Global Gateway

SCALING AGROECOLOGICAL PRACTICES THROUGH DIGITAL TOOLS
The example of Solis, an innovation to foster cocreation and knowledge exchange

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Boosting agrifood research and innovation cooperation for impact at scale

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OBJECTIVE: LEVERAGE INCLUSIVE DIGITAL RESOURCES TO SCALE UP AGROECOLOGY

How to overcome the potential antagonism between the standardizing effect of digital technology and the human-centered essence of agroecology?

ATDT project

- Digital resources have the potential to contribute to transformation of agriculture but remain largely inaccessible to smallholder farmers
- Participation and co-design of knowledge are key principles of agroecology (HLPE 2019)
- ATDT (Inclusive digital tools) project, funded by DeSIRA, implemented in Vietnam and Brazil to support more inclusive use of tools and co-design of practices by farmers (2022-2024)

Context Brazil

- Pará: high deforestation rates due to cattle and soy expansion
- Lack of quality technical assistance and influence of industrial agribusiness model
- Production system in project location: livestock & cocoa (main source of income)
- Increased access to internet, smartphones, widespread use of social media
- Solidaridad: 10 years track record using digital tools for technical assistance

Brazil

Pará
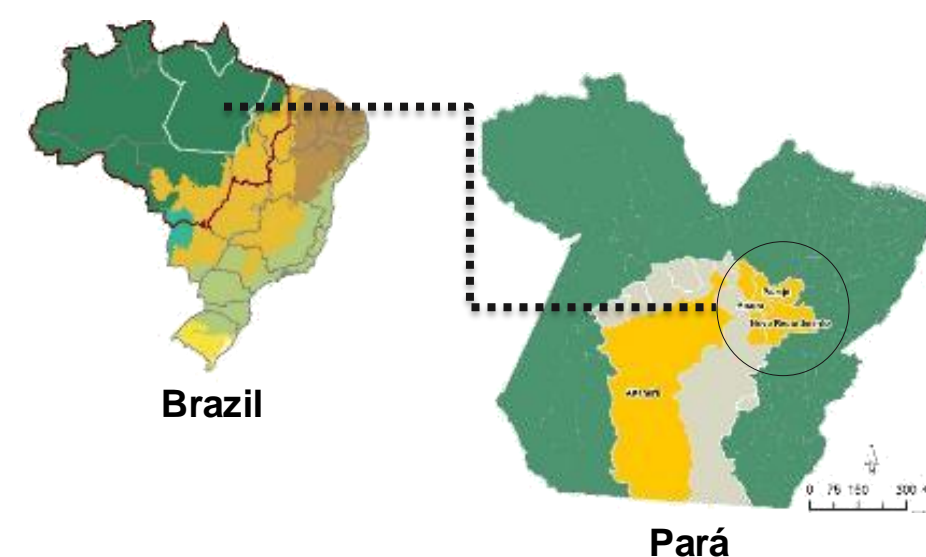
Genilson, a young farmer supported by Solidaridad, proudly stands on his family's farm, showcasing the plot where he and his father implemented rotational grazing, a key step toward agroecological farming

APPROACH: INCLUSIVE AND HIGHLY PARTICIPATORY PROCESS FOR CO-DESIGN AND COMBINATION OF LOCAL AND SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

PROCESS

Highly participatory process engaging extension agents, farmers and local actors in the design of the tool and its content

DIGITAL TOOL

Solis, a catalyst of new exchanges and a multiplier of community-driven knowledge at scale

SOCIAL INNOVATION

Enabling mechanisms for continuous co-creation, engagement and scaling

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Digital resources aligned with agroecological principles**

- **Shift from top-down approach to co-creation with farmers**

- **Enhanced agency of youth and women**

- **Interest from local institutions**

CHALLENGES

- How to **accelerate scaling up** of the tool while maintaining **high-quality engagement for local content adaptation**?

- How to ensure and maintain the **quality** and alignment of an increasing **volume** of videos with the agroecological curriculum?

- How to **attract and retain** new creators and curators of content?

- How to **keep Solis free for farmers** while integrating a monetization program for content creators?

1,446 farmers engaged

83,700 hectares

231 active users

162 videos

7 ambassadors

20 local institutions

8 public entities

TRADE-OFFS

❖ **Participatory process vs speed and scale**

❖ **User-friendliness vs accessibility**

❖ **Quality of content vs quantity**

❖ **Free and commercially independent vs sponsored**

LESSONS LEARNED: BEST-FIT APPROACHES TO SUPPORT AGROECOLOGICAL TRANSITIONS USING DIGITAL TOOLS

PARTICIPATORY AND FARMER-LED

- Farmers must be involved from the outset
- User experience should be based on familiar tools and content grounded on their realities
- Needs of different subgroups must be actively prioritized

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN

- Foster interactive, two-way engagement and peer-to-peer exchange rather than one-size-fits-all recommendations

BUILT ON TRUST, USING SOCIAL INFLUENCE AS A DRIVER FOR UPTAKE

- Farmers are more likely to trust information produced locally or shared by their peers. Local success stories as powerful motivators, triggering "race to the top"
- Farmers highly value social recognition of their efforts through the publication and sharing of their stories.

HYBRID MODELS COMBINING DIGITAL SOLUTIONS WITH ON-THE-GROUND SUPPORT

- Digital tools are not a stand-alone solution
- Use digital tools to complement fieldwork by enabling real-time remote interactions, gamified experiences, and data-driven insights to support decision-making

TRANSPARENT AND SAFEGUARDED FROM COMMERCIAL INTERESTS

- Safeguarded from commercial interests that could bias knowledge-sharing or reinforce existing inequalities
- Transparent data policies and where applicable, business models should support fair arrangements for the use of data shared by farmers on the tool or platform

RECOMMENDATIONS TO DECISION MAKERS

1. **Support strengthening of digital infrastructure in rural areas,** such as expansion of affordable internet access or incentives for the creation of community-led networks

2. **Bridge the digital divide through targeted support and training**, integrating digital literacy programs into broader capacity-building initiatives for farmers and extension agents

3. **Incorporate the use of digital tools** that enhance agroecological principles, such as participatory mapping, land-use planning tools or knowledge-sharing networks, **in a) broader agroecological and climate resilience programs and b) in public policies** for technical assistance and rural extension

4. **Support multi-stakeholder governance models** where farmers, researchers, policymakers and other actors collectively guide digital innovation.

5. **Support initiatives that combat misinformation while fostering decentralized and inclusive knowledge-sharing**

Thank you!

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