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## Feedback Seminars as a Tool to Contextualise Research Findings in Low External Input Systems

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### Abstract

Results of applied livestock research are supposed to have a meaning in both the scientific and the farmers' real life context. The former consists of conditions set by the discipline and the research community, such as formal criteria for scientific methodology, while the latter consists of the bio-physical and the socio-economic conditions in which farmers establish, maintain and develop their production systems. Especially in low external input systems, production has to be adjusted to these conditions. Considering the semantic dimension of information, something gains a meaning because of either having an inner pattern or because of being connected to a context.

This paper draws on 10 years of experience with feedback seminars in different MSc and PhD studies on low external input livestock systems. Feedback seminars are group discussions in which research findings are presented to and discussed with the farmers involved in the study. The seminars follow a systematic procedure which is adopted from scientific presentations and adjusted to the experience of the livestock keepers. This adjustment is reflected in the content of the introduction (outlining the importance of the research questions for the farmers), the description of the methods (using analogies to explain observation methods), the presentation of the results (visualising findings to be comprehensible to farmers), and interpretation of the results (discussing their relevance in the real life context). The challenges that these adjustments pose are presented along with possible solutions.

Various feedback seminars showed that livestock keepers are interested in learning about scientific results which are obtained by observation methods beyond their reach, help them to compare their own observations within a wider context exceeding their own observation range, and are based on aggregation of quantitative data hence provide additional analysis and evaluation options.

In feedback seminars, livestock keepers provided feedback on the validity of the research and on the meaning of the research findings in the local context. This feedback helps to contextualise research findings which is of prior importance in low external input systems. Furthermore this process lets the livestock keepers take part in the negotiation of meaning of research findings.

**Keywords:** Feedback seminars, livestock keeper, low external input systems