



Volume 2

**Innovation Processes
in Agro-Ecological Transitions
in Developing Countries**

Edited by
Ludovic Temple
Eveline M.F.W. Compaoré Sawadogo

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Innovation Processes in Agro-Ecological
Transitions in Developing Countries

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Dimitri Uzunidis

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Contents

Foreword	xi
Michel GRIFFON	
Introduction	xiii
Ludovic TEMPLE and Eveline M.F.W. COMPAORÉ SAWADOGO	
Chapter 1. Innovation Platforms as a Tool to Support Technological Change in the Agri-Food Sector in Developing Countries: A Case Study of the Plantain Value Chain in Côte d'Ivoire	1
Euphrasie C.M. ANGBO-KOUAKOU, Ludovic TEMPLE, Syndhia MATHÉ and Alexandre ASSEMIEN	
1.1. Introduction.	1
1.2. Technological innovations in the Ivorian plantain sector	4
1.2.1. Development of plantain cultivar transfers	4
1.2.2. History of the WAAPP plantain program	5
1.2.3. Innovation platform features: objectives, composition and governance	6
1.3. Conceptual and methodological framework.	10
1.3.1. SIS: framework for analyzing technological changes based on the strategies of stakeholders in agri-food chains	10
1.3.2. Conceptualization of the four components of an AIS.	11
1.3.3. Methodological and analytical framework	13
1.4. Results.	17
1.4.1. Functionality of Côte d'Ivoire's PIPs	17
1.4.2. Reorganization of the AIS components by PIPs	17
1.4.3. Redirecting technological trajectories in the plantain sector in Côte d'Ivoire.	18
1.5. Discussion of the functionalities of the system and IAs.	20

1.5.1. Functionalities of the agricultural SIS for the plantain sector in Côte d'Ivoire	20
1.5.2. IAs and changes	21
1.5.3. Renewal of technological innovation processes	21
1.6. Conclusion	22
1.7. Bibliography	23

Chapter 2. Biotechnological Cotton in Burkina Faso: An Innovation Trajectory in a Development Context 29

Eveline M.F.W. COMPAORÉ SAWADOGO

2.1. Introduction	29
2.2. The rise of biotechnological cotton within a context of persistent development problems	33
2.3. Institutional mechanisms that led to the adoption of biotechnological cotton innovation in Burkina Faso	34
2.4. Identification of the actors and their place in the Bt innovation trajectory	35
2.4.1. Cotton producers	35
2.4.2. Cotton industries	36
2.4.3. Cotton researchers	36
2.4.4. Civil society	37
2.4.5. The government of Burkina Faso	37
2.5. Stabilization of the Bt cotton adoption process	42
2.6. Discussion and conclusion on the failure of Bt cotton in Burkina Faso	43
2.7. Bibliography	45

Chapter 3. Emergence of a Biofuel Innovation System and Production in Burkina Faso: An Analysis of the Determinants and Challenges for its Development 51

Salif DERRA and Ludovic TEMPLE

3.1. Introduction	51
3.2. Methodology	52
3.2.1. Analytical framework	52
3.2.2. Data collection	55
3.3. Defining the biofuel innovation and production system.	56
3.4. Incentives for the emergence of the actor system	58
3.4.1. Biofuel support policies	58
3.4.2. Increased funding for biofuels research	59
3.4.3. Financing of biofuel production projects	60
3.5. Functional analysis of the biofuel innovation and production system.	60
3.5.1. Creation of a platform for capacity-building	60

