Bean Business Innovation Platform

**INNOVATION PROFILE**

- Bean Business Platforms are vehicles designed to implement program interventions by bringing together critical actors to improve business ecosystems and incentivize actors in bean corridors. This approach is operationalized through innovation platforms that aim to eliminate bottlenecks in the bean value chain.
- These innovation platforms are linked to the “Bean Corridor” approach, which is a market-driven model through which CIAT’s Pan-Africa Bean Research Alliance (PABRA) implements research and development activities in Africa.
- Business platforms, driven by lead grain off-takers, provide actors with inclusive space for interaction, learning, negotiation, and transactions in a coordinated environment. PABRA has facilitated the establishment of close to 76 business platforms (110 women and 20 youth in leadership positions) resulting in enhanced business opportunities and increased investments along the bean value chains in member countries.
- The acceleration of the production is also due to complementary innovations such as structured trade via distribution and consumption hubs. Actors feel empowered as they are simply more than ever consulted and involved but also provided with a space for trade operations in a coordinated environment.

**CHALLENGES AND RESULTS**

- Access to good quality seeds which is the beginning of successful crop production initiatives globally is still a formidable challenge for the smallholder farmers in the eastern, southern, and central Africa, where seed systems are still under-developed. The bean business innovation platforms are aimed at addressing these gaps.
- In Zimbabwe, bean business ecosystems have developed around five innovation platforms operating within two bean corridors. The innovation platforms have attracted membership from enthusiastic partners along the bean value chain led by several private sector actors (seed companies, agro-dealers, aggregators, off-takers, and processors). As a result, about 561,000 households in Zimbabwe were able to access bio-fortified bean varieties from 2015 to 2020.
- In Tanzania, some of the business platforms around school feeding programmes integrating farmers, schools, district education boards, agro-dealers and off-takers have resulted in nutrient-rich bean varieties reaching over 200 communities around schools.
- In Rwanda, the platforms bring together 2 exporters, the commodity exchange, aggregators, 2 traders (1 woman) and 2 bean product processors linking them to 10 platforms established at the district level for supply of 60,000MT of beans per year. This has also helped in empowering women by increasing their participation and leadership in these activities from 30% to 48.6%.

**PARTNERSHIPS DELIVER INNOVATIONS**

- **Collaborators**
  - Pan Africa Bean Research Alliance (PABRA)
  - Alliance of Biodiversity International (ABDI)
  - International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)
  - National Bean research programs

- **Funders**
  - SDC funded project “Improving food security, nutrition, incomes, natural resource base and gender equality for better livelihoods of smallholder households in Sub-Saharan Africa”
  - GAC funded project “Improving Bean Production and Marketing in Africa (IBPMA)”
  - ADB funded project “Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT)” program.

**INNOVATION LAUNCH**

- Launched in 2010, the platforms which are accompanied by corridor approach method is realising market-driven transformation of rural agriculture that focuses on “bean flow” activities at all stages from research, distribution of grain to value addition. The value added comes from an improved process to produce high-quality products by processing bean grain into several value-added products that are then easily distributed to the market for income creation.

**BROADER RELEVANCE**

This innovation contributes to SDG 2 “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”, SDG 1 “To end poverty in all its forms, everywhere”, SDG 4 “Ensure inclusive and quality education”, SDG 5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” and SDG 17 “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development”.

As a Stage 4 and a Maturity level 3 innovation, these platforms have permitted farmers to access market easily with their better seeds and improved nutrient-rich bean varieties. This has increased the demand as consumers buy nutrient-rich foods that increase their well-being. The flow between supply, demand and quality of the products enhanced has helped improve the business environment with rising interest from policy makers to invest in this innovation to increase the income of actors along the value chain who contribute to nutrition and food security goals.