

DeSIRA-LIFT Service area 1

Proving and Improving impacts in the DeSIRA Initiative

A learning agenda

Aurélie Toillier, Ricardo Ramirez, Margarida Lima de Faria, and the core team.

Version: 7 March 2023

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Introductory note

This document presents the learning agenda developed by DeSIRA-LIFT Service Area 1 (ie. the SA1 core team), as indicated in Service 1.4. 'Elaboration of Knowledge and communication products' of the contractual documentation (see details in Annex 1).

The learning agenda is a living document that can adapt to SA1 core team priorities and circumstances, allowing for new or more refined questions to emerge from the process and paying attention over time to emergent patterns from data can inform new or revised areas of inquiry.

This version is the last one to date. It stems from three precedent versions. It is used as the framework to kick start the release of SA1 knowledge and communication products, including the SA1 transversal learning reviews that will be conducted by short-term experts and steered by the core team.

1. Reasons for developing the SA1 learning agenda

The overall logics of intervention of the DeSIRA initiative is based on the promotion of research and innovation (R&I) within an agricultural innovation system (AIS) perspective as a major lever to transform agri-food systems towards more resilience and more sustainability, and thus addressing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Pillar 1 of the DeSIRA Initiative is composed of project-based interventions run by consortia mostly made of research organizations and their partners from civil society, private sector and public services and authorities. A total project portfolio of 69 projects across the three continents in various countries was selected. Most of them started between 2018 and 2020 for 3 to 5-year periods. Several innovation domains were targeted by the European Commission such as agroecological transitions, the water-energy-food-forest nexus, water management in rice farming systems in fragile and coastal States in Africa, or prevention and risk management (not exhaustive)¹.

These R&I partnerships are expected to deliver and scale innovations but also to contribute to more sustainable changes in the innovation capacities of their development partners and in national AIS themselves. AIS (AKIS) needs to innovate themselves and adopt new ways of working (mission-orientated, distributed innovation networks, innovation governance mechanisms, efficient innovation support services, etc.).

Given the high complexity of DeSIRA projects and of the challenges they seek to address, the European Commission set up the DeSIRA-LIFT facility in order to upgrade the capacities of DeSIRA projects to manage for impacts, through on-demand training & coaching but also through mutual learning and enhanced collaboration between projects carried out in the same countries or in the same innovation domains² thanks to a Community of Practice (CoP).

Delivering adequate and valuable on-demand support to these projects is a challenge in itself since little is known on the 'best ways' to innovate for climate resilient agrifood systems and there is no 'one size fits all' strategy for AIS strengthening. Most of the pillar 1 DeSIRA projects engaged in multi-actor innovation processes, with the purpose to co-create, experiment or disseminate climate-relevant innovations in different socio-technical areas and diverse country contexts. They mobilize diverse types of action-research methodologies; they focus on different levels and actors of the agricultural innovation systems (niche level, territory level, value-chain level, policy level; etc.).

How all these R&I projects deal with "participatory research and innovation" and to what extent they operationalize the components of AIS thinking/ to make research more embedded into innovation processes and to increase research contributions to transformative systemic changes in AIS and in food systems? Even if some projects look similar in their narrative description (i.e 'scaling agricultural innovation') or intend to carry out the same intervention strategy in multiple countries, projects work differently in different contexts and through different change mechanisms. Therefore, some innovation and action-research methodologies cannot be simply replicated from one context to another and expected to achieve the same outcomes automatically. Theory-based understanding about 'what works for whom, in what context, and how' is, however, transferable. That is where a transversal meta-

¹ An overview of the "innovation domains" addressed by DeSIRA [can be consulted here](#).

² The available service offering is accessible [here](#).

support as the DeSIRA-LIFT facility can play a major role, by helping comparative and cumulative perspectives across projects and countries for the generation of middle-range theories on AIS strengthening and innovation support.

Given all these challenges, we developed a learning agenda with threefold objectives:

- The need to identify inefficiencies and/or knowledge gaps hindering the success of DeSIRA pillar 1 projects, but also success factors for future improvements of such an Initiative, and more generally of research interventions in support of agricultural innovation systems;
- The lack of sufficient information to better define and customize valuable Training, Coaching and CoP activities for upgrading projects' capacities to manage for impact;
- The desire to gather knowledge that stems from valuing continuous learning of the SA1 core team on how to support a portfolio of R&I projects to manage for impact.

2. Process of developing the SA1 learning agenda

The development of our learning agenda is a highly iterative process itself and has benefits for the SA1 Core team as well, providing the team with guidance on key topics to discuss with projects teams during Training& Coaching and helping to refine the knowledge and communication products that are of interest to our beneficiaries and partners.

The process started in 2021 at the inception phase of the DeSIRA-LIFT facility, with a short indicative note of our main learning questions and products (see Annex 2). This note was used to clarify the boundaries and scope of action of the Service Area 1, vis-à-vis the other D-LIFT service areas. It was also used to engage Agrinatura experts in the core team, and make sense of our work.

The learning questions were refined after the first phase of assessment of Projects' capacity development needs that occurred between March and June 2022 through a series of inception workshops in each geographical cluster. A second version of the learning agenda was designed, making use of the segmentation of projects' challenges, managerial capacities to develop and corresponding learning questions (see Annex 3). In this new version of the learning agenda, some of the learning questions were validated through the buy-in and participation we got from our key stakeholders during the inception workshops. Priority questions emerged. This updated learning agenda was consolidated during the R&R core team workshop held in Paris in June 2022.

