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“Global food security and food safety:
The role of universities”

Advantages and Opportunities for Collaborative Research Between Universities and NGOs to Strengthen Food Security

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Abstract

Humana People to People (HPP) is a federation of 31 locally registered and managed non-governmental organisations on five continents. Improving the food security of the rural poor through the provision of extension services is central to their work in the global South. A recent meta-analysis of these so-called farmers' clubs aimed to compile lessons-learned to-date.

The farmers' clubs approach was first used in 2006 and has since been applied in more than 330 projects. Currently, approximately 90,000 farmers participate in the programme across 14 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Participants are organised into groups of 25–50 through which they receive training, tools and resources to sustainably increase production and income using locally-appropriate farming methods.

A meta-analysis completed in 2017 had the objective to provide an overall assessment and review of external evaluations of farmers' clubs projects that were carried out in different contexts and countries to identify good practices, commonly faced challenges and trends. It serves as an internal review on what has been learned to date, and to identify opportunities for improvements in future projects.

This paper outlines the added value of collaborative research for improved food security showing a concrete example of initial research done on farmer clubs. While extension services and NGOs can benefit from a scientifically solid evaluation of their impact on food security, the research community can gain from tailoring their project design and results presentation according to the needs of the NGOs. Moreover, stronger collaboration in research initiatives is likely to increase take up by NGOs and extension services in the field, thereby improving the impact that research results may have on food security. The paper will further explore opportunities for collaborative research on farmers clubs taking into account the extension service model's flexibility and outcomes from the meta-analysis.

Keywords: Collaborative research, extension services, farmer clubs, food security