

FARMER TO FARMER EXTENSION

Farm innovation refers to the dynamics of indigenous knowledge i.e., knowledge that grows within a social group, incorporating learning from own experience over generations, but also external knowledge internalized within the local ways of thinking and doing. The outcome of this process is farmer innovation.

Farmer led innovation in agriculture is the process through which individuals or groups discover, modify or develop and apply improved ways of managing the available resources, building on and expanding the boundaries of their indigenous knowledge within a given locality. All farmer led innovations are not of a technical nature but rather socio-economic and institutional innovations. The concept of farmer innovation is applied to agriculture technology processes that aim to improve rural livelihoods for sustainable development in agriculture ensuring inter-institutional and farmer learning. The rapidly changing climate, technical and socio-economic constraints and poor coordination among stakeholders are the major driving forces for the development of farm innovations. These situations compel the farmers to develop their own skills to manage their livelihoods in their environment. These farm innovations are comparatively inexpensive, niche specific and well accepted in local conditions.

Local farm innovations are product of farmer's informal experimentation and could be very helpful even for resource poor farmers being affected by climate change, policy and other factors in the country.

Importance of Farmer Innovations

The impact of green revolution in India had been quite effective in the homogeneous regions in terms of agro economics as well as socio-economics. So, farmers' innovations could play a vital role in those areas where this revolution has not impacted so far.



The researchers often lack the intense knowledge of specific problems of a given farming situation where farmers have been able to step in. However, the scientists and extension workers in developing nations have increasingly realized the importance of farmers' local knowledge. The researchers have realized the relevance of making farmers as a partner for participatory innovation development to meet out the farmers need in a locality. These farmers have excelled in experimentation, adaptation and innovation and in taking a new risk.

To increase the success of programmes, farm innovators included in the design process of the programmes

feel concerned that they have a predominant role in future extension and research policy leading to early acceptance of programmes. The interactions and integration between farmer innovation system & stakeholders results in social learning. This enables the stakeholders to identify and recognize their experimentation efforts, responsibilities, strengths and weaknesses, thereby strengthening participatory and community innovation processes resulting in higher adoption of technologies by farmers. At the same time, other researchers also learn from the farmers about their farming systems and about the actual constraints and potential of the communities.

By ensuring effective communication between farm innovators and researchers, extension agents can promote sharing of knowledge between two groups. The pre-existing knowledge and innovations of farmers are often overlooked by researchers, but are in fact immeasurably useful and functional. By learning farmers' situations, researchers can design programs that fit better in specific conditions. Incorporating farmers in the design and



implementation of programs will further increase the success rates and outcome of the programme.

Strategy to Enhance Farm Innovation Process

Steps to enhance the farmers' innovation process are as under:

- Special attention and appreciation should be given on identifying, prioritizing and reviewing the farmer innovations for further development.
- Learn closely about the building blocks of the participatory approaches for formal research and farmer innovation systems.
- Creating opportunities for farmers to share their innovations by organizing farm innovators meet etc., as these provide ideas for other farmers to try out.
- Offer alternatives to compare with local farmers' innovations.
- Improving farmers' experimental design by stimulating farmers to examine their informal experimentation methods and helping them explore more systematic forms of experimentation.
- Awareness of farmers' on resource management principles to develop local ways of applying the principles in farming practice.
- Facilitating mutual learning through farmer-led participatory research, thus creating opportunities for groups of farmers to critically analyze both local and external ideas for improving agriculture development.

The strength of farmers' innovations is that they have been best suiting to their requirements and compatible with farmers' overall farming system. In different parts of the country, farmers adopt some practices which have never been investigated by the researchers. The people following those techniques have different reasoning for the same which may or may not be scientifically sound but the ground reality is that these are to the advantage of the people, practiced since long and sustainable in their system and suits the available resources.

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