

UP-SCALING AND OUT-SCALING CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE TECHNOLOGIES: THE CASE OF A LOCAL INNOVATION PLATFORM IN EASTERN KENYA

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Project evaluation meeting with farmers



Technology evaluation by farmers



Field day

Introduction

An innovation platform (IP) is a forum for diagnosing problems of common interest, exploring opportunities and solutions. Such a platform comprises a multi-sectoral and/or a multi-institutional partners. The initiative can be formed at national, intermediary (district/county) and operational/farm levels. The national level IP provides guidance on the implementation of any new technology or initiative generated by a program. The intermediary level IP is established at provincial, county or district level to manage multiplier effects and enhance the impact. The farm level IP is organized at the community level with direct participation of beneficiaries.

Objectives

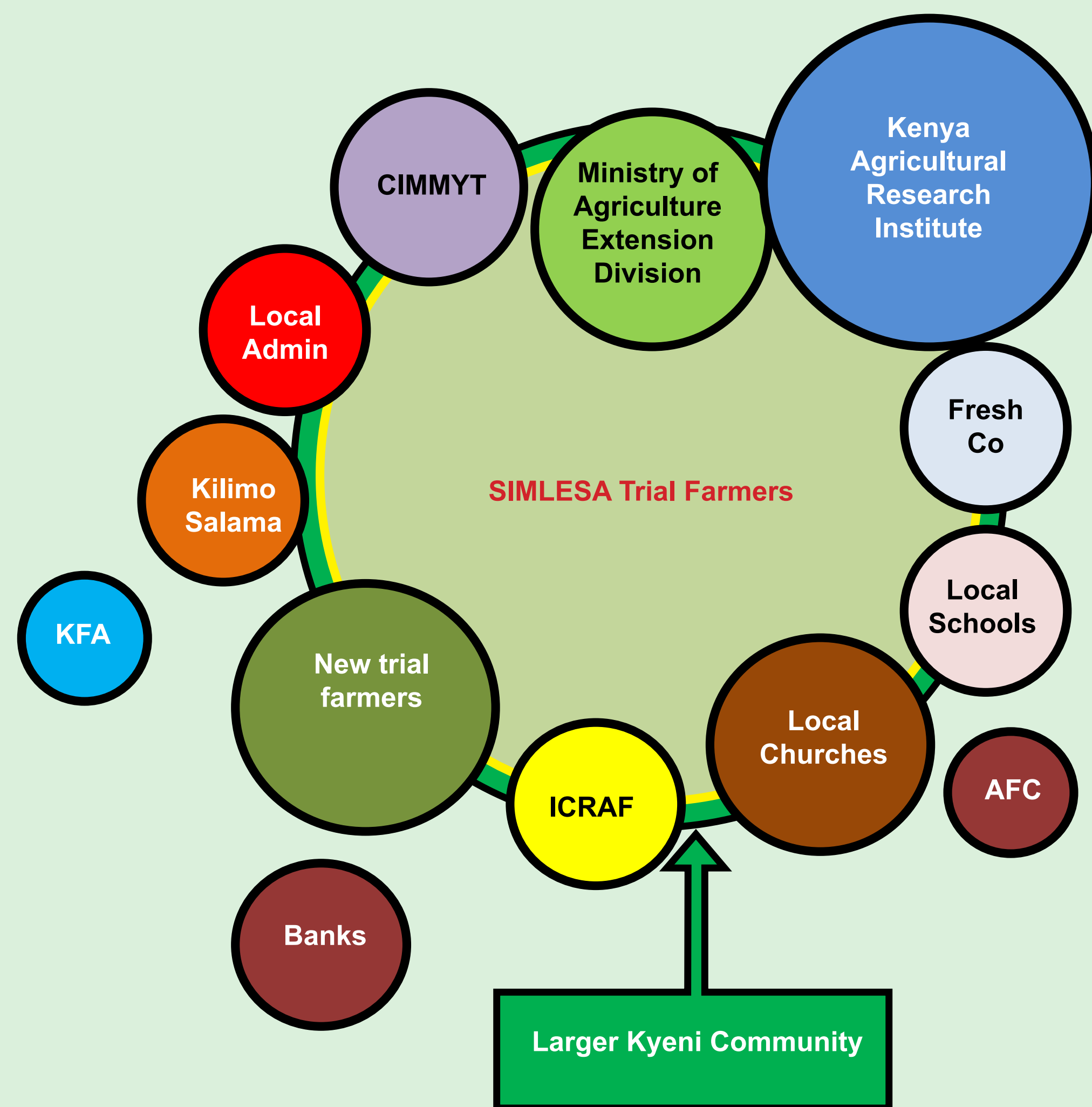
Analyze the status, challenges and opportunities of the Kyeni local innovation platform that was put up to sustainably evaluate, disseminate and hasten adoption of CA technologies involving maize/legume cropping systems in eastern Kenya.

