

WORKSHOP REPORT

**System of Rice Intensification
(SRI)**

**By:
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WORLD EDUCATION

I N D O N E S I A

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I. Background

World Education (WE) and its partners' experience in developing a sustainable agriculture program based on IPM have already managed to reduce rice farmers' operational costs. This reduction is due to lower outlay for external inputs such as seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. However, this approach has yet to achieve a significant increase in production. That is why WE and its network were attracted by the claims emanating from SRI trials in other parts of Asia. It is hoped that SRI would increase yields while still being low-cost.

For the last two years, WE has been collecting information on SRI from Indonesia as well as other countries' experiences, including from where the system originated, Madagascar. Based on this input, WE has developed a guide for applying the popular and proven Farmer Field School approach to development of SRI among farmers. This document is not so much geared toward technology transfer, but rather as a **learning process guide** to the implementation of SRI.

Since last year, WE and its network in Indonesia have been carrying out experiments on SRI together with farmers. This workshop was intended to reflect on the experiences of farmers, organizations and networks in experimenting with SRI. Based on these reflections - and on sessions specifically devoted to the topic - a revised guide that could be more effective for training farmers would then be developed.

II. Objectives

1. Farmers sharing their experiences in implementing SRI
2. Improvement of SRI modules
3. Determination of future SRI work plans

III. Schedule

Workshop activities were held between 1-5 June 2003 in Sidoharjo Village, Polanharjo District, Klaten Regency, Central Java

IV. Participants

53 people participated in the SRI Workshop, including:

1. Lampung Wakak Jukuk Network (JWJL) = 5 people: 1 staff member and 4 farmers
2. Rural Technology Development Organization (Lembaga Pengembangan Teknologi Pedesaan - LPTP) = 14 people: 4 staff members and 10 farmers
3. Algeheins = 2 people: 1 staff member and 1 farmer
4. PAN North Sumatra = 3 people: 1 staff member and 2 farmers
5. CRS Indonesia = 1 staff member

6. IPPHTI = 2 people from Ciamis, West Java and Lumajang, East Java
7. VECO and Partners = 3 people: 1 VECO staff member and 2 partners
8. Lembaga Gita Pertiwi = 2 people: 1 staff member and 1 farmer
9. World Education = 3 staff
10. Polanharjo District Office of Agriculture = 4 people
11. The “Tani Makmur” farmers group from Sidoharjo = 3 people
12. Local committee = 10 people

V. Speakers

The SRI workshop guest speaker was Dr. Anischan Gani from the Rice Crop Research Institute (Balai Penelitian Tanaman Padi - BALITPA) in Sukamandi, West Java. Norman Uphoff and Roland Bunch were unable to attend due to other engagements.

VI. Outcomes

The SRI workshop used a mutual learning process whereby each farmer group explained the results of their SRI trials; and NGO staff also offered their views on SRI. Workshop participants were then given time to respond and clarify. In this way, each party gained useful input for improving experiments in the future.

The speaker, Dr. Anischan Gani from Balai Penelitian Tanaman Padi in Sukamandi, also provided input during the workshop.

World Education had already prepared the modules one year earlier. These were discussed, and participants and the speaker provided input in the hope that the modules could be improved upon for further dissemination of SRI.

Outcomes of this experience sharing process in SRI implementation were as follows:

1. Farmers Group Presentations

SRI is basically quite new to the WE network. For this reason it is natural that there are differing perspectives on SRI and experiments implemented by farmer groups. Farmer groups' experiments in SRI presented in the workshop were as follows:

a. Seed Bed Nurseries

Each group used different materials in making seed beds; some used bamboo baskets, coconut leaf baskets (*kiso*), boxes made from the outer layer of banana tree stems, and some made their seed beds directly in the fields. However, the principle was the same – to have dry seedbed nurseries. Most farmers used similar growing media - a mixture of ash from rice husks and organic materials. The hope was that a highly fertile growing media, rich in organic matter, would provide seedlings with strong, large root structures. Such root structures, the logic goes, would ensure healthy, high-yielding crops.

b. Experiments

Experiments undertaken by each farmers' group were: planting 7 to 14-day-old seedlings, and planting one seedling in each hole, using variable planting spacing from 20 cm x 20 cm, 23 cm x 23 cm, 25 cm x 25 cm, 30 cm x 30 cm and even using a variation on a traditional Javanese practice for paddy (*jajar legowo*); that is, 10 cm x 20 cm x 40 cm. Fertilizer use was not a focus of these experiments. To gauge the success of SRI, farmer groups purposely made comparisons with conventional methods – that is, using 25-27 day-old seedlings and planting 3-4 seedlings in each hole.

