PRACTICAL GUIDELINES: Identification of varietal selection criteria of the farmers during evaluation of trials

If it is necessary to evaluate a range of varieties with a substantial number of farmers (> 30), it is recommended to focus on a reduced number of criteria when evaluating varieties. To identify the farmers' criteria and to learn how the farmers evaluate and define these criteria, the following steps are suggested:

1. Repeat the conditions of the target crop for the trial and repeat the objectives retained for the trial.

2. Visit all the plots. The experimenting farmer can explain the conditions of the crop management and the operations that have been effected.

3. Form groups among the visiting farmers according to sex, village etc. Animate and encourage a discussion on the differences between the plots and the entries that have been observed. To facilitate the discussion, the following questions can be asked:

    i.   What difference have you observed? Does the observed difference represent an advantage or a disadvantage?

    ii.   Do the entries correspond to the target conditions? Are there some entries that correspond more than others? Why or how did you identify them?

    iii.   What are the differences between the local variety and the new varieties? Are the observed differences an advantage or a disadvantage?

    iv.   …

4. Draw up a collective list of all the criteria mentioned by the various groups.

5. Choose the three most important criteria. If the various groups cannot reach a consensus on the three criteria, it is possible for each group to come up with their own three criteria.

6. Encourage the farmers to provide a definition of each criterion: how it is characterised and what its merits are. To facilitate this exchange, it is possible to show or cut panicles in the plot that represent (or do not represent) particular aspects under discussion. Using the table below, document the definition of the criteria and establish/ define the scores for the level of appreciation for the criteria.

Criterion	Definition and importance