International Learning Alliance 2019 – Trade-offs plenary discussion

During the fourth International Learning Alliance workshop in Tanzania, members from SAIRLA research projects and National Learning Alliances were invited to share their lessons and experiences and present key findings and tools. This is a summary of the plenary that followed the presentations given under the theme of **trade-offs**.

Question 1: What is your main observation regarding trade-offs in relation to SAI in Sub-Saharan Africa?
• Trade offs is a complex process which is constantly on-going. The dashboard is interesting if farmers can use it, the methodology is complex though • Results shared are very localised. There is a challenge going to scale. May need to make less extensive versions of the tools. Scale is an issue . • Looking at household/smallholder farmers but how communication with policy makers in not clear. Trade-offs can be used to influence implementation on the existing agriculture policies • Trade-offs need more clarity e.g. how is it different from the cost-benefit-analysis or other similar terms? • Conflict of priorities between farmers and donors in setting the agenda • Approach trade-offs from different perspectives. Preferably perceptions of the farmers and combination with household methodologies (husband and wife discuss and define their household goals) • For trade-offs in relation to SAI to be sustainable you must rely on participatory methods and consider inclusivity • Concept of 'quick and dirty' – decision making under imperfect conditions on data limitations • Relationship between data, information, stories of changes and policy-impact of research on policy-role of stories • Good evidence but cannot influence policy because it is isolated cases. Who sets the agenda? Locals need are not integrated • How to get local perspectives? Farmers will have different objectives then researchers (eg biodiversity, GHG emissions) related to issues of scale (local vs global) ad time frame (shot vs long term) • Mismatch between the model (trade-offs analysis tools) and the reality on the ground (the way the farmers operates). Farmers are interested in income (market gains) • Trade-offs should be understood from the point of view of farmers and their practices • There are two ways of approaching trade-offs in SAI. Starting from technology perspectives (analysing how a technology performs along the 3-5 dimensions). (Social/economic/environment). From an actor perspective, analysing peoples

objectives and strategies, then give them additional options (technology, institution). Each way has its own advantages, together they are complementary
- Trade-offs occur at many levels all the time (on going) at individuals, households, communal, nation and global, so it would be interesting to make the framework work across all levels.

Question 2: What is your main observation on how to engage policy and investment processes on trade-offs?

- Avoid reactionary approach to policy engagement- promote pro-active approach e.g. reference to Malawi land Act (2016)
- The best way to engage policy is to involve policy-makers in trade-off analysis exercises and discussions
- Engaging policy and investments on trade off, what shall we tell them? What are key lessons learnt?
- Tools used in the analysis of trade-offs will be effective support for decision making
- There is a need to align SAI initiatives focusing on trade-offs based on priority commodities/geographical locations and social groups
- Policy engagement plan on potential trade-offs for stakeholders (different stakeholders different technology packages)
- Don't push technologies (or package of technologies) on their own, it doesn't work and is not sustainable as it does not address famers priorities and resources. Instead, "tweak/improve the enabling environment
- Is it too much of a stretch to expect researchers to change policy…
- No clear distinction between the concepts of conservation agriculture and SAI among decision makers and participants on the SAIRLA
- Tools developed by the SAIRLA projects must be easily accessible and user-friendly to the target stakeholders for decision-making
- How much do extension workers explain trade-offs when training farmers/stakeholders on certain technologies
- Need to ground trade-offs analysis in local realities. Look at local priorities then think about incentives to nudge people into more sustainable direction. Do it in sustainable way, not just a project.
- Difficult to be used by farmers because of the many components to be considered e.g. conservation agriculture can be time consuming
- Research projects are developing interesting decision making tools but decision makers have their own tools that they are using, so how can these be integrated.
- Capacity building of policy makers is important so that they understand and be able to use these tools
- Framework has resonance with some strategies (such as sustainable livelihood strategies etc)
- The pulling forces/factors have not been properly established on whether farmers are driven by market, cost or simply productivity and the need to conserve biodiversity
- Trade-offs analysis tools depend on the perception of people instead of understanding the context. When it comes to change or switch groups you may get different opinions/answers
- Data availability is key to trade-offs analysis in relation to SAI