National Workshop on "OUT-SCALING FARM INNOVATIONS

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

Agricultural development is largely driven by innovations in the entire value chain of different commodities. The type of innovation that ultimately makes the difference is the extent and intensity on what farmers makes choices. Until recently, little attention was given to the farmers-led innovations, including technological, management, and institutional. It is now realized that there are numerous innovations, which yielded higher returns and made farming more economical and sustainable. A number of farm implements were also designed to enhance farm efficiency. Over the years, farmers have also screened and selected number of varieties those have higher yields and better quality. Similarly, innovations were also expanded in developing the technologies needed during post-harvest operations, such as processing, packaging, value-addition and marketing. It is irony that the farmers-led innovations could not be popularized due to lack of awareness to other farmers. Also, the intellectual propriety rights on the innovation made by the farmers have often been ignored. It is therefore necessary to develop a platform for farmer-scientist interface to recognize the importance of farmer-led innovations and identify ways to commercialize those. This will require developing an inventory of farmer-led innovations, and validating and refining them by blending those with modern science so that these can be commercialized and out-scaled for sustainable agricultural growth and development.

All Farmer-led innovations are not of a technical in nature but they do have socio-economic and institutional dimensions. The key reason is that farmers operate under constrained and uncertain environment; their livelihood depends on how smart choices they make. The constrained environment and emerging opportunities ignite farmers to take initiatives at their own capabilities to overcome their problems. It is argued that farmers' innovations are inexpensive, easily accessible, locally appropriate and tested in real farm situation. They are, therefore, more rapidly accepted by other farmers than are the results of formal research imposed on them. Through informal trials, with ideas from multiple sources, farmers do make choice for low cost technologies that fit their specific situations so as to ensure better effectiveness, efficiency, profitability, marketability, palatability, sustainability etc. Farmers' innovations are also a way of life for the resource poor farmers who are being challenged by the ever-changing environmental, policy and market situations. Farmers' innovations are a product of farmers' informal experimentation. Faced with the problems of financing, farmers always try low cost technologies to suit their requirements. Another dimension of the farmers' innovations is that their ability to innovate goes beyond production and improves networking, communication, institution building, information management, marketing, planning, accessing resources, etc in view of improving their agricultural and natural resource management activities. In short, farmers' innovations are all about efficient ways of production and marketing agricultural commodities.

Diversity requires situation-specific practices. Farmers live and work under a wide range of ecological, climatic, economic and socio-cultural conditions, and the range of farming systems is similarly diverse, not just across regions or countries but also within districts and even localities. Each farming system has its own dynamics, strengths, challenges and opportunities. In respect to this diversity, there are very few research scientists and there is simply no way that they can generate the variety of innovations and adaptations required. In the face of such farming diversity, it is desirable to develop location specific technologies. Local adaptation and locally specific development of options need to be key elements in any agricultural research and development strategy. If scientists recognize and accept this, then they need not spend so much time and money on perfecting the technologies and can spend more time on refining/enhancing farmers' led efforts to wider adoption of recommendations to suit local realities. Rapidly changing conditions require local capacities to adapt quickly**.** No innovation is permanent. Conditions for farmers are constantly changing. This is especially not only the case for those who are practicing agriculture under very diverse, complex and risk-prone conditions, but also for those affected by the emergence of new pests and diseases, effects of climate change, and for those who see new opportunities opening up. The key to sustainability in farming lies in farmers' capacities to adapt. The farmers have to adapt more quickly in the present context than in the past. Recognizing farmers' innovation is a step towards encouraging this process and helping farmers find ways to adapt more quickly to ever changing bio-physical and socio-economic environment.

Although farmers are sources of diverse innovation but their potential could not be realized to the extent possible, because of several confounding challenges: i) lack of accommodative attitude of researchers, ii) lack of adequate opportunity for farmers to decide on research priorities, iii) lack of financial support, iv) lack of peers support, and v) illiteracy. In addition, researchers perspectives also create problems. Some researchers are not familiar with the concept of farmer innovation, some find it difficult to use the data scientifically, and others have limited knowledge of the concept.The key ingredients for livelihood improvement are not external inputs but rather labour, knowledge and local management capacities that enable people to manipulate skillfully the local resources for their own benefits. Most rural development efforts have failed to mobilize and enhance these

internal inputs. In diverse agro-ecologies and situations, promotion of farmers' innovative thoughts and actions would contribute significantly towards the sustainable development of agriculture.

It is, therefore, important to ensure a "bottom-up" approach in which farmers' participatory role must be recognized. Hence, the recent slogan given by the Indian Council of Agriculture (ICAR) on "Science with Farmer First" is indeed very appropriate. As such, it is necessary that farmer-led innovations are given due importance and are recognized for out-scaling or for further validation and large scale adoption for improving the livelihood of resource poor farmers. Way back in 2011, ICAR, Haryana Kisan Ayog, TAAS, PPV&FRA and CCSHAU had organized a national dialogue which emphasized on the need to give high importance to the innovations made by farmers themselves. The proposed national workshop on Innovation for higher impact will help in providing "Way Forward" for faster adoption of farmer-led innovations for greater impact.

Objectives

1. To discuss and identify important farmer-led innovations so as to validate, refine and disseminate them for wider adoption and desired large scale impact.
2. To blend ITK with scientific innovation through farmer's participatory approach requiring research reorientation through change in the mind set of researchers.
3. To identify specific research gaps for developing low cost easily acceptable technologies, tools etc.
4. To protect the interest of farmers by recognizing their role in protecting the genetic resources of economic importance, through IPR, benefit sharing, award/ rewards
5. To have value addition through adoption of low cost, rural based technologies with appropriate processing, storage, linking with market and to help generate employment for the rural youth, besides additional income in order to ensure inclusive market oriented development (IMOD)
6. To assess the need for required policy advocacy for outscaling innovations for large scale impact

Collaborators

The workshop will be jointly organized by the Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) in collaboration with Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS), Haryana Kisan Ayog (HKA), Bharat Krishak Samaj (BKS), Protection of Plant Varieties & Farmers Right Authority (PPV&FRA) and National Rainfed Area Authority (NRAA).

Participants

About 200 participants will include administrators, researchers, policy planners, innovative farmers, CSOs (NGOs, Fos) and the representatives of farming communities as well as private sector in India.

Expected outputs

1. Knowledge on innovations shared among the diverse stakeholders
2. Stakeholders benefitted from learning of experiences on farmer led innovations.
3. Potential innovations identified for faster adoption for large scale impact, and also for further refinement where needed
4. Need for policy interventions assessed for out scaling innovations for greater impact on smallholder farmers

Exhibition

An exhibition will also be organized to showcase the successes and the potential of Farmer-led innovations for greater impact on smallholder farmers

Venue & Dates

The two day workshop will be held at the National Agricultural Science Centre (NASC) Complex, Pusa Campus, New Delhi, India from 3-5 September, 2013.

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