

Learning Alliances Help Climate-Smart Agricultural Practices Take Root

Posted by Joan Russow

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Smallholders in developing countries all too often do not have the resources or incentives to commit to the transformation to sustainable agriculture that scientists know is needed. Credit: IITA

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IBADAN, Nigeria, Jan 24 2017 (IPS) - Development advocates and professionals are very keen on harnessing the power of agriculture to promote the cause of climate change these days. And rightly so, because agriculture is both a major emitter of greenhouse gases and so a potential force for mitigation, and because billions of people will need to eat, and so adaptation is an absolute necessity.

That said, it's actually quite hard to achieve lasting consensus on the ground. For a plethora of reasons, smallholders in developing countries all too often do not have the resources or incentives to commit to the transformation to sustainable agriculture that scientists know is needed.

However, these challenges can be faced and overcome. Doing so requires that experts listen closely to what people are saying.

The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture is highly engaged in promoting climate-sensitive farming practices and full-fledged Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA). Our experience in the field has given us the opportunity to learn why some useful adaptive techniques struggle to take hold.

Some examples from our work in Northern Uganda are noteworthy.

For example, some agroforestry initiatives and other projects geared to using perennial crops fail to achieve traction among women farmers because they do not own land. The absence of equitable tenure rights leads many women naturally to prefer annual crops that can be harvested in the short term.

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