

(Facilitated) Farmers are Doing it for Themselves

“Within a short time of a death in a village all of the people in the surrounding villages are aware of the news, so why does it take us so long to get our extension messages across to the farmers.”

Edward Ulicky, Hai Extension Department, Tanzania

Farmers seeking advice from bean researchers for solutions to damage caused to their bean crops by insect pests were surprised to be asked what **they** thought the solution was. Working with the farmers, researchers not only identified solutions – in

this case the use of botanical insecticides – but also boosted the farmers’ confidence in their own ability. In project R7965 researchers and extension workers facilitate farmers’ knowledge generation through placing farmers at the centre of developing, testing, monitoring, evaluating and communicating possible solutions to their livelihood constraints. Consequently farmers now readily tell others about their innovations, investigate problems (even non-agricultural ones) and encourage other farmers to work together to solve their problems. Farmer derived communication methods include field days, cross visits, drama, songs, media and extension materials; it has been found that men and women have different preferences. Currently there are more than 150 active farmer groups (15–30 members each) in the project, although the number of groups is still increasing. Some



This farmer’s hand is full of money from improved beans

have even registered as community-based organisations (CBOs).

Through links with the Pan African Bean Research Alliance (PABRA) activities have been replicated in Rwanda, Uganda and north-eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In addition project extension materials have been shared with farmers, extension agents and scientists in Madagascar and Rwanda, and there is interest from Sudan. Linkages with the CPP armyworm project (R7954), the African Highlands Initiative (AHI), the Kenyan Ministries of Health and Education, national and international research organisations, other farmers’ groups, local extension agents, NGOs, bean traders, etc. have enabled farmers to improve their livelihoods through broadening their access to information and services. The income obtained from the sale of surplus beans and maize in Kenya and Tanzania has been used to pay school fees for children, to purchase family needs, and has helped farmers to diversify their businesses through livestock production, fish farming and other agro-enterprises.

R7965: Promotion of integrated pest management strategies of major insect pests of Phaseolus beans in hillsides systems in eastern and southern Africa

Contact: Eli Minja, Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical-Pan African Bean Research Alliance (CIAT-PABRA)

Photos: Eli Minja and Roger Kirkby



Men and women farmers actively disseminating IPM strategies