharing of lessons learnt from each country. The framework approach facilitates the flexibility and adaptability of the system based on national conditions and resources.

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