The farmer groups' experiments sought:

1. To see the number of tillers resulting, and
2. To determine differences in production between SRI and conventional methods (those commonly used by farmers).

c. Experiment Outcomes

The results of these experiments turned out to be quite promising. In SRI methods, between 30-55 tillers were attained, and production reached an average of 8-10 tonnes/hectare as opposed to 6-7.5 tonnes/hectare, and seed requirements went from 60-75 kg/hectare to only 6-7 kg/hectare.

d. Challenges Encountered

In general, each farmer's group, whether in Java or in Sumatra, encountered certain challenges in using SRI, including:

1. Taunting from families (especially their spouses) and other farmers when crops were still 1-30 days old, because the fields looked unpromising. This stopped after 30 days
2. Difficulties in convincing other people to experiment.
3. Weed growth needing serious attention when crops are 10-30 days old.

2. NGO Partners' Presentations

NGO presentations focused more on their views towards SRI and on the kinds of support given to farmers.

a. PANSU (Bp. Sukardi)

First heard about SRI from LEISA magazine in 2000 and from Engkus Koeswara – who was visiting from Ciamis and who had some experience with SRI. From there they started to discuss SRI until interest in experimenting with SRI grew and grew.

Implementing SRI was difficult at first. In the Karya Maju farmer group, there were 10 people who wanted to experiment on a large scale; they wanted to plant 1 hectare, but SRI capabilities in their organization were still minimal. So they finally agreed upon an area of 4000 m².

Apart from the WE modules, we also got information on SRI from the internet. Experiment results were not so good. At a routine meeting of farmers from the Ular River catchment area, discussions were initiated by Supar (farmer). Although results had not been so good, many other farmers were interested.

Discussion Questions

Triharjanto (Sidoharjo): PANSU seem to have been somewhat successful; what steps were taken to ensure successful dissemination of SRI?

Answer: Actually, I don't really agree if you say 'successful' because out of the 2000 hectares of fields in Sungai Ular, only 2 hectares have been tried with SRI. But 10 farmers who tried SRI disseminated information on it at the four-monthly forums.

Kasim (Lampung): You must be very happy to have tried SRI in several locations; in Lampung we have tried it in only one location. How about aspects of future planning in PANSU?

Answer: In fact the issue with SRI is the problem of water. In future, SRI can work, albeit slowly, spreading from river estuaries to sources. SRI can reduce water use; maybe it can also reduce quarrels over water.

Darwis (NTB): The SRI system can curtail production costs, however the speaker yesterday explained it could increase production. Why then is PANSU not prepared to say SRI has been a success?

Answer: People will get the wrong idea. We only see these experiments as being successful in curbing production costs. Farmers' experiments there are still limited to seedbed media; they have yet to increase production. Production has increased by 36% in rice blocks, but it has been done haphazardly, so we are not yet prepared to say it has been a success.

Speaker: (Anischan Gani)

NGOs are not usually in a position to get very involved with rice crops because conservation efforts usually attract more funding; so rice production gets little attention. NGOs and the government itself sometimes pay little attention. However, now there are NGOs that want to get out into the fields and this should be praised. Several months ago, there was a meeting of NGOs, research and development bodies, and other government institutions on SRI. However up until now there have been no further developments.

Water is indeed a problem everywhere. In the newspaper there were even people attacking each other with machetes over it. The water company's water has been stolen because the water in rice fields has been too low. Whatever the background for developing SRI, it is best to fit it in with local conditions. Whether or not production will be higher is a question for later, so do not promise anything now. But the yields should be at least what they were previously. However in terms of pests and disease damage, things

will be better. For example, *Gogo rancah* (a dry-wet rice planting system whereby seedlings are planted in dry soil before the rains arrive) may be more appropriate in and around the Brebes area, because that area has water shortages. Sometimes *gogo rancah* is more successful than other types of rice production because it is particularly applicable for the location.

