

Inventory and characterization of the innovation platforms in Benin during the last 10 years

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In Benin, the multi-stakeholder platforms were encountered in 24 communes among the 77.

78.26% of those multi-stakeholder platforms are concentrated in the South, benefiting from opportunities for urban markets and commercial transactions with neighboring

In Benin, as almost all developing countries, several approaches have been used to develop and transfer agricultural technologies in order to improve field performances and the living condition of family farmers. Those approaches have changed over time. From the linear approach criticized for its monopoly on the production of knowledge by researchers and its static view of innovations, many more holistic and participatory approaches have been developed. The innovation platforms approach is one of the last one, established in order to cover previous approaches weakness and meet very good results.

Multi-stakeholder platform approach is a new generation of emerging paradigms that ensure the knowledge of innovations (Sonehekpon *et al.*, 2016). The rationality of this approach is to catalyze a process of social learning and negotiation between various operators (direct actors, support services, service providers, policy makers etc.) within agricultural fields or values links. It aims to promote innovations development through holistically perspective which take into account as well as the technological, economical, institutional and political related considerations. The present

policy brief showcases the establishment and evolution of multi-stakeholder platforms in Benin these last decades.

Inventory and characterization of innovation platforms in Benin

Geographic distribution

Forty six (46) innovation platforms were counted throughout Benin territory. They were found in just 24 among the 77 communes of the country and in 10 among the 12 departments (Figure 1). The communes of the southern area of Benin which are in orange color (Figure 1) account altogether for 78.26% of the total platforms while they represent less than 20% of the cultivated acreages. Several reasons could explain this observation such as the access to markets opportunities. In fact, the southern area has the biggest urban centers and the biggest markets available and easy to reach. Moreover, the related communes have exits to external markets through land borders with Nigeria (170 million inhabitants) and Togo and also maritime and air

