

# **Agricultural Innovation Marketplace (MKTPlace)**

## **Second External Evaluation**

### **Final Report (Product 3)**

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## **Executive Summary**

This report presents the key findings of the second external evaluation of the Agricultural Innovation Marketplace (MKTPlace). Drawing on desk research, interviews and field work conducted between August and November 2016, the report expands some of the main conclusions of the first external evaluation led in 2014.

The main goal of this evaluation is to contribute to the MKTPlace improvement and help the initiative to increase its impact and sustainability. Drawing on a robust methodology, detailed in its 'Work Plan', the report analyses the three pillars of the MKPlace, i.e. policy dialogues, knowledge sharing/knowledge management and joint research projects, paying particular attention to their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

As the report shows, six years after its creation, the MKTPlace can be pointed out as a very well managed, functional and efficient initiative. Its main objectives remain pertinent, the platform design and strategy, adapted, and its (internal) management and governance tools, robust and reactive.

The projects selected and supported by the MKTPlace tend also to produce positive outputs and outcomes, such as the promotion of knowledge-sharing, exchange, and other forms of scientific cross-fertilization. The MKTPlace has also enhanced the agricultural and scientific collaboration among numerous Brazilian and African researchers and research institutions.

In short, The MKTPlace, and its management team, has been operating in a (cost-)effective manner in order to reach its main objectives. Following a quite simple 'success recipe', the MKTPlace has managed to promote scientific exchange and cross-fertilization among Brazil, Africa and to a lesser extent LAC countries.

With few exceptions, researchers' overall experience with the MKTPlace tends to be quite positive. From the contact with (and support received from) the management team, to their research experience, including participation in the MKTPlace Forum, the majority of researchers consulted has a rather high opinion of the platform.

The 'bureaucratic minimalism' of the MKTPlace often appears as an interesting aspect and a real differential when compared to other funding opportunities (at national or international level). The overall rules and guidelines seem clear, and the process of elaboration of pre-proposal, proposal and submission quite straightforward.

One of the most important impacts of the platform has been the creation of structured/institutions links and/or the improvement of (agriculture) scientific cooperation between Brazilian and African research institutions. Such cooperation, though not new, were rather fragmented and fragile before the creation of the MKTPlace.

The platform has also become an important (and rather rare) source of financial, material and scientific support to many researchers in Africa who tend to remain at the

margins of the (global) research communities/institutions. Researchers are moreover considerably empowered by the platform's original 'bottom-up' model and able to propose research projects that effectively tackle their agricultural challenges and scientific needs.

Therefore, the platform, as most of the projects it supports, presents also good levels of ownership and seems to be genuinely driven by demand. Adaptation to the particular context of partners (and beneficiaries) has also been considerably positive, even if there is still room for development.

Indeed, MKTPlace impact and sustainability present some issues which need to be tackled in the next years. Among these challenges are project's difficulties to effectively 'scale up' their research results and connect research to practice, as well as the MKTPlace increasing reliance on financial contributions from (international) partners, in a context of decreasing institutional, political (and financial) support from Brazil.

Although these challenges require attention, they do not call for major revisions or changes in the MKTPlace strategy or management model. In fact, some mitigating measures have already started being taken: the setting up of the MBoSs could represent for instance a real step further towards guaranteeing greater impact in the longer run.

## 1. Introduction

This report presents the findings of the second external evaluation of the Agricultural Innovation Marketplace (MKTPlace). Drawing on desk research, interviews and field work conducted between August and November 2016<sup>1</sup>, this report expands some of the main conclusions of the first external evaluation led in 2014.<sup>2</sup>

The methodology applied in this evaluation is based on the guidelines developed by the European Commission and the World Bank<sup>3</sup> which have proven particularly efficient to evaluate Research and Innovation (R&I)<sup>4</sup> initiatives like the MKTPlace. The methodological tools and framework are detailed in the ‘Work Plan’ (Product 1) submitted to the Contracting Authority (CA) on 24 August 2016 (final/revised version).

As defined in its Terms of Reference (ToR), the main goal of this second external evaluation is to contribute to the MKTPlace improvement and help the initiative to increase its impact and sustainability.

With that in mind, the report examines different aspects of the three pillars of the platform<sup>5</sup>, with particular attention being paid to: (i) the overall implementation of MKTPlace, notably the technical procedures and project management processes; (ii) the platform governance; (iii) the quality and consistency of projects funded by the MKTPlace, their generated outputs and, when applicable, impacts (see below), as well as the “knowledge sharing/knowledge management” and “policy dialogues” activities; and finally (iv) the MKTPlace website and the online system.

These different aspects are analysed in section 2 below, which provides a detailed (analytical) assessment of the MKTPlace and its different aspects, from management, governance, implementation and other specific elements. The section also highlights the main challenges the platform needs to tackle in order to improve its performance, impact and sustainability.

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed overview of the period of desk research, field work and interview see the evaluation’s “Work Plan” (Product 1). A list of people interviewed is also available at the end of the report (Annex 1).

<sup>2</sup> This final version of the report also draws on the recently published book “Agricultural innovation marketplace - South-South cooperation beyond theory”, Reifschneider et al. (Ed.), Brasília, DF, 2016. In the present study, this publication is mentioned as the “MKTPlace book”.

<sup>3</sup> The “Evaluation Unit” of the Development Cooperation Directorate of the European Commission (DEVCO) has compiled and systematized a series of methodological approaches and tools to assess the implementation and results/impacts of the different programmes and projects supported by the European Union in partner countries. For more details of the methodological guidelines be used see: [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/evaluation/methodology/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/evaluation/methodology/index_en.htm). Another important methodological source is the “IEG Sourcebook for Evaluating Global and Regional Partnership Programs: Indicative Principles and Standards”. The Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) is an independent, three-part unit within the World Bank Group.

<sup>4</sup> See for instance the “Evaluation of EU support to Research and Innovation for development in partner countries (2007-2013)” produced by ECDPM, available at: <http://ecdpm.org/publications/evaluation-eu-support-research-innovation/>

<sup>5</sup> The three pillars of the MKTPlace are: (i) policy dialogues, (ii) knowledge sharing/knowledge management (KS/KM) and (iii) joint research projects.

Based on the evaluation index and questions outlined in the Work Plan, section 3 provides a numerical (and quite visual) assessment of the MKTPlace performance, looking at five (interconnected) criteria, namely: the MKTPlace design and relevance<sup>6</sup> (section 3.1), effectiveness<sup>7</sup> (section 3.2), efficiency<sup>8</sup> (section 3.3), impact<sup>9</sup> (section 3.4) and sustainability<sup>10</sup> (section 3.5). In addition to other, ‘horizontal issues’<sup>11</sup> (section 3.6) a separated section examines the MKTPlace website and online tools (section 4).

The report also outlines some ‘lessons learned’ and recommendations that could help remediating some of the existing challenges and enhance the MKTPlace overall performance, and in particular its efficiency, impact and sustainability in the next years.

Finally, a methodological remark on the ‘impact’ session deserves attention here. Contrary to the first external evaluation, which emphasised the ‘impossibility’ of evaluating the impact of the platform, this second study believes that there are at least some aspects or dimensions of the platform impact that can be assessed.

After six years of its launching, the MKTPlace has financed numerous joint research projects, participated in several policy dialogues and has led a continuous work to manage and share the knowledge it produces. All these activities have directly or indirectly produced positive (or negative) long-term effects (see footnote 9).

Of course, establishing a clear causal connection between one of the MKTPlace (projects and activities) and more fundamental, long-term changes in policy, research or agricultural practices is quite challenging. This is even more the case since, as any evaluation work of this sort, we are not dealing here with the same causal connections that can be found (and used) in ‘exact’ or ‘natural’ sciences. There is in reality a great deal of interpretation and (subjective) thinking – and therefore also a certain bias.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In the framework of this evaluation, relevance is defined as the extent to which the objectives of the MKTPlace are consistent with beneficiaries’ requirements, countries’ (and/or research institutions’) needs and priorities, as well as partners’ policies. See “Work Plan”.

<sup>7</sup> In the framework of this evaluation, effectiveness is defined as the extent to which the MKTPlace objectives are being achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account the context in which the platform’s activities are being implemented, and other factors in influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives. See “Work Plan”.

<sup>8</sup> In the framework of this evaluation, efficiency should be understood as the extent to which the MKTPlace outputs and/or desired effects are being achieved with the lowest possible use of resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, administrative costs, etc.). See “Work Plan”.

<sup>9</sup> In the same vein, in this report impact should be understood as the positive and negative long-term effects directly or indirectly produced by the MKTPlace implementation. Such impact can be positive and negative, but also direct or indirect, intended or unintended. The MKTPlace impact/effect needs to be measured hence against specific (social, economic, environmental, etc.) development indicators, taking into account external variables such as changes in terms of trade, financial or political conditions (See “Work Plan”).

<sup>10</sup> In this report, sustainability refers to the extent to which the benefits generated by the MKTPlace implementation continue after end of the intervention, or the probability that they will continue in the long-term in a way that is resilient to risks and financially sustainable. See “Work Plan”.

<sup>11</sup> Among these “horizontal issues” are the “demand driven” aspect of the MKTPlace, its ownership, as well as the platform adaptation to the context and capacities of partners/beneficiaries.

<sup>12</sup> The evaluator’s bias is of course taken into consideration in the presentation of the results of this evaluation, in particular the “numerical” or “grading” part. See section 3.

That said, we join the body of literature (see ‘Work Plan’) that believes that at least some aspects of the impact can be assessed – even if the result of this assessment needs to be considered carefully and not taken as absolute or neutral.

## 2. MKTPlace Second External Evaluation: Key Findings

Launched - rather discreetly - in 2010, the “Agricultural Innovation MarketPlace” (MKTPlace) has become in time a respected (and renowned<sup>13</sup>) example of “South-South” cooperation.

The original idea was in fact quite simple.<sup>14</sup> Given Brazil’s extensive experience and scientific knowledge in tropical agriculture, and considering the notable rise of African demand for Brazilian cooperation during the mid-2000<sup>15</sup>, Embrapa decided in 2009, in collaboration with other international partners, notably the World Bank (WB), the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) and Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), to channel these requests and institutionalize this nascent Brazil-Africa scientific cooperation.

Drawing on the WB’s “development marketplace” past experiences, Embrapa’s in-house expertise, and other partners’ financial and/or institutional support, the “Agricultural Innovation MarketPlace” was born.

The platform has since then been focusing on one major goal: offer a ‘virtual space’ where researchers from Brazil and African countries would ‘meet’, exchange, but more importantly, propose and – if selected – develop together a two-year research project on a shared area of expertise. One of the few requirements is that research developed should in some way support sustainable agriculture and socio-economic development in African countries.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The recent nomination of the MKTPlace at 2016 UN Global South-South Development Expo can be seen as a concrete sign of such international recognition.

<sup>14</sup> The first Evaluation report provides a thorough description of the initial years of the platform.

