

Capacity Building – Knowledge Management Dry-Run

Farmers in semi-arid sub-Saharan Africa are generally considered to be amongst the most resource-poor. There is little private sector provision of services as populations are sparse and most of the crops are of 'low value'. Public/government extension is still the main service provider but traditionally has struggled to provide a quality service to disparate populations. Currently the agricultural sector is undergoing considerable change under policies of decentralisation and liberalisation and the CPP is keen that semi-arid areas are not further marginalised through an inability to communicate knowledge effectively. Programme development work led to the contracting of project R8349 working in Kenya and Tanzania. This project is using knowledge generated through the CPP, with potential to bolster household food security and incomes, to understand and improve knowledge promotion in these institutionally weak semi-arid areas. A major challenge is to empower local service providers to access and process crop protection information and products to better meet farmers' needs.

Three inter-agency teams have been formed – two in Kenya and one in Tanzania – to facilitate a comparison of experiences and organisational lesson learning. The central Tanzania team is coordinated by an NGO, INADES Formation, and the eastern and western Kenya teams are coordinated by Kenya Agricultural Research Institute and work with the public sector and NGOs.

Existing methods of demand-identification (e.g. technical committees and rural appraisals) have crop protection diagnostic capacity shortcomings, and feedback on technology performance is unsatisfactory. Participatory approaches to learning (e.g. farmer field schools) effectively articulate demand. Decentralised approaches are effective but require training and capacity building. Farmers and many service providers prefer information sources that are face to face and interactive, such as field schools, demonstrations and group sessions, which are currently accessible to only a limited part of the farming population. The incentives and/or resources to stimulate exchange of information between key stakeholders are limited. Factors encouraging dynamic information seeking and exchange need to be further explored.

The evaluation of communication approaches, such as leaflets, radio, video, drama etc, by different groups suggest that inclusion of a 'farmer voice' e.g. through



Farmers assessing communication tools (upper) and some of the leaflets produced by Central Zone Communications Office in response to demand



Farmer speaking to Radio Tanzania Central Zone on farmer/extension participatory trials

para-extension workers (trained volunteers selected by the local community) is very cost-effective. Quality assurance in relation to training, information and products remains a big challenge.

Decentralisation initiatives in East Africa have a stated aim of empowering farmers and other local stakeholders, but this will require new relationships – and communication is key. This project provides insights into the importance of appropriate methods, but participants have also identified commitment, accountability and incentives as vital elements in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of service provision in general and communication strategies in particular.

R8349: Developing crop protection research promotional strategies for semi-arid East Africa (Kenya and Tanzania)
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