

ABSTRACT

Institutional weak linkages among actors and organisations in extension delivery systems continue to be a major challenge for enhancing agricultural innovation and productivity. Agricultural innovation systems' thinking has thus been adopted in agricultural research and development to harness the actor innovative capabilities, knowledge enhancement and social transformation. Innovation platforms are recognized as viable approaches to stimulating development of agricultural enterprises due to their emphasis on value chain development, networking and partnerships. Studies have been done on platform facilitation, organization and their potential outcomes; but less focus on how innovation intermediaries foster and manage interactions among diverse actors for desired outcomes. This study investigated how governance aspects influenced performance of coffee innovation platforms in Central and Western Uganda. Specifically, the study: (i) explored processes in the formation of Coffee Innovation Platforms (ii) analysed contextual conditions that enabled coffee platform leaders to achieve their desired expectations (iii) investigated the knowledge sharing mechanisms and their influence within platform social networks. The study used a constructivist paradigm and qualitative multiple case study research design to understand the governance aspects basing on individual perspectives and experiences of diverse actors in their context.

Identification and mobilization of actors, visioning and strategy formulation and formation of interim steering committees were found to be the main steps in the formation of Coffee IPs. Development of effective governance structures was excluded in formation process; yet they are critical for successful implementation of organizational activities for desirable benefits and outcomes. Selection of leaders, rules of engagement, incentives, organizational structures, personal attributes and distributed roles were identified as missing critical leadership facets which require due attention of the innovation intermediaries to build and sustain interactions and relationships in the IPs. Weak linkages within the social networks were attributed to undefined knowledge sharing mechanisms at platform level. Social networks thus have a strong influence on actor knowledge exchange and collaboration in agricultural innovation platforms. To enhance platform performance, the study recommends a governance framework comprised of three major components; operational formation, leadership development and knowledge sharing models.