

‘DeSIRA CONNECT Days’

A regional meeting event between DeSIRA projects supported by the DeSIRA-LIFT facility

Concept and guidelines for implementation DeSIRA-LIFT facility, Service Area 1

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DeSIRA-LIFT support services to DeSIRA pillar 1 projects

DeSIRA-LIFT Service Area 1 (SA1) provides on-demand support services to country-based DeSIRA projects to help project teams prove and improve their impacts on climate-oriented innovation systems in line with more sustainable food systems transitions.

A Community of Action & Reflection (CoAR) has been set up with the twofold goal of sharing DeSIRA projects' challenges and practices, and bridging projects' support needs with adequate international expertise.

DeSIRA-LIFT Service area 1 is coordinated by CIRAD and ISA, and implemented by a team of European and international experts from the Agrinatura networks and its partners.

Purpose of DeSIRA CONNECT Days

DeSIRA CONNECT Days events intend to reinforce the Community of Action and Reflection of DeSIRA projects and their stakeholders and "make it happen for real", through regional field and in-person meetings.

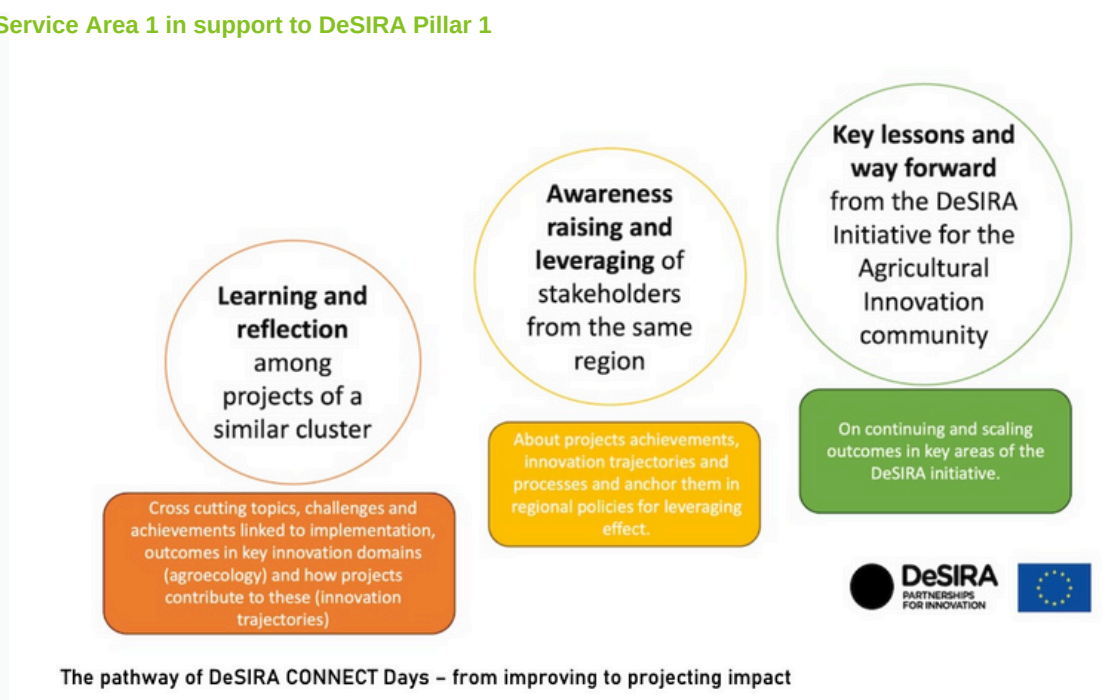
Additionally, because they are implemented in regions where similar issues are cross-cutting, the results of DeSIRA projects can combine and provide regional perspectives to inform regional policies. This and the processes mentioned above highlight the institutional strengthening potential of DeSIRA projects, both at the level of the research organizations that support their implementation and at the level of the organizations that can retain, own and carry their results forward.

