DeSIRA-LIFT Learning Reviews

Understanding the contributions of research to innovation and sustainability transitions in DeSIRA

Lessons for future action

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The DeSIRA Initiative: activating sustainability transitions through research and co-innovation

The DeSIRA Initiative portfolio

- 80 research and innovation (R&I) projects
- 65 countries, 3 continents
- 2019 -2026
- EU contribution of €340,000,000.
- >1600 researchers involved
- >800 organisations involved, incl. 223 research org.

Expectations from research

- Solutions to complex problems
- not only as a provider of technologies
- More proactive role in designing and even managing transformative processes
- Accelerate answers to CC

Challenges for research

- Breaking silos
- Reconnect science to end users
- ☐ engage in multi-actor innovation partnerships and support innovation processes
- ☐ Impacting while transforming itself
- ☐Through project-based approaches

Overall goal of DeSIRA-LIFT transversal learning reviews

To identify how DeSIRA projects have contributed to innovations and sustainability transitions and detect success strategies that can be replicated or further used by:

- Funders and beneficiaries: new investments in R&I

- Research organisations and their partners: improved partnerships for impact

- Project implementers, innovation practitioners; project formulators: upgraded project approaches

3 key learning questions:

1. **How are DeSIRA projects addressing sustainability transitions ?** (what focus and what strategies?)

2. **What are research approaches, challenges and contributions to sustainability transitions ?**

3. **What specific factors have contributed to successful project interventions? What could be improved?**

 **Expected results: upgraded models of action for project-based approaches in support of I&ST**

Assumptions :

To make contributions to innovation and sustainability transitions, DeSIRA projects should:
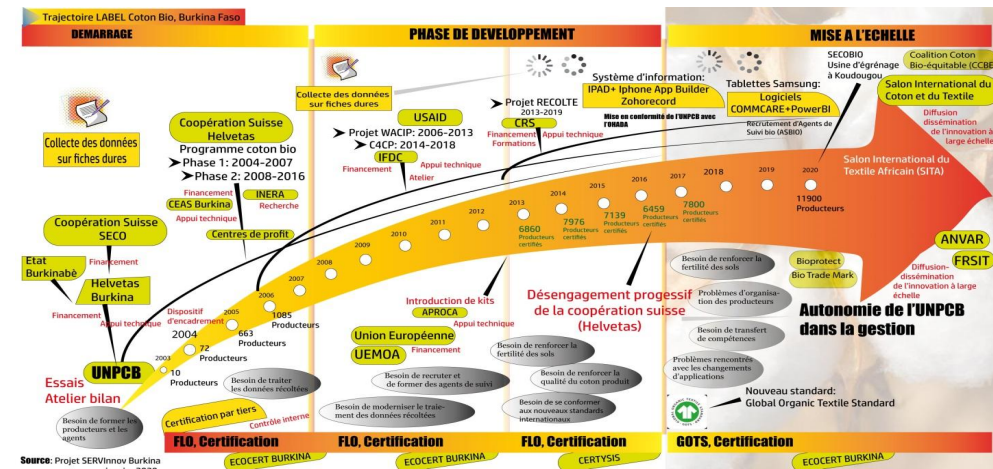
1. Contribute to innovation trajectories

