India rice check program: A (new?) extension method in making

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While everyone would like to see impact of new technologies at a wider scale, very few appreciate the need for adapting new technologies to meet the varied requirements of different socio-economic, bio-physical, organisational and institutional settings. The Rice Check programme follows a procedure of extensionist-assisted farmer –group's self- learning tries to address these concerns.

We all know that - given the highly diverse and dynamic nature of the rice farming, research activities took explicit account of site-specificity by way of AICRIP System (All India Coordinated Rice Improvement Project). The AICRIP system aims at conducting multi-location trials and recommends location specific varieties/ hybrids and technologies. What is practical and profitable for farmers at any given site depends on the unique combination of bio-physical, socioeconomic, organizational and institutional circumstances. As a consequence, it is almost impossible for researchers to develop standard technologies that can be adopted on a large scale and thus easily replicated in different contexts. To address this problem, a participatory approach is proposed keeping in view the diversity of location specific conditions, with farmer experimentation, discussions, experiences, standardizing and adaptation of technologies.

Rice Check is an innovative farmers participatory extension methodology where farmers decide - what are the best practices for their fields based on the ‘experience’ rather than on ‘recommendations’ from the experts. The core activity under this approach is group discussions among farmers facilitated. Ricecheck is a procedure of extensionist-assisted farmer-group self learning.

RiceCheck can be defined as a dynamic rice crop management system that presents key technology and management best practice as key checks; checks farmer practices with best practice to compare results; and learns through farmers’ group discussion to sustain improvements in productivity, profitability, and environment safety. Simply, we can say that RiceCheck is learning by checking and sharing for best farming practice.

Rice check program benchmarks farmers' fields to identify practices (checks) for lifting yields and profits. Here comparison is made with best yielding farms rather than with the experimental plots (of research stations)

This has been proven in Australia, Philippines, Chile, Brazil etc., with certain modifications, we are piloting in India. There are 4 key principles and 8-10 checks for the 'Rice Check' programme. In India, Directorate of Rice Research (ICAR) has initiated this programme in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh in collaboration with AP Rice Research Institute, Maruteru (ANGRAU) and International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Philippines. The Indian experiences are shared in this paper extensively.

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