

Reception and Perception of the IAASTD-Report

By the Church Development
Service

Remarks by Rudolf Buntzel

Science and the Farmers



„We are all here, Sir: the Agronomist, the Agrologist, the Breeder, the Entomologist...however I wonder who those people are.“



Rudolf Buntzel, VdW, future of Food, Nov. 9th, 2011, EED's view

Whose Knowledge Counts?

- Are peasants and farmers unknown species in the world of agricultural experts?
- To combat the needs of the hungry, where do we place our trust and hopes?
 - On the genius of the poor in their struggle to survive,
 - Or on the genes of plants, isolated and recombined in laboratories?

What for us is the most important contribution of IAASTD?

- the recognition of the important role and wisdom of the small and marginal producers of food,
- and consequently the emphasis they put on the methodologies of research, cooperation, dissemination, extension and training.

Extension: Key to our Rural Development

- Participation: like PELUM = Participatory Ecological Land Use Management
- Extension and organising methods
- Training and curriculum

We do not see farmers as:

- objects of welfare programmes,
- as objects to study them in order to gain power over them,
- as receivers of pre-fixed messages.

- Even if IAASTD believes in the decisive function of academic science, it is also willing to accept that other knowledge systems have an important role to play in the generation of new knowledge and its application in agriculture. In this respect the relationship between indigenous knowledge (IK) of the farmers and scientific knowledge of researchers is the key.

What is indigenous knowledge?

- It is locally bound knowledge, which is indigenous to a specific area, embedded in culture, in cosmology and in activities of specific people;
- it is non-formal, orally transmitted, adaptive and dynamic; it governs local survival and wellbeing.[\[1\]](#)

[\[1\]](#) IAASTD, global Report, page 67

Which Knowledge is superior?

- The superiority of the academic science has clearly been denied. IAASTD is convinced of the ingenuity of the active farming community. The authors claim that innumerable examples exist of effective technological advances pioneered by farmers themselves.[\[1\]](#)
- In other concepts the academic researcher wants to gain the knowledge from the indigenous people to make effective use out of it for generating progress. Here it is not the joint effort of equal knowledgeable partners that generates the real innovation.

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[\[1\]](#) IAASTD, Global Report, page 78

Basic Message in Matters of Agricultural Extension

- Earlier paradigm that fit farmers into top-down structure of research-development-extension worked with major cash-crops, but with little success with diversified smallholder agriculture.
- It is necessary to understand farmers´ context, rationale, priorities, motivations, constrains, cultures, ethnic backgrounds, gender aspects.
- A participatory and interdisciplinary approach is needed.

Models of Extension

- 1.) Transfer of Technology
- 2.) Training & Visit Approach
- 3.) Farming System & Extension Approach
- 4.) Outgrower Model
- 5.) Demand and Control Model
- 6.) Farmers' Participatory and Research Model
- 7.) The Chain-Link Model
- 8.) The Innovative System Model

1.) Transfer of Technology Model

- Assumption: Science is positioned in this model as the only real problem-defining and knowledge generating activity, and
- the farmers are passive cognitive agents whose own knowledge is to be replaced or improved as a result of receiving messages and technologies designed by others and communicated to them by experts.

ToT worked well in Asia under the Green Revolution

- The ToT model proved fit for the purpose of disseminating improved seed, training farmers in simple practices and input use and disseminating simple messages within the intensive, high external input production system, like for instance with the relatively homogeneous irrigated wheat and rice environments of South and Southeast Asia. (Moris, 1981; Carr, 1989, IAASTD, page 63)

ToT was shown to be unfit for organizing knowledge processes capable to impact..

- diverse heterogenous environments,
- resource poor farmers,
- in risky, drought prone, diverse environments,
- women´s technologies,
- to maintain local food cultures and genetic diversity,
- processes in which the people were to be agent of their own development process.

2.) Training & Visit Approach

- Heavily propagated by World Bank since the 90's.
- Manage diffusion process by selection of „contact“ or „leading farmers“ or „contact groups“.
- Extension agents report „up the line“ the problems the farmers have.
- Inadequate response to the limitation of ToT; approach heavily criticised, failed.

3.) Farming Systems Research and Extension Approach (FSRE)

- Diagnostic surveys by multidisciplinary teams with farm level interaction in the course of technology design, testing and adaptation.
- Designation of farming systems within agroecological domains, for which specific technologies or practices were designed.
- Taking into account: contextual conditions, effectiveness + profitability of solution, sociocultural factors, women's role.
- Failed as ruling paradigm, but had lot of influence as methodological innovation; stimulus to multifunctionality of farming.

4.) Outgrower Model

- Core-estate with out-growers model.
- Institutional challenge.
- Positioning producers under contract to supply output to a procession facility and provides inputs and services.
- Company assumed responsibility for assembling the scientific and physical infrastructure.
- Critic: locking smallholders in low-income contracts, proved open to corruption, profits siphoned off to intermediaries and elites, little entrepreneurship on the side of the outgrowers.

6.) Farmers Participatory Research and Extension (FPRE)

- Drawing on local traditions of associations, knowledge generation and communication.
- „Participatory Learning“, „Farmers´ Research Circles“, „Participatory Rural Appraisal“, „Action Research“.
- Extension is advice for problem solving; technologies in the shelf of store, to be called upon if appropriate.
- *„If time is taken to practice effective and honest partnerships in FPRE the results can be significant.“ (Chambers)*

Farmers' Economic Rationale

- Ill functioning markets lead to subsistence economy with its peculiar laws.
- Farming under high risk and uncertainty leads to strategies of minimising risk and vulnerability at the expense of profit maximisation, well below the potential.
- AKST must be built upon farmers' own coping strategies.
- Important aspect: high diversification to spread risk and deliver various benefits at different periods throughout the year.

Criticism of FPRE

- Too much trouble for too little effect
- Too locally focused
- Unable to address higher level economic and societal constraints of development
- Failing to take advantage of the „best“ science and technology available
- Supporting farm systems that some consider insufficient to provide surplus

8.) The Innovative System Approach

- I.S.defined: network of org.+actors and inst.+policies that affect their performance.
- Broad spectrum of actors outside the state have a role to play.
- Farmers and private business are at the center.
- Their ability to absorb innovative impulse is decisive.
- Laboratory – farmer relationship must become interactive process.
- Roles evolve, importance of actors change
- Network of scientists around a research theme.
- Network of rural actors around a development theme.
- Both interact closely on a chosen cluster.

What can/should be done?

- Participatory Rural Appraisal as a learning experience.
- Community based participatory approach (works well for small services, not complex, require local cooperation, common/ public/ civil goods)
- Support networks of traditional practitioners and community exchange.
- Basket-Approach of techn. options. Agricultural Innovative Systems
- Special training for Outgrower Schemes and Contract Farming (focus on legal matters, collective bargaining)
- Farmers-Field-Schools

Thanks for listening