2. Be embedded into national agricultural innovation systems

3. Be equipped with managerial capacities specific to complex projects

1- Idéation

2 – Essais pilote

3 – Mise à l'échelle

4 – Généralisation et durabilité
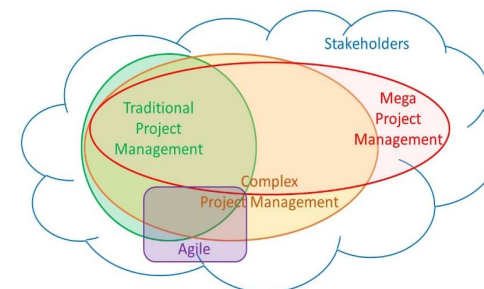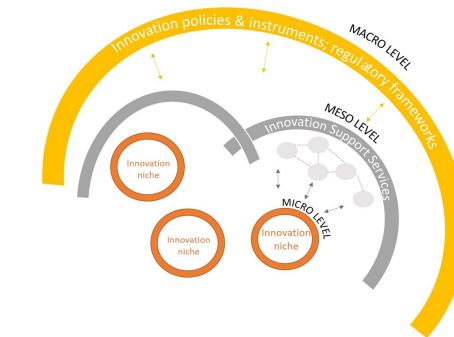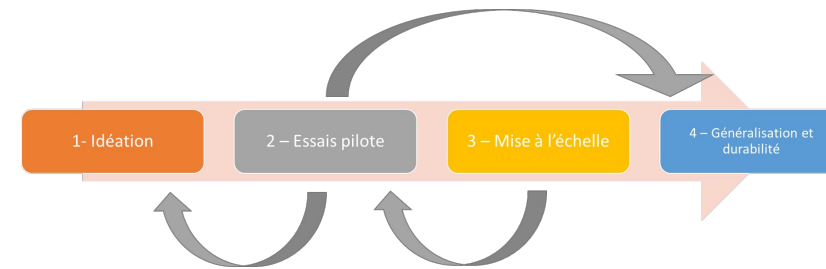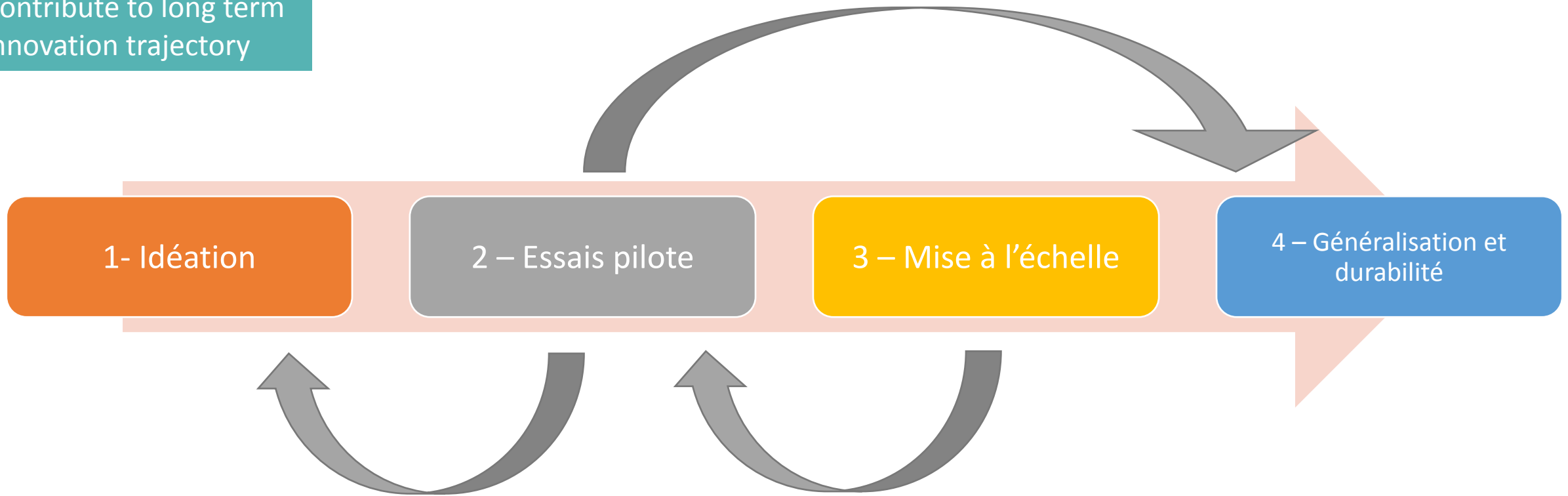
- Innovation is a non-linear and unpredictable phased process that takes time, beyond short term project duration
- Different types of research outputs are necessary at each phase

