

FOOD & BUSINESS APPLIED RESEARCH FUND

[Unravelling the potential of farmer led irrigation development in the BAGC, Mozambique]

Consortium Members

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Project description

Farmer led innovation processes in irrigated agriculture are poorly understood despite their substantial contribution to rural and economic development, food security and poverty alleviation. Research in Mozambique suggests that over 100,000 hectares of irrigated agriculture have been developed by small Mozambican farmers, often through local initiatives and innovations. Most of which are not recognized/invisible by/to the private sector, donors, and governments. The project aims to contribute to a better understanding of the processes, triggers and impacts of these developments through: a) the co-production of innovative research and assessment methodologies, b) the identification of key (f)actors that either facilitate and/or constrain these developments and c) the development of effective strategies and tools that foster and strengthen the unrealized potentials of smallholder entrepreneurship and their engagement with the private and public sector. The results will be of great relevance for interventions aimed at catalysing Mozambique's irrigated agro-productive sector.

Impact activities and preliminary results

This research project started in March 2016 and is led by a local Research and Irrigation company: Resiliência Moçambique Ida (represented by Nicky Schepers). The project has primarily been active in recruitment of the field staff and start-up of the research in the field, with the first promising field reports coming in.

As start-up activities two workshops were held/attended where the main result (apart from defining the exact research topics and methodologies) was the coupling of this research to the Oxford University led SAFI research program, Studying African Farmer-led Irrigation. This links us up to research in Tanzania and Mozambique with clear policy engagement agenda's. In Mozambique this led closer collaboration with the government agricultural research institute (IIAM, represented by Ana Lidia Gungulo)

Simultaneously to the ARF-Benin workshop the project coordinator will be attending the 17th WaterNet Conference in Gaberone, an annual Symposia held in Eastern and Southern African regions to promote interaction among policymakers, academics, practitioners from water and related sectors, and cooperating partners.

Opportunities and challenges

Opportunities:

Currently the Government of Mozambique (GoM) is running a World Bank funded program, PROIRRI, a sustainable irrigation project in the Beira Agricultural Growth Corridor (BAGC), aiming at smallholder irrigation development. All of the consortium partners are involved in this project, which does not only offer the opportunity to add to it with the ARF research efforts in identifying smallholder irrigation areas, but also allows to try and change the discourse from developing "new" smallholder irrigation to supporting and enhancing existing farmer-led irrigation efforts.

Simultaneously, this ARF-research gives the opportunity to position Resiliência Moçambique, with its partners ISPM and IIAM, as a critical group with grounded tools to engage with smallholder irrigation development in the field. Not only supporting the policy discourse with research outputs but also through engagement with the markets and companies in out-grower modalities and project execution.

Challenges:

The diversity of the characteristics of farmer-led irrigation possess challenges in its identification efforts and modes of engagement. Fiscally as dispersed groups and areas of production, spread over huge regions, which cover many hectares summing them all up (estimated to be more than 100.000 ha) but individually remain small units (0.5-20 ha). And institutionally as different social-technical entities, with their own drivers that led to its development, rules of operation and social coherence, that does not allow for a singular response from external agencies, but requires stratified modes of engagement and corresponding tools.

This clearly demonstrates the need for this ARF-research.



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