In September 2022, inputs from a developmental evaluation perspective helped to refine a third version of our learning agenda, with a better identification of the purpose (final use) of our learning questions (Annex 4). The learning questions that concern our own internal team learning from what we do in DesIRA-LIFT Service area 1 was further unpacked in October 2022 (Annex 5), and helped to guide the regular core team meetings and their documentation.

An additional refinement of our learning agenda was consolidated early 2023, incorporating realistic considerations about what we can achieve based on internal (e.g., staff resources) and external (e.g., leadership approval) constraints. Our learning agenda was finally embedded into our CoP roadmap and communication strategy in February 2023, with a detailed work plan and list of expected products. It now helps to integrate the different core team activities and services into a coherent offering.

3. Our learning questions

Our learning questions are divided into two broad purposes followed by evaluation uses, and several associated key evaluation questions (KEQs):

- Purpose A: Understanding the challenges and success of DeSIRA Projects
- Purpose B: Learning within the DeSIRA-LIFT team as a model-in-the-making

The KEQs are detailed in the following sections.

3.1. PURPOSE A: Understanding the challenges and success of DeSIRA Projects

USE 1. IMPROVING PROJECT DESIGN & MANAGEMENT

KEQ 1. What are the trends in project architectures and intervention strategies (including: development-driven, research-driven, innovation-driven) and associated types of managerial challenges?

- KEQ 1.1. **Innovation paradoxes** - What are the “best-fit” project architectures and strategies to address the contradictions between project settings and research & innovation requirements (creativity, uncertainty, etc.)?
- KEQ 1.2. **Uncertainties** - What are the “best-fit” project architectures and strategies to work under/ with unpredictable and insecure contexts?
- KEQ 1.3. **Learning** - What are the “best-fit” project architectures and strategies to create stimulating and incentive learning environments for behavioural changes, cocreation mindsets, project learning and institutional learning, beyond project duration?
- KEQ 1.4. **Capacities** - What are the core project capacities to manage for impact in DeSIRA projects? How to assess, monitor and develop them? What types of impact are beyond R&I project contributions?

USE 2. IMPROVING ACTION-RESEARCH IN SUPPORT OF AIS STRENGTHENING

KEQ 2: To what extent projects operationalize the components of AIS (and OI) thinking to make research more embedded into innovation processes and to increase research contributions to transformative systemic changes in AIS and in food systems (i.e. how the principles are put into action)?

- **KEQ 21. Partnerships** - What are the (new) patterns of research partnerships that contribute to AIS strengthening? Who are the partners from outside the formal and traditional agricultural research community and which novelties do they bring to A-R settings?
- **KEQ 22. Multistakeholder innovation facilities (MIF)** - In particular, what is new in MIF promoted by DeSIRA projects? How MIF are used in new transformative ways in project intervention strategy? What are the constraints and opportunities of managing MIF in a project mode? Which innovation models are promoted? What are the roles for researchers?
- **KEQ 23. Innovation agenda** - How innovation agendas are set and managed? How innovation and research agenda are conflicting? Which projects have true on-demand approaches? To what extent and how grassroots innovations and local communities are voiced and empowered in the agendas of DeSIRA projects?
- **KEQ 24. Innovation models** - To what extent – and how – have the projects contextualized ‘innovation models’ in their intervention contexts? To what extent and how cultural features of innovation are considered?
- **KEQ 25. Innovation policies** - what are the successes and challenges of DeSIRA projects to engage in policy design or policy changes? What were the added value of MEL systems and/or the use of MEL data in policy making processes (e.g. evidenced-based policy making)?
- **KEQ 26: AE Transitions** - For which types of changes in food systems, projects did use AIS thinking for their design and strategy? Did the projects working on AE transitions were more concerned than others, which components of AIS thinking revealed to be useful to better position projects’ contributions to AET?

3.2. PURPOSE B: Learning within the DeSIRA-LIFT team as a model-in-the-making

USE 3. TO DOCUMENT & LEARN FROM OUR ONGOING DEVELOPMENT

KEQ 3: What are the factors of efficiency and sustainability of the DeSIRA-LIFT facility mechanism?

- KEQ 3.1. **Engagement** – How did projects successfully engage with us; how did project readiness manifest itself and how were we able to nurture it?
- KEQ 3.2. **Responsiveness** – To what extent did we succeed in making converge their needs and our predefined offer?
- KEQ 3.3. **Consistency (balancing learning and accountability)** – In what ways and to what extent did the different core team subject matters become integrated into a coherent offering?
- KEQ 3.4. **Outcomes** – What are the outcomes of our support services? To what extent mutual learning and cross-project activities enhanced outcomes at project level?

USE 4. TO IMPROVE OUR ADAPTIVE CAPACITY (in preparation for Cycle 2)

KEQ 4: What are the lessons learnt from our cycle 1 of service delivery?

- KEQ 4.1- **Operationalization** – What was implemented and what was not, compared to what was planned? What worked well? What did not work well?
- KEQ 4.2 **Criteria for adaptation** – What were the main adaptations / dropouts we made during Cycle 1 and on what basis did we do this?
- KEQ 4.3 **Consensus** To what extent was there consensus among the core team for the adaptations/dropouts, and to what extent were the decisions made on evidence?
- KEQ 4.4 **Rationale (motivations?)**– What principles or concepts explain or underlie the adaptations?
- KEQ 4.5 **Effects**– What were the effects or consequences of the adaptations?
- KEQ 4.6 **Unknowns** – What were the surprises, good and bad unexpected outcomes?