These important underlying mechanisms, which have the potential to reduce the cut-off effect of project-based approaches by budling into longer-term strategies, however, require to be brought forward and discussed through putting projects in contact with one another and with a broader range of stakeholders, among which policymakers, professional organizations operating in the various fields covered by DeSIRA projects and civil society organizations and networks.

During these events, projects, their organizations and a broader range of agriculture innovation stakeholders – including policymakers – will meet and exchange.

DeSIRA CONNECT Days seek to provide:

- A platform for in-person encounters between projects of a similar cluster and generate experience sharing, joint learning and critical reflection on cross-cutting topics, challenges and impact generation.
- A space for DeSIRA projects to meet with Agricultural Innovation stakeholders: policy and decision makers - including regional organisations SCOs, NGOs, Farmer Organizations, Private Sector, etc. to raise their awareness about what the projects in the region have been achieving in relation to the key innovation agenda and themes of the DeSIRA initiative
- A space for this broader Agricultural Innovation community to reflect on key lessons and perspectives from the DeSIRA Initiative and how to follow up on the projects' achievements to progress towards systemic and broader impact.



Further to harnessing and reinforcing regional dynamics, DeSIRA CONNECT Days also intends to shape the agenda leading toward the final DeSIRA Conference scheduled for early 2025 by the DG-INTPA of the European Commission.

Organizing DeSIRA CONNECT Days

Proposed host countries and cities

DeSIRA CONNECT Days should be convened and supported by organisations involved in implementing DeSIRA projects or activities with the potential to lead the process and ensure the regional magnitude of the event. These lead organisations should have the capacity to bring together an Organization Committee with convening legitimacy.

DeSIRA CONNECT Days should be organized in cities where it is convenient to fly and stay for the event and have the added value of hosting other DeSIRA implementing organizations.

We plan to have one DeSIRA CONNECT Days event organized for each DeSIRA geographic cluster:

- CLUSTER 1 – Western Africa, Central Africa & Madagascar,
- CLUSTER 2 – Asia & Pacific Islands,
- CLUSTER 3 – Eastern and Southern Africa,
- CLUSTER 4 – Central America, Southern America & the Caribbean.

The following countries, cities and periods have been planned:

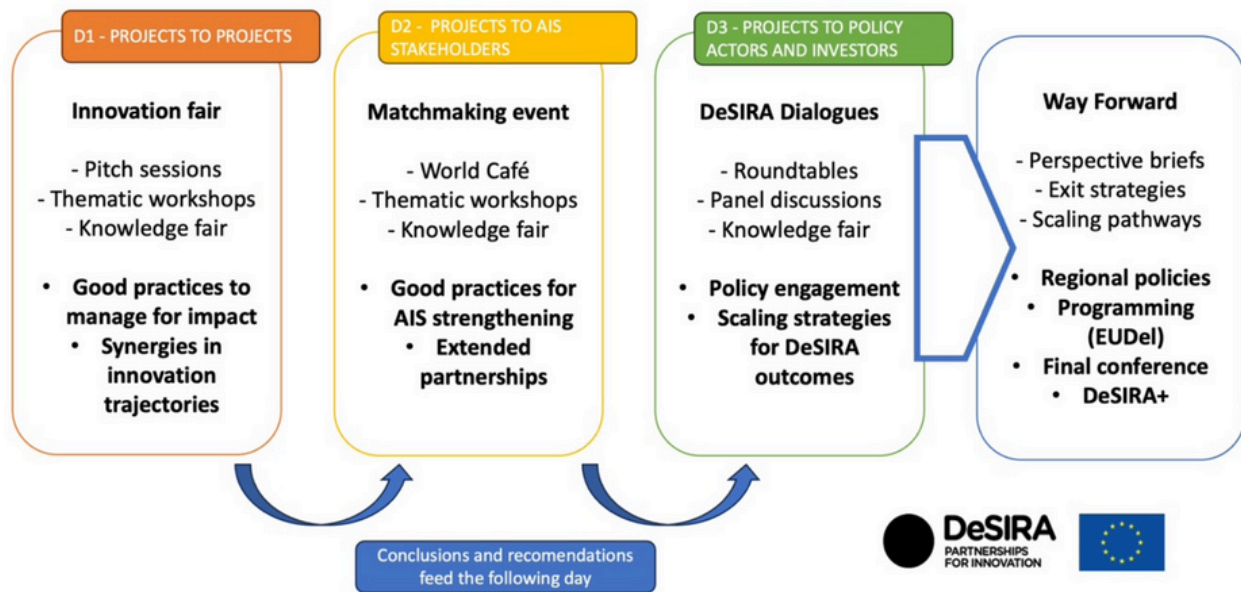
- **Latin America & Caribbean** – Cluster 4 (June 25/27, '24) – Bogota, Colombia
- **Eastern and Southern Africa** – Cluster 3 (Jul 30, 31 and 1 Aug '24) – Kigali, Rwanda
- **West Africa** – Cluster 1 (Sep 25, 26 and 27 '24) – Accra, Ghana
- **Asia Pacific** – Cluster 2 (Oct '24) – Hanoi, Vietnam

