With this first issue of the PTD Circular, ILEIA takes the initiative to spread documented experiences on participatory technology development in Low-External-Input and Sustainable Agricultural (ILEISA). Recently, Europe-based advocates of the approach met in Germany and the request for a regular update was heard frequently. Now that interest in participatory technology development or farmer participatory research approaches has increased considerably, more and more field experiences are becoming available and developments are going fast. However, very few of these experiences reach people working in the field. This circular hopes to bridge the gap in an informal way. It aims to keep people informed on recent experiences, publications and audiovisuals on PTD. We also hope to inform you on recent and upcoming workshops and training opportunities.

Participatory Technology Development covers methods in working with farmers in problem analysis, looking for opportunities, experimentation, monitoring and evaluation, farmer-to-farmer extension and local institutional development to sustain all this. The danger exists that we try to cover too many areas and make this update too thick and less useful. We hope to prevent this by:

- focusing only on experiences where outsiders support and/or participate in development work of farmers,
- focusing on actual experiments by farmers and farmer-to-farmer extension as areas of key interest (but maintaining the above overall perspective)
- including experiences from other areas such as participatory analysis, problem diagnosis, monitoring and evaluation only if they refer to an integration or overview of a number of cases, or if they are very innovative. Many of these experiences are also reported in the excellent RRA Notes, available free of charge from IIES, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H 0DD, United Kingdom.

If you have new information in the field of PTD, that you would like to be made known to a wider audience, please inform us. Don’t forget to include the source of your information, so that readers may obtain a copy from that person or organisation.

This first update contains not only all PTD documents received in the ILEIA library in 1993, but also other publications that colleagues suggest to us. A new update will be published twice a year, in future also including new PTD entries in international databases. If you wish to obtain copies of publications or audiovisuals, please take up contact with the author or publisher mentioned. Photocopied can only be ordered (at cost price), if sources are unknown or difficult to trace.

We would appreciate your comments on this initiative. Do we focus on the right topics? Do the updates meet your expectations? Your suggestions may lead us to narrowing or widening the focus as the need arises.

Note that only this first issue is sent to all ILEIA Newsletter subscribers. The next issues will only be sent to those of you who return to us the subscription form.

Contact: Laurens van Veldhuizen and Ann Waters-Bayer, editors.

Bielek, J vd and Veldhuizen, L van. 1993. Developing tools together. ETC Foundation, PO Box 64, 3830 AB Leusden, Netherlands. Giving the results of a study commissioned by GATE/GTZ on role of PTD in appropriate technology programmes. With a review of many experiences with PTD in appropriate technology, the report outlines the possibilities of applying the approach in developing tools and equipment and it identifies complicating factors.


Ifira research, Benin, farming systems, farming systems development, indigenous knowledge, oil palms, rapid rural appraisal, soil fertility.

This case study (thesis) of the response of the Adjia people of South-West Benin towards the changing environment aims at increasing our understanding of what is called Rural People's Knowledge (RPK) and the way it is generated, adapted, and exchanged. Studying the Adjias' concepts related to soil fertility as compared with conventional scientific understanding, leads to new insights in local farming systems. It shows how much can be learned about ways rural people learn, 'make sense' of new ideas by studying in detail their experiments and innovative activities.

Chambers, R. 1992. Rural appraisal: rapid, relaxed and participatory. IDS Discussion Paper 311, IDS, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK. Methods, participatory methods, rapid rural appraisal, rural development, social participation, farming systems research. The paper attempts to give a state-of-the-art of PRA development and links practical experiences with more conceptual discussions. After tracing the origin of PRA, it explains how RRA, Rapid Rural Appraisal, became...
PRA after realising that interaction with farmers should not primarily aim at extracting information for outsiders’ use but directly support farmers in their own development efforts. Although no systematic comparison has been done on the whole range of PRA methods presently available, evidence presented suggests that results of PRA are not less than those of exhaustive studies requiring much higher inputs. Main challenge mentioned is the need to spread the approach while safeguarding quality, without formalising it too much. This will be especially difficult in larger, often bureaucratic, organisations. A very good overview of present experiences and thinking in PRA.

Fliert E van den. 1993. Integrated pest management: farmer field schools generate sustainable practices: a case study in Central Java evaluating IPM training. AUW Thesis, Wageningen, Netherlands. In assessing the impact of the Indonesian IPM programme this study clearly establishes the link between the new way of looking at agricultural development and a participatory extension and technology development approach. Farmers are encouraged to more critically observe developments within their farm and actively manage the ecosystem with more room for own experimentation.

Hagmann, J. 1993. Farmer participatory research in conserva
tion tillage: approach, methods and experiences from an adapt-
tive on-farm trial programme in Zimbabwe. Paper presented to 4th Annual Scientific Conference of the SADC Land and Water Management Research Programme. An important element in participatory research is developing true partnership between farmers, extensionists and researchers. Intensive joint workshops in the “Training for Transformation” approach are an effective means to achieve such partnership. It further describes the specific experimental design aspects of participatory research in soil conservation.