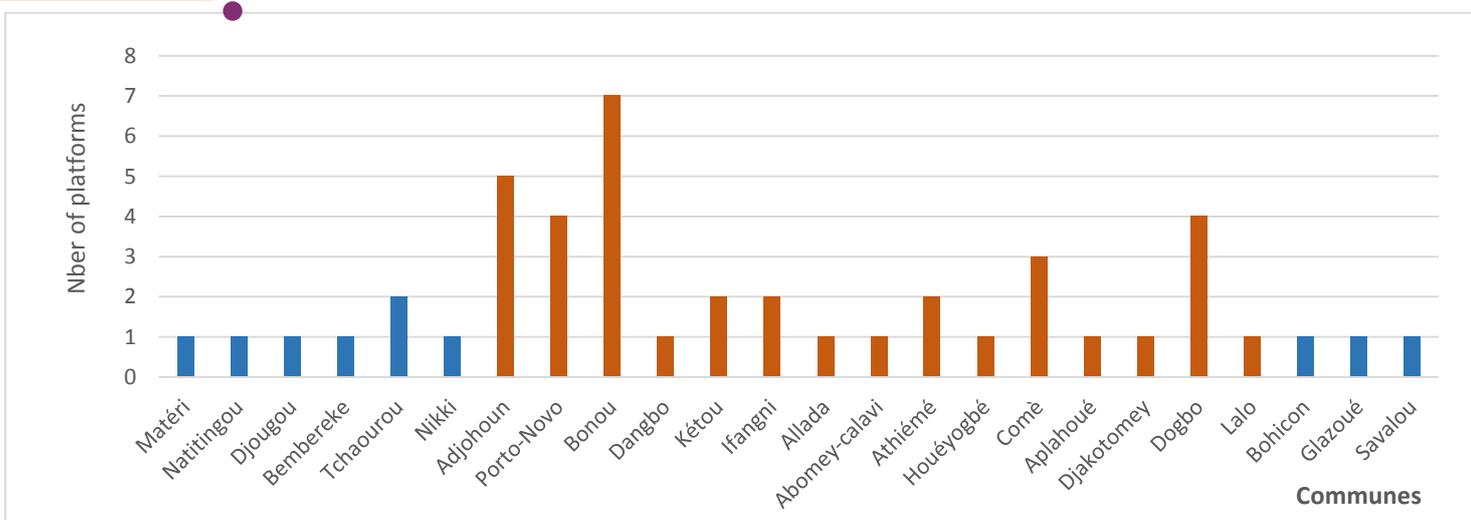


Figure 1: Distribution of the innovation platforms by commune

Structures involved in the creation and financing of IPs in Benin

- CARDER: Regional Action Center for Agricultural Development
- SCDA: Communal Sector for Agricultural Development
- INRAB: National Institute for Agricultural Research
- DICAF: Directorate of the Agricultural Council and Operational Training
- PADA: Agricultural Development Support Program
- PPAO/WAAPP: West African Agricultural Productivity Program
- SNV: Netherlands Development Organization
- CORAF: West & Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (WECARD)
- FUPRO: Federation of Producer Unions
- DONATA: Dissemination of New Agricultural Technologies in Africa
- BORNE FONDEN NGO
- ESOP: Company of Services to Producer Organizations
- Banque Mondiale : World Bank
- BAD: African Development Bank
- SARD-SC: Support to Agricultural Research for Development of Strategic Crops in Africa(SARD-SC),
- PAIAVO: Project to Support Agricultural Infrastructures in the Ouémé Valley
- DEDRAS-ONG: National NGO
- Africa Rice: Africa Rice Center
- Mairie: Town councils

borders. Public structures such as CARDER, SCDA, INRAB, DICAF, Town councils and governmental projects such as PADA and WAAPP) were involved in the creation of 78.26% of the platforms counted. Those organizations do not often intervene alone, but jointly through partnership gathering public and private organizations. Research institutions, INRAB and Africa Rice were involved in the creation of 13% of the platforms enumerated in Benin. The funding of the innovation platforms is essentially assured by the technical and financial partners (SNV, WECARD, World Bank, African Development Bank, etc.). Those TFP provides the financial supports directly or through national NGOs and governmental projects such as PADA, WAAPP, etc.

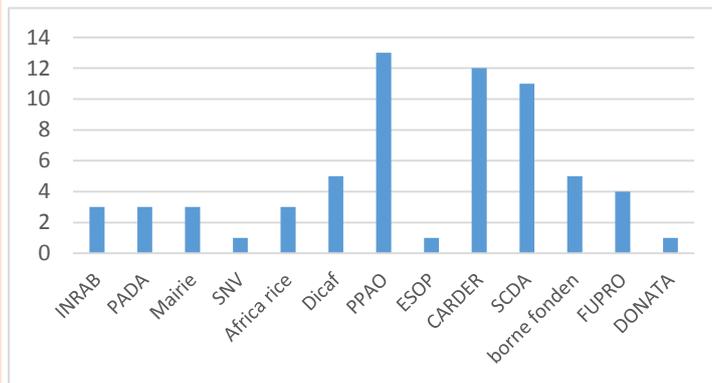


Figure 2: Number of platforms created by organization

Moreover, 65.21% of the platforms inventoried were created during the last five years (2011 to 2015) notably by WAAPP (40%). Thus, the platforms creation and development dynamics was accelerated these last five years at WAAPP behest.

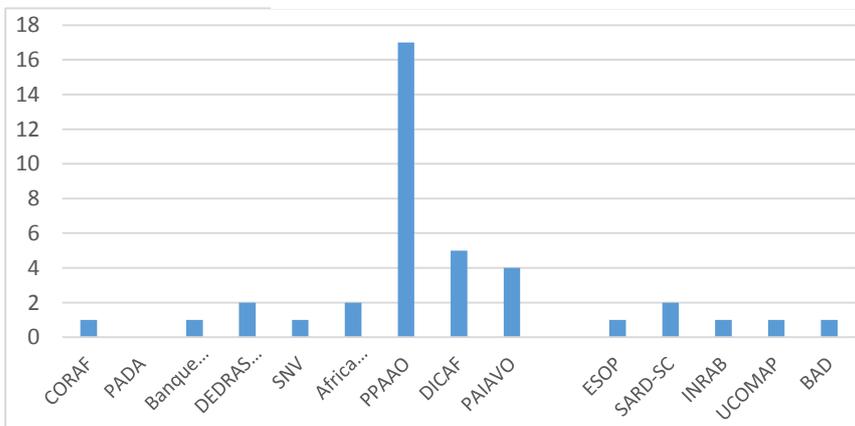


Figure 3: Platforms and funding organizations

Evolution phase and duration of activities

The inventoried platforms are mainly created thanks to the interventions of research and development projects/programs, NGOs and TFP.

