

# Improving Relevance for Policy and Practice: Reasoning from Impact to Research

Presentation for 'Research & Policy: Two peas in a pod? A dialogue for food security impact'. Food & Business ARF & GCP Research–Policy Dialogue Conference, The Hague, December 1, 2017

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## Improving Relevance for Policy and Practice: Reasoning from Impact to Research

### Outline

- 1. What types of impacts are we aiming at?
- 2. How do such changes come about? A historical view!
- 3. What do these insights imply for the role of research?
- 4. Some reflections on co-creation, demand-articulation, and the connection with policy in ARF and GCP



## The difficulty of demand-oriented research:

### The experience of the Dutch Dairy Board

- 100% farmer funded research
- 100% decision-making power by farmers
- Yet, researchers dominate agenda & type of research
- Analysis: low quality demand and supply articulation
  - question 'owners' lost along the way
  - no longer-term visionary outlook



Productschap  
Zuivel



## What types of impacts are we aiming at?

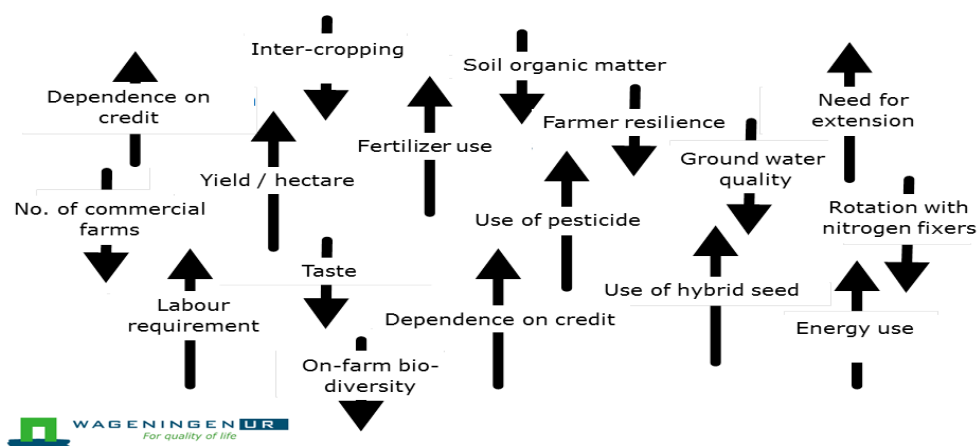
System innovations: combined technical and social transformation

- **Hardware:**  
technology
- **Orgware:**  
relationships,  
incentive systems
- **Software:**  
knowledge,  
visions, discourses



## What types of impacts are we aiming at?

Multiple simultaneous scaling process – involving multiple levels, spheres & actors



## How do 'system innovations' come about?

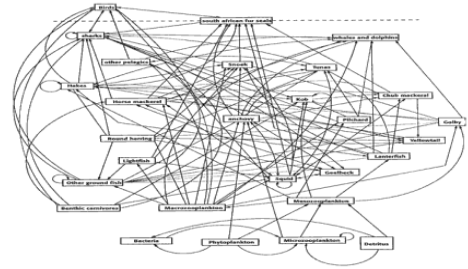
Social-organisational and policy change ('orgware') is a critical component

- land tenure / land consolidation / land security
- secure prices / market regulation / quota systems
- re-organised labour mobilisation
- cooperatives / collective action: input supply / bulking / selling
- models for service delivery
- legislation & licencing

## How do 'system innovations' come about?

The possibility of central steering and control is limited

- Stakeholders are inter-dependent; cannot change alone
- Complex unpredictable dynamics
- Transformation is contested
  - always competing interests and views of the future



## How do 'system innovations' come about?

Technological and policy options compete with each other in a selection environment

- Also:
  - seed varieties
  - cropping and seed systems
  - soil-fertility strategies
  - land-tenure arrangements
  - pest-disease mgt. options



## Horse-based urban transport to car in rapidly changing cities - **Destabilisation followed by a new socio-technical regime**



### How do 'system innovations' come about?

Success of particular options depends on

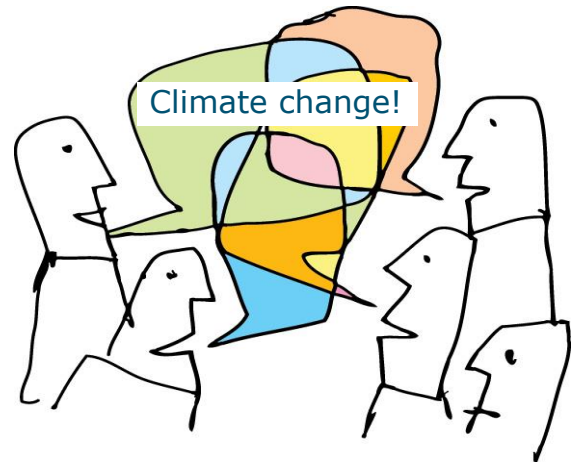
- Power and credibility of support networks and coalitions
  - Learning from mistakes, mature options
  - Overcoming uncertainties among stakeholders
  - Trust, mutual expectations
  - Agreement, convergence around a future vision
  - Communication strategies



## How do 'system innovations' come about?

Resulting in effective 'discourse coalitions' and 'shifting conversations'

- Change is prepared in everyday conversations
  - among citizens
  - in media
  - in policy



## So: How can research influence the strength of coalitions for change?

- Researchers and research organisations cannot on their own orchestrate societal change / impact (!)
- But they can maximise the chances for their research to have influence
  - by societal embedding of their research efforts



Reforming the research policy and impact culture in the CGIAR: Integrating science and systemic capacity development

