Our Products and Services

- **Effective approaches for:**
  - Fomenting agroenterprise development
  - Farmer participatory research
  - Applying new information and communications technologies (ICTs) to rural innovation
  - Formation of learning alliances
  - Rural planning
- **Advice, training, and follow-up assistance in applying these approaches:**
  These products and services are designed especially for individuals and organizations working with farmers, their associations, and rural communities on food security, agroenterprises, and the use of ICTs for development, with particular emphasis on rural women and indigenous people.

The Rural Innovation Institute
A Valuable Partner for Building Sustainable Livelihoods

For more information contact:
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Creating Competitive Agroenterprises

T
c create an entrepreneurial culture, rural communities and enterprises must have the leadership, skills, and capital to pursue new opportunities. They must develop new approaches to the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) that enable them to do so. To help farmers identify and pursue such opportunities, we have developed an approach to participatory research that enables them to do so.

The work of many international and national organizations, including numerous NGOs, suggests that such approaches can identify effective ways to improve technical and social innovation in rural areas.

In growing numbers of rural communities throughout the world, participatory approaches are creating opportunities for farmers to discover new knowledge that helps them build better livelihoods.

Opening Pathways for Communication and Information

T
e “Let’s Fight Poverty” group at Muguli, as they build the knowledge needed to pursue their action plans, are using the Internet and other new information and communications technologies, or ICTs, as a community telecenter in the nearby town of Kabale. Moreover, group members who belong to a local theater troupe are sharing that knowledge by presenting it through their plays.

ICTs are now readily available to rural communities in developing countries that previously relied on radio to inform their residents. Our work on rural planning in Colombia has generated a large demand for training, which we have met through the telecenters.

The Approach in Practice

Four thousand farm families in the Southeast Asian countries have introduced hybrid sugar cane, which has improved productivity and provided a new risk management tool for farmers, who now use a participatory research approach. The resulting innovations have helped to increase production and reduce the risk of losing money in the futures market.

Learning Alliances and Planning for Change

T
c various approaches offered by the Rural Innovation Institute are not fit for all regions or contexts. Rather, they developed a systematic approach to learning that opens the way to technological and social innovation.

To adapt and apply those tools in diverse rural communities requires the active participation of numerous partners. For this purpose the Institute is entering into a series of “learning alliances” with major international NGOs and other organizations.

The Approach in Practice

Through alliances with CARE International and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), our approach to applying ICTs for rural innovation is being expanded and adapted to diverse rural communities in Central America and East Africa. New alliances are being formed in other regions.

Our Approach to Farmer Participatory Research

- Identify and analyze market opportunities for current and alternative crops, resulting in a portfolio of high-potential options.
- Develop strategies that farmers can use to capture added value, based on participatory analysis of production opportunities.
- Strengthen local networking among farmers, extension agents, and organizations dedicated to seeking out and sharing information.
- Conduct participatory monitoring and evaluation of the research process.

Our Approach to Applying ICTs for Rural Innovation

- Establish community telecenters, supported by local organizations, allowing farmers access to ICTs.
- Set up e-business, e-government, and e-education projects.
- Initiate partnerships that extend the use of ICTs with more conventional or traditional communications channels, such as community radio and theater.

Our Approach to Basic Learning Alliances

- Set a research agenda, conduct experiments, and report results to development professionals, and representatives of the private and public sectors, all committed to agroenterprise development.
- Build local capacity to apply those approaches and support their application in the field.
- Document local experiences with the approaches, evaluate impacts, and identify lessons learned, leading to new cycles of collaborative experimentation.

Our Approach to Building Learning Alliances

- Seek out partners and negotiate terms of the alliance.
- Identify good development practices, evaluate their contributions to improved livelihoods, and design improved approaches to foster rural innovation.
- Build local capacity to apply the approaches and support their application in the field.
- Document local experiences with the approaches, evaluate impacts, and identify lessons learned, leading to new cycles of collaborative experimentation.

Our Approach to Rural Planning

- Define basic learning processes and frameworks for knowledge sharing.
- Develop a diagnostic framework that allows for the successful implementation of ICTs.
- Implement participatory learning processes.
- Develop an action plan for the introduction and scale-up of ICTs.
If you or your organization would like to work as partners with us, here is how you can get started:

- Request or enroll in a training course. For the Rural Innovation Institute, training is never a one-off affair. We continue to provide mentoring and follow-up with participants as they implement action plans devised during the training.
- Ask for technical development assistance. We work closely with clients to design the right combination of approaches and to organize support in applying these approaches through service contracts.
- Develop a project proposal and seek funding for it in collaboration with us.

Becoming a Partner

- Creating Competitive Agroenterprises
- Blending Scientific and Local Knowledge
- Opening Pathways for Communication and Information
- Learning Alliances and Planning for Change