



Extension Service in Guyana's Rice Industry

Presented at Workshop on Technology Transfer in Irrigated Rice, July 20-21, 2006

Acarigua, Venezuela

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Introduction

- This rice industry is second most important agricultural industry in Guyana accounting for about 40 % of the agricultural sector GNP or 12 % of GDP.
- There are about 10,000 farm families that are involved in rice production.
- Area cultivated: 120,000 Ha.
- During the 1990's annual padi production was 500 MT, with average yield of 3.8 MT/Ha.
- In 2005, rice production dropped to 420,365 MT of padi with a yield of 3.9 MT/Ha.

Background

- Extension in the Rice Industry started as Ministry-based extension in 1905
- This was adopted by the Rice Development Company in 1969
- The GRDB continued with the similar training and visit approach in 1995
- Adopting Farmers' Field School as an extension approach begun during the Autumn Crop 2003
- In the early stages, F.F.S was conducted in the form of a farmer-to-farmer grouping
- Formal F.F.S approach commenced during the Spring Crop 2004.

The Role and Function of Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB) in Extension

- To provide technical production information that meet farmer's needs.
- To engage in off station testing of new varieties, fertilizers, pesticides, water management practices and land preparation operations developed by the research station.
- To work in collaboration with farmers identifying production problems and advising on corrective measures.
- To provide field services in terms of crop survey, reporting and distribution of seed padi.
- There are 25 extension officers employed to provide this service.

General Characteristic of Farmer Field School

- Small observation trials were established with a view to address farmers' concerns in relation to the management of their crop.
- School lasted for the entire cropping season.
- F.F.S participants met once per week.
- F.F.S activities involved collection of data, agroecosystem analysis, special topic and group dynamics activity.

Conclusion

- Approach of using comparative trials has continued to bring more enthusiasm and vitality into the Farmer Field School operation.
- Establishment of the Farmer Field School has created an opportunity for more contact between farmers and extension officers.
- FFS is serving as a platform for improved exchanges and more constructive relationships between farmers, extension agents and researchers.

Future Trends and Challenges

- Human resources development to develop decision making capacity of farmers.
- Since no one approach can be effective to carry out extension, the search for improved extension methodologies will have to be an ongoing process.
- The new information technology (IT) could remove physical barriers to a great extent through the development and application of appropriate, interactive, information mechanisms.
- Making extension interdisciplinary and integrated within other developmental programmes needs to be pursued.



Thank You