Trajectoire LABEL Coton Bio, Burkina Faso

Source: Projet SERVInnov Burkina janvier 2020

Mission-oriented national agricultural innovation systems drive innovation for sustainability transitions
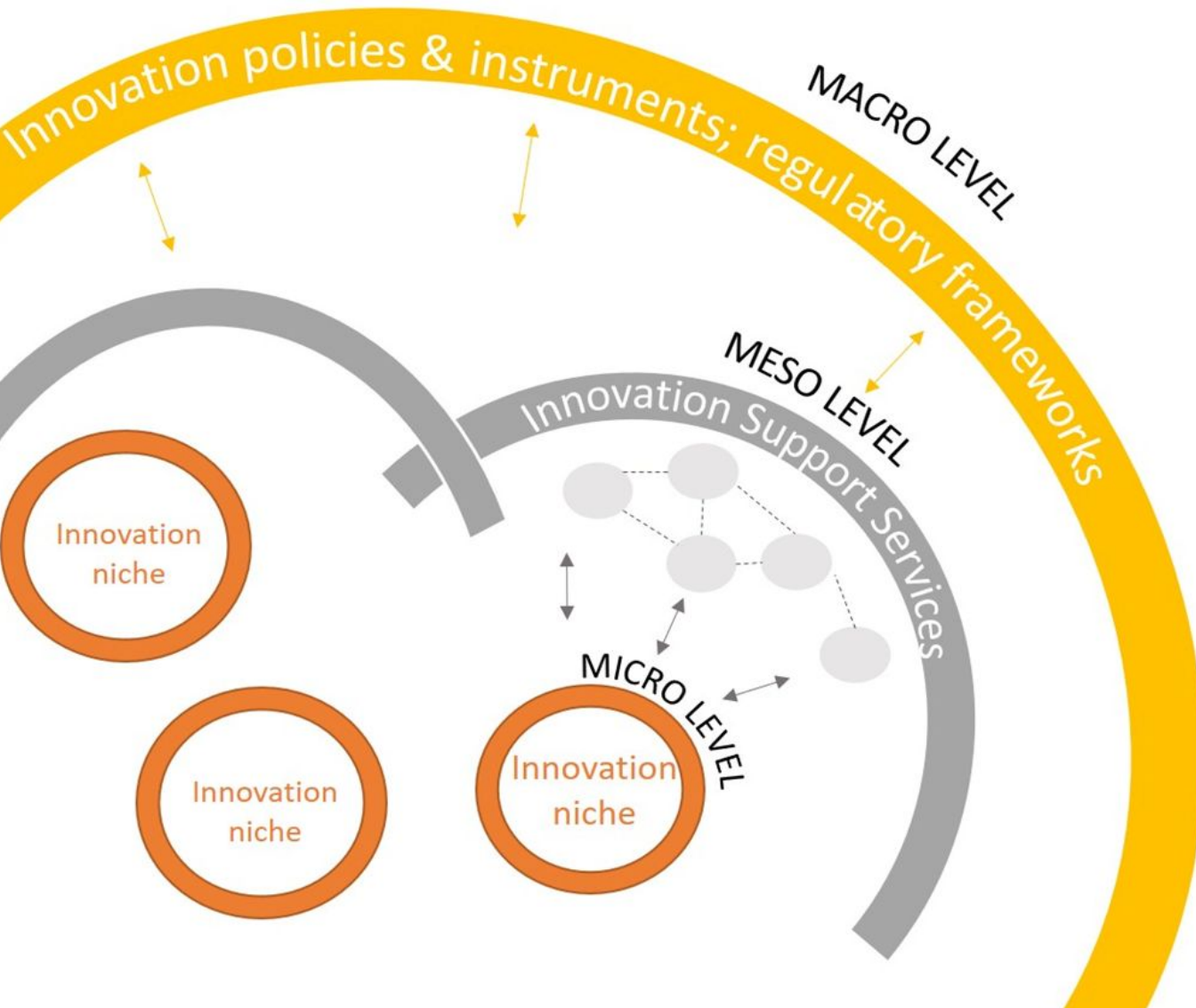

«Un système doit être géré. Il ne se gérera pas tout seul. Laissés à eux-mêmes, les composants deviennent des centres de profit égoïstes, compétitifs, indépendants et détruisent ainsi le système. Le secret est la coopération entre les composants vers le but commun » —W. Edwards Deming

3- DeSIRA projects are « complex projects » acting as temporary organisations

- enormous scope, great number and diversity of stakeholders, and unprecedented transformational intent (Abers et al., 2017 ; Gil et al., 2019).
- multi-cultural, multi-country, multi- site, multi-organization, and multi-stakeholder temporary endeavors
- Taking place take place in complex, uncertain, volatile, and crisis-ridden contexts
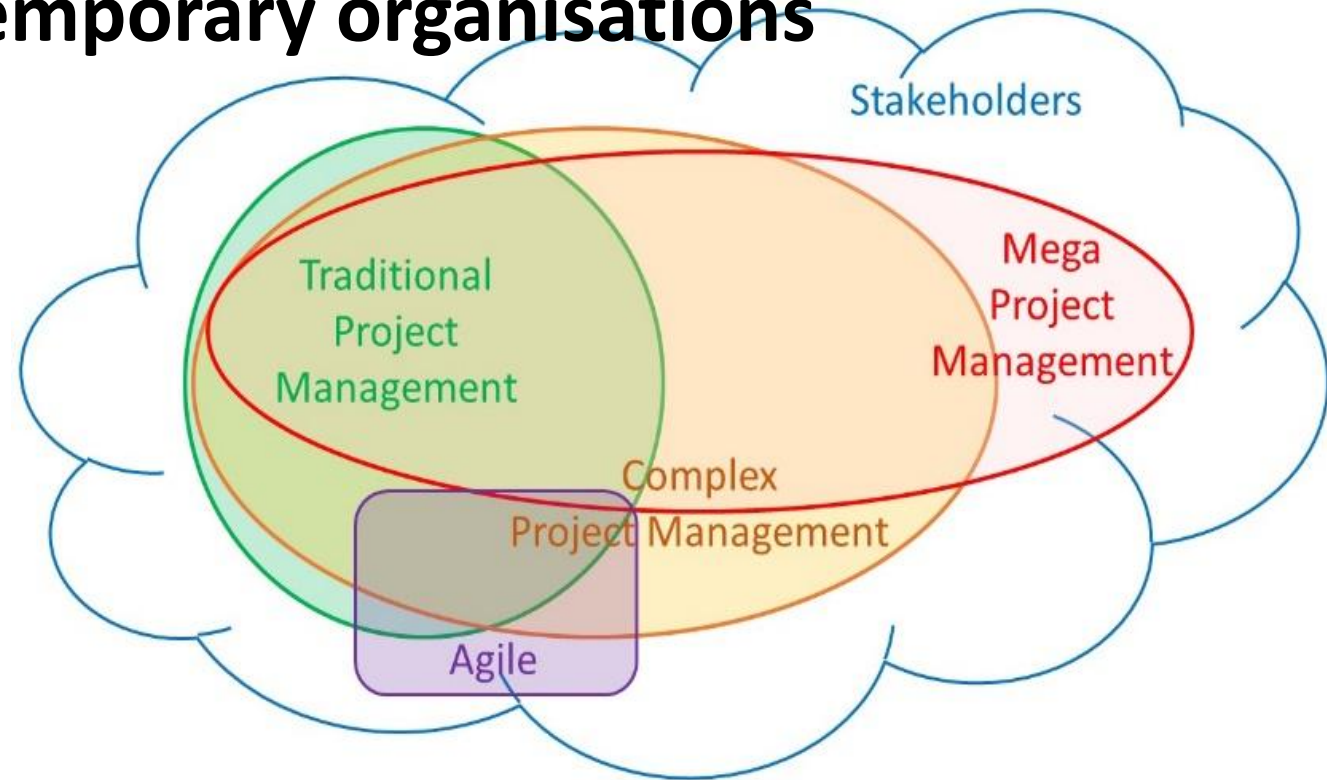
Huge challenges of implementing a strategy through complex projects with deliverables that are contested and/or hard to quantify and measure.

