Draft Policy Brief Programming Research and Innovation for Impact

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SCAR AKIS SWG, Warsaw, June 26 2018

Context for today

- First input to brief - joint SCAR SWG (AKIS, ARCH and Food Systems) workshop, April 6th 2018 Rome

- 2 Skype meetings and 2 rounds of drafting

- Now – revert to SWG's for comments

  - AKIS discussing draft on 26th and 27th June.

  - ARCH and Food Systems members will be consulted by mail and their inputs gathered and submitted.

- Comments, corrections and additions by 1st August 2018.

- Targeted primarily at policy-makers and funders in the European Commission and in national ministries and funding agencies. However, it is also intended to provide value to researchers and their institutions.
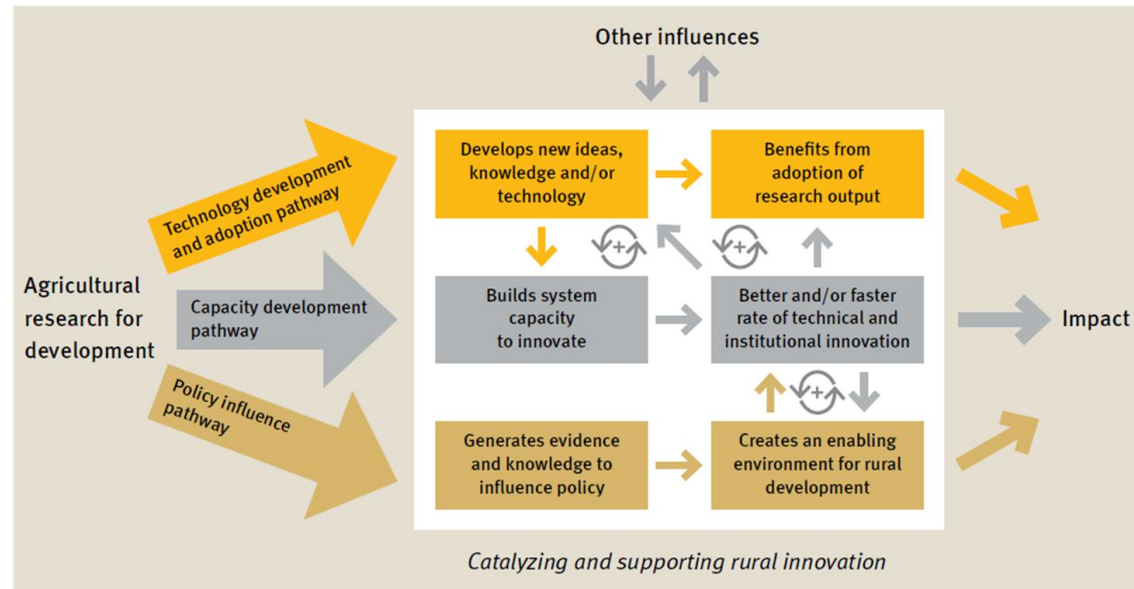
Sections of policy brief

1. Introduction/problem statement

2. Research & innovation pathways

3. Why ex ante?

4. Fostering impact prior to implementation

5. Recommendations

Introduction/problem statement

- Agriculture R&I systems – open and complex

- Increasing demand for *"impact-orientation"* - research performance evaluated not just on the delivery of research outputs, but on how those outputs are used, by whom, and to what effect.

- Long history of *ex post* impact assessment but relatively less attention has been paid to *ex ante* impact assessment - the likely effects of initiatives *before* activities actually start and trying to influence likely effects.

  - how to foster impact

  - generate a culture of impact within the research community

  - little understanding of how policy can support ex ante approaches.

- Necessary to develop the rationale, frameworks, tools, methods and culture enabling and encouraging more attention to understanding, planning and assessing ex ante impact while still continuing to carry out ex post impact assessment of research activities.

Research & Innovation Pathways

- A clear understanding / building of impact pathways is key for programming research for impact.

- Policy makers and funders have considerable influence in shaping the enabling environment for research and capacity development.

- What hinders impact assessment?