This book contains over 40 (summaries of) papers written for the 1991 workshop “Environment and the Poor” in Kenya. Apart from inventoring existing agro-techni
cal options for better land husbandry these papers cover social and economic aspects (land tenure, cost benefit analysis of village level investment in management of natural resources). The authors give convincing evidence for the need for and potential of a different development approach, with priority to linking with and supporting farmers’ efforts. The importance of monitoring and evaluation to accelerate learning from field experiences is emphasised. It finally outlines a training strategy which is crucial if the recommended shift towards a participatory development approach is to become reality.

Koudoukpon V (ed.). 1992. Pour une recherche participative : stratégie et développement d’une approche de recherche avec les paysans au Bénin. KIT, Mauritshåde 63, 1092 AD Amsterdam, Netherlands. DRA, BP 884, Cotonou, Benin. 96 p. ISBN 90 6832 048 3. Dfl 29.00. Agricultural research, Benin, farmers participation, participatory research, research methods. Since the beginning of the 1980s the Agricultural Research Department of Benin is developing new, more participatory, research approaches. This book describes the experiences of the first 5 years of one of its programmes, Recherche Appliquée en Milieu Réel (RAMR). Step-by-step, they developed such an approach within a general conventional research context. The evolution of the RAMR approach from researcher controlled on-farm research to farmer-controlled experimentation is very well documented and analysed and provides important lessons for other programme working towards a participatory research approach in similar contexts.

Metrick H. 1993. Development oriented research in agriculture: an ICRA textbook. ICRA PO Box 86, 6700 AB Wageningen, Netherlands. 297 p. ISBN 90 73041 16 3. Dfl 50.00. Agricultural extension, agricultural knowledge systems, agricultural research, data collecting, experiment on farmers, farm surveys, farming systems research, indigenous knowledge, on-farm experimentation, participatory rural appraisal, rapid rural appraisal, research programmes. This textbook is closely linked to ICRA’s annual seven-month course. It describes and analyses all phases of development oriented research: planning, farming systems study, survey methods, data collection and analysis, organisation of field study, on-farm experimentation and the final evaluation. A good overview of the debate on development oriented research, including PTD.


data collecting, farmers participation,
methodology, technology assessment
A practical training guide based
on the earlier handbook on far-
ners evaluation by CIAT Colombia.

Raintree, J. n.d. Farmers and
researchers together: observa-
tions on the social psychology of
information processing in a
community-based R&D team.
MS. 21 pp.
Describing the experiences with
promoting experimentation with
non-innovative communities in
the Philippines. It analyses socio-
cultural constraints on innovation
and information processing by
farmers and ways to overcome
these.

Schuerman, U and Brunold, S.
1993. Extension in animal 
husbandry: highlights of a workshop 
mission to Indo-Swiss Project
Andhra Pradesh. Lindau: LBL.
The workshop analysed how PTD
activities could fit within the large
government extension service for
animal husbandry serving over
20,000 villages. The report pro-
poses an institutional arrange-
ment for this, distinguishing
between PTD and so called
farmer-interactive-extension (FARINEX).

Sikana P. 1993. Mismatched
models: how farmers and scien-
tists see soils. In: ILEIA
Newsletter v.9 no.1 (March 1993)
p. 15-16
farmer-scientist interaction, soil classifica-
tion, soil sciences, soil types, Zambia
Peasant farmers describe differ-
ent kinds of soils and their uses
according to categories which do
not fit into the classification
system of soil scientists. Sikana
argues that the scientists - rather
than the farmers - will have to
change their way of looking at
soils.

Stolzenbach A. 1993. Farmers’
experimentation: what are we
talking about? In: ILEIA
Newsletter v.9 no.1 (March 1993)
p. 28-29
experimenting farmers, Mali, on-term
experimentation
Farmers’ experimentation is allot-
ted great importance in
Participatory Technology
Development. This article reports
the results of a study on how
farmers in Mali perceive their
experimental work, how they are
changing their agriculture how
they learn.
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Audiovisuals

CIAT. 1990. The IPRA method (Participatory research in agriculture). CIAT, AA 6713, Cali, Colombia. 20 min. video (VHS).

Participatory research, on-farm experimentation, farmer-scientist interaction


ICLARM, MC PO Box 2601, Makati, Metro Manila 1778, Philippines. 24 min. (PAL),

aquaculture, fish ponds, human nutrition, Malawi subhumid zone

ICRISAT. 1992. Participatory research with women farmers. 22 min. ICRISAT, Patancheru, Andhra Pradesh 502 324, India.

Participatory research, women’s participation, rural women, on-farm experimentation, pest control, cowpeas, plant breeding, pest resistance, watersheds, genetic diversity, plant protection, traditional varieties, India semiarid zone

Intercooperation Sri Lanka.

We could do what we never thought we could. PRA Training in Sri Lanka Dry Zone. (VHS). Intercooperation, 92/2 Senanayake Mawatha, Colombo 8, Sri Lanka.

IPM Programme Indonesia.


Available for Rs 35,000 per copy, plus postage, from Studio Audio Visual Puskat, PO Box 75, Yogyakarta 55002, Indonesia.


Community forestry, community self-management, development projects, farmers, forestry policies, participatory methods, reforestation, social participation, villages, Senegal, farmers participation, semiarid zone.