<sup>15</sup> Between 2000 and 2010, Brazil has considerably reoriented its foreign policy strategy, focusing on the developing countries of the ‘Global South’. In this new strategic framework, Africa has become one of Brazil’s main priorities together with Latin America. At this time, Brazil has opened 20 new Embassies and diplomatic representations in Africa, enhancing its diplomatic and political connections across the continent. Trade flows between Brazil and Africa grew at 14.41% annually between 1997 and 2012. Most of this growth took place between 2003 and 2012. This decade also corresponds to an increase of Brazil’s political engagement in Africa, notably by the implementation of new development cooperation initiatives. These ‘horizontal partnerships’ have become over time one of the key drivers of Brazilian foreign policy strategy to the continent. By the end of 2010, for instance, 57% of Brazilian technical cooperation budget was directed to projects in African countries. See Freitas, A. “Innovative Partnerships for Agricultural Research and Development. Examining the Africa-Brazil Agricultural Innovation Marketplace”, ECDPM, Briefing Note, No. 82 – November 2015; available at: <http://ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads/BN82-Innovative-Partnerships-Agricultural-Research-Development-Freitas-November-2015-ECDPM.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Most of projects supported by the MKTPlace focus on “Productivity-Enhancing Technologies”, one of the three research axes of the platform. As such these projects should aim enhance agricultural innovation and produce socio-economic development and strengthen partnerships among R&D organizations.

Indeed, more than simply advancing scientific interest or innovation, projects supported by the MKTPlace need to have a proven development orientation. At least in principle, then, pre-selected and winning projects need to bring new techniques, knowledge or products to the so-called 'final users' (small/family farmers, consumers, etc.), and in some way help improving food security and overall development in Africa.

Periodical calls and a fairly simple process for proposal and project submission have allowed numerous researchers and research institutions in Africa to obtain something quite rare: funding. Indeed, in a context where general support to scientific research is meagre, the MKTPlace has become in time a rather unique opportunity to secure not only financial, but also institutional, material and scientific support. Though hardly measurable, this could be pointed out as one of the main achievements of the platform in the African scientific/research context.

Year after year, the MKTPlace has been repeating its own 'success story': opening new calls, encouraging and promoting researchers' 'match' and making sure that funding and scientific support directed to the institutions and researchers are timely received and efficiently used.

As highlighted in the first evaluation, behind this 'success story', lies a rather small, but highly skilled, committed and efficient group of people that has been working from Embrapa to guarantee the good management and smooth implementation of the platform. Institutionally connected to Embrapa<sup>17</sup>, and counting with numerous Embrapa officials, the MKTPlace management team seems to have become in time almost an 'institution within the institution'.

This explains in part the robustness of the work provided by the team: they have in fact managed to develop their own work methods and environment which are not directly dependent on - or similar to - those of Embrapa itself. But such autonomy could also represent a challenge in the future, especially if, in addition to institutional support, the platform is no longer considered a priority at a more political, strategic level to the Brazilian government.

Indeed, political changes in Brazil<sup>18</sup>, and shifts in institution leadership at Embrapa<sup>19</sup>, seem to have diminished the initial political and institutional 'drive' to promote South-South cooperation initiatives, as the one embodied by the MKTPlace.

In its origins, for instance, the MKTPlace has received not only the institutional support from Embrapa (which implies among other things an important 'in kind'<sup>20</sup> contribution), but also some financial support from the Brazilian government, via the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC). This initial financial contribution seemed to have been ad

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<sup>17</sup> Though initially plans existed to engage other agriculture research institutions in Brazil, the MKTPlace remains though focused on (and managed from) Embrapa.

<sup>18</sup> The end of former President Lula da Silva mandate in 2010 represented an important break from the previous 'South-South' orientation of Brazilian foreign policy. Former President Rousseff, without clearly challenging or formally interrupting this policy, has not consistently supported

<sup>19</sup> This has also led to the reshuffling of internal departments, some of which directly related to the management of the MKTPlace.

<sup>20</sup> This 'in kind' contribution goes the work-hours of Embrapa experts, but also access to laboratories, research material, etc.

hoc, and was not continued in the following years. Quite soon, then, the MKTPlace has become rather reliant on the financial contributions coming from other (external) partners.

Though the MKTPlace coordination team has managed to keep the platform working (and functional) in the last years, increasing disengagement at the Brazilian side, in particular at the level of government and/or public institutions, may pose important risks to the continuation (“sustainability”, see below) of the platform in its current form.

There are indeed two main risks associated with this particular challenge. The first one is that some of the MKTPlace partners may decide to radically reduce their financial input to the platform -- or even cancel it altogether. Though not imminent, this should be considered as real and considerably high risk given the general trend at the international level to diminish financial support to development cooperation in general. This trend is even more acute when it comes to development cooperation initiatives directed to, or being developed with, Latin American countries, notably Brazil.

Embrapa’s ‘in kind’ contribution is certainly valuable and represents one of the foundations of the platform. Yet, this contribution alone cannot keep the MKTPlace working should a serious financial shortage take place.<sup>21</sup>

Of course, the MKTPlace was never intended to operate upon funding of one partner alone, but on the contribution of several institutions operating together as a network. Nonetheless, in periods of financial scarcity where the existence of the platform could be put in danger, an increase of the Brazilian ‘ownership’ (which may include financial participation) may be required.

This seems all the more needed since, to many international (and MKTPlace) partners, Brazil should in fact assume a more prominent role in the ‘South-South’ initiatives it has been engaged in. There seems to be a general perception among these actors that the country can (or at least should) afford to be more than a simple provider of technical, in-kind assistance as has been the case thus far.

In other words, Brazil (and its institutions) is being called to play a bigger part in international (development) cooperation and politics, as the country has been demanding – but this entails greater responsibilities, including financial ones. This perception seems to become more acute in a context where their own financial capacity to support international/development cooperation becomes reduced – and hence where the participation of other, ‘emergent’ actors such as Brazil becomes most needed.

The other risk arising from a diminished Brazilian (financial, political, institutional) engagement in the platform could be a shift in the MKTPlace’s ‘core identity’.

Planned to be (and presented as) a ‘South-South’ cooperation arrangement, the MKTplace may increasingly become a ‘triangular’<sup>22</sup> or ‘multi-stakeholder’ development

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<sup>21</sup> The management team is of course quite attentive to the financial capacity of the platform and has developed what seems to be a fundraising strategy to guarantee that the platform has enough capital to continue operating.

cooperation scheme, where more 'traditional' ("Northern") partners and institutions could in fact play a more decisive role because they hold the financial capacity to keep the platform effectively operating.

This is not a problem per se, as triangular and/or multi-stakeholder cooperation arrangements have been pointed out as quite efficient and successful tools to promote/support development in key policy areas.<sup>23</sup>

Still, some consequences of this shift may be difficult to avoid. An important one is that the definition of the platform's funding strategy may be increasingly defined by the partners who contribute financially to it. Yet, these partners have their own funding agenda and (politico-strategic) imperatives, which tend in turn to 'shape' the MKTPlace funding agenda and imperatives too.

In a way, this is something that can already be observed. Indeed, in 2012, the successes of the African experience led to an expansion of the geographic scope of the platform that now encompasses also Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) countries. Despite that decision, Africa has remained the bulk of MKTPlace activities and (project) funding.

This is in part due to some of the MKTPlace partners' (funding) strategy, which often focuses on developing countries in Africa, rather than Latin America, for support. When contributing to the platform these partners tend to (pre)define to where their financial support should be directed to – a decision often guided by institutions' core funding objectives but also limitations.

The great flexibility the MKTPlace coordination team has shown to accommodate these (and other) demands and constraints over the years is quite impressive. Such adaptation capacity in some way also explains the platform's longevity. Indeed, the creative (administrative, legal, contractual) solutions developed by the MKTPlace coordination over the years has notably allowed the continuity (and even increase) of funding received by the platform from international partners.

On the other hand, though, the participation of LAC researchers and research institutions in the MKTPlace has been rather reduced over the years when compared to African ones. And, as our research shows, there is an important risk that LAC participants could become even less numerically important in the future.

Although working with Latin American countries, notably in the context of agricultural research and development, may be a (political, strategic) priority to Brazil, as the country does not provide substantial (financial) support to fund LAC research projects

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<sup>22</sup> In fact, triangular cooperation mechanisms normally involve North ('old') and South partners working together in collaboration with a third, 'South' ('new') 'donor' that coordinates and run a given development project.

<sup>23</sup> Indeed, triangular cooperation schemes are often said to improve the service delivery of developing countries' policies, but also increase local (national) ownership of international development. As these projects are crafted on (Southern) donors' successful development experiences at home, financially supported by traditional donors, they are also pointed out as more appropriate and hence effective to tackle development challenges in developing countries. In 2011, OECD's Busan Partnership Agreement has notably recognized the value of triangular cooperation tools to increase effectiveness of development and aid initiatives.

the MKTPlace cannot necessarily serve as a ‘tool’ to support Brazil’s regional cooperation.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, as research led in the framework of this evaluation indicates, there seems to be another, and quite serious risk associated with diminished percentage of funding available to LAC countries: a progressive loss of motivation from researchers in the region to take part on MKTPlace calls. As funding has become relatively rare, less and less projects in LAC have been able to reach the final stages of the proposal submission – and funding.

Existing figures are quite telling. Over the 2010-2013 period, for instance, 75% of pre-proposals received in the framework of MKTPlace calls were formulated by African researches, while only 25% came from LAC countries.<sup>25</sup> To date, the MKTPlace has funded to 82 projects (in implementation or concluded), 64 of which in Africa and only 18 in LAC.

Knowing that their chances are meagre to eventually obtain a MKTPlace grant, it seems that LAC researchers feel then ‘less incited’ or ‘keen’ to take part of the preparatory work – which includes finding the right “match” within Embrapa, define a topic and approach, draft a pre-proposal, etc.

Although the MKTPlace submission process is relatively simple, it still represents an investment of time and work that many researchers may not be willing to make anymore given the reduced chances of success. Of course, this aspect does not challenge the very existence of the platform, but can harm its reputation among LAC researchers/research institutions in the long run.

In the future, the platform (management and governance) team may consider putting in place special measures to search and secure more funding to the region. In the same vein, and equally important, seems to be the development of ‘communication measures’ to make sure the research community in the region understands that, despite the reduced number of grants, the MKTPlace is still a platform where they can find research support. This sort of strategic communication should help avoiding a durable harm to the MKTPlace image, especially if the platform wants to keep funding projects in the region in the next years.

Despite these challenges, six years after its creation, the MKTPlace can be pointed out as a very well managed, functional and efficient initiative. Its main objectives remain pertinent, the platform design and strategy, adapted, and its (internal) management and governance tools, robust and reactive.

Though more difficult to assess, the projects selected and supported by the MKTPlace tend also to produce rather positive outputs and outcomes<sup>26</sup>, though not always those

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<sup>24</sup> In the Brazilian official (politico-diplomatic) narrative, South-South cooperation should be seen as a “foreign policy tool”. See Freitas, 2015 op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> For more details see: MKTPlace Proposal Information 2010 – 2014: <http://www.mktplace.org/site/images/documents/Proposal.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> This is the overall assessment of the first evaluation report, but also the perception of MKTPlace researchers (see Annex 2 below).

expected at first. The innovative character of MKTPlace-financed projects may moreover not always be evident – or present.