Format and audience

A DeSIRA CONNECT Days event is a specific DeSIRA-focused three-day (in average) event with a regional angle organised, pursuing those abovementioned purposes articulated in three days with specific features and objectives:

- Discussion among projects, along the lines of our joint learning agenda, about their progress and challenges from which they can formulate recommendations for the continuation of their momentum,
- Meetings and round tables with policymakers and other stakeholders, including the private sector and regional organisations, about innovation uptake and AIS strengthening,
- Discussion and formulation of exit strategies, handover processes and continuation pathways.

DeSIRA CONNECT Days will typically gather DeSIRA project managers in the region (15 to 25), 10 to 15 policymakers from the host country and the region, 15 to 10 research organizations, 15 to 25 representatives of third parties, EU representatives, from the local EU Delegation and from Brussels (5) and relevant experts and DeSIRA- LIFT experts. A total of 65 to 85 people.



Structure and outcomes of DeSIRA CONNECT Days

Organization - Coordination

An Organizing Committee should be formed comprising at least a lead organization involved in DeSIRA in the country and possibly in the region, relevant organizations and the EU Delegation of the Host Country, and DeSIRA-LIFT.

The organization committee (OC) will act as convenor and ensure coordination with local authorities. These can be represented in the committee through a national research organization.

Typical steps, roles and timeline

- Identify lead project and organisation,
- Confirm interest and support, including financial, of EUDel
- Form Organization Committee (Lead organization, EUDel, DeSIRA-LIFT, Relevant organizations),

Define a date (D)

- Communicate the date to projects and key targeted stakeholders for earmark D-50/45
- Define agenda (OC, support: DeSIRA-LIFT), **D -45/40**
- Approach projects and prepare them (OC, support DeSIRA-LIFT), **D -40**
- Identify and approach policymakers: RECs, Regional Organizations, others (OC, DeSIRA-LIFT, INTPA), **D -40**
- Identify speakers where needed (OC, DeSIRA-LIFT), **D -40/35**
- Prepare communication supports (projects, OC, support DeSIRA-LIFT), **D -40/20**
- Support logistics (OC, DLIFT), **D -40/1**
- Facilitate and harvest key learnings each day and input them to the next day (OC, DLIFT) during the event.

Financial contributions

- Venue: covered by local co-host DeSIRA projects + DeSIRA-LIFT contribution (about 20k€/event)
- Communication: EU delegation(s)
- Travels: invited DeSIRA projects (self-sponsored)
- DeSIRA-LIFT experts (agenda, project mobilization, content development, local facilitation & output reports with local ST NKEs)

Feedback from previous DeSIRA CONNECT Days

- Two pilots were organized. In Burkina Faso in June 2023 and in Addis Ababa, in partnership with FAO during the TAP Partners Assembly in November 2023.
- These two events and their outcomes can be found on our Community website:
 - [Journées nationales des innovations agricoles – Burkina Faso – 14 to 16 June 2023](#)
 - [Contributions to the 10th Tropical Agriculture Platform \(TAP\) Partners Assembly](#)

Annex 1 – Menu of potential activities per day

Day 1 - Connect Projects to Projects

Day 1 is dedicated to project-to-project exchanges, networking and peer learning, to identify key learnings in terms of implementation, particularly how set-up, management and strategy of research-supported projects have allowed generating impact.