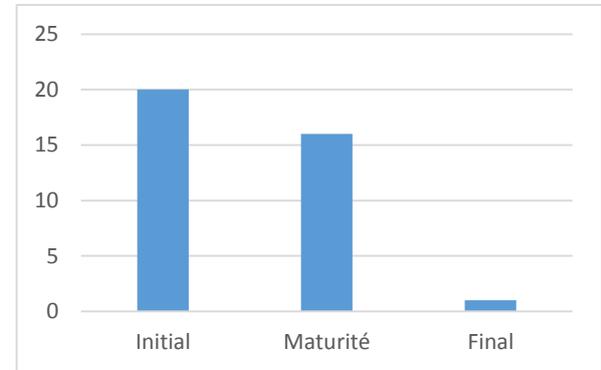


Figure 4: Evolution phase of the platforms

The main opportunity is the access to market for agro-food products, which represents as noticed by Adégbola *et al.*, (2013) a capital link for agricultural fields. Three phases are to be distinguished in the evolution of the platforms: the initial phase, the maturity phase and the independence phase. 54.05% of the platforms (documented with regard to this parameter) are still in the initial phase of their development and 43.24% are in the maturity phase. Only one platform is really independent.

Categories of actor's members of the platforms

Members of the platforms inventoried are mainly producers, processors and traders.

- 27.27% of the platforms (documented with regard to this parameter) are made essentially of producers,
- 40.9% of processors and
- 31.82% of producers, processors and traders.

Transporters, essential actors of the value chains, were not found among platforms actors.

● *Achievements and sustainability of the platforms*

- Achievements of the platforms are varied and include the following areas:
 - establishment of production and marketing infrastructures (irrigation schemes, storage warehouse, market shed, etc.);
 - supply in agricultural inputs;
 - capacity building;
 - information on markets and prices.

● These achievements are mainly made thanks to financial supports from technical and financial partners. The inventoried platforms operate essentially with external funding because they do not have their own resources. Faced with this situation, some platforms made their members pay in order to ensure some functions. This stopgap solution does not however guarantee their sustainability.

● **Success stories and failures of innovation platforms in Benin**

● *Success stories cases*

- The analysis of field information, literature review as well as their cross-checking show that the success of an innovation platform depends on the harmonious interaction between several factors such as:
 - understanding, cohesion and functional relationships between the different members of the platform
 - equitable access to opportunities and resources
 - convergence of interests and abiding by operation principles
 - funding organization, its practices and its intervention mode in the life of the platform

Failure cases

The platforms are established by the institutions supporting the rural world or by rural funding organizations to solve the problem of incoherence between the different actors of a value chain of a given sector. However, certain platforms fail, and are unable to solve the problem situation, than miss experience a sustainable evolution. Multiple reasons account for these failures. We can point out among others:

- non-respect of attractive conditions promised in the beginning by the institution that has created the platform
- non-provision of adequate information and training conditions for a better facilitation of the life of the platform
- non-respect of the main phases of the establishment of the platform
- non-empowerment of the platforms of assistances brought by funding institutions.

Agricultural extension in Benin has evolved throughout history. Thus, purely sectorial and closed systems have gradually given way to a unified extension system and then were gradually replaced by platforms. The most of them are at the initial phase and that their operation is based essentially on external funds. However these platforms are not always winning models. Cases of failures exist and we need to dwell on the factors of failures, learn the lessons for a better stability in the evolution and sustainability of the platforms.

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