3.5.2. Functioning of the biofuels sector in Burkina Faso	61
3.5.3. Biofuel development models	62
3.6. The failures of the biofuel innovation and production system	63
3.6.1. Insufficient knowledge on the consequences of technological choices	63
3.6.2. Poor interaction within the actor network.	64
3.6.3. Lack of regulatory frameworks and standards	64
3.6.4. Apprehension from national and international civil society	65
3.7. Conclusion	65
3.8. Bibliography	66
Chapter 4. Trajectories of Innovation in Conservation Agriculture at Lake Alaotra in Madagascar	71
Eric PENOT, Valentin FEVRE and Patricia FLODROPS	
4.1. Introduction.	71
4.2. The problem	73
4.3. Methodology	75
4.4. Status report on the adoption of CA in 2013	76
4.5. Developments in farming practices and innovations in CA.	79
4.6. A wide variety of growing systems among the early adopters	80
4.7. Learning, innovation co-design and IS.	82
4.7.1. Learning and recombination of knowledge.	82
4.7.2. Empirical example of an evolution towards co-construction of systems	82
4.7.3. Toward innovation comangement	83
4.8. Contrasting behaviors after project shutdown.	84
4.9. Conclusion	87
4.10. Bibliography	91
Chapter 5. Ecological Transition of an Innovation Model: Yam Seed Production in Haiti	95
James BOYER and Ludovic TEMPLE	
5.1. Introduction.	95
5.2. Conceptual and methodological frameworks	97
5.2.1. Yam production in Haiti	97
5.2.2. Methodology and data collection.	97
5.2.3. A three-phase mechanism for collecting data and validating results	98
5.3. The diffusionist attempt to transfer Miniset technology in Haiti.	100
5.3.1. Emergence of the Miniset technique in Haiti.	100
5.3.2. Orientation based on external research and exogenous elements	100
5.3.3. The diffusionist model's failed attempt at adapting	102

5.3.4. Co-constructing adoption: adapting the technology to green the process	104
5.4. From adoption results to the socioeconomic impacts of Miniset.	107
5.4.1. Evolution of the adoption rate	107
5.4.2. Impact on production.	107
5.5. Discussion of the conditions for changing an innovation model.	109
5.5.1. Miniset: the failure of linear and diffusionist innovation models	109
5.5.2. Miniset: a positive contribution to agro-ecological innovation	110
5.5.3. Miniset: a reaffirmation of the importance of action research.	111
5.6. Conclusion	111
5.7. Appendix: characteristics of surveyed areas	113
5.8. Bibliography	115
Chapter 6. Diversity of Innovation Processes in the Niayes Market Gardening System (Senegal): Between Conventional Intensification and Agro-Ecological Transition	117
Patrick DUGUÉ, Isabelle MICHEL, Victor KETTELA and Serge SIMON	
6.1. Introduction.	117
6.2. Theoretical position	119
6.3. Methodology	120
6.3.1. Context	120
6.3.2. Combination of methods	122
6.4. Results: diversity of technical innovation processes	124
6.4.1. Adoption and adaptation of an innovation from large capital-intensive farms: drip irrigation and electric pumping	124
6.4.2. An innovation process led by a development operator: the use of biopesticides and organic manure	125
6.4.3. Poorly visible innovations carried forward by market gardeners	128
6.5. Discussion	131
6.5.1. Recognizing the innovation capacities of farmers.	131
6.5.2. Why should agronomists be interested in farming innovation?	132
6.5.3. How to support innovation processes?	135
6.6. Conclusion	136
6.7. Bibliography	137
Chapter 7. Food Challenges in Africa	141
Jean-Marc BOUSSARD	
7.1. Food challenge in Africa	141
7.2. How to improve the food production capacity of sub-Saharan Africa	143
7.3. Difficulty in raising capital.	145
7.4. Agricultural prices south of the Sahara	149

7.5. Reasons for agricultural price volatility in Africa	152
7.6. The “endogenous” causes of price instability	155
7.7. Conclusion and implications for agricultural policies	159
7.7.1. Improving infrastructure	160
7.7.2. Input subsidies	161
7.7.3. Price stabilization	163
7.8. Bibliography	165
List of Authors	167
Index	169

Foreword

The different chapters in this book deal with a difficult problem that can be summarized as follows: “conventional” and modern agriculture in the second half of the 20th Century was based on a technical model using chemical inputs, mechanization and capital. Farms, which use these inputs at varying levels, could only “import” these techniques and inputs from large and increasingly monopolistic companies, acquiring them on the corresponding markets and following the recommendations attached to them. This has resulted in a form of technical dependence of agriculture on the upstream industrial sector and a dependence on reasoning from research institutions and dissemination of technical models.

