Facilitating Social Learning through Farmer Research Networks

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Outline

• FRNs in BBIII and BBIV projects
• Advancing actor participation in knowledge building
• Beyond traditional field days
• Filling in gaps in existing systems
• Then what?
From BBIII to BBIV project: Scaling FRNs

BBII project: Few and isolated FRNs supporting soil health

BBIV project: Scale FRNs (number and space)

FRNs Institutionalised (linked to national extension system)

Strengthen partnership of multiple actors supporting soil health

Generate soil health options suitable to diverse contexts (based on scientific, indigenous, and local knowledge)

Improved soil health and livelihoods of small-scale farmers
Building Knowledge together: Designing farm level experimentation

- Analyse context (e.g., landscape, farming system)
- Identify gaps (farming problems, gaps with existing technologies)
- Suggest new solutions or ways of improving existing technologies (science, indigenous, traditional)
- Select options to test and agree on test plots layout (treatments and control)
- Agree on type of data to collect and how to record
- Agree on management of the test plots

Farmers, agronomists, soil scientists, extensionists
Multiple actors learning from multi-environments: Joint field interactions

Site A: Upland plots

Plots to visit randomly selected from each site

Farmers, agronomists, soil scientists, extensions workers observe, discuss and draw lessons from sites A, B and C

Site B: Plots close to houses

Site C: Downstream plots

Options tested in multi environments + options experienced by multiple actors = Knowledge for adapting options to suit contexts
Institutionalising FRNs from grassroots: The District Agriculture Extension Services System

- FRN as a catalyst for local agriculture development
- Source of information for farmers in the community
- Provide evidence on performance of options to national organisations
So what is next?

• Develop and improve on individual tools for facilitating FRNs
  • E.g., analysing data with farmers
• Gather evidence on the effectiveness of the FRNs on improving soil health
• Disseminate experiences and lessons from BBIII and IV projects