Establishment and maintenance of IPs is one of the action oriented research approaches for technology transfer in the ACIAR funded Sustainable Intensification of Maize-Legume Cropping Systems for Food Security in Eastern and Southern Africa (SIMLESA) project such as Kyeni Local Innovation Platform.

The platform has three objectives:

- Assisting farmers in designing and evaluating innovative production systems
- Assisting researchers and extension officers in designing methodologies for technology evaluation and transfer
- Linking farmers to input-output markets, credit and insurance suppliers

Diagrammatic representation of the Kyeni LIP as at April 2012



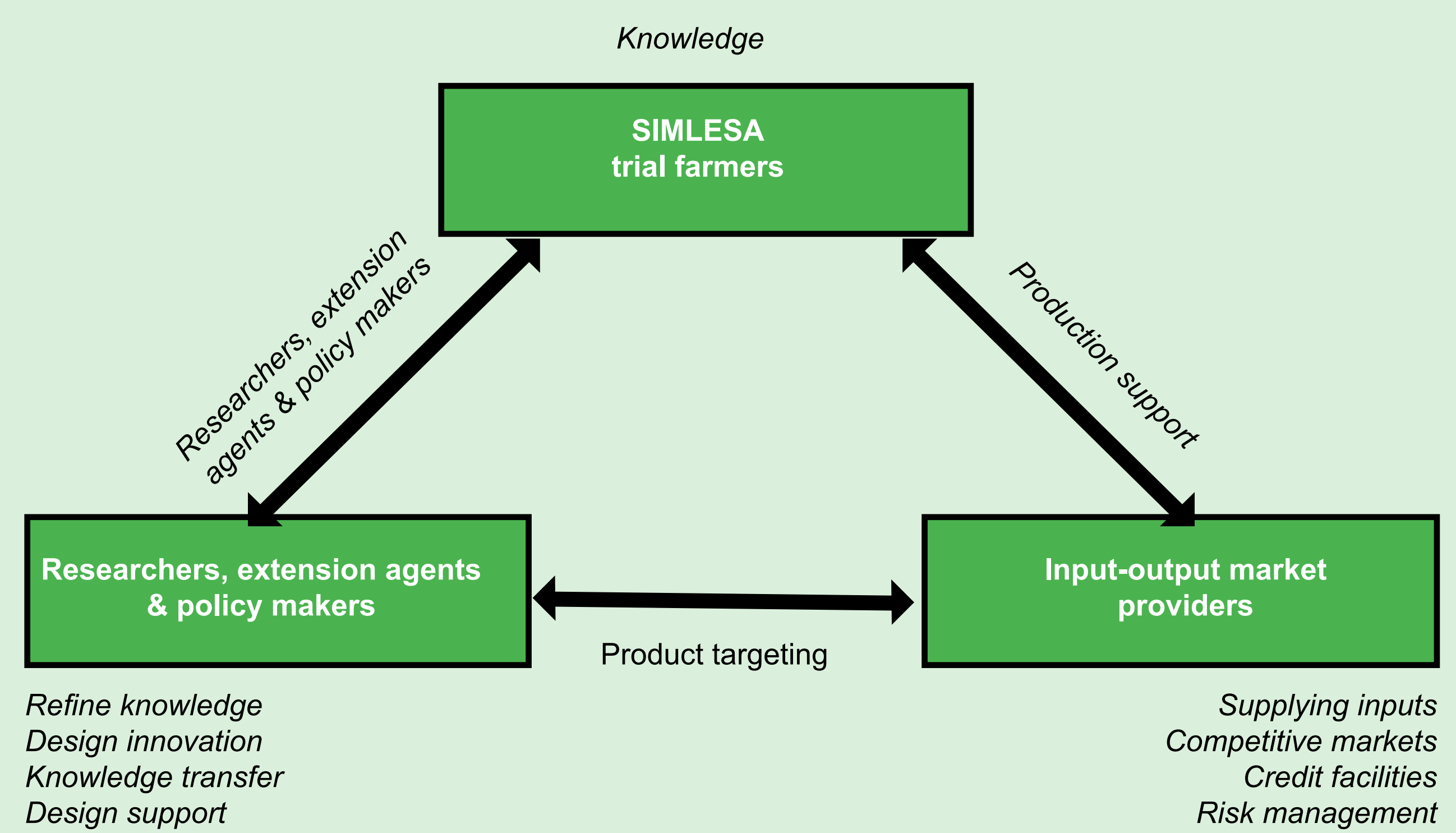
Members have specific tasks of verifying magnitudes hence, the bigger the diagram the bigger the input level the member provides to the LIP

