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What Can we Learn from Country Comparisons of Investment in Farmer Education? The Case of Farmer Field Schools in Cotton in China, Pakistan and India

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Abstract

In this paper we present the results of the multi-country analysis of the impact of farmer training on the productivity of cotton and the in China, India and Pakistan. Data were collected under a project-specific impact assessment scheme which included a baseline survey in pilot areas and an impact survey in the year after the training, i.e. the first year that the training participants were able to apply their new knowledge and practices in their own fields. Hence the measured impact can be considered as conservative as the learning and practice change effect would develop over time.

Since panel data were available the methodology developed to assess training impact was a single period “difference in difference” model. Dependent variables included in the models were pesticide cost, yield, gross margin, and environmental effects using the environmental impact quotient (EIQ).

Results show that there are considerable differences in the effect of training among the three countries. Generally the productivity effects are higher in countries with lower yields such as for example in Pakistan. The major influencing variables are training quality and the initial level of farmer education. The results suggest that investment in farmer education can be efficient if the target population is well chosen and quality can be assured.

Keywords: Cotton, environmental impact, impact assessment, IPM, productivity