The aim is to highlight the innovation trajectories of projects in the same region and how these can open to synergies of actors and synergies of impacts between DeSIRA projects, and how further stakeholders should be engaged to expand project boundaries and reinforce outcomes.

The possible interactive formats are listed in the table below. Depending on specific objectives, expectations or project needs, and on available time and budget for the event, they can be implemented in isolation, or combined and adapted.

Possible bridging formats	Principles	Prerequisites
1 Innovation Fair	Exhibition of innovations promoted by the DeSIRA projects + Pitch sessions + Side events (i.e. video screenings, thematic workshops, panel discussions). Example here	Presentation of innovations and innovation networks in pedagogic formats
2 Pitch sessions	'5-minutes elevator pitch' - each project get 5 minutes to explain how their DeSIRA project is trying to make a difference. Listeners provide information on possible synergies with other initiatives /people/services	Project pitches ready ahead of the session
3 Videos projection	Discussions around videos produced by Projects	Videos available
4 Thematic Workshops	Sharing of innovation strategies in a specific sector. Short presentations and group discussion. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group 1: Projects in support to irrigation – successes and challenges - Group 2: Projects in support to seed sector – successes and challenges - Group 3: Projects in support to livestock – successes and challenges - Group 4: Projects in support to organic farming – successes and challenges 	Selection of relevant cross-cutting topics and speakers Existing portfolio of DeSIRA projects working on similar innovation sectors in the region

<p>4 Knowledge Fair</p>	<p>Sharing of good practices to manage for impact. Short presentations and group discussion on different managerial challenges. Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group 1: Managing R&I projects in unpredictable situations - Group 2: Managing multistakeholder platforms - Group 3: Managing co-creation activities - Group 4: Engaging policy actors in innovation processes 	<p>Selection of relevant cross-cutting challenges</p> <p>Canvas to guide project presentations</p> <p>Selection of projects and speakers</p> <p>Existing portfolio of DeSIRA projects working on similar innovation processes in the region</p>
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Outputs of day 1 are:

- Overview of DeSIRA projects' capacity gaps and bottlenecks
- Overview of the diversity of innovations and innovation actors engaged in DeSIRA projects
- Overview of the potential of synergies and joint impacts of the DeSIRA projects at the country/region level
- Overview of cross-cutting challenges for innovation uptake beyond project duration.

Outcomes of day 1 are:

- New synergies, collaboration or partnerships between DeSIRA projects
- Increased awareness of what DeSIRA projects are achieving, and what their successes and challenges are.
- More People knowledgeable on ongoing innovations and innovation promoters in the country/region.

Day 2 – Connect Projects to AIS stakeholders

Day 2, building on Day 1, is dedicated to reinforcing relationships between DeSIRA projects and the broader range of stakeholders of the National Agricultural Innovation System (AIS) to broker opportunities for projects through meetings and engagement with strategic partners to advance their innovations and innovation trajectories.

While some projects focus on the development of a value chain, a production sector or a territory, others focus on the development of AIS infrastructures at regional or country levels. The nested effect chains of these projects can combine and be reinforced for greater and more systemic impacts.

The possible interactive formats are listed in the table below. Depending on specific objectives, expectations, or project needs, and on available time and budget for the event, they can be implemented in isolation, or combined and adapted.

