

Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future TOPICAL LUNCH

Title: Systemic Theories of Change and Pathways for Food Security and Climate Change Adaptation

Host: Chris Barrett and Alex Travis

Date: Thursday March 13, 2014 – 12:00 – 1:00pm

Summary Report

Yiheyis Taddele Maru, a visiting research scientist from CSIRO – Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization presented on systems approaches to understanding old persistent problems (poverty trap) and dealing with new challenges (climate change impacts) based on his recent publications. The change in focus from theories of change for food security to poverty was in response to interest and common work on the application of the resilience concept in understanding poverty and food insecurity issues. The core message in relation to poverty was that systems thinking and modeling approaches important for understanding poverty traps can be built based on a synthesis of existing understanding from work in the resilience literature and development literature. Deep uncertainty and complexity of future interaction and impact of climate change require developing adaptation pathways with robust decision making process built in a systemic understanding of the vulnerability and resilience of social-ecological systems. The presentation generated interest and discussion including on the descriptive and normative interpretations and application of the concept of resilience, on handling core variables in a model that operate at different temporal special and organisational scales and the challenges of securing research funds that apply complex systems methodologies. Individual interaction between the presenter and some of the participants continued after the meeting which led to subsequent meeting appointments to explore possibilities for future collaboration.

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