To plan SRI dissemination, invite your friends from outside the village, ask farmers who have already tried it to talk about their experiences with SRI; they will definitely start to experiment with SRI. In my view, constant inundation of paddy fields with water is unnecessary.

Facilitator: In North Sumatra, 4,000 hectares of fields depend on irrigation from the Ular River. Now there is sand excavation. If it is difficult to control the water, perhaps SRI needs to be modified, in what way?

Speaker: You need water reserves, such as *embung* (water catchment in field). You could also water fields manually because irrigation water supply there is still good. Plant varieties of rice that can withstand dry spells should be sought. The local government there should not allow sand excavation. If necessary, invite the farmers to demonstrate to the government.

b. JWJL Presentation (Kasim)

Farmers had experienced crop failures. Information on SRI was obtained from WE partners that are already using SRI, and partner groups were very responsive. One JWJL group drew the conclusion that SRI is extremely appropriate and should be developed in Lampung. Farmers' opinions have already changed away from asking about "medicine" (chemical pesticides) for controlling pests to asking "how" to succeed without this.

Results have shown an increase with SRI of approximately 30%, and now the authorities have already started getting involved. They have already appointed someone to coordinate SRI activities. However, because their future funding is insecure, they are not sure if they can continue to support SRI.

Discussion questions

Pardi: JWJL locations had often had crop failure, how could you overcome this?

Answer: Crops had failed there due to a lack of water. From research we found the flow of the Way Seputih River was the cause. A solution to this matter could not be found quickly. Different planting patterns are one alternative to solve the problem by planting rice that can withstand water, for example *gogo rancah*. Water levels have gone down because of large-scale sand excavation.

Sarto: What planting times in the JWJL area can be done concurrently, so that problems encountered can be reduced?

Answer: Planting is indeed already done concurrently because of the limited water supply; if a crop is planted late, then it will not get its share of water. With the advent of SRI perhaps planting patterns can be developed. For pests this will indeed be a problem.

Anischan Gani: SRI was developed in paddies with technical irrigation capacities. It is not rainfed rice production. If crops fail due to a lack of water, don't blame SRI for that.

ADRA has already experimented with SRI in Way Kanan involving the government. Perhaps you can get information from ADRA. For pests, experiments have already been undertaken in Lampung; you can see the results there.

SRI can be developed for dry lands with a number of modifications. Planting fields concurrently is already recommended by the government, this is done to avoid pests. The SRI principle is sufficient water, not excessive amounts of water. You can see if rice plants are lacking in water because their leaves roll up.

c. ALGHEINS Presentation (Sarto)

Farmers in Ponorogo have been made to lose out by several reasons. We see the need to be able to cut operating costs. The first objective is to increase knowledge and skills in SRI cultivation. Up until now, the emphasis has been on reducing the use of chemicals. The SRI being stressed uses animal fertilizer. Experiments were done over areas of 7 x 5 m. At first the response from the community was one of disbelief, but after seeing the results, many farmers are giving it a try. Organization management is facilitating farmers groups implementing SRI. Activities undertaken are tying together information with other organizations, WE and LPTP. A donor organization for SRI does not yet exist. Chemical fertilizer use there is extremely high; up to 1.5 tonnes/hectare, and pesticide use is also very high using control for justification.

Discussion questions:

Muhrodli: The farmers joining SRI, do they learn together directly or individually?

Answer: Farmers who are not practicing SRI do not attend our farmer group meetings; they hear about SRI from farmers in other forums.

Anischan Gani:

Farmers are losing out because of fertilizers problems and older seedlings. Don't be in too much of a hurry to believe in subsidies given by the government. SRI should not use chemical fertilizer, but should just use organic fertilizers. Farmers can make plans/proposals to develop their own experiments. The Algheins case is indeed very interesting because of the very high use of chemical fertilizer. I am interested in trying out an experiment in Ponorogo. For SRI, don't promise an increase in production; production increase is only an extra benefit of the SRI system. In the future, suggest that farmers

curb the use of chemicals. Don't look for too much help from other people, but help farmers find their own way.

d. Presentation from VECO (Peny)

Agriculture is the main focus of VECO - formerly FADO. In 2001 the VECO organization debated whether SRI should be tried within their program. With information from LEISA magazine, VECO tried to publish a Sustainable Agriculture magazine ("SALAM"). In certain areas in NTB (Dompu and Bima), experiments in SRI will be carried out in the future. Hopefully in implementing their experiments with SRI, VECO partners will work in cooperation with the local government (DINAS). Plans for the future will be continued in each organization (VECO partners) from input from this workshop. Technically speaking, VECO has yet to try SRI.