Possible bridging formats	Principles	Prerequisites
<p>1 World café</p>	<p>Matchmaking event Table hosts: project teams with a list of specific capacity gaps or bottlenecks to address. Invited group of AIS stakeholders seats at the table and share their insights or support to address project capacity gaps or bottlenecks. At the end of the twenty minutes, each member of the group moves to a new table with another project. Each round is prefaced with a question specially crafted for the specific context and desired purpose of the matchmaking. After the rounds (and/or in between rounds, as needed), project teams are invited to share insights or other results from their conversations with the invited AIS stakeholders. These results are reflected visually using graphic recording.</p>	<p>Preparation of cross-cutting questions Selection and mobilization of relevant AIS stakeholders Preparation of project teams to share their challenges, gaps and bottlenecks</p>
<p>2 Thematic workshops</p>	<p>Raising awareness for transformative research partnerships Grouping projects with similar capacity gaps or challenges, for discussion with specific group(s) of AIS stakeholders with whom they need to develop/expand partnership (extension services, farmer's organizations, civil society, private sector, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group 1: Research and Farmers organizations - how they make a difference together? - Group 2: Research and Private sector - how they make a difference together? - Group 3: Research and NGOs - how they make a difference together? - Group 4: Research and Policy actors - how they make a difference together? 	<p>Selection of relevant cross-cutting challenges Canvas to guide project presentations Selection of projects and speakers Existing portfolio of DeSIRA projects working under different partnerships settings</p>
<p>3 Knowledge Fair</p>	<p>Sharing of Research good practices for AIS strengthening Short presentations and group discussion on the contributions of DeSIRA action-research to AIS strengthening Examples:</p>	<p>Selection of relevant cross-cutting challenges Canvas to guide project presentations</p>

- Group 1: How DeSIRA projects contribute to detect and nurture innovation niches
- Group 2: How DeSIRA projects contribute to reinforce innovation support services in a country/ a sector
- Group 3: How DeSIRA projects contribute to more enabling regulatory and policy frameworks for agricultural innovation.

Selection of projects and speakers
Existing portfolio of DeSIRA projects working at different levels of the AIS

Outputs of day 2 are:

- Overview of DeSIRA projects' innovation trajectories and outcomes
- Overview of the possible matchmaking with other AIS stakeholders
- Overview of the transformative potential of research partnerships with AIS actors

Outcomes of day 2 are:

- New synergies, collaboration, or partnerships between DeSIRA projects and AIS stakeholders
- Increased awareness of how DeSIRA projects contribute to AIS strengthening.
- More People knowledgeable on AIS thinking and practice.

Day 3 – Connect Projects to policy actors and investors

Day 3 is dedicated to the future of DeSIRA innovations beyond project duration. The main objectives are to explore conditions of sustainability and generalization of the innovations promoted by the DeSIRA projects and to draw lessons from them on the necessary research partnerships and financing mechanisms to make a difference in the transformation of agrifood systems.

Day 3 will be facilitated mainly under the format of discussions fed with the results and findings of days 1 and 2 to guide the discussions. Participants will be able to discuss the national and/or regional perspectives on:

- The key innovation domains covered by DeSIRA projects
- Unanswered capacity gaps and capacity development needs in the national AIS
- The transformative research partnerships
- The possible alignment of policy agendas, innovation agendas and research agendas
- The necessary investments and financing mechanisms to maintain momentum or to upgrade innovations developed by the DeSIRA projects.

The possible interactive formats are listed in the table below. Depending on specific objectives, expectations or project needs, and on available time and budget for the event, they can be implemented in isolation, or combined and adapted.

Possible bridging formats	Principles	Prerequisites
1 Roundtables	'DeSIRA dialogues' Thematic roundtable discussion focused on consensus-building to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prioritize key innovation domains for the country/region - Highlight unanswered capacity development needs in the national AIS - renew and reinvigorate research partnerships with AIS stakeholders, - better align policy, innovation and research agendas, - mobilize additional international support and financing mechanisms for innovation uptake in key domains. 	Selection of relevant cross-cutting topics for consensus-building Selection and preparation of roundtable participants
2 Panel discussions	Inviting guest speakers to critically reflect on the future of DeSIRA innovations beyond project duration	Identification of guest speakers
3 Knowledge Fair	Brokering policy-relevant knowledge Short presentations and group discussion on academic knowledge from DeSIRA projects that constitutes useful evidence for policy-makers and decision-makers in support to agricultural innovation	Projects ready and willing to share their evidences

