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## When Two Cups of Tea are a bit Expensive — Assessing Technology and Development Strategies from a Farmers’ Context Perspective

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### Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to address development strategies with respect to the interface between the global level, seen as international markets and agricultural research, and the local level, with a focus on marginal farmers. The absolute poverty which is the reality of marginal farmers forms a special challenge to development of technology and innovations which really are relevant and advantageous to the target group. Innovations and inputs that may appear economically feasible to the researcher may be prohibitively expensive to people living in absolute poverty.

The international agricultural research institutions have a strong tradition build on hierarchical thinking and expert domination. This tradition has been challenged and new, participatory approaches have become important and increasingly popular in research as well as in the development sector. However, the old expert paradigm is still alive, and many strategies are for instance still building on the assumption that farmers have interaction with extension officers as an end line of the research hierarchy, an assumption which often is misleading. Crop breeding programs, including bio-fortification efforts, are linked to a reductionist tradition which also may be at conflict with the complexities at local level, including multiple micronutrient disorders.

Successful research and development must build on contextual knowledge: take its departure the complexity of the local context, and the conditions generated by poverty. It will identify relevant constraints in plant growth conditions and resource entitlements of farming systems, access to inputs and markets, knowledge systems and routes of dissemination and spread of knowledge. This may include ‘indigenous’ technical knowledge and practices, but because the reality is under constant change also factors and institutions created by modernization: new soil constraints, new institutions, new knowledge pathways and communications. An escape from the linear extension model, and openness to new public/private partnership strategies is essential.

**Keywords:** Knowledge pathways, micronutrient, nutrition, strategies