4. Learning activities


4.1. Purpose A-learning activities

For the purpose A of our learning agenda ('Understanding the challenges and success of DeSIRA project'), four types of learning activities are implemented by SA1 core team, as displayed in the Table 1 below: transversal reviews, periodic assessments of projects capacities and outcomes, CoP webinars, co-development of stories of change. The level of inclusion and participation of project teams differ from an activity to another.

In some cases, the information gained on projects during Training & Coaching activities are also used to feed some of these learning activities.

Note that for each of this learning activity, a roadmap and related guidance documents were developed and made available in our shared folders under MSTeams.

Table 1

SA1 Learning activities	1-Transversal reviews	2-Periodic assessments	3-CoP webinars	4-Co-development of SoC
Objectives	Cross-project study on a specific question for both descriptive and analytical purposes	Tracking DeSIRA project capacity needs and capacity outcomes from D-LIFT activities	Sharing and shaping 'best' managerial practices	Illustrating the drivers of changes and success in DeSIRA projects
Approach	Academic research and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mid-course stock taking - Outcome tracking - Participant attendance 	Step-wise co-construction of Projects' experiences and lessons learnt through practice	Support offered to voluntary projects for data collection, writing and dissemination
Data Sources	LIFT databases, case studies, interviews	On-line questionnaires	LIFT expert frameworks, projects insights	Projects' stories, interviews of projects stakeholders
Frequency	3 reviews per cycle	Before/During/After Training & Coaching delivery	Every 6 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project cohorts - 1 cohort of 15 projects per cycle
Knowledge	Academic Explicit	Declarative	Tacit and experiential knowledge	A posteriori
Final products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Infographics - Reports - Learning brief series 	Reports included in annexes of SA1 progress reports (bi-annual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Graphic records - Blog with take-aways - "How to" Brief series 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Book compiling SoC
Inclusion and participation	LIFT expert-driven  Project-driven			

Planned activities over the Cycle 1- between Oct 2022 and June 2023 – are displayed in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Learning Activities	Titles	Corresponding KEQ	Tot. Number
Transversal reviews	1-Harvesting 'best-fit' project architectures and strategies	KEQ 1.1 / 1.2 / 1.3	3
	2-Innovation policies: what are the successes and challenges of DeSIRA projects to engage in policy design or policy changes?	KEQ 2.5	
	3-Research & Innovation strategies in support to AET	KEQ 2.6	
CoP webinars	(OCT 22): New patterns of research partnerships for AIS strengthening	KEQ 2.1.	7
	(FEB 23): Managing R&I projects in unpredictable situations	KEQ 1.2	
	(APR 23): Managing MIF in project mode	KEQ 2.2	

	(MAY 23): Making space for learning in project settings	KEQ 1.3	
	(JUN 23): Managing trade-offs in research and innovation agendas	KEQ 2.3	
	(SEPT 23): Contextualizing 'innovation models' in different countries	KEQ 2.4.	
	(OCT 23): The future of DeSIRA innovations in regions	wrap up webinar	
Periodic assessments	Consolidation under the June Progress Report June CT meeting in Montpellier	KEQ 1.4 + KEQ 3, KEQ 4	1
SoC	On-demand- 10 projects pre-selected	TBI	10

4.2. Purpose B-learning activities

For the purpose B of our learning agenda ('Learning within the DeSIRA-LIFT team as a model-in-the-making'), the learning activity consists in core team reflection meetings.

Table 3

SA1 Learning activities	1- End of Activity debriefing	2- Annual core team reflection & refinement meetings
Objectives	To assess what worked well and what did not	To assess our outputs and outcomes, comparison to what was planned, and adjust our delivery mechanism
Approach	Regular CT meeting	Workshop
Data Sources	Experts notes Debriefing notes by CT members after events	CT reflexion Minutes of regular meeting Experts notes Knowledge products, existing reports
Frequency	At the end of a Course, a webinar, a specific event	Once a year (June)
Knowledge	A posteriori	Tacit and experiential knowledge
Inclusion and participation	CT experts and short-term experts	All CT members

5. Learning products

These deliverables are based on the outcomes of learning activities and are utilization focused. Our learning products are designed to communicate evidence and findings to key stakeholders to inform decision making and future program design. They are summarized in the table 4 below.

Table 4

Learning Products	Learning brief series	'How To' brief series	Stories of Change (SoC)	'Perspectives' brief series
Approach	Past-oriented	Prescriptive	Lessons learnt	Future-oriented
Related Learning Activity	Transversal reviews	CoP webinars (Training courses)	SOC development	Multiple
Editorial line	Summary/highlights of the learning review reports	Guidance to project managers, with tips and tops to manage for impacts	Stories that illustrate answers to our learning questions	Recommendations from the projects on best-fit options (and next steps) to enhance Research for Innovation and strengthen AIS

Audience	DeSIRA project partners	Project managers	DeSIRA project partners	DeSIRA-LIFT partners
Frequency	3 per cycle	6 per cycle	10 per cycle	1 per cycle
Expected total number	6	12	20	2
Guiding material	2-Learning Reviews	1-How To brief series	3-Perspective Brief series	4-Stories of Change

Provisional editorial calendars are in Annex 6 and 7.