Crucial success factors from litt.:
- partnerships and stakeholder engagement
- social capital and knowledge management
- gender mainstreaming
- adaptation, evaluation, and learning

Dynamic managerial capacities:
- Flexibility
- Open innovation
- Boundary management (AIS)
- Monitoring process & outcomes

Methodology

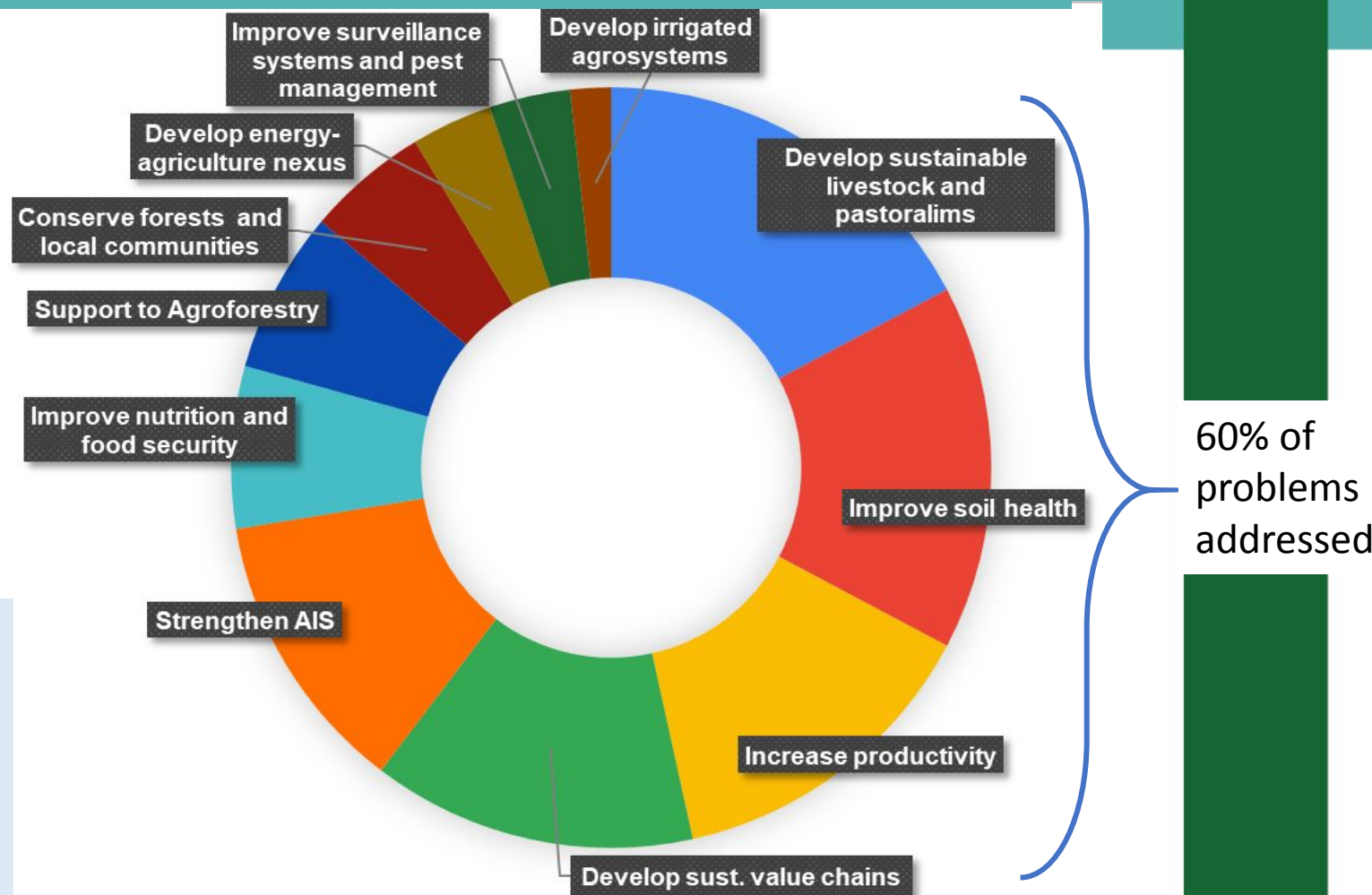- Meta-data on DeSIRA projects
- Analysis from secondary data (project documents, DLIFT databases) – support from AI / data analyst
- Additional data collection on specific dimensions : short on-line questionnaires.
    Ex: innovation survey
- Interviews with project managers on specific dimensions.
    Ex: ranking of « success dimensions » in project management and associated critical capacities.

