

**EXPERIENCES OF A JICA RESEARCH PROJECT IN ETHIOPIA:
ENHANCING TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT AND DISSEMINATION THROUGH
FARMERS RESEARCH GROUP (FRG)**

Hailu Dadi

Laboratory of Animal Genetics and Breeding, Tokyo University of Agriculture
1737 Funako, Atsugi-shi, Kanagawa 243-0034

ABSTRACT

Experiences in Ethiopia have shown that innovations/technologies that are developed on research stations without the participation of farmers (ultimate users) are often refused by these farmers. This is due to the fact that technologies which were developed without the involvement of the farmers have little chance of meeting the actual farmers needs. Ideally, farmers of all types would have the capacity in terms of knowledge, skills, attitude, information technologies and motivation to run their farming enterprise effectively. In the past, in general the active role of farmers in developing technologies and dissemination has been largely neglected and underestimated. It is in response to the problems and shortcomings of this past research approach that other participatory research approach such as FRG evolved in Ethiopia. The overall aim of establishing FRG at a given community is to effectively facilitate participatory technology development (PTD). Farmers Research Group acts as a focal point for on-farm observation, problem identification and prioritization, experimentation, analysis and monitoring and evaluation of the planned activities. Under this approach, there are attempts to evolve farmers in the whole process of technologies development and dissemination. All research efforts are also being directed towards solving the major priority problems identified. Working with small groups of FRG both in livestock and crops research in Ethiopia considerably improved communication and information exchange, empower farmers both technically and economically and open door for on-farm participatory research approach. Although, the performance and success of FRG can be affected by various factors, if FRG scenario can be managed properly it can have a significant contribution in research and development activities of developing countries.

KEYWORDS

Farmers Research Group (FRG), technology development, technology dissemination.

2. Concept and objective of FRG-project in Ethiopia

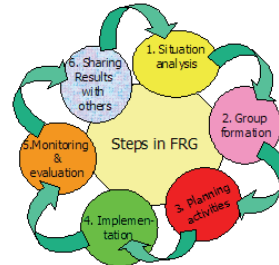
- The basic concepts why we are working in small groups of FRGs:
 - It opens a “participatory approach” in the research system.
 - It improves communications and information exchange.
 - It empowers farmers, both technically and economically.
- The main objective of FRG is to involve farmers in technology generation, verification and transfer process.

7

3 Methodology

3.1 Stages in forming and operating FRG

- The process of FRG formation involves various steps which are summarized as follow:



- 1. Situation analysis:** assess existing scenario, define problems to be addressed, and technological options to be tested are identified for each priority problem.
- 2. Group formation:** based on situation analysis groups are formed on particular problem area, training farmers
- 3. Planning:** groups design experiments (methods designed to test technological options), set time table and analyse its activities.
- 4. Implementation:** the group implements planned activities.
- 5. Monitoring and evaluation:** the group evaluate the implementation of the planned activities
- 6. Sharing results:** the group shares its results with other farmers.

3.2 Composition and size of FRG

- Composition:** Group of farmers who are in the same category have common interest, similar resources, vision and can easily discuss and negotiate on their social problems can form FRG.
- Size:** There is no standard rule that obliges to have a certain number of members in an FRG.
 - At Adami Tulu Research Center, members vary between 18-30 farmers.
 - At Melkasa Research Center, 8 -30 farmers.
 - At present, there are 40 FRGs at both research centers

9

4. Major achievements

4.1 The 1st year was given to prepare ground upon which the FRG project was established

Much of the focus was given to:

- Construction of FRG offices at both centers
- Conducting baseline survey in the project area
- Inception participatory workshop
- Procurement of office and field equipments

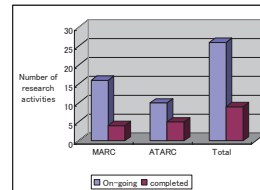


Figure 2 On-going and completed research activities

10

4.2 Awareness level of participatory research approach increased

- Farmers, development agents and researchers awareness level increased on participatory problem identification, priority setting, planning, execution and evaluation of on-farm research.

Sweet potato verities identified by farmers for moisture stress environment (two years trail). Discussion among researchers, farmers and development agents at a farmer field.



11

4.3 Improved extension linkages

- Researchers-development agents-farmers and other relevant stakeholders linkage and the quality of extension services improved.



Field visit, good opportunity for farmers to learn from each other (farmer to farmer extension).

12

4.4 Shift in research agenda

- There is a gradual shift of research topic from conventional research focus to farmers problem targeted research topic.



■ On-farm, drought tolerant tree species identified for semi-arid conditions 13

4.5 Development of guideline

- There was no proper guideline that clearly indicates what procedures and methodologies to be followed while implementing the FRG approach.
- One of the success of this project until now is the development of FRG guideline in Ethiopia.

14

4.6 Major Publications

- (a) Proceeding of a workshop
- (b) Gender profile in Ethiopia (by Suzuki)

(a)



(b)



15

5. Challenges

- Unpredictable weather conditions (e.g. unpredictable rainfall)
- Multi-faceted (a many-sided subject) nature of farmers problems

16

6. Conclusion

- It is too early to provide an accurate picture of the impacts of the project, but the monitoring shows that,
 - Working with FRG facilitates participatory technology development process; make the whole technology development and transfer process financially and technically more suitable
 - FRG influences the research agendas, researches focus on solving farmers problems
 - FRG activities help to build farmers capacity to enhance self-help
 - Effective means of reaching women and the poor, who are often overlooked by formal research and extension approach

17



■ THANK YOU

18