6. Contact information

DeSIRA-LIFT Service area 1 is coordinated by Aurelie Toillier (CIRAD) and Margarida Lima de Faria (ISA), and implemented by a team of European and international experts from the Agrinatura networks and its partners.

For any additional information, please contact us: service@desira-lift.org

Annex 1 – SA1 Knowledge et Communication products (June 2021)

Extract of the contractual documentation of DeSIRA-LIFT/ WP1 -signed in June 2021

By: A. Toillier (SA 1 leader), M. Lima de Faria (SA 1 co-leader)

Service 1.4 : Elaboration of Knowledge and Communication Products

Focus and orientation

Projects work differently in different contexts and through different change mechanisms. Therefore, projects cannot be simply replicated from one context to another and expected to achieve the same outcomes automatically. Theory-based understanding about 'what works for whom, in what context, and how' is, however, transferable. In this perspective, this service area aims at conducting transversal reviews of projects' impact pathways, CD processes and draw lessons on 'What worked for whom, in what circumstances and how?'. These transversal reviews will explore, on the one hand, the ways developmental evaluation and MEL systems helped project implementers to refine their intervention strategies, and on the other hand, the ways projects produced impacts and contributed to AIS strengthening in different contexts. The benefit of this transversal work is the comparative perspective across projects and countries, as regard to project strategies and ex-post impact pathways, in order to generate middle-range theories on climate-oriented innovations and innovations systems

The services activities will be the following:

- a) With project holders, identifying and selecting topics for final cross-learning and review of lessons learnt, for instance : the challenges and successes of implementing AIS-oriented interventions, the challenges and successes of doing action-research in innovation systems, the challenges and success of implementing MEL systems and using MEL data in non-traditional arenas such as policy making processes; the challenges and successes of identifying and implementing innovation support services at the project level;

Products:

- List of topics for cross-project learning review and work plan

- b) Supporting data collection, analysis and management for learning review: Agrinatura will support data collection and analysis where needed and relevant; also joint learning review with project holders will be conducted when possible;

Products:

- Studies reports

- c) Elaborating final knowledge and communication products; a knowledge management system will be developed for the purpose of WP1 transversal analyses

- MEL-related knowledge management system
- Guide for developing MEL systems in AIS-oriented projects;
- Learning reviews
- Joint scientific publications.
- Briefs
- Stories of change
- Joint webinars with LIFT partners and Desira projects' holders.

Annex 2 – OUTPUT 3. SA1 LEARNING AGENDA AND EXPECTED PRODUCTS (SEPT. 2021)

Extract from SA1 Inception report, delivered to DG INTPA on Sept. 2021

18 Sept. 2021

By: A. Toillier (SA 1 leader), M. Lima de Faria (SA 1 co-leader)

Learning Topics

- **Learning topics on the action conducted by country-led Desira Projects**
 - The challenges and success of implementing change-oriented R&I interventions;
 - The challenges and successes of doing action-research in agricultural innovation systems
 - The nature of required capacities for managing and implementing change-oriented R&I projects
 - The ways these capacities contributed to enhance impacts of DeSIRA Projects;
 - The contribution of synergic effects of DeSIRA projects on capacity development, AIS strengthening and agrifood system transformation
- **Learning topics on the action conducted by LIFT SA 1**
 - The contributions of SA 1 in the above mentioned outcomes
 - The challenges and successes of identifying and implementing on-demand innovation support services at project level;
 - The challenges and success of developmental evaluation for developing capacities for AIS
 - The challenges and success of implementing MEL systems and using MEL data in non-traditional arenas such as policy making processes;
 - A middle range theory on how to scale out capacities for change-oriented R&I Projects in the agricultural sector.

Expected Knowledge Products

Service areas	Products
Service 1.1: Support to in-project MEL approaches and tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learning needs reports ▪ Training curricula; ▪ Coaching reports; ▪ Workshop reports; ▪ Reviews of project's ToC, CD processes, projects' impact pathways; ▪ Lessons learnt on implementing MEL systems for managing change and impacts in DeSIRA projects.
Service 1.2: Support to strengthen participatory research, innovation and innovation services in country-based DeSIRA projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Learning Event' reports
Service 1.3: Facilitation of cross-project mutual learning and networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training reports • Workshops reports; • On-line platform, discussions reports, newsletters, knowledge notes, briefs, etc.;
Service 1.4: Elaboration of Knowledge and Communication Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of topics for cross-project learning review and work plan • Research Studies reports • MEL-related knowledge management system • Guide for developing MEL systems in AIS-oriented projects • Learning reviews • Joint scientific publications • Briefs • Stories of change • Joint webinars with DeSIRA-LIFT partners and DeSIRA project holders.

Knowledge brokering with other LIFT service areas

SA 1 knowledge - and related knowledge products - will feed the purposes of SA2 and SA3:

- As regards to SA2 purposes (developing capacities of XP4 organizations; preparation of high level policy dialogues): the activities needed for conducting the transversal analysis could involve members of XP4

organizations so as to increase their capacities, under the lead of WP1; SA2 could also formulate some additional specific questions to be explored during the transversal analysis in order to feed the preparation of SA2 policy dialogues;

- As regard to SA3 (synthetizing lessons learnt on the overall DeSIRA initiative), SA1 and SA3 experts will identify jointly which knowledge products from the transversal analysis will be useful for some of the purposes of WP3, and adjust them accordingly if necessary. For instance, the results of the transversal analysis will feed recommendations to improve the EC-OSPYS system. Furthermore, the results of the transversal analysis will feed recommendations to INTPA and delegations on the design of new programmes and policies.

