

Developing agricultural solutions
with smallholder farmers

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How to get started with participatory approaches

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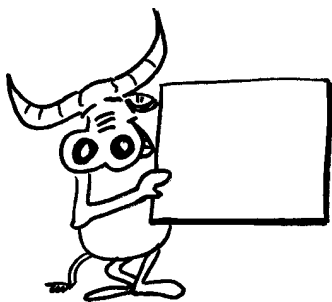
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This booklet is the third in the CIAT in Asia Research for Development series. The first two booklets are 'Developing forage technologies with farmers – how to select the best varieties to offer farmers in Southeast Asia' and 'Developing forage technologies with farmers – how to grow, manage and use forages'. All three booklets are available in Chinese, English, Indonesian, Khmer, Lao, Thai and Vietnamese (see contact addresses at the end of this booklet).



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••• Acknowledgments

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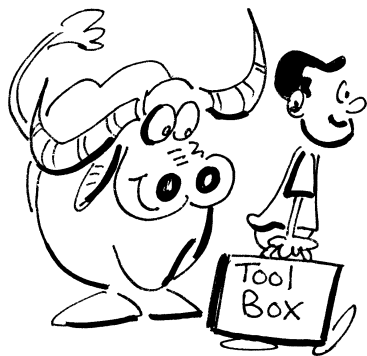
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Before you start . . .

1



Before you start . . .



We have written this booklet to help those who want to use participatory approaches in their work, but are unsure how to begin. It is not a manual to be followed 'step-by-step' but a 'toolbox' of ideas, practical tips and basic tools to help you get started with participatory approaches.

Like a carpenter, you will need a few special skills to be able to use these tools. This booklet provides ideas to help you develop these skills. Rather than trying to offer a comprehensive list of participatory tools, we simply present a collection of ideas, experiences and approaches that have worked for us. Don't be afraid to experiment and adapt the approaches in this booklet to fit your needs.

Some development workers are 'generalists' responsible for all agricultural research or extension in their area. Their job is to promote agricultural commodities, such as rice, livestock and fruit trees. Their main challenge is to identify the technologies that are likely to give the most impact in their area.

Other development workers and applied researchers are 'specialists' in a particular field, such as livestock feed or horticulture. Their main challenge is to identify the places where their particular technologies and expertise are likely to have the most impact.



WS



In this booklet we describe a participatory approach that is used by 'specialist' development workers in Southeast Asia to help smallholders integrate forages onto their farms. If you are a 'generalist' development worker, the principles will be the same, but you may have fewer choices about where you will work.

2

Why should I use participatory approaches?



Why should I use participatory approaches?

Farmers are natural experimenters. They are always trying new ideas and technologies to improve their farming practices. Before government extension services existed, farmers based this experimentation on their own knowledge and the experiences and ideas of other farmers in their area. Only in the last few decades have governments established research and extension agencies to help farmers improve agricultural production. Extension workers in these agencies usually promote technologies developed by researchers (such as new rice varieties), implement government programs (such as livestock credit schemes) and administer government regulations.

Take Note!



Farmers are keen experimenters - often all they lack is access to new technology options that have the potential to improve their farming systems and information about the potential benefits and limitations of these options.