In contrast, ecological intensification proposes to first intensify the natural functionalities of agroecosystems, which do not turn to industrial inputs as a first point of call. For farmers in developing countries, this is an interesting opportunity. However, ecological intensification is not easy to achieve. First of all, it is knowledge intensive. For example, reasoning in terms of food webs to control crop pests requires precise and sometimes complex knowledge, which is not the case in conventional agriculture where pesticides are used. It therefore requires a shift from situations where simple technical practices are applied to complex reasoning requiring training through observation, diagnosis, knowledge of different technical alternatives, monitoring and surveillance. Experience has shown that small-scale farmers quickly become familiar with this knowledge of how natural mechanisms work.

But these techniques are not given away for free. They are supplemented with conventional techniques, such as applying fertilizers where necessary, as “natural” methods are insufficient. In addition, ecological intensification comes with specific costs that can be high. This is particularly the case for ecological infrastructures such as, for example, establishing hedgerows, terraces, impluviums and more general improvements, which are all investments, and these investments are not limited by human labor. These are monetary costs.

It therefore appears that this new form of intensification presupposes a good understanding of ecology and good motivation from farmers to use it. This can only be done if they are convinced that it is in their own interest and if they freely agree to use the new techniques by appropriating them. This approach therefore contrasts with conventional extension, which has often placed farmers in a situation of dependence.

The studies that are presented here show how this change is taking place in practice on the ground. The authors are to be congratulated for having done this work of observation and analysis of experiments on a social phenomenon that is of primary importance for the farming agriculture based on agroecology.

Michel GRIFFON

Introduction

Innovation Processes in Agro-Ecological Transitions of Developing Countries

In this book, the core problem concerns the interactions between changes in innovation models, the institutional condition of production system greening and the social consequences. Six innovation processes are, analyzed in the agricultures of Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Haiti, Madagascar and Senegal, respectively. Chapter 7 analyzes the extent to which the lack of full agricultural policy explains the failure of technology transfer based on capital intensification. These situations converge to demonstrate that collaborative innovation models are particularly useful for development, as they adapt the studied processes to local needs. These models imply more commitment from public policy innovation in the agricultural sector, mainly food, in order to regulate the market and encourage funding of infrastructure and investment in production.

I.1. Introduction

The increase in global development inequalities, the questions raised due to the acceleration of climate change, new food crises and technical transitions in the fields of digital computing, energy, biotechnology, etc., all converge for a technological paradigm shift in the agricultural and food sector. The recognition of this in international political fora (World Bank, UNESCO, OECD, FAO, etc.) raises controversy about the economic and social model that it mobilizes and strengthens.

The first model is based on the industrialization of production through the standardization of inputs that are used to produce agricultural and food goods. This is predominantly in OECD countries. It is partly due to technical progress in the postwar era in the fields of chemistry, motorization, genetics, etc. It is based on the search for economies of scale, on the concentration and specialization of farms and land, and is often associated with a modernist vision of capital intensification. It is mainly based on new techniques that implement scientific progress through the world's agro-chemical and agrifood companies. It requires agricultural policies that regulate market instabilities and the conditions for financing investment in production, which enable capital intensification [BOU 17]. In other words, within agriculture, it promotes the "developmentalist" myth that southern countries are catching up because of exogenous industry and technology transfers [COU 86]. Ultimately, it "artificializes" agriculture by "disembodiment" it from its relationship with the land, climate and work (human and animal): hydroponics or the decerebration of animals. This model is highly efficient in terms of productivity or return on investment and underpins an innovation trajectory that is polarized by the intensification of production (more inputs and capital to replace labor and land). The emancipation of production from the natural and social ecosystem reduces the diversity of these ecosystems to a constraint that must be homogenized [VAN 09]. Huge fires in the dried-out bogs of Sumatra (Asia) producing acacia for the paper industry or even the dehumanization process of Chaco (South America) to produce soya are increasingly common place.