Outputs of day 3 are:

- Consensus on the future of DeSIRA Innovations
- Critical reflection on the future of DeSIRA Innovations
- Overview of policy-relevant knowledge from DeSIRA projects

Outcomes of day 3 are:

- Increased or renewed engagement of policy actors and investors to maintain support for innovation uptake.
- More people knowledgeable on policy and financing challenges for agricultural innovation

Annex 2 – Cross-cutting themes

The DeSIRA initiative is driven by several cross-cutting themes that relate to its objectives, the innovations targeted by projects and how these have been using and combining research to engage with farmers, innovation support organizations and policy makers.

These themes have guided implementation strategies as well as the results projects have tried to achieve. It is against these themes that some outcomes will be assessed.

Given this structuring aspect, they will also be used in the DeSIRA CONNECT Days to articulate discussions and carry lessons from each of the three days to the following one.

A non-exclusive selection is provided herewith, to be adjusted for each event. The co-learning approach is transversal to all topics and is very important.

Day 1 - Connect Projects to Projects

Implementation strategies and challenges

- Reaching out to and setting up linkages with stakeholders and end beneficiaries
- Leading, helping, listening: alternating and adjusting roles of the researchers to ensure ownership of beneficiaries and partners while keeping up with the objectives
- Measuring course and achievements, learning to review priorities against
- uncertainties and unpredicted situations,
- Keeping up a radar of trends and policies in the local and broader contexts to better
- anchor the project in its context.
- Co-learning
- Key project objectives in the region
- Contribution of agroecology to climate resilience
- Role of agroecology (and regenerative agriculture) in soil health management
- Women-led innovations (across sectors/value chains)

Day 2 – Connect Projects to AIS stakeholders

Embedding projects into contexts

- Stakeholders and end beneficiaries, getting information and access to projects.
- Ownership of beneficiaries and partners and increasing participation and autonomy in activities
- Joint appreciation of trajectory and achievements, resetting priorities to balance uncertainties and unpredicted situations,
- Informing project implementers about trends and policies in the local and broader contexts to maximize benefits from the outcomes of the project.
- Co-learning

Designing and building new relationships and synergies

- Strengthening capacity for university research to create business products and services (link with scaling)
- Curriculum development in higher education: e-learning platforms and digital innovators
- Adjusting strategies and policies related to agroecology (and regenerative agriculture), climate resilience and soil health management based on science-based data and information from projects.
- Adjusting innovation strategies and policies to favor pooling of and access to funding, the emergence of common tools, methodologies or standards, and structures.

Sustainability, scaling, funding

- Climate change, biodiversity and soil health and agroecology
- Role of innovation and support policies
- Role of research in innovation and development
- Science – policy nexus, data and analyses
- Higher education and agricultural innovation
- Digital innovation
- Agricultural innovation and food systems

Day 3 – Connect Projects to policy actors and investors

National and regional policies, how to build on and bridge with DeSIRA outcomes and trajectories?

- Climate change, biodiversity and soil health and agroecology
- Role of innovation and support policies
- Role of research in innovation and development
- Science – policy nexus, data and analyses
- Higher education and agricultural innovation
- Digital innovation
- Agricultural innovation and food systems

Role of regional organizations.

- Role of research and extension organizations (XP4 in the African context), in particular, the CAADP Research and Innovation Strategy led by FARA (link to better align policy, innovation and research agendas and multistakeholder approaches to strengthen innovations systems).
- Articulation with Regional Economic Groupings and broader policies on trade, energy and innovation.
- Standard setting processes

Articulation of regional strategies and outcomes with broader strategies and policies such as CAADP (in the African context), the ASEAN Action Plan on Sustainable Agriculture, UN SDGs and FAO/TAP.