Result 1- Contribution to innovation trajectories

R1.1. : **diversity -** Projects developed a variety of innovative responses to 4 main problems: Livestock development + improve soil health + increase productivity + value chain development
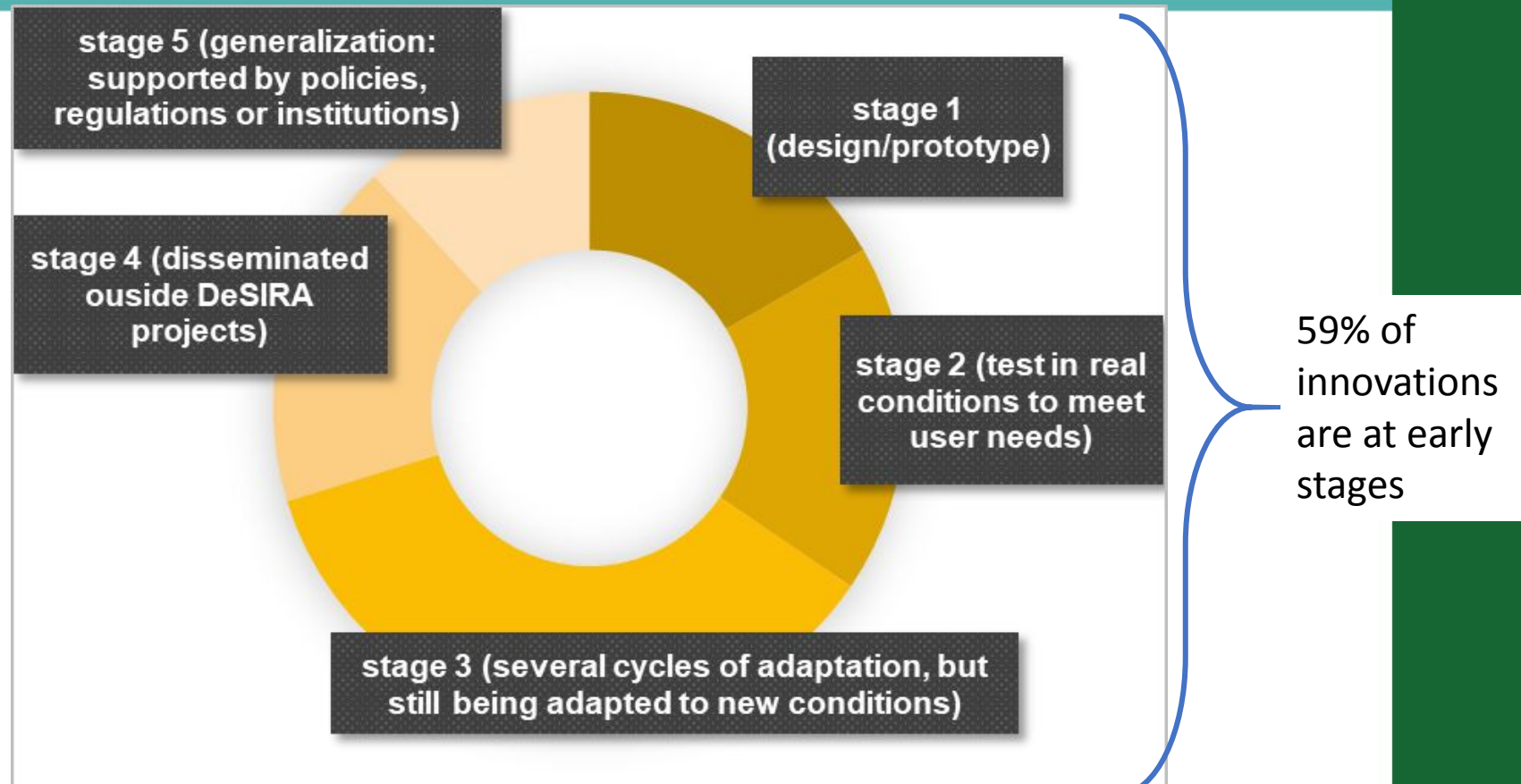
- 72% have a **technological components**
- 85 % are **multidimensional** innovations (combination of new technologies, new organisations or services and/or new policies)
- 70% as part of a **portfolio of several bundled innovations**