Still, even when research results are less outstanding or pertinent from a purely scientific perspective, evidence shows that projects often offer occasions for knowledge-sharing and exchange, as well as other forms of cross-fertilization.

Learning from and with other countries/cultures, understanding how research/scientific communities work in other developing countries, test the limits or expand possibilities of existing techniques/research results, notably when applied in other rural/agricultural, but also social and cultural contexts: all these (non-quantifiable) ‘outputs’ are frequently highlighted by researchers that have engaged in a MKTPlace project.

The MKTPlace has also helped enhancing the (agriculture) scientific exchange and collaboration between numerous Brazilian and African researchers and research institutions. Such collaboration was virtually inexistent (or at best considerably frail and fragmented) before the platform’s set up. This can be pointed out as one of the main impacts of the MKTPace thus far.

At the challenges end, one of the main difficulties of platform remains the ‘scaling up’ and ‘out’ of research results. As stressed by the first evaluation, MKTPlace project’s capacity to secure a long-lasting impact in the ‘real world’, i.e. beyond laboratories and the scientific research environment, remains feeble.

Indeed, as observed above, the MKTPlace is not only about producing research. The platform has a strong focus on the link between research and practice.<sup>27</sup> Hence, the knowledge, techniques and innovation produced need to be connected to the final users’ needs and help them tackling existing challenges.

Yet, despite this imperative, scaling up projects and connecting them to farmers and markets has only occasionally been achieved and remain hence a challenge for agriculture research in general, and for the platform in particular.

A number of variables can explain this situation, some of which were also listed in the first evaluation work. Here we can outline for instance the lack of clear business and funding models, poor communication and engagement levels of final users/markets; policy obstacles or deficient or inexistent infrastructures. To these variables – all well known by the MKTPlace coordination and governance team – another and quite important one can be added: researchers’ (strict) ‘scientific culture’ (or focus).

Indeed, researchers – in Africa, Brazil and elsewhere – are usually trained to develop scientific research and/or academic activities. Even when the research techniques they develop can have a development (or commercial) application or impact, researchers’ main goal or concern tend to still be the advancement of scientific knowledge and/or techniques.

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<sup>27</sup> Indeed, having a clear link between research and practice is one of the criteria for awarding a proposal with a grant.

However, ‘doing research for development’, one of main goals of the MKTPlace, requires a substantial change of perspective and ‘work culture’. Indeed, when engaging in a MKTPlace-funded project, researchers are called to do more than ‘simple’ scientific work, but to integrate variables and objectives, such as the improvement of development variables and food security.

These are however aspects that most researchers do not necessarily look at or take into account when preparing a research proposal or implementing a research assignment. They need hence to ‘learn by doing’, i.e. while implementing their projects.

Indeed, interviews conducted in the framework of this evaluation reveals that this ‘change in work culture’ or shift in ‘research focus’ requires time and a (personal) adaptation period to many researchers taking part in the MKTPlace. Brazilian researchers notably need some time to fully grasp the sort of engagement and, more important, research work that is actually required from them.

This ‘learning period’ tends to be more or less long<sup>28</sup>, but often result on a better understanding of not only the MKTPlace philosophy and goals, but also of what ‘research cooperation’ with developing countries implies and can achieve.

On this, and with few exceptions, researchers’ overall experience with the MKTPlace tends to be quite positive. Here, this finding also coincides with the results of the first evaluation led in 2014.

From the contact with (and support received from) the management team, to their research experience, including participation in the MKTPlace Forum, the majority of researchers consulted has a rather high opinion of the platform.

The ‘bureaucratic minimalism’ of the MKTPlace often appears as an interesting aspect and a real differential when compared to other funding opportunities (at national or international level) that often require much more ‘paperwork’ and complex procedures. The overall rules and guidelines seem clear, and the process of elaboration of pre-proposal, proposal and submission quite straightforward (see below).<sup>29</sup>

The MKTPlace website is seen as a fairly good source of information about the platform, although some aspects, such as ‘matchmaking’ tool do not seem to really operate – or at least to operate as imagined in the first place. Indeed, some researchers report delays and difficulties in finding an appropriate research partner as the ‘matchmaking’ process is in fact made ‘manually’ (i.e. through the support of the MKTPlace management team) not automatically via the website (see below).

This seems to be the result of the (quite) important number of Embrapa researchers, who could hardly be included on an online database. Moreover, not all Embrapa researchers are keen or available to participate in a MKTPlace research project – many are in fact quite busy leading other research projects and assignments. Despite these

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<sup>28</sup> It often requires going to the country of his/her research counterpart (co-leader) to really understand (or reframe) the real goals of the research project.

<sup>29</sup> The results of the survey led with 61 MKTPlace researchers corroborate these findings (See below, in particular section 4 and Annex 2).

limitations, researchers seldom remained without reply when they contacted the platform/management team in search for a partner.

If the process of partner-finding, proposal drafting and submission is overall smooth, the implementation process can sometimes be trickier and more complex. Here several variables may interfere at different moments of the implementation. The lack of knowledge of partners' (often African) social, economic, political, but also institutional, legal and even bureaucratic context can sometimes lead to confusion and misunderstandings regarding each other's real capacity and commitment to the research assignments.

Hence, unknown/unspecified bureaucratic/legal rules in a given country or research institution can, for instance, delay the transfer of funds or the exchange of research material and therefore put the whole implementation process on hold. Similar examples could be mentioned regarding other aspects, such as the lack of awareness of partners' poor material/human resources capacity, different working (and gender) cultures, and so forth.

Linguistic differences can sometimes exacerbate communication and hence work difficulties. Indeed, the 'English monolingualism' of MKTPlace (website, working documents and guidelines) has already been identified an important challenge of the initiative, especially when considering African countries' plurilingual contexts. But not only African researchers can have a 'deficit' or poor English skills: as reported during the interviews led during this evaluation, also Brazilian researchers decline invitations to participate in MKTPlace projects because of their linguistic barriers.

All this highlights the importance of not only creating mechanisms to better inform Brazilian (and African) researchers of "what is needed" and required so the research activities can actually start. On that sense, in addition to field visits at the very beginning of research projects, the MKTPlace team could also strongly encourage researchers to exchange as much information as possible with their counterparts still during the project elaboration phase – and hence before the initial/formal start of the implementation, which can also take time given existing legal constraints.

If the lack of previous knowledge of the partner is somewhat unavoidable given the MKTPlace nature and purpose, some researchers feel that identification forms in the platform website could be more detailed in order to provide a better (and hence more realistic) view/image of their potential partner scientific background, research experiences, etc.

If connecting the CAPES' 'Lattes Platform' to the MKTPlace seems a good idea in theory to Brazilian researchers, in practice this cannot be seen as areal solution as the platform is not necessarily known (or used) outside Brazil. On the other hand, though, it does not seem too difficult or costly to slightly modify the platform identification forms so researchers from Brazil and Africa can provide more scientific/professional information. This can only help increasing mutual knowledge and awareness of the partner's background, and hence the potential areas of cross-fertilization.

Despite the important pedagogic work undertaken by the MKTPlace team these last years, delays in the implementation due to bureaucratic formalities involved in the germplasm exchange and other (similar or related) operations continue to exist. This aspect was highlighted in different occasions, not only by the first external evaluation led in 2014, but also by the MKTPlace own M&E mechanism (see below).

The MKTPlace coordination and M&E team are committed to increase awareness on this aspect, asking researchers to prepare in advance and be ready to speed up process. During the MKTPlace Forum for instance this has become one of the main topics of discussion and exchange of experiences among researchers.

Yet, it seems that despite the awareness created, the bureaucratic difficulties and delays continue. In other words, even when researchers plan ahead and prepare reasonably on time, bureaucratic/border procedures in Brazil and/or African countries are still a barrier – or blockage – to the smooth implementation of some research projects. By the end of the day, these aspects/variables go far beyond researchers and research institutions capacity and control.

Given the recurring character of this particular challenge, an alternative option could be the temporary suspension of the (formal) implementation period (2 years) during the period when the actual exchange would be taking place. Though not a perfect solution, this would at least allow projects to achieve full completion (i.e. reaching substantial outputs) during their implementation phase, which often is not possible when germplasm (and other material) exchange is involved.

Since 2014, the MKTPlace has set up an internal body/tool to enable the constant monitoring of the work developed by researchers as well as the evaluation of concluded projects and related initiatives. The M&E team is composed by a smaller group of members of the MKTPlace management team, which considerably facilitates their task. Since these individuals have a global vision of the development of the platform and the 'state of play' of the implementation of single different projects they can not only easily understand the sources of problem and oversee the areas where challenges/difficulties tend to appear.

The M&E tools used by the team seem to be based on traditional methods of project evaluation, monitoring and management: periodic review of the progress of the projects and their implementation, including the reading of progress and final reports to identify gaps/challenges, as well as direct meetings with researchers, during which they are asked to present the state of play of their projects.

These periodic discussions and review have proved quite efficient. They have for instance enabled the early identification of challenges blocking or hindering the good implementation of individual projects, which has made possible the formulation of corrective measures.

These challenges can be of different nature: from institutional, legal and bureaucratic hindrances blocking the MKTPlace funding to finally reach the foreign research institution, to communication difficulties among research partners, which tend to block the development of the project.

As they have been involved in the platform for some time now, the M&E team can moreover anticipate areas where problems could arise, and raise awareness among researchers so they are aware of potential shortcomings. This has been the case when new research projects that involve the exchange of germplasm (or other sorts of phyto/genetic material) are about to start (see above).

The M&E team has been also strongly encouraging Brazilian researchers to visit the country where their co-leaders are based and where part of the research will be carried out. Such recommendation is based on their observation and M&E work, which have identified that the lack of awareness of foreign partners' (institutional, economic, political and social) environment tend to make more difficult to Brazilian counterparts to communicate and understand the difficulties and blockages of their African or Latin American partners.

An event promoted by the MKTPlace that seems to be extremely useful to researchers (notably foreigners) but also advance of research projects is the MKTPlace Forum. Planned to be an annual meeting among researchers who have either just initiated or just completed their projects, the forum seems to have become a mix of scientific workshop, with short, poster presentations, and 'research experience/tips' exchange.

Usually taking place in Brasília, where the Embrapa headquarter is located, the Forum format has proven indeed quite efficient to reach its main goal: promote a sort of 'internal learning' from passed experiences, help researchers avoiding potential shortcomings but also making the best of the MKTPlace experience.

Confirming the Forum's own final evaluation assessments, researchers consulted during the evaluation tend to see the event as a real "plus" to their research experience, notably when they have the occasion to participate in it during very early stages of the implementation of their projects.<sup>30</sup>

In these occasions, the Forum offers in fact a particularly valuable opportunity for researchers (leaders and co-leaders) to meet in person and have a direct exchange about their background, experience, research goals, context and ambitions. They also can learn from other researchers' experiences and plan ahead to avoid falling in similar traps and so forth.

Given the highly positive impact of researchers' participation in the Forum during this initial moment of their project's implementation, it would be wise to try and coordinate the organization of these meetings with the start of the implementation period of new calls. This would allow a greater number of 'newcomers' to take part and engage in the Forum and, more importantly, meet their counterparts, become more aware of existing challenges and plan accordingly whenever possible/needed.