Analysis and Discussion

Main activities of Kyeni LIP include: identifying food production challenges and opportunities; evaluating technological options and limitations; promoting the community endorsed technologies/feedbacks; advising on the best input/output markets and linking Kyeni community with the outside/partners.

Members have an obligation to ensure cohesiveness of LIP through participation in positive achievements of the initiative main goal interpreted by the key role(s) played by each of the member.s

Production & Implementation of Innovations



Interactive and participative innovation systems model linking actors in Kyeni LIP

Roles of Kyeni LIP members

Member	Key role(s)
SIMLESA project trial farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide trial farms, labour and some inputs for demonstrations • Provide information on local challenges and opportunities • Participate in evaluations and promotion of technologies • Participate in bulking and distribution of planting materials • Advice on farm inputs and outputs markets • Train partners on specific crops, CA and cropping system • Link Kyeni community with researchers, extension and other partners
Project's new farmers (early adopters)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide trial farms, labour and some inputs for demonstrations • Scale out appropriate crops, CA and cropping system techniques • Participate in bulking and distribution of planting materials • Train partners on specific crops, CA and cropping system topics
Agricultural extension providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct training on group dynamics and other topics • Participate in packaging and promotion of technologies • Link the community to more partners and institutions
Kilimo Salama insurers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide farmers with crop insurance against risk (bad weather) • Participate in collection of weather and socio-economic data • Train farmers on group formation and dynamics • Train farmers on "FARMING IS BUSINESS"
Freshco Seeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiply, pack and distribute appropriate seed to farmers
Kenya Farmers Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sell farm tools and other inputs and also give advice on the use of various tools and inputs
Agricultural Finance Corporation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide farming or farm development credits and advice on how to utilize the finances on profitable ways.
Equity Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above and also offer banking services to IP members
Local Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popularize together with LIP members the community events and technologies
Schools and churches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as the local administration
Embu East Agricultural Development Stakeholder's Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popularize together with LIP members the community events and technologies. Also hosts the district agricultural events that provide the LIP members with ground to showcase the SIMLESA project technologies and innovations

Challenges of establishing IPs

- Managing diverse people and institutional expectations.
- Need for extra resources for subject sensitization and building a cohesive group.
- Communication and organizational skills required to start and manage a credible and sustained IP.

Lessons learnt and opportunities of the Kyeni LIP

- Through the IP, a range of technologies can be evaluated.
- Project co-ordination can be significantly eased.
- The IP facilitated identification of project's challenges and opportunities, hence mapping way forward .
- By upholding cohesiveness and active participation by each partner, the IP will sustainably promote conservation agriculture technologies.