

Participatory research methods for varietal selection and improvement of sorghum/ millet production

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES: open evaluation—qualitative data

Context: to be used when the researcher is not familiar with the opinions of the farmers in regard to a certain technology and wishes to explore the opinions and experiences of the farmers in connection with such technologies. Procedure:

1. Planning:

- Define the objective of the evaluation: which type of information, with which technology, with which type of key personnel/resource persons (farmers, cattle rearer/ stock breeder, children, processors etc)
- Choose the resource person to be interviewed
- When and where will the evaluation take place?
- Inform and involve partners well in advance, create confidence

2. Opening phase:

- Greetings
- Present the objective
- Establish the neutrality of the researcher/ technician/ interviewer: the farmer is free to make positive or negative comments
- Clarify expectations: how will the data be used?
- Explain the procedure, the “rules”
- Explain the functions of each person in the group
- Invite the farmers to ask questions

3. Dialogue/ interview phase at the evaluation site:

- Verify that objectives and procedure have been correctly understood
- Record the name and other basic information of the farmer
- Conduct an open evaluation with open questions and opinion polling that encourages the farmer to express his opinions and ideas; take note of the exact words and expressions that the farmer uses, ideally in the local language
- It is possible to ask direct questions to facilitate comprehension
- Note observations on the interview separately

Open questions:

*What do you think of this variety?
How do you rate this trial?
What else could you tell me about this plot?
What have you observed?
What is your experience with that?
Could you give me a few reasons for that?
Could you help me understand that better?
Do you have any other views about this?*

Probing Questions:

To understand more clearly what the farmer has said and for clarifying the translation of certain terms:
*What do you think of this colour?
What does the term “short cycle” mean to you?
Why do you believe that this is good or useful?
Have I understood this correctly?*

4. Final phase:

- Revise notes and comments with the farmers
- Verify the acquired information by summarising it with the farmers
- Agree with all partners on future/ follow-up activities
- Express gratitude
- Assign a code identifier to each interview