The forum is in fact one of the key components of another pillar of the MKTPlace, which focus on "knowledge management and knowledge sharing" (KM/KS). This pillar is based on the idea (or intent) that more than producing research and/or promoting innovation, the MKTPlace should also work as a sort of depository and a (virtual and physical)

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<sup>30</sup> This does not seem in fact to be the case of all researchers.

'place' where the experiences, knowledge and best practices it generates can be accessed and shared among the research and (agriculture, development) policy community around the world.<sup>31</sup>

To achieve these goals, in addition to public events such as the forum, a series of "communication tools" have also been set up. Together, these tools and events are expected to support and/or promote the "presentation and discussion of ideas and concepts, proposals, and results", as the main objectives of the KM/KS pillar have been defined (MKTPlace book, p.68).

Although it remains unclear what are the 'communication strategies' of the platform<sup>32</sup>, they seemed to have shaped the set of tools and activities developed by the MKTPlace team to increase the visibility of the outputs of the platform (i.e. innovative research results, policies, etc.) and thereby enable a greater number of researchers and policy-makers to become aware of and have access to them.

These communication tools can be more 'classic', such as brochures and publications<sup>33</sup>, but also digital ones, such as short videos, photos, social media channels (e.g. Facebook), as well as other online systems embedded on the platform's website. The website is in fact the main repository of information about and produced by the MKTPlace. It is thus the key knowledge management and sharing instrument set up by the platform to date (see below).

The question that remains open is how successful these communication tools and the forum have been in their attempt to fulfil the goals of this pillar. In other words, have them been efficient/effective in their mission to "present and discuss the ideas and concepts, proposals and results" produced by the platform?

The question is of course difficult to reply as it would entail an assessment of each of these tools over the last years and their actual impact in different targeted audiences/groups – something that goes beyond the time and material constraints of this evaluation.<sup>34</sup> That said, some remarks can be made on the basis of the field work and interviews led in the framework of this study.

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<sup>31</sup> The definition of the target audience or group with which the knowledge produced by the MKTPlace should be shared and managed could not be found anywhere. This wider, more global reach can however be derived from the reading of the MKTPlace founding documents, in particular the MKTPlace book and other online documents. In other words, even if the immediate focus remains Brazil, Africa and Latin America, other developing (and developed) countries across the world should potentially also benefit from the experiences, knowledge, innovation and 'best practices' produced by the platform.

<sup>32</sup> Although a reference to the "communication strategies" of the MKTPlace can be found on the recently published book (p.68), these documents could be found neither in the book nor among the files shared with the evaluators. It is therefore difficult to assess what are the main targets of such strategies, their final goals, or the outputs and activities that have been implemented to achieve them.

<sup>33</sup> Examples of these publications are meetings and forum reports, articles published in specialized journals or even a book. All these material, produced internally, have been developed to either make public and available the knowledge/innovation generated by the MKTPlace, or to increase the visibility of the platform to a broader audience.

<sup>34</sup> The first external evaluation did not seem to focus that much on this particular pillar, even it was mentioned the report. In reality, beyond a general description of what this pillar consists of, no substantial analysis of the appropriateness, efficiency, effectiveness of the activities and tools used to achieve the KS/KM pillar goals appear in the report.

First, it can be noted that the forum has indeed proved a quite successful mechanism to promote interaction among researchers, but also the transfer of knowledge produced within the platform. However, the “knowledge sharing/management” the forum enables tend to happen within a relatively circumscribed circle – i.e. researchers that already are part of the platform.

This certainly does not diminish the relevance of the forum. On the contrary, as the main objective of this event seems to be the promotion of KM/KS *within* MKTPlace researchers, the forum has been in fact quite effective in meeting its own purposes. Yet, if we consider that the audience/target of this pillar should be actually wider than this circle of ‘initiated’ researchers, then the forum may not be the most appropriate instrument to meet/implement the objectives of the KM/KS pillar.

The MKTPlace website, for its wider reach and the dematerialized character of its content, seems to be best (and the most efficient) tool when it comes to promote effective knowledge sharing/management to researchers and policy audiences beyond the members of the platform.

If the forum may not be the more appropriate tool to promote KM/KS to a wider audience, other sorts of public events, organized or not by the platform, can prove quite successful. This links in fact to our second remark: there seems to be a strong connection, and sometimes overlapping, between the KM/KS and the other pillar of the platform, the so-called “policy dialogue”.

Although there is no clear definition, from the general description provided<sup>35</sup> in the MKTPlace book (p.66-67), it seems that the ‘policy dialogue’ pillar has very similar goals (and tools) to those of the KS/KM.

Indeed, the ‘policy dialogue’ pillar seems to be based on the idea (or expectation) that the MKTPlace should try and engage in (international) policy discussions in order to promote not only internal (i.e. within members of the Steering Committee, for instance) but also external discussions about the platform goals, activities, orientations, and so forth.

These discussions seem to have different purposes, from increasing “trust” among members of the platform to promoting the model, ideas and knowledge resultant from the MKTPlace itself. In different ways, then, the ‘policy dialogue’ pillar also promotes knowledge sharing and management, and support/enhances the visibility of its outputs.

This impression is somewhat reinforced by the description of the pillar’s “dimensions” or “types” (MKTPlace book, p.66-67). According to this ‘tentative’ typology, the policy dialogue entails the direct or indirect participation of MKTPlace representatives<sup>36</sup> in

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<sup>35</sup> According to the book, policy dialogues enable members of a given partnership “to discuss the same matter from different points of view, bringing to their attention issues and situations that might not have been considered before”. From this perspective, these dialogues should also promote “trust and transparency”, which eventually should improve “the effectiveness and commitment and benefits the partnership as a whole and their partners individually”. (MKTPlace book, p.66).

<sup>36</sup> This information is however not clear from the documents available, but can be concluded from the way the description of the policy dialogue and its different “types”.

(international) policy events, in which they are called to present and discuss the ideas, concepts, proposals, and results of the MKTPlace. These events can be organized by the MKTPlace itself, like the forum, or organized by institutions that are not directly connected to it.

Interestingly, it is also considered a form of “policy dialogue” the presentation and discussion of the MKTPlace in public events by individuals that are not directly involved in its management or organization. An example mentioned in the MKTPlace book is the presentation and discussion of the MKTPlace in 2012 by British and Brazilian authorities during the Global Hunger Event held in London.

Although it may be questioned to which extent the presentation of the platform in events where its members may not even be present<sup>37</sup> can be considered an effective tool to strengthen “trust” or improve the “effectiveness and commitment” of the partnership, it seems that this sort of event can indeed increase the MKTPlace visibility and eventually contribute to increase the reach of the knowledge and ‘best practices’ it produces.

Finally it seems that though the MKTPlace has three different pillars, the bulk of its activities, human capacity and material resources are in fact concentrated in only one: research for development. As a result, though existing and in many ways operational, the other two pillars tend to become rather contingent on – or eclipsed by – this one.

This seems in reality only natural, as supporting joint research projects for development and innovation is indeed the main ‘end goal’ of the platform. However, this poses questions about the reasons for having three different pillars as the ‘foundations’ of the MKTPlace.

From a project design perspective, these different pillars do not represent a real value-added to the platform’s relevance, quality or robustness. On the contrary, because some aspects of the ‘KS/KM’ and ‘policy dialogue’ pillars are not substantially (and precisely) defined, they may sometimes only create confusion.

These two pillars main goals can easily be integrated under the ‘joint research projects’ one, and the activities/tools developed to promote them could become part of the ‘communication and visibility’ activities/strategies of the platform (i.e. participation/organization in international policy events, etc.). The promotion of discussions, transfer of knowledge and ‘lessons learned’ seems to be in reality already integrated as a dimension of the ‘joint research project’ pillar. Instead of an aside KM/KS or ‘policy dialogue’ activity, forum can for instance be considered as an extension (or follow up) of the ‘joint research project’ activities.

Indeed, and returning to the MKTPlace forums, these events offered researchers the opportunity to reflect upon existing challenges and limits of their own research and the platform as a whole. As some of the forum’s reports reveal, MKTPlace researchers seem actually quite aware of the ‘scaling up and out’ challenges mentioned above. They seem

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<sup>37</sup> This can indeed raise questions about how platform members can have access to what was said, presented or discussed during these sort of events, and how the debates and exchanges that took place in there can eventually be used by the MKTPlace to nurture its own work, internal discussions, etc.

to recognize the need to be more focused towards that end and to improve their research design in order to reach out for greater, more durable ‘impact’ outside their labs.

This particular challenge has indeed also been recognized by the MKTPlace management and governance team and a new initiative has just been set up to tackle them. Building on the successes of MKTPlace past projects, the so-called ‘MBOSS’ aims to promote a ‘change’ in researchers’ culture and incite them to increase the scalability of their research results, notably with the support of the private sector.

It is certainly too soon to judge if this ‘new phase’ of the MKTPlace will be able to reach its objectives. Still, considering the above, it seems that an important (pedagogic/training) work will be required so researchers can indeed integrate and implement some of the MBOSS’ imperatives.

Probably more than the research projects it supports, one of the main innovative aspects of the MKTPlace seems to be the change in perspective (or ‘paradigm’) it has been subtly promoting over the years. Indeed, as other policy areas, the scientific research environment tends to be dominated by a strong North/South axis, where the ‘South’ (i.e. developing countries) often has less material/economic capabilities to develop human/scientific capacities and remain hence ‘at the margins’ of big discoveries, techniques etc.

Therefore, research communities in developing countries often turn to those based in (or financed by) developed ones to access the required resources, knowledge and skills. These ‘Southern’ scientific communities often also need to follow the research (and development) agenda defined by others and are frequently disconnected from their main/immediate social, development, but also scientific concerns or objectives. And yet, African research and researchers strongly need to be supported so the continent can develop their own solutions, adapted to their needs and local contexts.<sup>38</sup>

By connecting researchers and research institutions from Brazil and other developing countries, the MKTPlace has been helping in different ways to reverse (or at least question) such logic. To begin with, researchers are called to ‘look South’ instead of ‘North’ in search of new collaborations, resources, techniques, institutional or material support.

Likewise, the research agenda is not pre-defined (externally) by ‘donors’, but determined or co-created by researchers according to their own developing needs, scientific goals and expectations. Of course, projects proposed need to fit into one of the MKTPlace ‘research axes’ and have a clear development approach. Still these axes are broad enough to accommodate a wide range of possible topics.

In a similar vein, African and LAC researchers have been particularly empowered by the MKTPlace approach. Contrary to more traditional capacity building and mentoring initiatives, these researchers are not passive recipients of knowledge or techniques, but

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<sup>38</sup> Although African countries have committed to allocate 10% of their national budget to agricultural development, the amount of funding directed to agricultural research remains very low. As a result, Africa produces only 1.1% of global scientific knowledge.

actors that (co)produce and (co)develop innovative knowledge and techniques. Indeed, African scientists are often the ‘initiators’ of the whole research process.<sup>39</sup>

This particular approach has been guaranteeing moreover a quite strong engagement and ownership from researchers and research institutions in Africa and Latin America. Indeed, because these researchers have been (co)responsible for the very definition of their project, as well as their outputs and outcomes, they tend to show a greater engagement towards the implementation of the research. Indeed, in many occasions the ‘enthusiasm’, ‘passion’ and ‘commitment’ of their (African) counterparts were reported to have been ‘decisive’ in Brazilian researchers’ decision to move forward with their MKTPlace projects.