Discussion questions:

Muhrodli: What strategies have VECO been carrying out, and what problems have you encountered?

Answer: VECO is an organization from Belgium. A condition that has to be fulfilled is working in cooperation with local organizations (not directly). Model-oriented strategy, demands policy changes, changes that are not too high-sounding, like government programs.

Anischan Gani:

Gogo rancah can be used with low rainfall. Do we need to implement SRI? In NTB, rainfall is sufficient. Need e-mails addresses of VECO partners to provide them with information. Does VECO make an Indonesian version of LEISA magazine?

Peny: Not all SALAM magazine articles are from LEISA magazine. There are several translations, and a column for local articles.

Anischan Gani: LEISA provides information on sustainable agriculture. LITBANG BALITPA needs something like the VECO magazine (LEISA).

Peny: Only three issues of SALAM magazine have been published, and they will be sent to BALITPA addresses.

e. LGP Presentation (Jarwo)

The background as to why we adopted the SRI model is because existing agricultural models cannot be implemented any more (a legacy of the green revolution); also because the price of inputs and chemical fertilizers are very high. It is hoped that with SRI we can increase farmers' incomes, take care of the ecosystem, maintain soil fertility levels, and improve farmers' human resources. From an economic angle, we hope there will be an increase in production, increased income, and the ability to curtail production costs as

much as possible. From a socio-cultural angle, we hope for a change in farmers' attitudes. From a political angle, farmers should have the freedom to determine their own choices.

Responses on SRI from LGP farmers: Extremely appropriate because SRI development is very dominant at farmers and organization levels.

Discussion questions

Supardi: You said the use of chemical inputs was very high. How high is that use from planting to harvesting?

Answer: On average, 8 *kuaintal* (1 quintal = 100kg) fertilizer and pesticide.

Parjono: We are currently still using chemical inputs, but use in the field has been reduced from 25-50 %.

Answer: There is already a curb on chemical fertilizer use, especially at the Farmer Field School graduate level. This can also be seen among FFS graduates throughout Java.

Sutoyo: A suggestion. When our friend from Sidoarjo was invited to Waru to see conditions in the field through observations, et cetera, next time, invite farmers along to see from the visit what groups should do.

Answer: SRI will be socialized to farmers, and experiments and analysis will be carried out and spread it to other places.

f. LPTP Presentation (Zamzaini)

The Rural Technology Development Foundation (Lembaga Pengembangan Teknologi Pedesaan - LPTP) was established in Solo in 1978. During its development, this foundation gave autonomy to each of its programs, so that it consisted of 5 autonomous organizations, i.e., Adiyasa Further Education, CB-tech (waste management), Tekad Invesco (economic development), Susdec (training and advocacy), and LPTP (sustainable urban, rural and waterways development).

The sustainable agriculture program was developed in lowland regions with technical irrigation, and in lowland areas using rain water. The sustainable agriculture program approach is conducted through field schools, where field school groups are geared toward becoming study centres for other farmers. In supporting communities, we should always learn together with farmers in seeking and producing innovations in effective and efficient agricultural management, relatively easy to implement in both dry land and wetland fields.

Being interested in SRI, LPTP is aware that until now, crop cultivation in a number of regions still refers back to technology spelled out in the green revolution that reached its peak with the food self-sufficiency initiative of 1984. However as a result of all sorts of

environmentally unfriendly technologies, there have been detrimental impacts on people and their environment.

Recent developments with the appearance of SRI have attracted the attention of several organizations including LPTP. SRI provides several alternatives for solving problems in rice cultivation. Apart from that, SRI also has a simple feel and is easy for farmers to implement.

Support information on SRI development: Before undertaking experiments, LPTP collected lots of information on the technical scope of SRI. These activities were assisted fully by World Education as a partner in developing the learning process through field schools.

The response of partner farmers, before experimenting with SRI, was not too optimistic and even tended to be scathing. However, after experimenting together in the field, SRI provided a good impact for farmers. It curtails operational costs and also maintains the ongoing preservation of the environment. This is proven by farmers' desire to try SRI in their own fields.

