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Site Selection Criteria for Locating Innovation Platforms in a Dairy Development Project

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Abstract

Within the rural research and development communities innovation platforms are promoted as an efficient approach to stimulating change and achieving development goals. This paper discusses the selection of sites for locating innovation platforms within a dairy development research project on the basis of results from the initial innovation platform meetings. A village census was conducted in 93 villages of 2 sub-districts (Sult, Almora district and Bageshwar, Bageshwar district), covering variables such as marketing channels, dairy animal populations, active institutions, road accessibility and feed resources. Subsequently, 10–30 settlements (in 4–6 villages) were grouped into a total of 12 potential innovation platform clusters, based on their vicinity and interaction. Within each sub-district 2 of these clusters were selected, one with a high potential for dairy development and one with a medium potential. Potential is defined by dairy animals, cultivated land, quality of milk marketing channels and road accessibility. Innovation platform meetings are being held at regular intervals for developing the dairy value chain and for improving feeding systems. The discussions have been recorded in structured templates. Unsurprisingly, the high-potential cluster in Sult, Baseri, has quickly developed formal links with the state dairy co-operative and is interested in introducing new technologies such as concentrates or cross-bred cattle. However, platform members in Saknara, the medium potential cluster in this sub-district, are also discussing the establishment of a milk collection centre and are developing feeding interventions in their IP meetings. On the other hand, the high potential cluster in Bageshwar, Sainj, seems so crowded with development initiatives and institutions that it appears difficult to concentrate on specific constraints and actions. Finally, the mid-potential cluster in this sub-district, Chhona, is hardly showing any interest in improving dairy marketing or production. Here a large part of the community works at the local mine and depends on neighbours for milk. Thus, when estimating the potential interest of communities in marketing and production innovations the physical factors considered in the village survey appear to be valid where the social context is similar. However, including more social indicators seems to be especially important where the context shows considerable variation.

Keywords: Dairy development, innovation platform, site selection