Another innovative aspect of the MKTPlace is the governance model that has been chosen to enable such different and numerous partners<sup>40</sup> to take common decisions and agree on the future and strategic directions of the platform.

Although the MKTPlace coordination team has a central role, the group has been leading a conscious work to avoid having the exclusive responsibility over the directions and management of the platform. Ideally, all stakeholders should then become (and feel) fully committed to the platform, a sort ‘special relationship’ that requires going beyond the mere transfer of financial resources or human capital.

When engaging in the platform, then, institutions are called to become active partners, taking charge of pre-proposals’ and full proposals’ assessments and approvals, participating at MKTPlace annual forums, participating in Steering Committee meetings, etc.

Although this considerably increases ownership, not all partners have the human, financial or technical capacity to engage in all tasks/activities they are required to as members of the platform. Our research suggests in fact that, though most partners feel this governance model is functional, efficient and actually enables greater participation, they are not always able to find the time, but also human and material resources to meet some of the demands that being part of the MKTPlace entails. This seems to be

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<sup>39</sup> Foreign researchers are often the ones that draft the pre-proposals and start a search for potential Brazilian (Embrapa) partners. These pre-proposals are then (re)elaborated together with a Brazilian counterpart, before being submitted to as (‘final’) proposals. This also makes the whole process more competitive, as the final selection by the Steering Committee.

<sup>40</sup> Following the achievements of its initial year, the MKTPlace has considerably increased the number of its ‘partners’. Internal differences, development approaches or agenda do not seem an obstacle to joining the MKTPlace. In that sense, the platform is not exclusive, fixed or closed, but remains open to other potential partners willing to support the initiative and its particular approach to development. Currently, the following institutions are partners of the platform: Embrapa, World Bank, FARA, IFAD, DFID, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (B&MGF), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), University of California Davis (UC Davis), but also the Brazilian Ministry of External Relations (ABC), the Brazilian Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MCTI), the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply (MAPA), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) of the CGIAR. According to the governance model adopted, all these institutions are members of MKTPlace Steering Committee (SC). The Executive Committee is composed by Embrapa and FARA, who are responsible for the general coordination of the platform. See: <http://www.mktplace.org/site/index.php/what-we-do/governance>

particularly the case of bigger institutions, to which the MKTPlace is often only one, and rather small, programme in their large portfolio of funded initiatives.

It does not mean that these partners do not approve or see the value-added of the MKTPlace governance model, but they feel that sometimes the levels of commitment and participation may be disconnected from their own work/institutional realities allow.

Overall, though, members of the governance team (Steering Committee) have a quite positive perception of both the MKTPlace, as a scientific cooperation/development tool, and the MKTPlace management team, which guarantees the efficient and good work of the platform – and their resources.

On this, partners seem also to highly appreciate the work done by the MKTPlace coordination team (including Funarbe) to accommodate their particular requests regarding funding management and spending, and above all financial reporting.

Indeed, given the multiplicity of partners that contributes financially to the platform, each of which with a specific financial spending and reporting rule, the MKTPlace coordination team is constantly submitted to an important ‘reporting work load’ to meet all these specific requirements on time.

Existing legal limitations have led the MKTPlace management team to rely on an external institution, Funarbe, to facilitate contractual, but also fundraising and financial spending activities. This complex legal solution has enabled the MKTPlace management and financial administration to work in (almost) full autonomy from Embrapa.

This is a real value-added since, as a public company, Embrapa is submitted to the rules governing public institutions in Brazil, which tends to make process of contracting/buying, etc. extremely long, costly and not always efficient.

This partnership with Funarbe seems indeed to facilitate the resource management work of the MKTPlace and can also be pointed out as one of the variables accounting for their efficient, cost-effective and robust management of the platform.

Such particular partnership has moreover allowed the MKTPlace to minimize financial losses resultant from differences in change rates. This point was strongly emphasized by the first external evaluation of the MKTPlace, which seemed to see in this aspect a real challenge to the financial capacity of the platform.

Without denying the negative impact the different change rates may have, it does not seem that it has considerably reduced or challenged the MKTPlace capacity to continue funding Brazilian and foreign researchers and research institutions. Because the MKTPlace administrative/financial team is particularly aware of foreign currencies fluctuation (not to mention the erratic interest rates and bank transaction fees existing in Brazil) they have developed particular strategies to guarantee that the final impact on the MKTPlace resources kept at the minimum possible level.

Finally, an aspect seems to have received relatively less attention so far is the sustainability of the platform, as well as the research projects it supports.

Research reveals that ‘sustainability’ seems to have been often understood and defined as the capacity of the MKTPlace to ensure the financial means to continue its activities in the future. Though ‘resource mobilization’, including fundraising, is an important variable to increase and guarantee (some) sustainability, the concept entails much more than financial means only.

Sustainability involves in fact a quite vast range of variables, some institutional, others economic, social and even political, which guarantee that the MKTPlace as well as the projects it supports can continue existing (see also section 3.5). In the case of individual projects, their existence/impact should ideally exceed the natural “cycles” of projects implementation and completion.

One of the main challenges of the MKTPlace, i.e. the difficulty of projects to scale up and effectively bring “research into practice”, could be in fact connected to the lack of basic sustainability variables/mechanisms in their conception phase.

Indeed, it seems that most of these projects do not have robust financial/ economic, but also institutional or political phase-out strategies to guarantee their sustainability. Therefore, the support or engagement of public or private actors to support research results is often not likely to continue after the project financing reaches its end.

The same could be said, though from a different perspective, of the MKTPlace sustainability. The platform has indeed a solid fundraising strategy and has ensured enough resources to continue its activities over the next years. If the financial sustainability of the MKTPlace is strong, some of the elements analysed above indicate that other aspects of its sustainability may not be fully guaranteed. Poor institutional and political support may for instance undermine the platform’s strategies and, in extreme scenarios, even challenge its continuation.

Although the platform management/coordination team may not have the capacity to influence on the institutional and political environment in which it is embedded, particularly in Brazil, these risks need to be thoroughly considered so corrective (or alternative) measures can be set up.

Revising the platform’s sustainability definition and assumptions, but also integrating sustainability-related risks into a “risk management matrix” (which entails also the development of robust mitigating measures) could help the MKTPlace looking ahead for solutions, but also avoiding potential problems even before they take place or become too acute.

### 3. 'Grading' the MKTPlace

As defined in the "work plan" (Product 1), the sections below propose an 'evaluation index' and 'grading' of the MKTPlace performance.

This index is based on scores (see below) that have allowed the evaluator to "grade" the MKTPlace performance according to the different variables selected, namely: Relevance and Quality of Design; Efficiency; Effectiveness; Impact; Sustainability and Horizontal issues.

#### Summary of Grades

Grading	Numerical	Qualitative	Description
<b>A</b>	<b>4.00 - 3.51</b>	<b>Very good</b>	The situation is considered highly satisfactory, largely above average and potentially a reference for good practice. Recommendations focus on the need to adopt these good practices in other operations.
<b>B</b>	<b>3.50 - 2.51</b>	<b>Good</b>	The situation is considered satisfactory, but there is room for improvements. Recommendations are useful, but not vital for the operation.
<b>C</b>	<b>2.50 - 1.51</b>	<b>Problems</b>	There are issues which need to be addressed; otherwise the global performance of the operation may be negatively affected. Necessary improvements however do not require major revisions of the operations' strategy.
<b>D</b>	<b>1.50 - 1.00</b>	<b>Serious deficiencies</b>	There are deficiencies which are so serious that, if not addressed, they can lead to failure of the operation. Major adjustments and revision of the strategy are necessary.

Each variable was assessed on the basis of the "evaluation questions" listed in the 'Work Plan'. Each question was attributed a different numerical grade depending on the total number of questions a particular variable was attributed. The final value of all questions taken together could not exceed 4 - the maximum numerical grade possible in the index selected (see above).

The section below offer then a detailed overview of these different dimensions of the MKTPlace performance assessed both quantitatively but also qualitatively.

On this, some important reminders seem needed. Though numerically expressed, and based on clear variables and methodology, this evaluation remains a subjective work, in which the evaluator's background and assumptions often interfere as research 'biases'.

Moreover, grades tend to strongly reduce the complexity of the issues this evaluation has examined notably because they are removed from their context. Therefore, the 'grades' attributed below should not be considered per se, i.e. isolated from the section above. In other words, this quantitative exercise can only be used and fully understood as a complement of other, qualitative data and analysis.

### 3.1 Relevance and Quality of Design

Relevance and Quality of Design	
<b>1. What is the present level of relevance of the MKTPlace? (max 0.8)</b>	<b>0.8</b>
<i>Are the platform purposes and overall objectives consistent with, and supportive of partners/beneficiaries interests, goals and/or policies?</i>	Mostly yes
<i>Does the project respond to the needs of the target groups/institutions?</i>	Yes
<b>2. As presently designed, is the intervention logic holding true? (max 0.8)</b>	<b>0.7</b>
<i>Does a logframe or similar tool exist? If yes, what is its present quality (does it clearly show how activities will achieve results and impact)? If not, why not?</i>	Could not be observed
<i>Are the objectives and purposes of the MKTplace clear and logical, and do they address clearly identified needs?</i>	Mostly yes
<i>Is the platform purpose achievable in the project framework?</i>	Yes
<i>Are there suitable and informative 'objective verifiable indicators' (OVIs)? Are they SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound)?</i>	Could not be observed
<i>Are the activities, outputs and outcomes planned appropriate to achieve the platform objectives?</i>	Yes
<i>Are the risks and assumptions holding true? Are risk management arrangements in place?</i>	Could not be observed
<i>Is sustainability an integral part of the design? Is there a phase out and hand over strategy in place?</i>	Needs improvement
<b>3. Is the current design sufficiently supported by all stakeholders? (max 0.8)</b>	<b>0.6</b>
<i>Have key stakeholders been involved in the design process?</i>	Yes
<i>Are coordination, management and financing arrangements clearly defined and do they support institutional strengthening and local ownership?</i>	Yes
<i>Is the sustainability strategy (handing over strategy to partners)</i>	

<i>fully understood by the partners?</i>	Could not be observed
<i>Are the objectives of the platform clearly understood by the project partners?</i>	Yes
<i>Are the timescale and/or range of activities realistic with regard to the stakeholders' capacities?</i>	Yes, but improvement possible
<i>How well has the project design been adapted to make it more relevant?</i>	Adaptation/'learning' processes in place, but improvement possible
<b>4. Institutional structures (MKTPlace Management &amp; Governance) (max 0.8)</b>	<b>0.8</b>
<i>Are governance and management arrangements in place and functioning as planned?</i>	Yes
<b>5. Strategic direction (max 0.8)</b>	<b>0.7</b>
<i>Are the program's strategic directions correct and on course?</i>	Yes, but improvement possible
<b>TOTAL (Max 4.00)</b>	<b>3.6 A - Very good</b>

