

Farmers are more convincing on video than in person

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STUDY

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Introduction

Bangladesh became self-sufficient in rice by 2005, in part by adopting irrigated, dry-season rice. This led to a new problem: how to dry rice seed during the heavy rains of the early rainy season?

Videos more effective than farmer-to-farmer extension

From 1999 to 2002 researchers interacted with women farmers to improve their seed, creating technology that raised yields by 5-15%. The project then used farmer-to-farmer extension to reach 13,000 farmers by the end of 2004.

Meanwhile, in another project operating with a much smaller budget, the authors researched local knowledge and involved rural women in developing video scripts. The team produced four, 6-8 minute videos on managing rice seed.

In 2005, researchers surveyed 1,252 women who had seen the videos in 12 districts. Seven control villages were also surveyed. Over 70% of the women who saw the videos improved their seed drying. To deter storage pests, the use of plants such as neem increased from 9% to 67%, and 91% of the women learned to expel air from their storage container.

Almost all the women stopped drying seed on the ground. Women were surprised to learn that the sides of earthen pots are porous, and absorb moisture from the air. After the videos, many tried out different storage pots, or painted their ceramic vessels to make them airtight. After watching the videos, women tried 45 new practices (only 15 of which appeared on the videos). NGOs received 700 copies of the videos and within a year held 1,400 video shows for 131,000 farmers.

Conclusion

By the end of 2005, the cost of the video was repaid over 17-fold in the form of greater rice yields. Video proved better than farmer-to-farmer extension for conveying new scientific knowledge and local innovations.



Farmers can be pretty convincing, but especially on camera



After seeing the videos, women experimented with airtight seed storage containers, like this metal drum

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