  - market and policy distortions
  - barriers to the diffusion of new technology
  - the difficulties for researchers to clearly define the beneficiaries of their research and the kind of impact they, have to achieve.
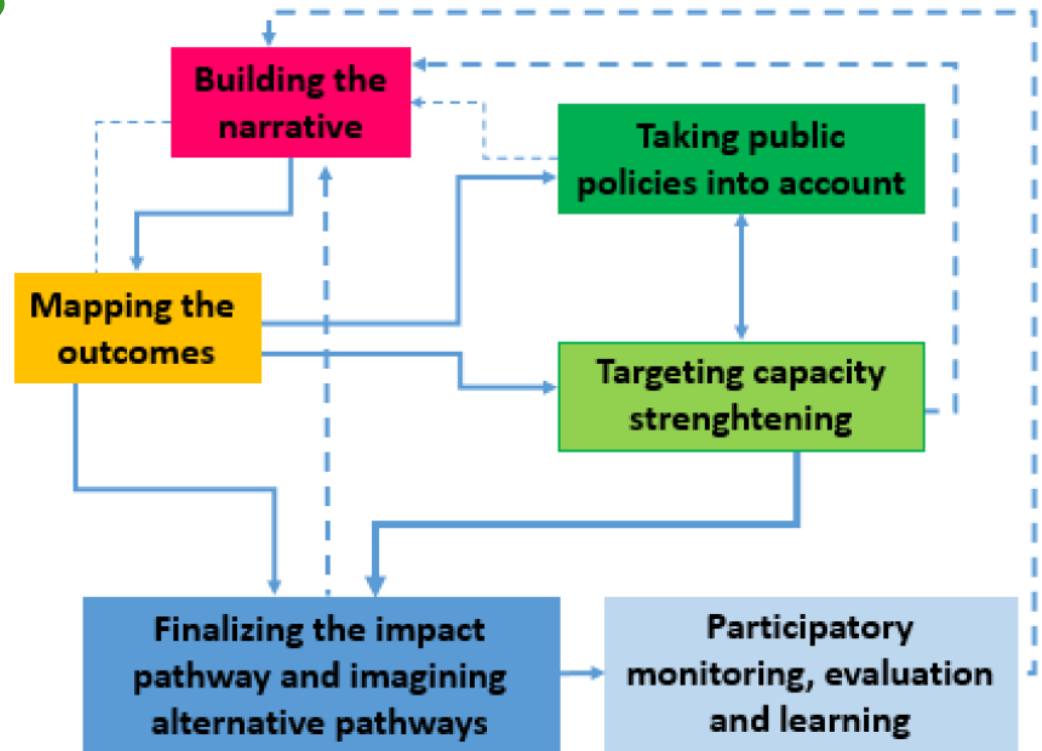

Source: EC 2017 Guidelines. Evaluation of innovation in rural development programmes 2014-2020 & Douthwaite et al., 2017

- Interdisciplinary approach required to embed research in broader context of economic, political, social and cultural aspects.

Why ex ante?

- Better understanding of the interactions between actors & pathways → generate changes in practices and behaviours that will ultimately lead to the desired impact.

- But, focusing more on ex ante in addition to ex post impact assessment → real cultural shift as it requires an opening of the framework for planning for all elements of the research and innovation pathways.

Source: CIRAD (2018) An Approach for Building Ex Ante Impact Pathways

- Changing role of research institutions → expanding scope to also include strengthening research uptake, transfer and support for knowledge generation, as well as sharing and fostering innovation.

Fostering impact prior to implementation

- Different actors (researchers, public and private sector) need to be dialogued in a *multi-actor approach*. Likely to require a change in the culture of research organisations as:

  - researchers cannot define their research goals independently anymore, but have to interact with other actors to define the real needs.

  - must encompass "transfer activities" and think about potential applications for beneficiaries. Closer collaboration with transfer organisations and innovation brokers should be fostered.

- Impact must be taken into account by researchers when *designing projects and before starting a project*. In addition to producing knowledge - it is also necessary to build capacities for innovation uptake.

- To make this happen → *provide incentives and build the respective capacities at all levels* (e.g. include new roles such as innovation brokers to create an environment for supporting impact generation)

- *Regular interaction with policy makers* is as crucial as a transparent planning approach with a realistic timeline.

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Fostering impact prior to implementation (2)

- Multi-actor *collaboration needs to be structured* and in some cases it may be desirable to renew or at least open the group for fresh ideas.

- An evaluation system with *indicators of research impact* in terms of concrete applications and benefits to stakeholders could be set up.

- *Capacity building and training* about innovation and impact targeting researchers should be considered when designing projects.

- Changes could be encouraged by using *more flexible, but appropriate, funding requirements* by funding agencies.
  - Project time frames to be increased in order to encompass a more complete process to also include impact assessment.
  - Funding agencies should require from applicants a broader involvement of stakeholders and beneficiaries from a very early stage, addressing their needs.
  - A wider range of evaluation methodologies and approaches will need to be demonstrated within all projects and programmes.
  - The evaluation of impact must be emphasised and the weight of impact in the total evaluation must be more important.

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Recommendations

Research institutions:

- Develop an impact culture at institution level, as well as capacity for evaluation, in order to strengthen the impact of policies and programmes.

- Widen collaboration and communication to include all relevant stakeholders in the research and innovation pathways including transfer organisations.

Funding agencies:

- Adapt funding regulations to ensure impact is considered and included ex ante and incentives are provided for impact orientated research.

Recommendations (2)

Policy makers:

- Foster the enabling environment for development and provide support for capacity development as well as innovation uptake.

- Change project periods from one to three years to five to ten years to allow time to include elements mentioned above such as capacity development ensuring greater chance of impact etc.

All:

- Enable regular exchange between researchers, funding agencies and policy makers at the national and European level through regular meetings and the better use of the existing infrastructure such as SCAR and its working groups.

- A new SCAR working group could be developed or the mandate of on-going groups should be strengthened.

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Thanks

Questions/comments?