### 3.2 MKTPlace Efficiency

<b>Efficiency</b>	
<b>1. How well is the availability/usage of means/inputs managed? (max 1.00)</b>	<b>0.9</b>
<i>To what degree are inputs provided/available on time to implement activities from all parties involved?</i>	Inputs provided and available on time
<i>To what degree are inputs provided / available at planned cost (or lower than planned), from all parties involved?</i>	Inputs provided/available at planned cost
<i>Are inputs monitored regularly to encourage cost-effective implementation of activities? By whom are they monitored?</i>	Yes, M&E mechanisms in place
<i>Are project resources managed in a transparent and accountable manner?</i>	Yes, financial/management reporting tools in place
<i>Are all contractual procedures clearly understood and do they facilitate the implementation of the project?</i>	Mostly yes
<b>2 How well is the implementation of activities managed? (max 1.00)</b>	<b>1.00</b>
<i>Is the logframe or similar tool used as a management tool? If not, why not?</i>	Could not be observed
<i>Is an activity schedule (or work plan) and resource schedule available and used by the project management and other relevant parties?</i>	Yes
<i>To what extent are activities implemented as scheduled? If there are delays how can they be rectified?</i>	Most activities implemented on time, only few delays
<i>Are funds committed and spent in line with the implementation timescale? If not, why not?</i>	Yes
<i>How well activities are monitored by the project and are corrective measures taken if required?</i>	Yes, M&E tools in place
<i>If appropriate, how flexible is the project in adapting to changing needs?</i>	Highly adaptable

<i>If appropriate how does the project co-ordinate with other similar interventions to encourage synergy and avoid overlaps?</i>	Not applicable
<b>3. How well are outputs achieved? (max 1.00)</b>	<b>0.7</b>
<i>Have all planned outputs been delivered to date? And in a logic sequence?</i>	Extremely well (most outputs delivered)
<i>What is the quality of outputs to date?</i>	Good quality
<i>Are the outputs achieved likely to contribute to the intended results?</i>	Most likely
<i>Are they correctly reflected through the (Objective Verifiable Indicators) OVIs/targets?</i>	Not clear
<b>4. How well is partners' contribution/involvement working? (max 1.00)</b>	<b>1.00</b>
<i>Do the inter-institutional structures (e.g. steering committees, monitoring systems) allow efficient project implementation?</i>	Yes
<i>Have all partners been able to provide their financial and/or HR contributions?</i>	Yes
<i>Is the communication between responsible actors in the partner countries/research institutions and the project management satisfactory?</i>	Yes
<b>TOTAL (Max 4.00)</b>	<b>3.6 A - Very good</b>

### 3.3 MKTPlace Effectiveness

<b>Effectiveness</b>	
<b>1 How well is the project achieving its planned results? (max 2.00)</b>	<b>1.4</b>
<i>Have the planned results to date been achieved?</i>	Mostly yes
<i>Are the OVIs/targets for the platform appropriate and are they being reported against?</i>	Mostly yes
<i>What is the quality of the results/services available?</i>	Good quality
<i>Have all planned target groups access to / using project results available so far?</i>	Mostly yes
<i>Are there any factors which prevent target groups accessing the results/services?</i>	Some factors (bureaucracy, etc.)
<b>2 As presently implemented what is the likelihood of the PP to be achieved? (max 2.00)</b>	<b>2.00</b>
<i>To what extent has the project adapted or is able to adapt to changing external conditions (risks and assumptions) in order to ensure benefits for the target groups?</i>	Highly adaptable
<i>If any unplanned negative effects on target groups occurred, or are likely to occur, to what extent did the platform management team take appropriate measures?</i>	Regular internal M&E tools ensure corrective measures
<i>To what extent are unplanned positive effects contributing to results produced / services provided?</i>	Unplanned positive effects very important & contribute to MKTPlace (and projects') implementation
<b>TOTAL (Max 4.00)</b>	<b>3.4 B - Good</b>

### 3.4 MKTPlace Impact

<b>Impact</b>	
<b>1 What are the direct impact prospects of the MKTPlace at overall objectives level? (max 2.00)</b>	<b>1.00</b>
<i>What, if any impacts are already apparent? What impacts appear likely?</i>	Some, e.g. enhanced scientific connections (Brazil-Africa), capacities strengthened in (foreign) research institutions, etc.
<i>How is the flow of the innovation and absorption of projects results by the private sector?</i>	Still poor but improvement possible (MBOSS)
<i>Are any external factors likely to jeopardize the project's direct impact?</i>	Yes, e.g; fragility of institutional/political support & dependence on partners' financial support
<b>2 To what extent does/will the project have any indirect positive and/or negative impacts? (i.e. environmental, social, cultural, gender and economic) (max 2.00)</b>	<b>1.5</b>
<i>Have there been/ will there be any unplanned positive impacts on the planned target groups or other non-targeted communities arising from the project? How did this affect the impact?</i>	Yes, e.g. promotion of other sorts of cross-fertilization & exchange
<i>Did the project take timely measures for mitigating the unplanned negative impacts? What was the result?</i>	Unclear
<b>TOTAL (Max 4.00)</b>	<b>2.5 C - Problems</b>

### 3.5. MKTPlace Sustainability

<b>Sustainability</b>	
<b>1. Financial / economic viability? (max 1)</b>	<b>0.5</b>
<i>If the (research) results have to be supported institutionally, are funds likely to be made available? If so, by whom?</i>	Yes, by the MKTPlace - but during the implementation of project's only
<i>Are the (research) results affordable for the target groups at the completion of project?</i>	Unclear/Not always – specially to African authorities/institutions
<i>Can the benefits be maintained if economic factors change (e.g. commodity prices, exchange rate)?</i>	Unlikely
<i>Are the beneficiaries and/or relevant authorities/institutions able to afford maintenance or replacement of the technologies/services introduced by the project?</i>	Not always – specially African authorities/institutions
<i>Is there a financial/ economic phase-out strategy? If so, how likely is it to be implemented?</i>	Not really
<b>2. What is the level of ownership of the project by target groups and will it continue after the end of external support? (max 1)</b>	<b>0.5</b>
<i>How far projects are embedded in local structures?</i>	Embedment in local structures fairly good (but mostly research institutions)
<i>To what extent have target groups and possibly other relevant interest groups / stakeholders been involved in the planning / implementation process?</i>	Fairly good involvement & engagement (but not all target or interests groups)
<i>To what extent are relevant target groups actively involved in decision-making concerning project orientation and implementation?</i>	Mostly researchers and research institutions
<i>What is the likelihood that target groups will continue to make</i>	

<i>use of relevant results?</i>	Fairly likely
<i>Do the target groups have any plans to continue delivering the stream of benefits and if so, are they likely to materialize?</i>	Unclear
<b>3. What is the level of policy support provided and the degree of interaction between project and policy level? (max 1)</b>	<b>0.5</b>
<i>What support has been provided from the relevant national, sectoral and budgetary policies?</i>	Such support seem low (in African countries)
<i>Do changes in policies and (research) priorities affect the project and how well is it adapting in terms of long-term needs for support?</i>	Projects can be affected by these sort of changes and their adaptation capacity seems low
<i>Is any public and private sector policy support likely to continue after the project has finished?</i>	Quite low likelihood to many projects (except MBOSS)
<b>4. How well is the project contributing to institutional and management capacity? (max 1)</b>	<b>0.8</b>
<i>How far are MKTPlace projects embedded in institutional structures that are likely to survive beyond the life of the project?</i>	MKTPlace seems quite well embedded
<i>Are project partners being properly developed (technically, financially and managerially) for continuing to deliver the project's benefits/services?</i>	Mostly yes
<i>Will adequate levels of suitable, qualified HR be available to continue to deliver the project's stream of benefits?</i>	Quite likely
<i>Are there good relations with new or existing institutions and are there plans to continue with some or all of the project's activities?</i>	Not clear
<b>TOTAL (Max 4.00)</b>	<b>2.3 C - Problems</b>

### 3.6 Horizontal issues

<b>Horizontal issues</b>	
<b>1. Demand driven and ownership (max 2)</b>	<b>1.8</b>
<i>Do local partners effectively lead in the planning and management of MKTPlace support (i.e. beyond formal endorsement)?</i>	Mostly yes
<i>Are partner's research institutions/staff effectively managing the MKTPlace activities?</i>	Mostly yes
<i>Do local partners provide the required inputs enabling the MKTPlace to perform (e.g. human and/or physical inputs)?</i>	Mostly yes
<b>2 Adaptation to the context and existing capacities (max 2)</b>	<b>1.7</b>
<i>Is the MKTPlace support likely to achieve its objectives without critical constraints?</i>	Not always, some critical constraints can directly undermine objectives
<i>Is the MKTPlace support adequate vis-à-vis the capacity of the local partner?</i>	Mostly yes, but improvement possible
<b>TOTAL (Max 4.00)</b>	<b>3.5 B - Good</b>

#### **4. MKTPlace website & online system**

The MKTPlace website was built to fulfil two different goals. First, as analysed above, the website should enable the platform to operate, as most of MKTPlace processes and procedures, from the opening of calls to the submission of final proposals, are done through the website via its online system.

From this perspective, the website is more than a communication tool: it is the very 'place' where the core activities of the platform (joint research for development) take place.

In line with this goal, the website needs to present, clearly and thoroughly, not only the MKTPlace itself, but also the goals of its 'research for development' calls, as well as the rules and procedures to be followed by researchers who want to join the initiative.

As our research shows, and the figures below illustrate, the website has been quite efficient and effective in these aspects. The vast majority of researchers have a very positive appreciation of the website appearance, its design and writing style.

More importantly, the 'matchmaking' online system, online search tools, as well as the support provided by the MKTPlace team (via the "contact us" email) also received a very high positive score, indicating that researchers are in general quite satisfied with the website online tools and the feedback they can receive through it.

But in addition to supporting the MKTPlace 'joint research for development' pillar, the website has also been set up to enable the sharing and management of the knowledge produced by the platform. From this perspective, and as observed above, the website is the main instrument of the MKTPlace "knowledge sharing/Knowledge management" pillar.

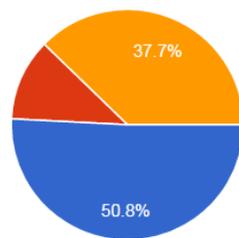
In line with this pillar's objective (see above) the website functions then as a repository of key information, as well as scientific and policy knowledge, produced with the support of the platform. Also here, the website has received a very good appreciation.

Most researchers consider 'excellent' or 'good' not only the accessibility, fast loading and update of the website, but also the quality, precision, relevance and robustness of the information presented. Nearly 87% of respondents considered the website 'user friendly' and could easily find the information they were looking for, while 88,5% said the platform website was 'easy to access'.

In sum, the MKTPlace website and online system can be pointed out as highly effective and efficient, and proved to be fulfilling its two main goals.

