

Info flash Rural Development

The Info Flash Rural Development is a periodic information service by the SDC Focal Point for Rural Development which will appear approx. 4 times per year. It is distributed by e-mail, though two issues per year will additionally be included in the Rural Development News (as this one). The Info Flash provides highlights of rural development resources, and informs on key activities of, and in relation to, rural development within SDC.

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The SDC Focal Point for Rural Development

Most readers by now have heard about the SDC Focal Point for Rural Development. Those who have not will find information on what the FP is and what its purpose is, on its web platform at www.sdc-ruraldevelopment.ch.

Although the web platform of the Focal Point for Rural Development is a service by the thematic divisions at SDC, its success **ultimately depends on you, on your contributions to, and utilisation of what the Focal Point has to offer.**

We, therefore, heartily encourage you to utilise the platform and its services, and to contribute your experiences and ideas or launch your initiatives - be it in the form of a discussion in the coffee shop or in the form of an article on your experiences with new ways of doing things. Have a look at the web platform and give us suggestions for improvements. Tell us what needs to be available on the site so that you would visit it regularly (1 x per month or so). Propose topics on which you would consider a package of materials helpful.

Key services of the FP

In the first edition of the Info Flash Rural Development we introduced Coffee Shop, Information Desk, Rural Development Briefings and Bookshop as key services of the Focal Point for Rural Development. This time two further important services are presented:

Training Directory. Are you looking for opportunities to build staff capacity? The training directory provides an extensive data base of training courses on rural development topics. Earlier the directory focused on agriculture, within the frame of the FP its thematic scope has been expanded. The courses included in the directory relate to priority themes for SDC and its partner organisations, and special attention is given to courses which take place in the South and East.

Reflection Space. This space offers a showcase to share your/your programme's practical experiences and innovative ideas with others. Just write them up and send them to the Focal Point Team. Or you ask us for some guidance on how to do the write up. Other people will particularly benefit from contributions which focus on the HOW and WHY something happened or has been achieved. New ideas on how to approach things are also very useful for other people, by complementing their own experiences with new thinking on how things could be done. The reflection space is open for articles in all widely spoken languages. English articles may also be included in the Rural Development News (RDN), and outstanding articles in other languages can be translated into English and included in the RDN.

Highlights from the bookshop

Rural development programmes nearly inevitably face questions around rural innovation development. Here we recommend two helpful recent additions to the broad range of resources available on this topic.

Unlocking farmers' potential: Institutionalising farmer participatory research and extension in Southern Ethiopia. This publication presents the key elements that supported the process of incorporating farmer participatory research into the activities of government research and extension organisations, and the challenges posed by working within bureaucratic structures. <http://www.farmafrica.org.uk/documents/121.pdf>

Farmer-centred innovation development – experiences and challenges from South Asia. This document presents participatory innovation development experiences of Intercooperation's rural development programmes in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan and insights gained at a joint workshop. Order the publication at akolff@intercooperation.ch (Annette Kolff, Intercooperation, Bern, Switzerland).

Skill development in rural areas is a topic that is high on SDC's agenda. Therefore we mention here two resources on the topic, and would recommend you to visit the respective section of the bookshop to find some more materials.

State of the art/concept on Skill Development in Rural Areas SDRA. This paper presents the insights gained so far during the on-line debate on skill development in rural areas and a workshop on the same topic organised by SDC's employment and income division. <http://www.skilldevrural.net/status/stateoftheartendjuly/stateoftheartendjuly.doc>

Skills development in rural areas. This resource CD contains strategies, tools, critical success factors and good practices for policy makers, planners and implementers on innovative and integrating approaches to international cooperation in technical and vocational education and training as well as knowledge systems in rural areas. It can be ordered from eli.baehr@c-quadrat.de.

L'appui à la commercialisation en milieu rural. This issue of the leading periodical on BDS in French provides a large package of essential resources on support services for commercialisation and value chains in rural areas (<http://www.gret.org/ressource/pdf/07368.pdf>).

Harnessing trade for development – benefiting from market access opportunities. This short paper provides an update on the Doha development agenda, and suggests that an 'aid for trade' mechanism should be established within the frame of the Doha Round negotiations (<http://www.id21.org/insights/insights59/pdf.html>)

You pay for what you get – from budget financing to result-based payments. Four case studies, from ex-Soviet Union, Asia and Africa, show how development projects can be financed through payments for the results instead of through funding of inputs. The nature of services, their quantity, quality and price are at the centre of the interest rather than micromanagement issues. The experiences reveal striking findings, with extraordinary efficiency increases and remarkable changes in local partners' attitude, ownership and commitment. The publication can be downloaded at www.helvetas.org.