Cees Leeuwis\*, Laurens Klerkx, Marc Schut

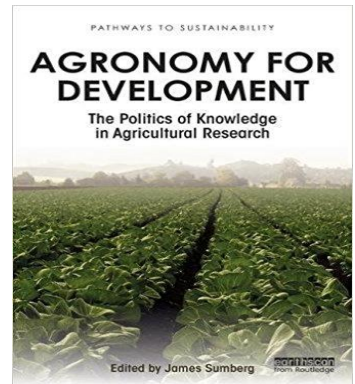
Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Global Food Security

Journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/gfs](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/gfs)

## So: How can research influence the strength of coalitions for change? Two meta-theories of change on the role and embedding of research

- Research FOR Development
  - developing, testing and disseminating options is key
- Research IN Development
  - research process is equally important



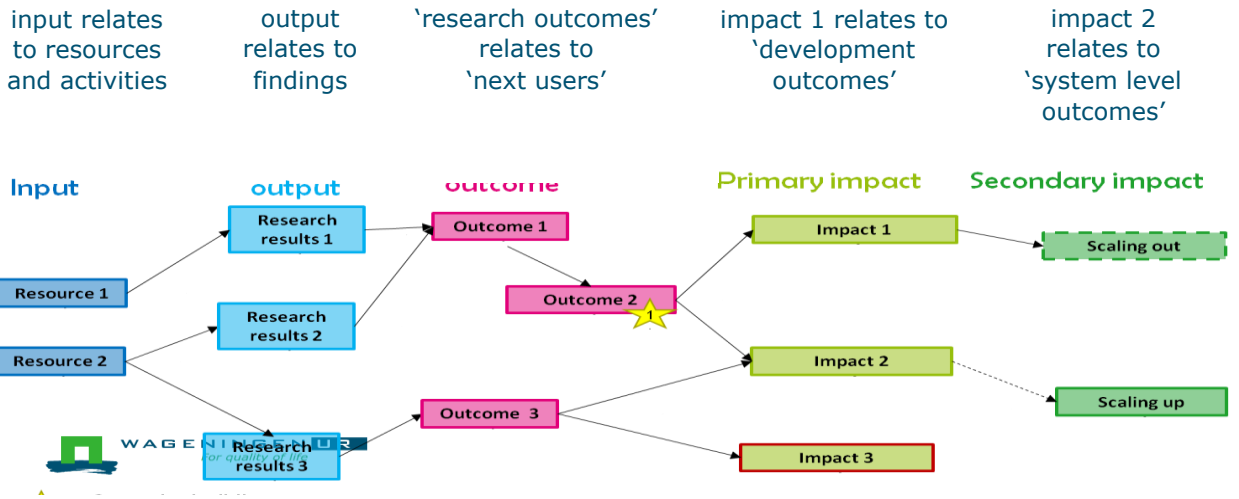
## Research IN Development - The value of collaborative research (also advocated by ARF and GCP !)

- A vehicle to bring interdependent parties together
- An ideal strategy to improve relationships among them
- Can foster common starting points and future visions
- Can ensure that people are waiting for results already
- Can build 'systemic capacity to innovate'
- In short: shaping the societal conversation



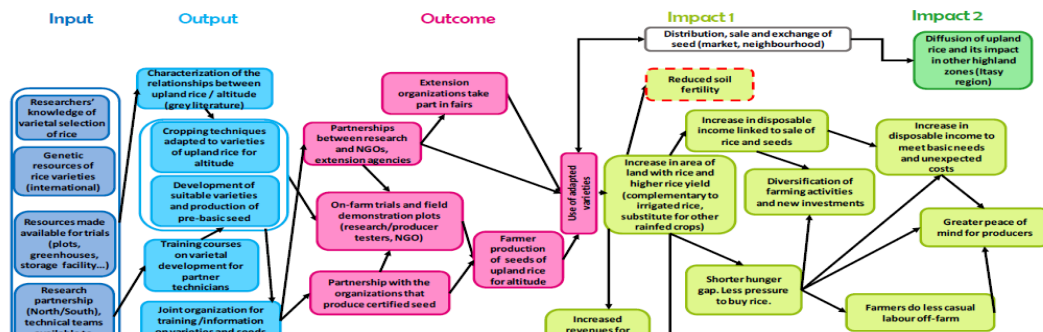


# Project 'theories of change' often do not reflect 'Research IN Development'



## Typical inputs / outputs / outcomes proposed

- Researcher time & other resources
- Options developed and tested
- Demonstration trials conducted
- Training materials developed
- Farmers trained
- Publications
- Adoption of technologies / cropping systems
- Income increased





History and system innovation theory suggest wider array of inputs, outputs and outcomes

- Ad. 'research inputs': e.g. demand-articulation, visioning, mediation, innovation intermediation
- Ad. 'research outputs': e.g. new relationships, trust, visions, agreement, coalitions
- Ad. 'research outcomes': e.g. shifting pressures, shifting discourses in policy and society



## Some reflections on ARF and GCP

- Why treat 'applied' (ARF) and 'strategic' (GCP) research differently?
  - transformative change trajectories require both !
- Projects address non-technical issues (especially 'business models' , 'service delivery') but:
  - are these the most important policy issues for CSA? (land security, trade, prices, labour?)
  - are time horizons realistic?



## Some reflections on ARF and GCP

- Listing / enrolling partners is no guarantee for high quality demand-supply articulation
  - no check on (or structural link to) to such processes (while lots of insignificant details are checked !)
  
- Great that 'theories of change' are flexible!
  - but do they invite transformative thinking? do they reason the right way around?
  - why at the end of the proposal?



Thank you for your attention!