Annex 3 – Refinement of our learning agenda and buy-in of key partners (Aug. 2022)

Extract from “Adjustment of SA1 service offer, Aug. 2022” report

By: A. Toillier (SA 1 leader), M. Lima de Faria (SA 1 co-leader)

Priority topics in SA1 learning agenda

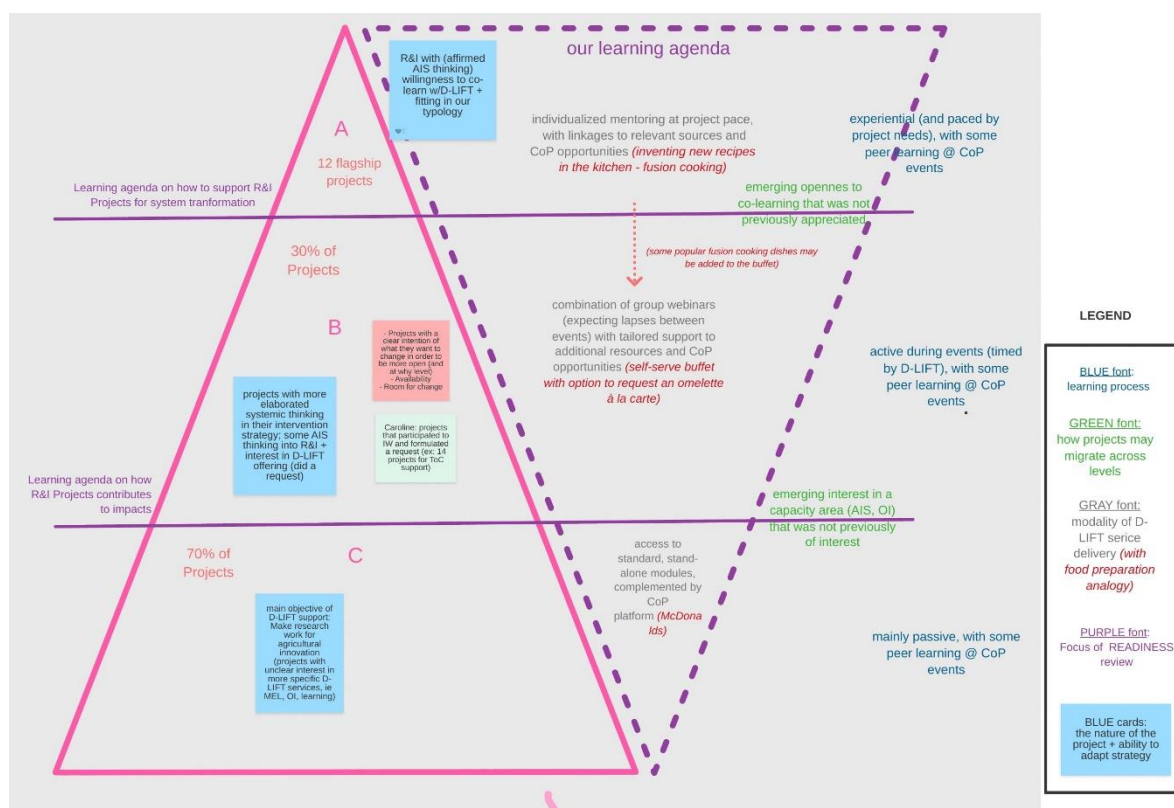
The major lessons learnt by the core team on the project challenges are that:

- More projects than expected are doing prototypes without scaling strategies, which generates unsuitable prototyping strategies for sustainability beyond project duration;
- More projects than expected are positioned in the scaling phase and face problems that cannot be solved by a project approach (*for instance, problems related to costs and access to innovative digital applications*). As a consequence, ‘exit strategies’ have to be explored earlier in the project cycle.
- More projects than expected are very exploratory and research-driven without clear innovation agenda linked to national agendas;
- More projects than expected don’t know how to operationalize their ‘innovation platforms’ in their intervention context.

We prioritized four learning reviews to support the cycle 1 of support services:

1. Analysis of trends in projects’ intervention strategies (i.e. development-driven, research-driven, innovation-driven), architecture and expected contributions to innovation phases in their contexts (ideation; pilot, scaling, generalization), with a view to identify “best-fit” strategies: what are the best ones to address the contradictions between project settings and research innovation requirements?
2. Transversal review of projects’ ToC in some key areas (TAE)
3. Analysis of research-action approaches in support to AIS strengthening (which types of researchers are engaged (disciplines, skills), how research and innovation agendas are set and managed; which projects have true on-demand approaches; with which types of organizations the Research institutions successfully partner to conduct research-intervention on innovation; what is the level of ‘maturity’ of the consortium).
4. Analysis of “innovation platforms” or multi-actor innovation facilities designed and implemented by Pilar 1 projects, associated managerial challenges, and MEL tools.

Segment pyramid, learning questions and end-users



Segment A	Top of the pyramid One-on-one mentoring Request-based Projects that feed SA1 learning agenda
Segment B	Middle of the pyramid Coaching of small groups of projects with similar challenges Request-based Projects that participated to the IW projects with more elaborated systemic thinking in their intervention strategy; some AIS thinking into R&I + interest in D-LIFT offering
Segment C	bottom of the pyramid webinars for large groups + on-line available contents for awareness raising on their potential challenges; projects with unclear interest in more specific D-LIFT services, ie MEL, OI, learning.

