

## FAQ about change management in agri-food value chains

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Change management is more and more introduced in development projects and in the promotion of agri-food value chains in particular.

### What is change management in agri-food value chains ?

There are several definitions of change management in agri-food value chains. In essence, it is an approach aiming at change individuals, teams and/or organisations active in agri-food value chains to a desired future state. The focus is to allow unlocking the potential of people who are working to implement a project and implementing a bottom-up change. The project may be a research project, a joint-venture, the creation of producers' association, the formulation of policy.

### Do we need change management in agri-food value chains?

Transformation in agri-food value chains is needed for several reasons.

1. Changes in the external environment create a need to adapt and adjust...
  - a. Long term changes: climate change, increased globalisation leading to more hazards and higher speed of change and more opportunities to choose from
  - b. Medium and short term: price increase or decrease, introduction of new regulations, new requests from buyers (traceability, standards, production techniques, new varieties), loss of a client.
2. Internal changes, also requiring the need to adapt and adjust: change of leader, new corporate identify, introduction of new working methods and approaches, restructuring.
3. More and more rapid changes require individuals to adapt more and more quickly
4. People change, affecting their work with the team among others

In particular, change management in agri-food value chains is required when:

- Strong beliefs, traditions or attitudes impede adaptation to a new environment, project or innovation.
- One want to anticipate adverse effects of a change, such as new competitors on the markets, trade regulations, requests from buyers (GlobalGap for example).
- One wants to enhance the success of a project, such as introduction of a new technology, adjustment to the requirements of a new buyer (e.g. traceability), creation of a strategic alliance in a specific supply chain, introduce the production of a new output.
- One wants set up a value chain or to stay ahead of the competition.
- One wants to increase the chances of success that a project remains sustainable after the external support exports and/or donors leave.
- Statu quo is no more an option!

### How is change management best introduced in agri-food value chains?

There are several ways to induce change, but non single recipe. Change management requires strong interpersonal skills... As in any other domain, various factors will determine the manner to tackle change:

- the environment conditions: culture in the various teams, firms and organisations
- the target individuals: role, access to information, level of resistance to change, experience in learning, change and entrepreneurship, type and number of stakeholders, motivation.
- the aim of change: level (team, organisation, value chain, sector), level of urgency.

For example, where resistance is high, information access is very poor and/or urgency is low, the more extensive participation approach is preferred. This is best done using entry doors for introducing change and allowing those who will be affected by the change to play their part in determining not only the needed change, but also the way it should be implemented. These entry doors may be: external evaluation, training in a specific aspect of agri-food value chains (marketing, market access, competition).

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### What about examples of **change management in agri-food value chains**?

- Export strategy or from “Our dried apricots are the best!” to “We need to profile our dried apricots”: after the restitution of a large sector analysis in Central Asia, a blind tasting of dried apricots was organised for the attendees, namely government and processing firms representatives. The results showed that the specific country faced important competition from several other countries, dried apricots are no more a standard commodity, government and processing firms representatives, hence consumers, have different preferences and choice! But most importantly, the results changed their perceptions about dried apricots international markets and induced the willingness to adapt their export strategy on market requirements for the selected market and not on the perception that their products were the best.
- Introduction of internal reforms within an institution: the CGIAR has began an initiative to improve its effectiveness and efficiency, see <http://cgiarchangemanagement.wordpress.com>.

### Is **change management** better than the participation approach?

Both are powerful approaches. They have different aims. But participation is a requisite for change... And a change management process might need to be initiated in order to introduce this new participatory approach!

### What can I gain from using **change management in agri-food value chains**?

The gains from change management in agri-food value chains are manifold. They may be:

- Enhanced effectiveness and efficiency such as an increased rate and speed of innovation adoption of a technology, creation of a new value chain, transformation of a supply chain into a strategic value chain, greater level of entrepreneurship and enhanced and more sustainable cooperation among the chain stakeholders.
- Reduced costs of implementation of specific processes: mergers, mandatory traceability in a supply chain, privatisation, added functions in a producers' cooperative, value chain coordination, new regulations.
- Higher empowerment of your firm or institution members, your team, your clients and/or your end-beneficiaries leading to higher cooperation, coordination, success and sustainability.

### Is **change management** suitable for multicultural environment? with illiterate people? in commercial value chains?

Change management is suitable in any environment, social, economical, technical, historical, cultural, even geological! In fact, change management is particularly suitable in multicultural environment and/or with illiterate individuals, so-called difficult situations! Change can be worked at an individual and group or firm, as well as with various stakeholders. The latter is valid when the stakeholders have common interests as in a supply chain, alliance.

### Why is there so much resistance about **change in agri-food value chains**?

There are many reasons to resist change in agri-food value chains!

- Human beings do not like change!
- There is a strong belief that change is based on pure logic, in particular since agri-food value chains is based on science. Farmers will adopt innovations if innovations are good. Buyers will buy products if the products are good. Hence, as my product is the best, I just need to produce more of it or my innovation is useful so farmers will adopt it. Experience shows that it is not so simple to adapt or to change.
- Several approaches were introduced lately, such as gender, participation, etc. Some of them have experienced lower success than expected.
- Projects are planned taking account about the environment and social factors. However, the people actually implementing the design (they usually did not planned) and their need to adjust to the new project are often neglected.
- Those who do not see the benefits of change may show high resistance, particularly when they perceive and fear a loss of power.

### **How long does a change management process in agri-food value chains take?**

Change management is a process involving people and requires time. This is particularly true when several new tasks are in addition to normal workload. There are several factors influencing time required for change. They are similar to those mentioned above: environmental conditions, targets individuals and aim of change.

### **Where can I read more about change management in agri-food value chains?**

You can read:

- some basics on [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Change\\_management\\_\(people\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Change_management_(people))
- more on <http://www.change-facilitation.org>
- about a change management experience in the agri-foodcultural sector on (CGIAR): <http://cgiarchangemanagement.wordpress.com>.

### **Are there change management tools I can use directly in agri-food value chains?**

There many tools that may contribute directly to your work, such as participation tools, the World Café. The list is very long. However, it should be reminded that because each situation is different, specific, there is no recipe for inducing, provoking wanted change in the right direction and sustain it.

### **Do I / my team need an external change management agent / leader?**

Change rarely happens from within. It may be “forced” due to circumstances or induced from an external agent. Most important, leaders should support the change process.

### **Can change management in agri-food value chains also be applied in other domains?**

Change management is suitable anytime where change is anticipated or required. It may be adopted for empowering your work team, promoting entrepreneurship, introducing new techniques and management methods, restructuring organisations.

### **Where can I find a change management leader and/or facilitator specialised in agri-food value chains?**

The profession of change management leader, facilitator, agent or... catalyst is not licensed. The best guide for selecting a change manager is to ask about their experience in the field! A successful change agent requires a mix of skills and experience, the ability to communicate with the various stakeholders and inspire the support of the relevant managers and eventually of the donors.