Preparing field staff to maintain the quality of the learning process with farmers, LPTP management pays serious attention to SRI. This was shown with the preparation of field staff right from the beginning, starting from seeking information, facilitating study trips, up to giving full authority to staff interested in gaining deeper understanding of certain technologies, so that each field staff member has certain expertise in accordance with his or her capacity.

Discussion questions:

PPL Delanggu: SRI has been talked about since 1990 and so far only the positive things have been said. How about the weaknesses over the long term so that we can anticipate what might happen.

Anischan Gani: For LPTP, specific locations are very important because SRI needs to be modified in accordance with farmers' abilities and resources. Dynamic implementation suiting conditions in the field, in accordance with government policies, because analytically, rice has yet to provide economic benefits for farmers. The obstacles to SRI that I see are at the farmer level. For them SRI is controversial with the methods used by farmers (regulating water, young seedlings, etc.). That is why farmers do not easily accept it just like that. Apart from that, there are difficulties with a lack of socialization and problems with waterway management. Therefore, consider it a high-risk methodology because of the habits of farmers up until now.

For the 'dinas' question, technology is always developing, and the same goes for its changes. So a technology packet is dynamic in nature and is not in fact determined by the government. Therefore, changes will happen based on time. Rice field areas in Indonesia are very narrow, meaning using airplanes for seeding will be extremely high cost. That is

why technology needs to be adjusted according to specific locations. An example is nuclear power from Japan that was previously used for electric lighting, but now forbids the use of nuclear power for electric lighting, so we must not use countries like Japan as examples. Regarding SRI, it is not from Japan, but its principles appeared from Madagascar.

Handoko: When we put together the modules we met first with Roland Bunch, who explained that SRI is not a technology, but revitalization of old rice planting principles.

3. Modules

SRI Modules written by World Education had already been used in the field for one year. During this opportunity, input was provided based on one year of experiences using the modules. Input from the workshop forum was as follows:

- a. Front cover, should not be a photo of crops using the *legowo* model because SRI suggests using square plant spacing. Besides facilitating weeding, this also gives roots more room to develop to the right and left.
- b. More material is needed in the module on seed selection so that farmers gain an understanding of healthy (normal) seeds.
- c. Weeds (page 4): Bear in mind that intercropping with pulses is impossible, except in dry crop fields.
- d. Seed bed nurseries (page 8): Nursery media need to be adjusted according to local potentials (not necessarily with wooden boxes). It would be better to make use of local resources (could be banana plant stems or even directly in the field itself). More attention to maintenance and crop care also needed.
- e. Seedlings (page 10): It should be explained that seedlings better not be over 7-12 days old when planted because beyond this age new tillers start to appear.
- f. Seedling removal and planting (page 12): Needs further explanation as to reasons for planting young seedlings and the principles of root configuration during planting – that is, roots are not bent up, but are horizontal, and when possible could be planted at an angle.
- g. Plant spacing (page 14): Better not to state plant spacing in the background section because there are no guarantees that land is prepared in each location. The ruler is not representative because the picture shows *legowo* plant spacing.
- h. Planting (page 17): The picture should further clarify planting depth and root direction as well as a picture of planting and the soil; could include the soil level and how far the roots reach.
- i. Weeds and weeding (page 21): The alternative of controlling weeds with intercropping would be best left out of the module (intercropping). Weeding is best done after 2 weeks – earlier and more intensively. Best to get rid of the picture of intercropping.

VII. Follow Up

After 4 days of sharing experiences on SRI, each farmers group and NGO produced work plans for their regions. These follow-up plans are as follows:

