

Enhancing livelihoods of livestock dependant poor people through increasing use of fodder: India and Nigeria

Problem Definition

The problem to be solved was the shortage of fodder for cattle in both dry land agriculture and irrigated areas, which was constraining the poor livestock keepers from enhancing their livelihoods. Initially informal discussions between farmers, researchers, extension specialists and other service providers along with formal surveys with a limited number of farmers were organised. This reinforced the hypothesis that shortage of fodder from dual-purpose crops in dry land areas and planted forages in irrigated tracts was the problem to be addressed. Accordingly a high yielding groundnut cultivar and an improved variety of a perennial fodder were accepted as candidate intervention strategies. However, with the continued interaction of actors and the basis of results after a couple of seasons it was realized that technology per se, while it was important, was not the problem. It was reconciled that institutions, actors responsible for the institutions and the knowledge generation and application by them to facilitate the service delivery were the underlying issues to be addressed. Fodder shortage was only a symptom of the complex problem

Research Management

The Research, “ Enhancing livelihoods of poor livestock keepers through improved fodder use”, was developed in a Project mode to start with. It had clearly stated outputs, targets etc. During the first year it remained an implementer of research with pre-determined activities aimed at generating technology based solutions to the Project-identified fodder problems. However, from second year onwards the focus changed towards *‘Empowerment of a multi-stakeholder network or system’*. That far the Project changed from implementation to a facilitation mode by providing a platform for learning through partnership. The partners who are mostly from civil sector organisations worked closely with farmers and other actors. The partners were encouraged to learn from actions and incorporate learnings into subsequent planning. Farmers’ field days and FGD with farmers before and after harvest of the crops were used as platforms for learning from

farmers and other resource persons. The change in learning approach from a technology transfer to creation of solutions, however, was not fully achieved.

Program Organization

The civil society partner organisations like Dairy union, NGOs and a parastatal organisation like NDDB (National Dairy development Board) served as boundary organisations. In the role of a facilitator, the Project also took upon itself the boundary spanning function by organising learning fora at local, Project and National level where research scientists, other public, private and civil sector personnel participated. However, the boundary spanning was limited to exchange of ideas and ‘informing the research/researcher/service provider the farmers’ perspective. While the initiative was aiming at a multi stakeholder perspective on fodder solutions, it has not been able to provide safe/neutral spaces for a dialogue across knowledge generators and decision makers. More work is needed before the actors are facilitated to take up actions on the basis of shared understanding

Decision-support system

The Project did not provide for an end-to-end system. The project with its emphasis on capturing multiple actor perspective or empowering a multi actor coalition, at best, can be seen as a prelude to developing an end-to-end integrated system. In one of the case studies where different groups of a community innovated an institutional arrangement in the form of ‘leasing’ small areas of land for fodder production, the Project studied and characterised the experiential capacity build-up process that entailed the innovation. The lessons from that might be useful for targeting other areas.

Learning Orientation

Yes the Project has experimental orientation. The approach of the Project after its first year changed to learning and to this end it analysed both success and failure. The success and failure were identified from the perspective of poverty reduction and equity. In 2004 the funding agency did the evaluation and critiqued the approach and accordingly the project changed from a project to learning by doing stance. In 2005 there was an

Output-to-Purpose review carried out by an outsider, which acknowledged the change in the learning approach of the Project. Project learnt that it was not enough if the multiple actors were consulted but should be facilitated to arrive at a shared understanding/perspective by way of designing solutions through technology and institutional arrangements. A flexible, open-ended approach with due attention on institutions, policy and technology is required.

Continuity and Flexibility

More than budget, human resources are a constraint for learning oriented Project. Disciplinary and commodity oriented personnel in partner organisations make it difficult for the project to get an interdisciplinary multi-stakeholder perspective. The skills of facilitation are hard to come by. Unequal influence or lack level playing field across players compound the problem. Critical mass of facilitators that help in process monitoring, evaluation (plus leadership) is a requirement.

Other Insights?

Participatory process Evaluation (PPE) through out the life of the project is essential to capture the 'back-end' of any development intervention. The K to A link is best characterized and appreciated by PPE. However, the skills required for PPE are not always available or the importance of PPE is still not recognized.

Contact information

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