Major margins of progress for each project segment and corresponding learning questions

	Most immediate margins of progress	Readiness criteria	SA1 action	SA1 learning agenda (LA) with Projects	Nb of projects
SEGMENT A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In-Project transformative learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support request submitted - Managing authorities well identified and on board with us - Flagship project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do a very tailored-based mentoring, assembling DLIFT modules in a unique pattern - co-design posture of our service offer. The projects to select must agree to "play this game" - Possible for less of 12 projects 	LA 2: how to support R&I Projects for system transformation	12
SEGMENT B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects better equipped with MEL tools adapted to their innovation topics, learning needs and material constraints (time, etc.) - Project better equipped with frameworks and tools for running multi-actor innovation facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support request submitted - projects with more elaborated systemic thinking in their intervention strategy; some AIS thinking into R&I + interest in SA1 offering (did a request) - Management teams available for a joint work supported by SA1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do a mix of coaching and tailored training with small groups, and cross-project events for enhancing learning - Adjustments step by step by core team experts 	LA 1: how R&I Projects contributes to impacts	About 23
SEGMENT C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects Better integrated into their environment - more links / synergies between Projects - Project with a systemic and processual vision of innovation - and be able to translate this into slightly new/different R&D activities, with more effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No support requests - projects with unclear interest in more specific SA1 services, ie MEL, OI, learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do mostly on-line massive trainings, debates with panel of experts and exposure to case studies/ success or failure stories. 	none	About 35

Annex 4- Identification of our evaluation purposes (Sept. 2022)

By Ricardo Ramirez

Sept. 2022

Background & approach

This draft is based on three sources:

- Annex 1: a draft “SA1 Learning Agenda and expected products” - Sep. 18 2021
- Annex 2: topics proposed by Aurelie in an email exchange with Ricardo - Aug 31 2022
- Annex 3: Patton’s five purposes for DE.

In UFE there is a hierarchy starting with: broad purposes, followed by evaluation uses, and several associated key evaluation questions (KEQs). From Aurelie’s note I inferred two evaluation uses that both focus on the changes within, from, and among the DeSIRA projects, so I tentatively grouped them under Purpose A:

PURPOSE A: Understanding changes within, from, and among the DeSIRA projects

USE 1. IMPROVING PROJECT DESIGN

KEQ 1.1 What are the trends in **project intervention strategies** including: development-driven, research-driven, innovation-driven?

KEQ 1.2 What is the **architecture and expected contributions to innovation phases** in their contexts (ideation; pilot, scaling, generalization)? *[could be combined with 1.4]*

KEQ 1.3 What are the “best-fit” **strategies** and what are the best ones to **address the contradictions** between project settings and research innovation requirements?

KEQ 1.4 What can we learn from a **transversal review of projects’ ToC** in some key areas (TAE)? *[this could be one of the actions implemented to respond to 1.2]*

USE 2. IMPROVING RESEARCH-ACTION in SUPPORT OF AIS STRENGTHENING

KEQ 2.1 Which **types of researchers** are engaged (disciplines, skills)?

KEQ 2.2 How are research and innovation **agendas set and managed**?

KEQ 2.3 Which projects have **true on-demand approaches**?

KEQ 2.4 With which types of organizations do research **institutions partner** to conduct successful research-intervention on innovation?

KEQ 2.5 What is the **level of ‘maturity’** of the consortium?

KEQ 2.6 What are the feature of the “**innovation platforms**” or **multi-actor innovation facilities** designed and implemented by Pilar 1 projects, including associated managerial challenges, and MEL tools?

Following Patton's proposed five DE 'purposes', we can refer to them as evaluation 'uses' and we can review the bullets as suggestions for drafting key evaluation questions. For Cycle 1, the first two appear most relevant. Subsequent ones could inspire us for Cycle 2.

PURPOSE B: Learning within the D-LIFT project as a model-in-the-making

USE 3. TO DOCUMENT & LEARN FROM OUR ONGOING DEVELOPMENT

KEQ 3.1 What were the key decision points (forks on the road) and on what basis did we make adjustments?

KEQ 3.2 What were the trends / patterns in engaging [inception workshops] and obtaining feedback from project partners and how did we respond to them?

KEQ 3.3 How did project readiness manifest itself and how were we able to nurture it?

KEQ 3.4 In what ways and to what extent did the different core team & core team subject matters become integrated into a coherent offering?

USE 4. TO IMPROVE OUR ADAPTIVE CAPACITY (in preparation for Cycle 2)

KEQ 4.1 What were the main adaptations we made during Cycle 1 and on what basis did we do this?

KEQ 4.2 To what extent was there consensus among the core team for the adaptations, and to what extent were the decisions made on evidence?

KEQ 4.3 What principles or concepts explain or underlie the adaptations?

KEQ 4.4 What were the effects or consequences of the adaptations?

KEQ 4.5 What were the surprises, good and bad unexpected outcomes?

