

Theme 4 – Knowledge co-creation for food security

Conference “Research & Policy: two peas in a pod? A dialogue for food security impact”

Concept note drafted by: Mirjam A.F. Ros-Tonen and Edith van Ewijk¹

Key statements

- Knowledge co-creation in multi-stakeholder processes for food security creates opportunities for evidence-based policymaking in the South, but for policymakers in the Netherlands research results usually come too late to be relevant.
- Knowledge co-creation is too time-consuming and complex to solve a wicked problem like food insecurity.
- Research driven by questions from policy or practice is societally more relevant, but compromises scientific freedom and rigour needed to create new knowledge or knowledge for transformational change.

Rationale

The above statements illustrate different opinions and dilemmas regarding knowledge co-creation – defined as joint learning and knowledge exchange processes through which farmers, value chain actors, practitioners, policymakers and researchers create and negotiate new knowledge. Dutch, EU and global policies promote knowledge co-creation in partnerships and platforms, acknowledging that research and sharing of knowledge and expertise are key to achieving global food security. This is reflected, first, in the November 2011 [letter to Parliament](#) by former Minister Ben Knapen, which outlines the policy regarding knowledge platforms, through which researchers from the Netherlands and developing countries would work together from the outset with companies, NGOs and government, with embassies bringing Northern and Southern parties together. Second, the [Dutch Diamond Approach](#) from 2012 encourages Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) between the government, private sector, research institutions and civil society organizations to implement Dutch development policy. Third, the [Dutch aid, trade and investment agenda \(2013\)](#) acknowledges that the private sector and knowledge institutions play an increasingly important role in finding solutions for global problems such as food security and therefore promotes their collaboration with public bodies and civil society organizations. Fourth, [European research policy](#) advocates multi-stakeholder collaboration to address complex global research challenges such as food security, climate change and poverty alleviation, with significant private sector involvement. Finally, the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), notably SDG 17, emphasizes “the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society for mobilizing and sharing knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources for achieving the SDGs”. All these policies assume that collaborative partnerships can contribute to poverty alleviation and food security by pooling academic knowledge and NGO’s knowledge of local circumstances with market-oriented financing and an enabling government. This would make knowledge more relevant for policy, entrepreneurs and farmers, and generate private funds for research, while a market-oriented approach would enhance efficiency.

These assumptions have permeated research funding through five knowledge platforms installed in 2012 to address the priority themes of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for International Cooperation. One of these is the Food & Business Knowledge Platform which supports the Global Challenge Programme (GCP) and Applied Research Fund (ARF) projects financed by WOTRO Science for Global Development. This research is to be carried out by consortia consisting of academic and non-academic partners from the North and the South, assuming that “collaboration between stakeholders in and related to food value chains is essential for food security and encourages [co-creation](#)”.

Knowledge co-creation in multi stakeholder platforms, however, does not occur automatically. Deeply rooted work practices and the way in which various stakeholders are rewarded and held accountable in their work can pose barriers to effective and efficient knowledge co-creation processes. Moreover, carrying out research through multi-stakeholder partnerships is relatively new both in the Netherlands and its partner countries in the Global South. This session aims to share best practices, challenges,

¹ Inputs from Yves Van Leynseele (UvA), Vanessa Nigten (F&BKP), Sonja Döpp (WOTRO-ARF), Marcel Vernooij (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Patricia Wagenmakers (Ministry of Economic Affairs) and other members of the Advisory Board of the WOTRO-F&BKP Science-Policy Dialogue Conference are gratefully acknowledged.

experiences and perspectives regarding knowledge co-creation and how it can help increase synergies between research and policy.

Key lessons, good practices and experience from ARF and GCP projects

A survey among ARF and GCP project leaders (n=37; 25 ARF, 9 GDP, and 3 both GDP and ARF) revealed that most knowledge co-creation activities are labelled as “learning platform”, “innovation platform”, and “community of practice (CoP)”. Specific knowledge co-creation approaches mentioned included “partner and stakeholders workshops”, “farmer research groups”, “validation workshops” and “stakeholder analysis”.

Good practices

Respondents are generally positive about engagement of various stakeholders and access to different knowledge types through platforms. Although it is still early to identify changes, examples of changes already occurring were given, including farmer empowerment, improvement of sowing methods, establishment of a joint venture, changed perceptions among community members, and influencing and changing policies.

Key lessons

<p>Regarding involving various actors in knowledge co-creation in multi-stakeholder platforms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint agenda setting, including farmers as well as the private sector as co-creators of knowledge, is key to effective and relevant knowledge co-creation. • Mismatches in knowledge, backgrounds and “languages” need to be identified and bridged, for which face-to-face interactions are essential. • The private sector can play a catalysing role in knowledge co-creation by bringing in expertise on quality standards, stimulating innovation, providing training in entrepreneurship and marketing, and knowledge of markets. • Innovations resulting from knowledge co-creation require prior thinking about ownership of new knowledge (patents and copyrights).
<p>Regarding influencing policy making:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge co-creation processes have impacted policies in various partner countries (e.g. plantation development policy in Ghana, sesame quality control policies in Uganda) by actively engaging policymakers in knowledge co-creation in multi-stakeholder platforms or engaging researchers in policymaking processes. • Challenges to research uptake by policymakers in both the Netherlands and partner countries are policy changes after elections and frequent personnel turnover.
<p>Regarding the way of doing research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge exchange and co-creation in multi-stakeholder platforms enhances research-policy linkages and evidence-based policymaking by facilitating the sharing of researchers’ expertise and insights in an early stage. • The time lag between knowledge needs of policymakers and practitioners and results of research produced by researchers can be bridged by regular communication and through accessible products like info sheets. • Engaging young researchers in the Global South increases their job opportunities in the food & business sector and is an added value of knowledge co-creation which is also in line with Dutch policies.

Purpose of the session

- To increase mutual understanding of different perspectives and roles regarding knowledge co-creation among policymakers, private sector, practitioners and researchers from both the Netherlands and partner countries.
- To share best practices, challenges and solutions from the ARF and GCP projects regarding strengthening policy relevance and use of research for greater food security through knowledge co-creation.
- To discuss if and how knowledge co-creation can make a difference for food security and policies.

Outcomes of the session

- Increased mutual understanding of different perspectives and roles regarding knowledge co-creation among policymakers, private sector, practitioners and researchers in both the Netherlands and partner countries.
- Increased insights into ways and conditions of enhancing policy relevance and use of (scientific) knowledge through co-creation. Recommendations on how synergy between research and policy can be increased for greater food security.