Innovating for Impact

How One Acre Fund innovates at scale
175,000+ Farm Families
## Big Opportunity

+ Expansive farmer network
+ Field officers in 5 countries
+ Knowledge dissemination process
+ Existing distribution channels
+ Financing in place

## Big Risk

- Farmer livelihood is dependent on success
- Brand and reputation
- Erosion of trust
- Could endanger core subsistence crops product line
Framework

+ Reduce risk
+ Structure process
+ Fail fast and learn
+ Make objective decisions
+ Common language and process for team
First, you need criteria.

Or, what you are evaluating
Assessment Criteria

+ Impact
+ Adoptability
+ Simplicity
+ Operability
Impact
Adoptability
Simplicity
Operability
Second, you need a process

Or, how you are evaluating
Grevillea Trees

+ Some farmers outside of the 1AF network are growing them successfully = Bright Spot
+ Good for erosion prevention and wind protection
+ Does not interfere with other subsistence crops
+ Good market value or farm use
Basic Research

Phase 0

Research

- Talking with in- and out-of-network farmers
- Meeting with ag research institutes
- Financial modeling

+ Grew quickly
+ Good companion plant
+ Good wind protection
+ Break-even for 1AF
+ 402% margin for farmers (4y)
Phase 0

Basic Research

Phase 1

Impact (Mech of Action)

- Planted alongside other tree species to measure impact on land
- Tested for planting methods & germination rates
- Spoke to farmers about planting trees (behavior)

Research

Nursery

+ Grew well in the nursery
+ High impact potential
- Unreliable seed source (quantity and quality)
- Inconsistent germination
- Requires more complex planting methods
- Concerned about farmer adoption & early cutting
Impact (Mech of Action)

- Adoptability
- Operability
- Simplicity

Phase 1

- Nursery

Phase 2

- Intermediate Pilot
  - A
  - B

A few sites with 100 farmers as an “add-on”
- Evaluated customer satisfaction

+ Acceptable germination rates and planting compliance
+ Good customer satisfaction
- Low adoption
1,000 farmers

A|B test of planting methods & composition

A|B test of packaging distribution

Tested behavioral nudges around timing of tree removal/sale

+ Improved adoption
+ Good customer satisfaction
- Low germination and survival rates
Return to Phase 1&2 to test planting methods, seed storage and packaging, bagging/socketing, etc.

SEED BAGGING

Tree seeds can be germinated in a large “seed bag” that functions as a seed bed consisting of a potential combination of sand, soil, and compost.

SOCKETING

Small seedlings may be transplanted as a “socket” for further development. A socket is the tree sapling and its root system.

SEEDLING PROTECTION IN A NURSERY

Through all stages of the process, seedlings need to receive careful attention to prevent death. For example, tree seedlings might be protected with a thatch enclosure in a nursery to prevent exposure.

TRANSPLANTING

Saplings are eventually transplanted (out of the bag or directly) into the field.
What did we learn?
Best Practices

1) Establish criteria
2) Select indicator
3) Define success
4) Advance through testing
5) Pilot, pilot, pilot
6) Never stop testing