60% of problems addressed

Trends driving the innovation agendas (problems addressed)

Pie chart segments:
- Develop sustainable livestock and pastoralims
- Improve soil health
- Increase productivity
- Develop sust. value chains
- Strengthen AIS
- Improve nutrition and food security
- Support to Agroforestry
- Conserve forests and local communities
- Develop energy-agriculture nexus
- Improve surveillance systems and pest management
- Develop irrigated agrosystems

R1.2. : majority are **« primary/pilot » exploration & experiments**, that will need to be continued by development partners, when projects will stop

stage 5 (generalization: supported by policies, regulations or institutions)

stage 1 (design/prototype)

stage 4 (disseminated ouside DeSIRA projects)

stage 2 (test in real conditions to meet user needs)

stage 3 (several cycles of adaptation, but still being adapted to new conditions)

59% of innovations are at early stages

- For **54% of described innovations, projects are the first to work on/develop these innovations** in their intervention contexts (no preexisting trajectories *to their knowledge*)
- And 84% of projects are developing their innovations over **less than 5 years**

- R2.1. : 3 types of strategies deployed within AIS with key AIS stakeholders, and 3 levels of transformative intention
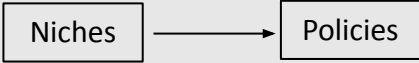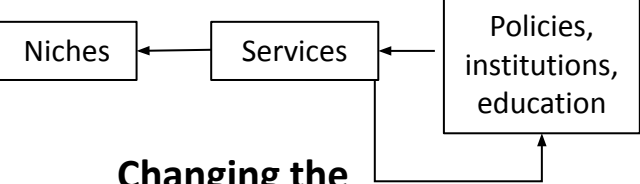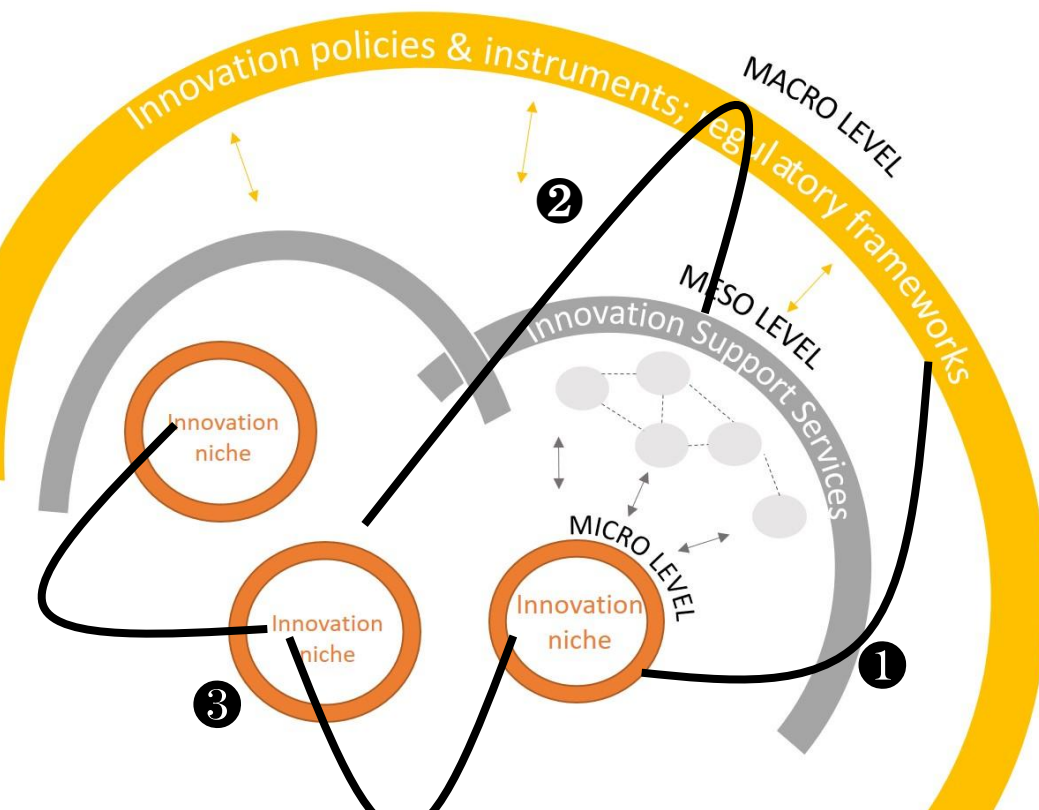