Next steps

- Ensure this effort is consistent with our commitment to doing learning reviews.
- Discuss how this DE effort needs to integrate, complement, or acknowledge other DeSIRA M&E efforts (eg ASRAFS)
- Review of this draft by the core team, editing, revising until it feels right.
- For each KEQ, identify the evidence needed to respond, its sources, and the data collection requirements. In doing this, it is often necessary to adjust the wording of KEQs, and even of evaluation uses.
- Confirm data collection tools, frequency, data analysis, synthesis and reporting - and assign CT or consultants to the task.
- Develop an undated Theory of Change for D-LIFT.
- NOTE: in DE it is common for quick data collection, analysis and utilization cycles, so the schedule of data collection and use will be specific to each KEQ.

Annex 5- Purpose B expanded (Oct. 2022)

By Ricardo Ramirez

Oct. 2022

*PURPOSE B: Learning within the D-LIFT project as a model-in-the-making***USE 3. TO DOCUMENT & LEARN FROM OUR ONGOING DEVELOPMENT**

KEQ	Evidence needed	Sources	Collection of data
3.1 What were the key decision points (forks on the road) and on what basis did we make adjustments?	List of decisions, forks on the road	Minutes of Meetings	<u>To do</u> : MOMs located, grouped in shared folder
	List of adjustments	Core team reflections	<u>To do</u> : Schedule a CT reflection meeting
3.2 What were the trends / patterns in engaging [inception workshops] and obtaining feedback from project partners and how did we respond to them?	List of engagement activities	Inception Workshop Report	
	Documented and unexpected changes in interest among partners	Debriefing notes by CT members after events	<u>To do</u> : Propose preparation of notes after each event
3.3 How did project readiness manifest itself and how were we able to nurture it?	Readiness self-assessments	Readiness self-assessment forms (*)	<u>To do</u> : Distribute and collect readiness self-assessment forms
3.4 In what ways and to what extent did the different core team & core team subject matters become integrated into a coherent offering?	Examples of cross subject-matter linkages A map of the different parts showing 'coherence'	Debriefing notes by CT members after events (**)	<u>To do</u> : Propose preparation of notes after each event A visual summary for Cycle 1 (Feb/Mar 2023)

(*) We have a readiness self-assessment form focused on evaluation, plus another on communication (pending Roger adapting the DECI sample); perhaps other variations will be needed?

(**) Some interesting overlaps between communication, AIS, policy advocacy, and evaluation emerged during Roger Reuver's group call (10Oct).

USE 4. TO IMPROVE OUR ADAPTIVE CAPACITY (in preparation for Cycle 2)

KEQ	Evidence needed	Sources	Collection of data
4.1 What were the main adaptations we made during Cycle 1 and on what basis did we do this?	Examples of changes in timing, sequencing, duration, integration Integration of different teaching modalities going into Cycle 2	Debriefing notes by CT members after events (could overlap with 3.1 Forks on the road)	<u>To do:</u> Propose preparation of notes after each event
4.2 To what extent was there consensus among the core team for the adaptations, and to what extent were the decisions made on evidence ?	List of key adaptations Ranking of consensus Vs. evidence used (***)	Core team reflections (also based on chart)	<u>To do:</u> Schedule a CT reflection meeting (include short term trainers/consultants)
4.3 What principles or concepts explain or underlie the adaptations?	Key principles & concepts on adaptive management, capacity building strategy	Core team reflections Compare reflections with literature	<u>To do:</u> Schedule a CT reflection meeting <u>To do:</u> Conduct literature review
4.4 What were the effects or consequences of the adaptations?	Feedback from project partners on competency gains	Core team reflections Exist surveys from training events	<u>To do:</u> Design exit surveys
4.5 What were the surprises , good and bad unexpected outcomes ?	Feedback from project partners on actions taken Findings from Uses 1 and 2	Core team reflections Lessons from Purpose A	<u>To do:</u> Schedule a CT reflection meeting (include short term trainers/consultants)

(***) See sample of chart on page 3.

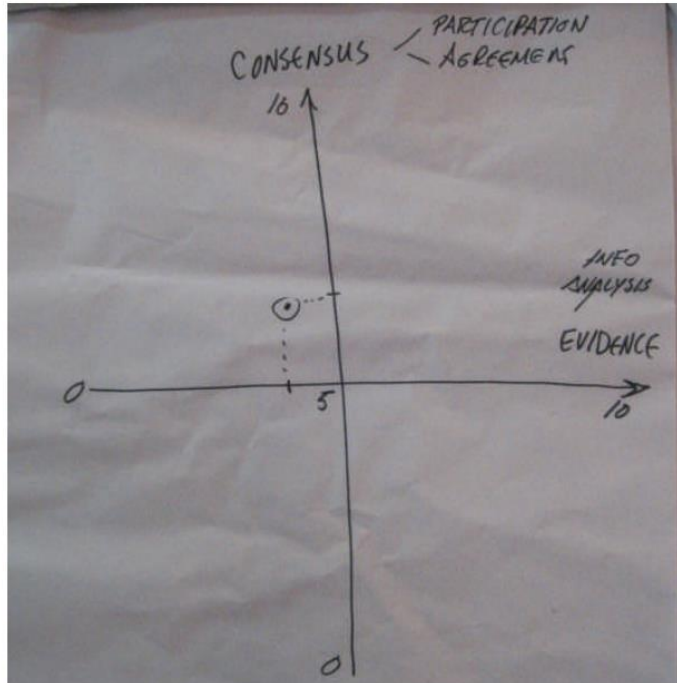
Notes and next steps

- Ensure this effort is consistent with our commitment to doing learning reviews. [RR: seems to fit, invite more feedback]
- Discuss how this DE effort needs to integrate, complement, or acknowledge other DeSIRA M&E efforts (eg ASRAFS). [RR: to do]
- Review of this draft by the core team, editing, revising until it feels right. [RR: to do]
- For each KEQ, identify the evidence needed to respond, its sources, and the data collection requirements. In doing this, it is often necessary to adjust the wording of KEQs, and even of evaluation uses. [RR: done in this version, to be reviewed]
- Confirm data collection tools, frequency, data analysis, synthesis and reporting - and assign CT or consultants to the task. [RR: partly started]
- Develop an undated Theory of Change for D-LIFT. [RR: to do]