## 4.1. Website Evaluation Survey - Main Results

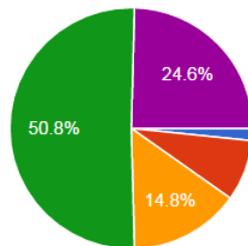
### Regional/national Composition of Survey Results (Total 61 respondents) <sup>41</sup>



Africa	31	50.8%
Latin America and Caribe	7	11.5%
Brazil	23	37.7%



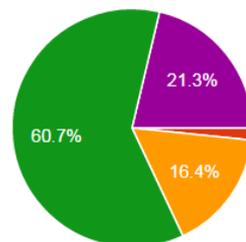
### Appearance/Design



Poor	1	1.6%
Below average	5	8.2%
Average	9	14.8%
Good	31	50.8%
Excellent	15	24.6%



### Writing style

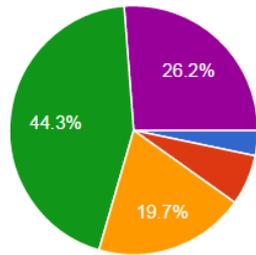


Poor	0	0%
Below average	1	1.6%
Average	10	16.4%
Good	37	60.7%
Excellent	13	21.3%



<sup>41</sup> The data and graphics presented in this section were gathered and elaborated by Durval Dourado.

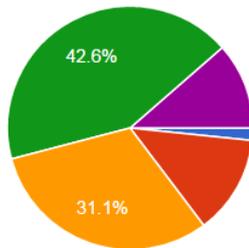
### Fast loading



Poor	2	3.3%
Below average	4	6.6%
Average	12	19.7%
Good	27	44.3%
Excellent	16	26.2%



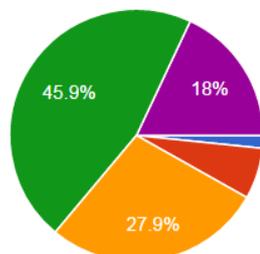
### Updating (occurrence and notification)



Poor	1	1.6%
Below average	8	13.1%
Average	19	31.1%
Good	26	42.6%
Excellent	7	11.5%



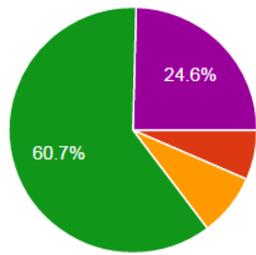
### Accessibility of information (including search tools)



Poor	1	1.6%
Below average	4	6.6%
Average	17	27.9%
Good	28	45.9%
Excellent	11	18%

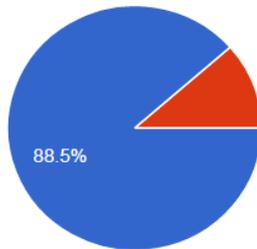


### Clarity and quality of information



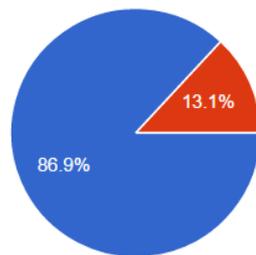
Poor	0	0%
Below average	4	6.6%
Average	5	8.2%
Good	37	60.7%
Excellent	15	24.6%

### Accessibility: Did you find the MKTPlace website easy to access?



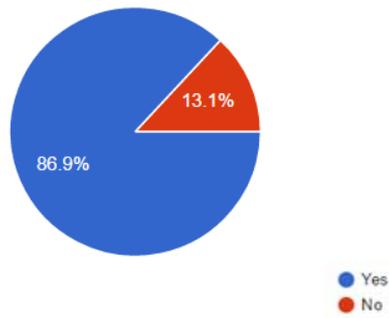
Yes	54	88.5%
No	7	11.5%

### Content: Did you find what you were looking for?



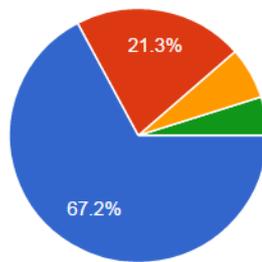
Yes	53	86.9%
No	8	13.1%

### User experience: Is the website user-friendly?



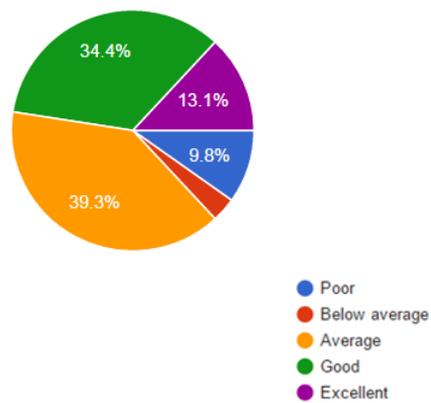
Yes	<b>53</b>	86.9%
No	<b>8</b>	13.1%

### Awareness: How did you know about the website?



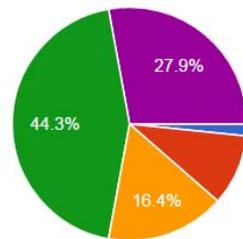
Embrapa	<b>41</b>	67.2%
Colleague	<b>13</b>	21.3%
Google	<b>4</b>	6.6%
Other	<b>3</b>	4.9%

### Site Problems



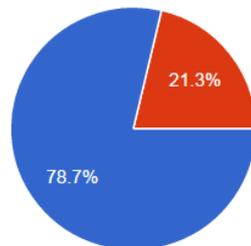
Poor	<b>6</b>	9.8%
Below average	<b>2</b>	3.3%
Average	<b>24</b>	39.3%
Good	<b>21</b>	34.4%
Excellent	<b>8</b>	13.1%

**MktPlace secretariat support (“contact us”)**



Poor	1	1.6%
Below average	6	9.8%
Average	10	16.4%
Good	27	44.3%
Excellent	17	27.9%

**“Matching”, submission of pre-proposals & proposals: Were you able to find a research partner easily?**



Yes	48	78.7%
No	13	21.3%

## 5. Lessons Learned

As the paragraphs above show, for its design, structure, governance and implementation modalities, the MKTPlace provides several 'lessons' that could be used to improve (or keep) the good functioning of the platform itself, but also support other, similar cooperation initiatives.

On this, a remark seems important. The lessons acquired or developed in the context of one cooperation initiative are not always transposable to another, even if they share similar aspects. The transferability of 'lessons learned' is always delicate and tricky question as several (social, political, economic, cultural) variables have a direct impact on the way these 'lessons' have been developed/implemented and are then applicable. These contextual elements have consequently a strong impact on the success of certain lessons when transferred from one project to the other.

That said, the MKTPlace has provided new ways of learning, doing and managing research for development cooperation, and these 'new modalities' could be used, under certain circumstances, to inform ongoing or future programmes/projects of the same kind.

Some of these 'lessons' are highlighted below. This list is not exhaustive, but directly derives from the research and analytical work done in the framework of this evaluation. It draws, partially, on some of the lessons of the first external evaluation and the recently published MKPLace book.

1. **"Bureaucratic minimalism"**: a straightforward and fairly simple model (and process) of calls, pre-proposal and proposal submissions have allowed an important number of researchers to join the MKTPlace. The bureaucratic simplicity of the platform has in many occasions been an incentive to the participation of researchers and research institutions, in particular new, in the platform. This model seems moreover particularly adapted to the context and reality of research institutions/researchers based in (some) developing countries, where it may not always be easy to provide all the certificates, licenses, credentials and other official documents often required in international calls for project funding.
2. **A fully online/web-based system**: the MKTPlace website and online system have proved central not only to promote the 'matchmaking' among Brazilian and foreign researchers, but also to ensure that all knowledge, data and information produced by the platform can be widely shared and managed. In addition to increasing the platform (and its project's) visibility, this online system also guarantees that MKTPlace information/knowledge is transparent and truly available to all.
3. **From 'beneficiaries' to 'co-leaders'**: the way MKTPlace project's are elaborated and managed requires not only a high degree of (institutional) engagement, and autonomy but also empowers African and Latin American researchers. They are

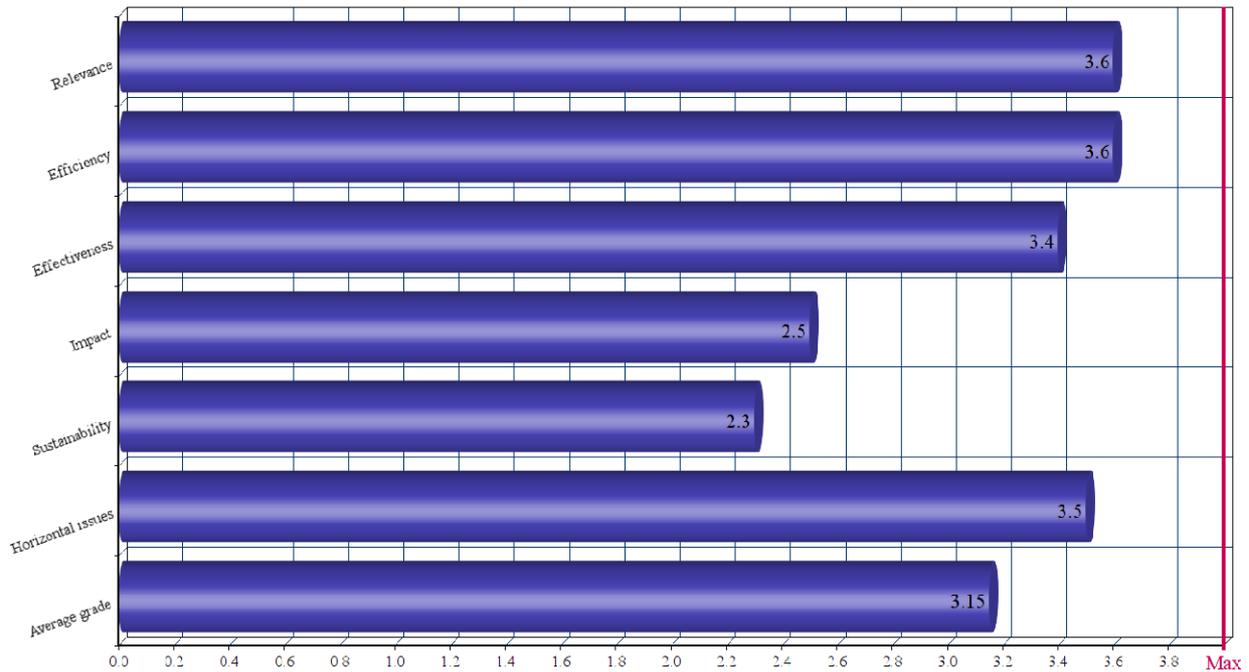
no longer the 'beneficiaries' that will receive knowledge/techniques/material defined as 'needed' by external donors. They are (co-)responsible for the definition of the research endeavour they engage in and have then an important role in defining of what they want to achieve, how and when. This particular change in approach and roles helps increasing the ownership of joint research projects and also facilitates its implementation in African and Latin American countries.