❶Niches to policy influence

❷Changing the knowledge regime

❸Nursing seeds for transition

Result 2- Embeddeness into Agricultural Innovation Systems

Strategy – levels of intervention		Strategy short description	Knowledge use	Projects	Context
Niches → Policies **Niches to policy influence**	Strategy 1	Sequenced change approach from developing niches to influencing policies, fed by evidence and supported by trainings and joint learning opportunities	Evidencing benefits of AE and pathways for change	• IDEAS-Colombia • ABRIGUE • FAIR-Sahel • PRISMA • S&T-Senegal	Countries where AE is accepted/supported at national policy level
Niches ← Services ← Policies, institutions, education **Changing the knowledge regime**	Strategy 2	Mobilizing policies/institutions/higher education, (and private sector) in support of innovation niches, thanks to coordination and engagement mechanisms	Developing a joint understanding and vision for AET	• Prosilience-Benin, Ethiopia • STREAM Mongolia • Asset –Lao PDR, Cambodia	Building on previous work
Niches **Nursing seeds for transition**	Strategy 3	Nurturing innovation niches (learning in/with niches and nursing seeds for transition)	Codesigning local farming systems	• Yayu Coffee • FORI-Brazil • MARIGO, CdI • TAERA-Benin	Countries where AE is not well supported at national policy level

Result 2- Embeddeness into Agricultural Innovation Systems

	Strategy 1	Strategy 2	Strategy 3
	Niches to policy influence	**Changing the knowledge regime**	**Nursing seeds for transition**
Main steps of the project intervention	1. Establishment of **co-design facilities** at local level (innovation platforms) 2. **Co-construction** of new models 3. **Analysis** of levers for scaling up 4. **Policy dialogue** and advocacy, informed by research results 5. Support to cross-sector learning / coordination & governance (**forum, platforms**) for sharing understanfing, vision, scenario [IDEAS, FAIR Sahel, DINAMICC]	1. Promoting an **innovation portfolio** as a solution to a shortage (biomass) / barrier 2. Working at the community level through user associations/cooperatives to enable changes in collective management, with **territorial plans**. 3. Implementing via government partners, **extension services**, with community-level planning; trainings, demonstration/model farmers. 4. Showing economic benefits of the agroecological approach to incentivize farmer adoption. [Prosilience Ethiopia; STREAM Mongolia; ASSET]	1. Assessment of **needs /priorities** 2. Establishment of **Test and experimentation platforms** 3. Training of niche actors (farmers, researchers, development agent) for **joint experimentation** [FO-RI, TAFRA]
Dominant contributions of research	• Analytical: - Understanding context - Conceptualization of solutions	• Support to implementation - Codification and transfer of knowledge	• Analytical - Understanding needs - Evaluation
Project management focus	Adequate acquisition of knowledge	Project's performance	Design strategies
Time horizons	• Temporality of research	• **Project** lead timing	• Variable, adaptable, responsive to needs

Result 2- Embeddeness into Agricultural Innovation Systems

- R2.1. : 3 types of strategies deployed within AIS with key AIS stakeholders, and 3 levels of transformative intention

  DeSIRA projects **materialized multilevel strategies** for transitions

- R2.2. DeSIRA projects fill the "**missing ties**" of the AIS, both horizontal and vertical. The projects are **full-fledged actors of the national AIS**

- R2.3 High variety of mechanisms for **stakeholder engagement** based on Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Result 2- Embeddeness into Agricultural Innov

Activating agricultural transitions to sustainability **through participatory research and co-innovation**

Stories of change across Africa, Asia and Latin America from the DeSIRA initiative

Upload and read the book :
https://www.desiraliftcommunity.org/stories-of-change/

- R2.3 High variety of mechanisms for **stakeholder engagement** based on Participatory Action Research (PAR)

- R3. Depending on the project transformative strategy, critical areas for successful management (and delivery) are not the same

❸Nursing seeds for transition   ❶Niches to policy influence

- Boundary management (embeddedness)
- Flexibility, agility
- Open innovation (and participation)
- Monitoring processes and outcomes