A second economic model [SOU 14] underpins an agriculture that is based on family production methods. It still dominates agriculture in developing countries and is based on social structures of production, which are considered to be diverse in terms of their historical roots. It challenges and calls upon the capacities of science and technology to accompany this diversity, which is a resource for innovation. This intensification, which is sometimes described as an ecological one [GRI 02], prioritizes the exploitation potential of natural and social ecosystems by hybridizing scientific research knowledge and knowledge bases of localized rural societies. Ultimately, this model refers to permaculture or other forms of organic farming that are based on the self-production of inputs.

These two "stylized" models coexist in the differing agrarian realities in the North and the South. They compete for resources: land, water, labor, knowledge, finance or in securing support for public policies for innovation

and research. In some situations, these models are complementary. Thus, they converge in recognizing the inadequacy of the diffusionist linear innovation model for the conception of invention through scientific research and its transfer from the laboratory to global agriculture [MEY 16]. This convergence is reflected in the growing importance of a system-wide reference framework for innovation analysis in innovation and research policies, which can alternatively be mobilized to improve the use of biotechnologies or to support innovation derived from the tacit knowledge of rural societies [TOU 15].

This special book takes a look at different innovation situations. The connections highlight how the transition from a linear diffusionist model to a systemic collaborative model intensifies agricultural production in a sustainable manner. The trajectories of agricultural innovations mentioned in the first five chapters are mainly based on improved achievement of ecological potentialities in the mobilization of environmental resources (human and non-human) due to the networking between innovation stakeholders. They show that it is possible to improve food security through ecological intensification and capacity-building for agricultural innovation in developing countries. Chapter 6 argues in favor of strengthening the capital intensification of production. It analyzes how the incompleteness of agricultural policies, which is linked to the disengagement of states in regulating product markets and making financial investments, explains current technological inertia in the considered context.

I.2. The determinants of ecological intensification

In Burkina Faso, based on the technological promises of reducing pesticides through the diffusion of Genetically Modified Organism (GMOs) by an agro-chemical firm, Eveline Compaoré Sawadogo (Chapter 2) shows how the lobbies linked to globalized investments in GMOs create institutional conditions for the extension of Bt cotton. She analyzes how emancipating the precautionary principles and not taking into account stakeholders' expectations contributes to the failure of the innovation process. She questions the negative social consequences of such a trajectory of Bt cotton.

Looking at the development conditions for Jatropha cultivation to produce energy in Burkina Faso, Salif Derra and Ludovic Temple (Chapter 3) extend this questioning. They show how structuring research and

entrepreneurial investments in the bioenergy sector instigates technological dynamics in response to needs defined by industrial countries. However, they underline how it can also feed a variety of possible technological models, some of which can meet localized needs (under certain conditions).

In Madagascar, Eric Penot *et al.* (Chapter 4) question how the diffusionist model of a new agro-ecological cropping system (SCV) reinforces its effectiveness through a development project by integrating farmers' participation into the evaluation and experimentation mechanisms. However, the results point to low adoption rates and partial adoption mechanisms of these techniques. They question the future sustainability of these adoptions in terms of their ability to integrate the complexity of institutional and organizational variables that, beyond individual scales, structure the coordination of collective community or professional action.

In Côte d'Ivoire, Euphrasie Angbo-Kouakou *et al.* (Chapter 1) show how a "South–South" technology transfer based on new disease-resistant plantain banana hybrids (which potentially reduce pesticide use) mobilizes participatory multi-stakeholder assessment schemes. These schemes solidify a collaborative innovation model. They generate collective adaptations of the relationships between research and farmers. These experimental platforms adapt the technology transfer offer to the needs of different stakeholders in the localized value chains.

