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Agricultural Innovations towards Smallholder Participation: Evidence from Central Java, Indonesia

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Abstract

The postulation for agricultural development programmes and projects to target pro-poor growth is of continuing relevance throughout the developing world. Indonesia's poor population is predominantly rural, with small-scale agriculture constituting the main source of income. Since poverty alleviation of smallholders is closely linked with the increase in productivity of traditional farming systems, innovations are required to improve people's livelihoods. Yet, innovations do not only refer to mere technical aspects, but also to “soft” ones, including changes in former practices. The study investigates the role of an agricultural innovation and its course of adoption for the case of high-value crops in Central Java, Indonesia. Semi-structured interviews were conducted among farmers applying papaya cultivation as a new farm element in Purbalingga Regency. Key informant interviews, focus group discussions and workshops were held to clarify the perspective of all stakeholders and identify sensitive moments, which have the potential to both hinder or facilitate the adoption process of innovations. Methods included the analysis of the farmers production environment, existing extension or advice services and approaches, as well as social networks and communication patterns. The study concludes that the inclusion of adopters' problems, needs and knowledge into the course of development and adoption of an innovation significantly depends on the active involvement of stakeholders. Evidence suggests that enhanced networks, communication flows and platforms are crucial for the diffusion of innovative ideas. At the same time they are linked with the reduction of farm risk through the mitigation of information gaps, the creation of knowledge and integration of know-how from all stakeholders into developed innovations. Capacity building nevertheless remains a basic requirement to support the adoption process of innovations and their adaptation to local farmers' needs and skills in order to achieve productivity increase for smallholder farming systems.

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