Recap of main DeSIRA Projects' contributions to I&ST and new questions

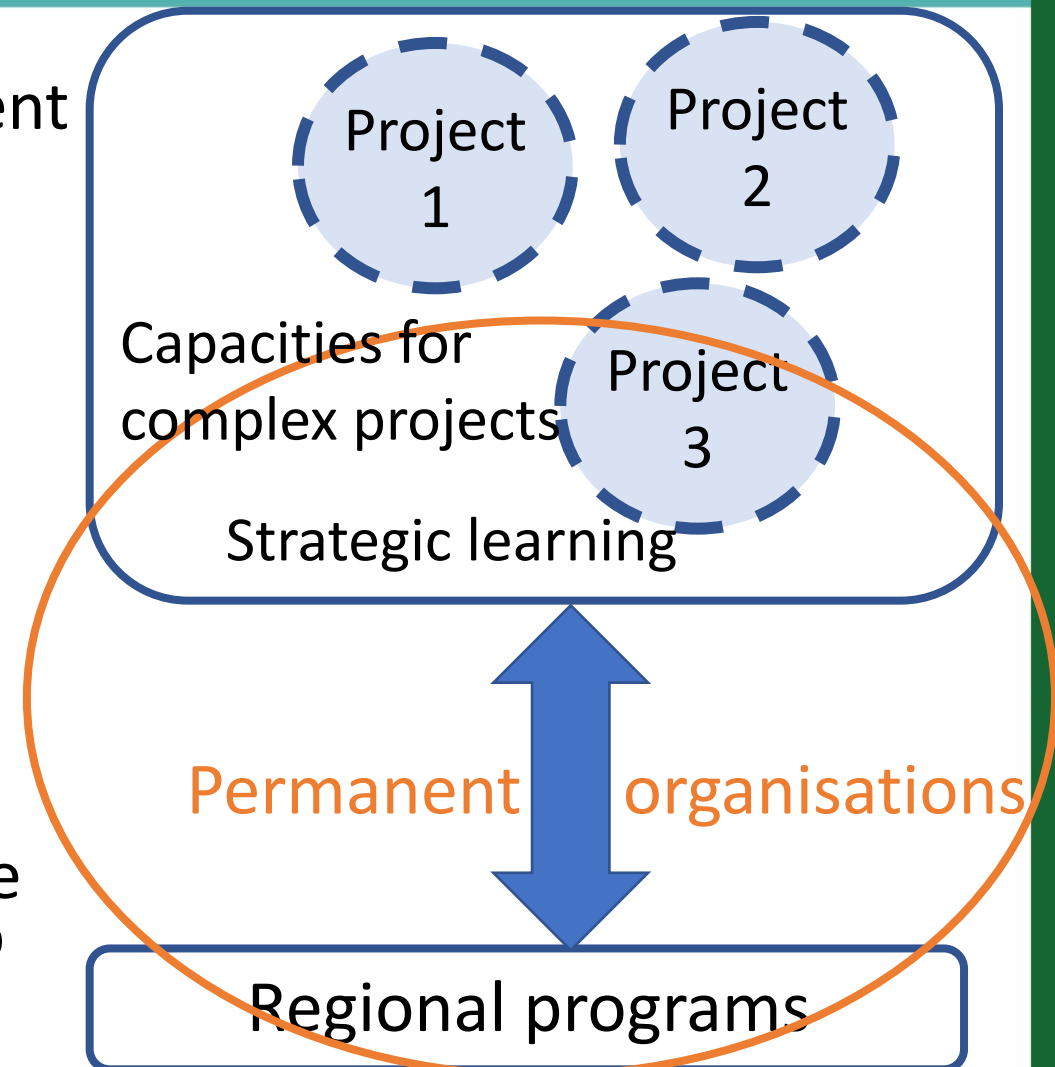|	
1-Contribution to developping and testing **innovation portfolios** in response to complex problems	How to maintain these innovation portfolios and make them move to the next phase?
2-Contribution to **strategy formation** and materialize multi-level and multi-country strategies for ST	Who can deploy these strategies over longer term?
3-Contribution to AIS strengthening by **filling MISSING TIES**	Projects are temporary organizations: how to sustain these ties?
4-Contribution to develop **research capacities** making international research more relevant to country needs and opportunities, and reinforce position as a strategic actor of AIS -	How to consolidate, sustain and scale research learnings and practices for I&ST?

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Recommendations to improve R&I projects contributions to I&ST

- ☐ 1-Align project design and management with Innovation and transition strategies

- ☐ 2- Enable organizational learning for systemic capacities to manage complex projects –esp.in research org.

- ☐ 3-Consider program level efforts for strategic learning

- ☐ 4-Include projects into comprehensive national and sub-regional action plans to ensure their effective delivery

Project 1

Project 2

Capacies for complex projects

Project 3

Strategic learning

Permanent   organisations

Regional programs

Thanks for your attention!

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https://www.desiraliftcommunity.org/

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