4. **Focus on 'mutually beneficial' projects:** that said, Brazilian researchers also have a say in the definition/management of these projects. Because they are 'mutually beneficial' MKTPlace projects can in fact guarantee that both ends of the research projects (the Brazilian and the African or LAC) are fully engaged, committed to its implementation and the achievement of their joint objectives.
5. **Horizontal, democratic and 'hands-on' governance model:** the MKTPlace governance model guarantees that all organizations that join the initiative have the same 'voice' and 'weight' in collective decisions, despite their financial (or institutional) capacity. They are all partners who play, in the framework of the MKTPlace, a well-defined and clear role. Moreover, all partners are called to actively engaged with/in the platform and be more than just a 'funding provider'. These and the other aspects of the MKTPlace governance analysed above guarantee greater ownership and (co-)responsibility at the partners' end too.
6. **Flexible financial and management model:** as a multi-donor platform the MKTPlace has proved able to adapt to different organisations financial rules and grant management guidelines. Though it has required a certain degree of contractual creativity and increased the actual work in the daily management of these different requirements/demands, it has also made possible the financial sustainability of the platform over the last years.
7. **Mutual knowledge and communication:** over the years, two factors have proved to strongly increase the 'success factor' of MKTPlace projects: a good, simple and frequent communication among researchers/co-leaders, as well as good understanding of each other's (social, political, economic and research) environment. As much as possible, researchers need to be encouraged not only to keep communication frequent, but also to do a mission/field visit to fully grasp where their project is being carried-out, by who and to whom.
8. **A M&E structure to prevent and amend recurring challenges:** in recent years, the MKTPlace has put in place a M&E structure that has been quite successful in not only preventing but also amending challenges related to project's implementation (e.g. delays in funding transfer, communication problems among co-leaders, etc.). As members of the M&E team have also been involved in the management/overseeing of MKTPlace projects, they have been quite efficient in not only identifying potential sources of problems, but also in proposing alternative/corrective solutions that have already proved effective in other/similar contexts.

## 6. Conclusion

Based on previous sections, the table and figure below summarize the (numerical) evaluation of each dimension/aspect of the platform, as well as the average grade obtained by the MKTPlace:

<b>Variables/Dimensions</b>	<b>Numerical (Max 4.00)</b>	<b>Qualitative</b>
<i>Relevance and Quality of Design</i>	<b>3.6</b>	<b><i>A - Very good</i></b>
<i>Efficiency</i>	<b>3.6</b>	<b><i>A - Very good</i></b>
<i>Effectiveness</i>	<b>3.4</b>	<b><i>B - Good</i></b>
<i>Impact</i>	<b>2.5</b>	<b><i>C - Problems</i></b>
<i>Sustainability</i>	<b>2.3</b>	<b><i>C - Problems</i></b>
<i>Horizontal issues</i>	<b>3.5</b>	<b><i>B - Good</i></b>
<b><i>MKTPlace total/average grade</i></b>	<b>3.15</b>	<b><i>B - Good</i></b>



In line with the analytical section above, the MKTPlace grades indicate that the platform is a highly relevant, efficient and well designed initiative. The MKTPlace (and its management team) has been operating in a (cost-)effective manner in order to reach its main objectives.

Following a quite simple 'success recipe', the MKTPlace has managed in the last six year to promote scientific exchange and cross-fertilization among Brazil, Africa and to a lessen extent LAC countries. One of the most important impacts of the platform has been for instance the creation of links and/or improvement of (agriculture) scientific cooperation between Brazilian and African research institutions – very fragmented and fragile thus far.

The platform has also become an important (and rather rare) source of financial, material and scientific support to many researchers in Africa who tend to remain at the margins of the (global) research communities/institutions. Researchers are moreover considerably empowered by the platform's original 'bottom-up' model and able to propose research projects that effectively tackle their agricultural challenges and scientific needs.

Therefore, the platform, as most of the projects it supports, presents also good levels of ownership and seems to be genuinely driven by demand. Adaptation to the particular context of partners (and beneficiaries) has also been considerably positive, even if there is still room for development.

Indeed, MKTPlace impact and sustainability present some issues which need to be tackled in the next years. Among these challenges are project's difficulties to effectively 'scale up' their research results and connect research to practice, as well as the MKTPlace increasing reliance on financial contributions from (international) partners, in a context of decreasing institutional, political (and financial) support from Brazil.

Although these challenges require attention, they do not call for major revisions or changes in the MKTPlace strategy or management model. In fact, some mitigating measures have already started being taken: the setting up of the MBoSs could represent for instance a real step further towards guaranteeing greater impact in the longer run.

## **7. Recommendations**

Based on the above, the following recommendations can be made enhance the MKTPlace efficiency, efficacy, impact and sustainability:

1. Brazilian official institutions/government need to be incited to further engage and effectively support the MKTPlace, including financially in order to improve the platform's sustainability;
2. If working with LAC is still part of the MKTPlace strategy, special fundraising strategies need to be deployed to secure more funding to the region and avoid a progressive lack of motivation (and eventually interest) of LAC-based researchers and research institutions.
3. Promote and/or enhance researchers' understanding of "what is needed" and required before initiating research activities. This goes from making very explicit what making 'research for development' means, but also encourage researchers (notably Brazilians) to exchange as much information as possible with their counterparts still during the project elaboration phase.
4. In the same vein, visits to the counterpart's country and research environment should be mandatory and take place as soon as possible during the implementation phase.
5. To tackle linguistic challenges and increase the participation of other countries, the platform could localize its content and website and open calls in other important languages in Africa, such as Portuguese and French.
6. Improve/enhance the identification forms/criteria in the platform website so researchers can have a better and more realistic perception of their (potential) partners' scientific background, research experiences, etc.
7. Given the recurring delays resultant from germplasm and other material exchange, the (formal) implementation period of research projects involving this type of transaction could be temporarily suspended. This suspension, limited to a

reasonable time length, would allow projects to achieve full completion (i.e. reaching substantial outputs) during their implementation phase which is currently not the case.

8. MKTPlace Forums should be organized right after the start of the implementation period of new research projects so all 'newcomers' can fully benefit from these meetings positive outputs. This also offers an opportunity for Brazilian researchers and their foreign counterparts to meet (physically) and have a first discussion about the future of their research endeavour.
9. The platform's sustainability definition and assumptions need revision; a robust "risk management matrix" (which entails also the definition mitigating measures) should also be put in place if it does not exist.
10. Likewise, sustainability and phase-out strategies need to be more consistently integrated (or developed) in the research projects selected and financed by the MKTPlace. These sorts of tools could considerably help improving the scalability of research results as well as their impact.

## **Annexe 1. List of People Interviewed**

### **I. MKTPlace Governance:**<sup>42</sup>

- *Embrapa*
  1. Francisco Reifschneider (Program Coordinator)
  2. Paulo Duarte (Program Coordinator)
- *World Bank*
  3. Willem Janssen (Agricultural Specialist in the LAC Region)
- *DFID*
  4. Silke Seco-Grutz (Livelihoods and Climate Change Advisor)
  5. Indranil Chakrabarti (Counselor for Development)
- *FARA*
  6. Jonas Mugabe (Co-manager of PAEPARD)
- *IICA*
  7. Hernán Chiriboga (IICA's Representative in Brazil)
  8. Jamil Macedo (Executive-secretary of Prociatrópicos)
- *CIAT*
  9. Elcio Perpétuo Guimarães (Former Research Director)
- *UC DAVIS*
  10. Roberto Sainz (Professor - Department of Animal Science)

### **II. MKTPlace M&E and coordination**

11. Paulo Melo
12. Luciano Nass
13. Ana G. Heinrich
14. Rodrigo Ferraz
15. Maria E. Cajueiro

### **III. MKTPlace Financial/administrative team**

16. Ana Maria Gonçalves

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<sup>42</sup> Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Charlene McKoin) was contacted by did not reply to the evaluator's interview request. IFAD (Paolo Silveri and Hardi Vieira) was also contacted and but an interview could not be organized given their officials lack of availability.

#### IV. MKTPlace Forum

17. André Dusi

#### V. MKTPlace Researchers<sup>43</sup>

1. Simone Favaro (BR)
2. José Valls (BR)
3. Arthur Mariante (BR)
4. Regina Carneiro (BR)
5. Cláudia Ribeiro (BR)
6. Raquel Melo (BR)
7. Adriano Nascente (BR)
8. Valacia Lobo (BR)
9. Thiago Souza (BR)
10. Lucia Hoffmann (BR)
11. Aluana G. de Abreu (BR)
12. René Guzmán Arnez (LAC)

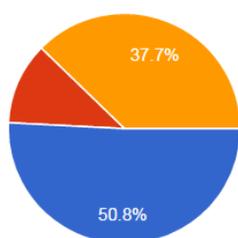
1. Mrs. Ximena Cadima (LAC)
2. Marcos Edel Martinez-Montero (LAC)
3. Elizabeth Alvarez (LAC)
4. Gabriel Ddamulira (AF)
5. Adewale Olusegun Obadina (AF)
6. Moses Kiryowa (AF)
7. Abdulrazak Ibrahim (AF)
8. Ofelia Galman Omitogun (AF)
9. Harun Murithi (AF)
10. Benjamin Ahiabor (AF)

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<sup>43</sup> The second list of 10 researchers replied to a written questionnaire sent electronically by Durval Dourado. The first list of 12 researchers (mostly Brazilians met during the field trip to Brasília) were interviewed face-to-faced and replied to open-ended questions (semi-structured interviews).

## Annex 2. Survey Results: Outcomes, Outputs & Capacity strengthening

### Regional/national Composition of Survey Results (Total 61 respondents)<sup>44</sup>

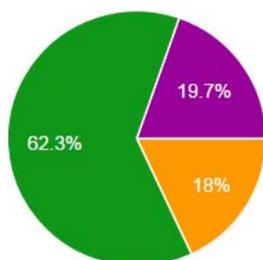


Africa	31	50.8%
Latin America and Caribe	7	11.5%
Brazil	23	37.7%



### Main Outcomes and Outputs

#### Projects [has your project's goals been met?]

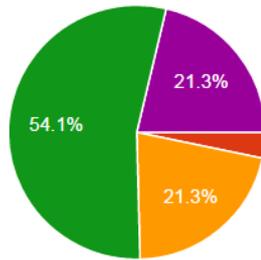


Poor	0	0%
Below average	0	0%
Average	11	18%
Good	38	62.3%
Excellent	12	19.7%



<sup>44</sup> The data and graphics presented in this section were gathered and elaborated by Durval Dourado.

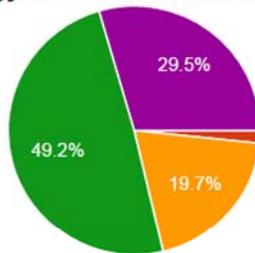
**Outputs (product, service - as exchange of germplasm, technology and training)  
[have your projects outputs matched planned expectations?]**



Poor	0	0%
Below average	2	3.3%
Average	13	21.3%
Good	33	54.1%
Excellent	13	21.3%

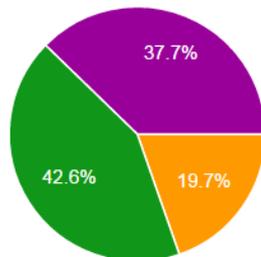
**Capacity Strengthening & Optimization**

**Capacity strengthening [has your institution or your capacities been strengthened?  
Has technology been transferred?]**



Poor	0	0%
Below average	1	1.6%
Average	12	19.7%
Good	30	49.2%
Excellent	18	29.5%

**Capacity optimization: expansion of human and scientific knowledge  
(as a result of the participation in the platform)**



Poor	0	0%
Below average	0	0%
Average	12	19.7%
Good	26	42.6%
Excellent	23	37.7%