- NOTE: in DE it is common for quick data collection, analysis and utilization cycles, so the schedule of data collection and use will be specific to each KEQ. [RR: the focus is to learn from Cycle 1 to improve the offering in Cycle 2]
- Data analysis is not yet specified.

(***) **Consensus vs Evidence chart** (in this case we used it as a quality control exercise during a training with NGOs; Calabar, Nigeria, August 2009). The discussion centred on how there may be limited consensus on a joint decision, and that even if there were more evidence at hand, it may not all be interpreted the same way. Sometimes group intuition is a good start.

Tool source: (Chevalier, J. & Buckles, D. 2008. *SAS² A guide to collaborative inquiry and social engagement*. IDRC & Sage.)



Annex 6- 'How To' Brief series – editorial calendar

1. Editorial line

The series « how to » is made for the use of Pilar 1 project managers (and future managers of R&I projects), in order to guide them with tips and tops on possible ways forward for upgrading their five core capacities to manage for impacts.

The five core managerial capacities are: capacity to collaborate in multistakeholder settings, capacity for MEL, capacity to make research work for open innovation, capacity to adapt and respond, capacity to influence project environment and strengthen AIS.

2. Content

Each brief is organized in four sections:

- 1) Why? (making sense of...)
- 2) How to make it happen (principle, examples of good practices or failures from the projects, 'tips & tops')
- 3) Useful resources
- 4) Who prepared the brief + email contact

Maximum of 10 pages, including illustrative drawings.

3. Editorial calendar – provisional

The title may change once the first draft of the Brief is ready. More might come, some might be deleted or merged, depending on the quality of knowledge gathered from the learning activities.

Purpose A – USE 1. IMPROVING PROJECT DESIGN & MANAGEMENT

Managerial Capacities	KEQ	Title	ID H2B	Date of release
Cap to adapt and respond	KEQ 1.2.	How to manage R&I projects in unpredictable situations	1	Avr-23
Cap to manage OI		How to manage co-creation activities in project mode?	2	Avr-23
Cap to adapt and respond	KEQ 1.4.	How to adapt project innovation strategy in the course of action?	3	Mai-23
Cap for MEL	KEQ 1.4.	How to make use of MEL and ToC to manage process-oriented interventions	4	Mai-23
Cap for MEL	KEQ 1.4.	How to communicate purposefully projects achievements by using MEL data	8	Mai-23
Cap to manage OI	KEQ 1.3.	How to avoid "participatory" suffering in R&I projects and adapt the innovation strategy	5	Mai-23
Cap. To collaborate	KEQ 2.1.	How to manage MIF in project mode	6	Mai-23
Cap for MEL	KEQ 1.3.	How to make space for learning and creativity in project settings	7	Juil-23
Cap for AIS	KEQ 1.4.	How to engage policy actors in innovation niches and avoid the usual "scaling" bottlenecks	11	Sep-23

Cap to manage OI	KEQ 2.3.	How to set and manage joint innovation agendas between research, an its partners (civil society, farmers organizations, policy actors) : trade-off and shared leadership	9	Oct 23
Cap for AIS	KEQ 1.4.	How to make use of AIS thinking in R&I project management	10	Oct 23

Purpose B – USE 2-IMPROVING ACTION-RESEARCH IN SUPPORT OF AIS STRENGTHENING

KEQ	Title	Date of release
KEQ2	How A-R can contribute to AIS strengthening: a triple pathway of change	Jul. 2023
KEQ21	How A-R can contribute to AIS strengthening : new patterns of partnerships	Oct 2023
KEQ24	How DeSIRA projects contextualize 'innovation models' in different countries – a regional perspective	Oct 2023

Annex 7- 'Perspectives' Brief series – editorial calendar

1. Editorial line

The series « Perspectives » is made for the use of all DeSIRA partners. It builds on the main lessons learnt from DeSIRA successes and challenges to propose perspectives for the next phases.

2. Content

Each brief is organized in five sections:

- 1) Framing questions
- 2) Lessons learnt
- 3) Recommendations
- 4) Useful resources
- 5) Who prepared the brief + email contact

Maximum of 10 pages, including illustrative drawings.

3. Editorial calendar

Purpose A – USE 1. IMPROVING PROJECT DESIGN & MANAGEMENT

KEQ	Title	ID PP	Date of release
KEQ1	The 'Future of' European R&I projects: paying more attention to the core capacities to manage for impact	PP 1	mid 2024

Purpose A- USE 2-IMPROVING ACTION-RESEARCH IN SUPPORT OF AIS STRENGTHENING

KEQ	Title	ID PP	Date of release
KEQ2	The 'Future of' DeSIRA innovations in regions: innovation potentials, bottlenecks and solutions	PP2	Dec. 2023