



Development of Smart Innovation through Research in Agriculture

Newsletter 9

The DeSIRA initiative (<https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/desira>) contributes to climate-relevant, productive and sustainable transformation of agriculture and food systems in low and middle-income countries and is largely based on agroecological approaches.

DeSIRA-LIFT update



1st cross-project Inception Workshops to explore DeSIRA Pillar 1 projects' support needs to prove and improve their impacts

DeSIRA-LIFT provides services to DeSIRA Initiative's implementers under three service areas, aligned with the three DeSIRA pillars. Service Area 1: Support to the country-based DeSIRA projects to enhance their impacts by promoting Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS) thinking and the use of developmental evaluation approaches. Service Area 2: Support to African apex organisations for research on agricultural development (CORAF, ASARECA, CCARDESA and FARA), extension (AFAAS) and higher education (RUFORUM), and add value to global initiatives TAP and GFAR. Service Area 3: Support to co-create knowledge and evidence to feed policy dialogues and programming on agri-food systems in the Global South.

DeSIRA-LIFT Service Area 1 is an on-demand service facility, that targets five core managerial capacities of Project implementers considered as accelerators of projects' outcomes and impacts. They are: capacity to do real-time monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), capacity to manage open innovation processes, capacity to adapt and respond to innovation needs in a given context, capacity to influence project environment(s) and strengthen national agricultural innovation systems, capacity to collaborate in multi-actor partnerships. DeSIRA-LIFT Service Area 1 is led by CIRAD and ISA and implemented by a group of international experts.

In March, April and May 2022, a set of Inception Workshops – *Aiming for Impacts, what do you need and how can DeSIRA-LIFT support you?* - were organized to introduce the [DeSIRA-LIFT](#) facility – Service Area 1 – to DeSIRA Pillar 1 project managers and their MEL officers. Sixty-nine DeSIRA projects divided into four geographic clusters (Latin America, French-speaking Africa regions, English-speaking Africa regions, Asia region), were invited to jointly review their challenges to prove and improve their impacts during

four working sessions over four days. A total of 53 projects, i.e. 129 participants, actively participated and discussed their support needs as regard to: using a contextualized Theory of Change to better strategize their intervention; making research work for open innovation processes; building spaces for learning and capacity development in their MEL system; making sense of their results in the broader context of the DeSIRA Initiative.

The Inception Workshops were instrumental to trigger communities of practice of DeSIRA projects around similar regions, topics or challenges. Case studies and structured group discussions enhanced critical reflection about projects' capacities to prove and improve their contributions to outcomes and impacts. Many Projects are exploratory, being engaged in uncertain innovation processes, hence needing tailored managerial tools and frameworks. The uniqueness of Research & Innovation Projects in their characteristics and specific universe of constraints they have to deal with, is also well recognized.

DeSIRA project managers were invited to submit their support requests after the completion of the inception workshops. As from September 2022, the DeSIRA-LIFT facility will propose them tailored packages of support services from the [existing menu](#), mostly training & coaching services related to the five core managerial capacities. In addition, the DeSIRA-LIFT facility will launch a DeSIRA Community of Practice aiming at:

1. Offering spaces for discussion and knowledge sharing between DeSIRA projects in the same country, for enhancing synergies between actors and outcomes.
2. Offering spaces for discussion and knowledge sharing between DeSIRA projects working in the same topics (examples: support to agro-ecological transitions, development of living labs; doing research and innovation in insecure zones; innovating with the private sector).
3. Offering opportunities to Projects to present their challenges to international experts to quickly find inspiration, solutions or advice.

For more information please contact us (DeSIRA-LIFT): info@desiralift.org