1. Farmers

| Location | Type of experiment | Field size | Participants | Assistance needed |
|---|--|-----------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Sido Mekar Farmers Group (Klepu - Ponorogo) | | | | |
| Meseri (Dec. 2003) | Seedling age 12 days Plant 1 seedling Planting spacing 20 cm X 20 cm and 30 cm X 30 cm | 150 m ² | 12 people | Design experiments, observation |
| Makmur Farmers Group (Sidoharjo-Klaten) | | | | |
| Ponadi (July 2003) | Compare organic and chemical fertilizers, <i>sintanur</i> varieties (3 times) | 1600 m ² | 10 people | Design experiments, observation, field plotting, analyze farming businesses |
| Subur Makmur Farmers Group (Waru –Boyolali) | | | | |
| Parjono (Nov 2003) | Plant 7-14 day-old seedlings, plant 1 seedling/hill, plant spacing at 20 cm x 20 cm and at 30 cm x 30 cm | 1800 m ² | 8 people | Design experiments, observation |
| Sukamandi and Karanganyar (North Sumatra) | | | | |
| Asri | Organic and chemical fertilizer doses | 8000 m ² | 10 people | Guide book and design experiments |
| Supardi | Using organic fertilizer | 20.000 m ² | 15 people | Guide book and design experiments |
| Krido Mulyo Farmers Group (Sambon-Boyolali) | | | | |
| Collective fields | Seedling age, fertilizer doses (high, medium, low and without fertilizer) look at production costs | 600 m ² | 8 people | Design experiments and support |
| Karya Bakti Farmers Group (Seputih Raman-Lampung Tengah) | | | | |
| Sugiyo (Nov 2003) | Compare planting 1 and 2 seedlings/hole, seedling age 12 days, plant spacing at 25 cm x 25 cm | 600 m ² | 20 people, men and women | Design experiments and technical support and ATK |
| Collective fields (Nov 2003) | Collectively implementing SRI | 4400 m ² | <i>Sda</i> | <i>sda</i> |
| Individuals | Implementation | | | Individual |
| Adil Makmur Farmers Group (Papanrejo-Grobogan) | | | | |
| Klp.Tani | Plant spacing 20 cm x 20 cm, IR 64 ss varieties, 1 seedling/hill and 5-6 seedlings/hill | 600 m ² | 13 people | SRI Module, ATK, partners |
| Sendang Mulyo Farmers Group (Kebonagung-Demak) | | | | |
| Mangunan Lor | Compare SRI with local methods | 800 m ² | 20 people | Module, ATK and support |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------|-----------|---|
| Tanjung Sari (July 2003) | Plant spacing 25 cm x 25 cm, 20 cm x 20 cm, seedling age 7-10 days, Membramo | 300 m ² | 15 people | Design experiments, observation and support |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------|-----------|---|

2. NGOs

| No | Organization | Planned activities |
|----|-----------------|---|
| 1 | PANSU | Make an education and training program for Sungai Ular farmers in 3 hectare fields (5 years) gauge SRI, small-scale training in 8 villages, no funding or support information as yet, Promote SRI to the organic agriculture network |
| 2 | JWJL | Experiments at staff level, experiments at farmers level 4 groups each consisting of 20 farmers, coordinate with the authorities for program access, internal funding |
| 3 | ALGHEINS | Discussions in the organization, farmers forums to discuss SRI, promote SRI to the organic agriculture network, work together on innovations with the Indonesian Farmers Network, funding as yet to be discussed with the organization |
| 4 | LPTP | Cooperate with study centers to pass on experiment results to group members, disseminate information about SRI through brochures, visits to study centres in Demak, Karang Gede, Sambon, Gubug, Tanjungsari, and Sidoharjo, with or without donors, LPTP is still keen to implement SRI as long as it is of benefit to farmers, development of SRI via the sustainable agriculture program umbrella |
| 5 | VECO | Undertake experiments in SRI with partners in NTB. |
| | LPSM (Bima) | Develop SRI FFSs with farmers, discuss SRI and cooperate with regional technicians |
| | LPMP (Dompu) | Experiment with SRI in 7 villages, workshops on experiment outcomes, development of SRI, monitoring and evaluating SRI |
| 6 | LGP | Will discuss workshop outcomes with organizations first in order to determine strategies for SRI issues |
| 7 | World Education | Technical fortification, development of an international network, a national scale SRI program (?) |

VIII. In Closing

We are all aware that agricultural technology will always continue to develop from year to year. Therefore, all of us, whether we farm directly or act as support partners, should always be prepared and wise in dealing with every emerging technological issue. SRI is currently popular with rice farmers because, based on experience, SRI can increase production and reduce farming costs.

Therefore it will be wiser if experiments with farmers carry out their evaluations together through a learning process in the field so that passing on information is not merely technology transfer, but is a process of mutual learning.