In Senegal, on the topic of market gardening, Patrick Dugué *et al.*, (Chapter 6) show how spatial proximity between different agro-industrial and family production methods can lead to innovation processes for small producers. In the observed situation, they favor the pooling of experimental and learning capacities, which allows for the adoption of new industrial innovations (thermal or electric pumps) for drip irrigation. This adoption model is coupled with other innovation processes that are more based on natural and cognitive local resources, for example the fertilization of crops or optimal valorization of land (crop associations). The hybridization of knowledge bases between professional organizations, civil society (NGOs with an organic farming model), businesses and research are at the root of these innovation mechanisms, combining different technical artefacts with local knowledge.

In Haiti, James Boyer and Ludovic Temple (Chapter 5) analyze how a linear diffusionist innovation model has been transformed into an open and

collaborative model of long-term production of yams. They highlight how this transformation needs to be created and strengthened through positive synergies between adoption mechanisms, the autonomous greening of the innovation process, and the socioeconomic impacts at a macroeconomic level.

Jean-Marc Boussard (Chapter 7) emphasizes the need to increase the availability and accessibility of agricultural production in order to meet the needs of population growth. By mobilizing the contribution of the agricultural production economy, he identifies the need to increase the productivity of the land and the labor it conditions for capital investment. This capital investment can take different forms: infrastructure, mechanization, use of technical inputs or mobilization of new knowledge. It remains governed by agricultural policies, which secure access to credit and regulate agricultural and food markets.

These six chapters provide cross-disciplinary knowledge of the results that illustrate a coevolution between the adaptation of agricultural innovation models and technological trajectories, which lead to a greening of agronomic practices in the intertropical agriculture of developing countries. All these case studies confirm the growing practice of participatory research, which creates interactions between stakeholders. These practices are more or less inclusive of local and non-local stakeholders depending on the phase of the process: design, experimentation, dissemination. In some cases, implementing a diffusionist model is a minor adjustment that barely modifies the linear dimension of the technology transfer governed by agro-chemical companies or researchers that are exogenous to rural societies. This results in costly failures for local populations and partial adoptions that are not stable. In other cases, the tools implemented (innovation platforms) modify the initial linear pattern of technology transfer by creating feedback loops. Finally, in yet other situations, the explicit implementation of collaborative innovation models during all phases of the process reinforces the endogenous innovation capacity of farmers in self-production of inputs. In these latter situations, the mechanisms for adopting innovation are faster, which breaks with the linear model. There can be two outcomes relative to the situations mentioned above: an increase in yield and productivity or an improvement in the innovation capacity of farmers through control of their own resources.

I.3. Conclusion

In terms of greening of production, some case studies have shown that innovation processes which reduce labor hardship (irrigation, *in vivo* seeding multiplication) allow for better involvement of farmers in the adoption and dissemination of technologies. With regard to innovations that are based on technology transfer, new varieties exist, crop systems to reduce pesticides developed in industrialized countries (SCV) and capital-intensive agricultural practices (new varieties including GMOs, chemical fertilizers). These produce divergent results depending on the institutional and political contexts. The chapter by Boussard explains the failures of capital intensification in the productivist model due to the inadequacy of agricultural policies to secure credit access conditions and reduce market instability. Risk aversion is highlighted as a major variable for investment in production. However, it does not question the compatibility of both this model and intensification technologies with the diversity of socioeconomic conditions for production and the specific nature of local needs. In general, all the innovation situations considered here concern family-run farms. The example of Senegal, however, reveals an explicit complementarity between different economic models of production organization.

The innovation situations referred to in this book differ in terms of the level of involvement of the various stakeholders in innovation processes, but they also depend on the role played by institutional incentives provided by public policies. They challenge the mechanisms and methodologies [TEM 16] that allow sub-Saharan Africa to accompany the transition from linear technology transfer models to collaborative innovation models. Although the results are contextual in each case, the fact that they converge shows how these collaborative models reinforce the effectiveness of innovation processes with respect to better connectivity between the agronomic research activity and its usefulness in inclusive development. Innovation and research policies that focus on the public good relative to local societal expectations are a necessity in the fragile institutional context of developing countries.

I.4. Bibliography

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