Agriculture, rural development, and pro-poor growth. Country experiences in the post-reform era. The paper is a synthesis of twelve of the fourteen country case studies included in the multi-donor project "Operationalizing Pro-Poor Growth" that looks specifically at agriculture and other rural development issues (http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTARD/Resources/PPG_final.pdf).

Rural finance innovations - topics and case studies. This document attempts to contribute ideas based on recent experiences to further innovations in rural finance. It describes how innovative techniques can be used to overcome traditional barriers to providing financial services to agriculture by reducing either the risks associated with lending, the costs, or both (http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTARD/Resources/RFI_final.pdf).

Does International Cereal Trade Save Water? The Impact of Virtual Water Trade on Global Water Use. International food trade is increasingly proposed as an active policy instrument to mitigate local and regional water scarcity. In their view, water short countries should import food from water abundant countries to save scarce water resources for other purposes. This research document looks critically at this proposition (<http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/Assessment/files/pdf/publications/ResearchReports/CARR4.pdf>).

Saving water through global trade. This research report analyses the consequences of international virtual water flows through on the global and national water budgets. This allows a more differentiated look at the cost and benefits of importing and exporting agricultural products, taking into consideration not only the quantities of water use, but also differentiating between the use of green and blue water (<http://www.waterfootprint.org/Reports/Report17.pdf>)

Methods and learning

Small producers in export horticulture – a guide to best practice. This practical web-based guide outlines each of the essential components for linking smallholders successfully to export markets. The guide has been primarily written for intermediaries working with or wishing to engage smallholders in the production of vegetables for export. It draws on lessons learnt by the export horticulture industry from working with smallholders. Much of the contents are also useful for enhancing smallholder integration in national high-value markets (<http://www.nri.org/NRET/SPCDR/index.htm>).

Training modules on experience capitalisation. The LEAF (Livelihood, Empowerment and Agroforestry Project) in Bangladesh has developed an experience capitalisation strategy with the aims of learning systematically from experiences emerging from dispersed project activities (see article in RDN 02/05). The strategy was introduced through a staff workshop. The workshop contents have meanwhile been processed into training modules that may be helpful to others too. The modules are available at AGRIDEA (elisabeth.katz@agridea.ch). For information about experiences with the experience capitalisation strategy contact the LEAF project (icbruno@citech-bd.com or icleaf-huda@librabd.net).

Link tips

Promoting local innovation in ecologically-oriented agriculture and natural resource management – PRO-LINNOVA. Prolinnova is a programme to build a global learning and advocacy network on promoting local innovation in ecologically-oriented agriculture and NRM.

The site informs on local innovation programmes going on in a range of countries and provides a wide range of resources on participatory innovation development (<http://www.prolinnova.net>).

Operationalising pro-poor growth. OPPF is a multi-stakeholder programme aiming at learning from a range of country case studies how to make pro-poor growth a reality. This site provides access to all the documents produced within the frame of this programme including the synthesis document (access to site: World Bank ... topics ... poverty ... pro-poor growth and inequality).

Jatropha – a multipurpose pro-poor and pro-environment plant? A gateway to information on Jatropha, a multi-purpose plant that can constitute at the same time an economic opportunity for rural people, a simple and locally usable renewable energy source, and a means for erosion control in many countries around the world (<http://www.jatropha.de>).

Spotlight on RURAL DEVELOPMENT activities at SDC

Systemic Approach to Rural Development. The Social Development Division (SODEV) is about to publish a manual for a systemic approach to rural development. It integrates four frames of reference into one approach – gender, sustainable livelihoods, agrarian systems and outcome mapping. It will appear on the Focal Point website as soon as it is available. For more information contact SODEV (laurent.ruedin@deza.admin.ch).

Global Donor Platform on Rural Development. SDC engages in the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development (GDPRD) is an initiative of leading development and donor agencies to improve cooperation with partner-countries to jointly master these problems. The GDPRD maintains a website that informs about the activities of the platform and provides many useful resources on agricultural and rural development (www.rdxl.org).