

LESSONS FROM PARTICIPATORY ON-FARM RESEARCH IN UGANDA

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The banana is the most important food crop and the second most important cash crop in Uganda. However, production is hampered by a combination of pests, diseases, declining soil fertility, insufficient water, and post-harvest and marketing problems. To address these problems, the Government of Uganda created the National Banana Research Programme in 1990. Subsequently, the programme has evolved through a series of levels that involved increasing farmer participation. At each level, the lessons that led to the next level were learned.

In a nutshell, a number of technologies that had been recommended, but which were in limited use, were rapidly adopted after their evaluation with full farmer participation. Unfortunately, the scientists realised that many of the recommended technologies were inappropriate. They were either too expensive to be utilised profitably in specific locations in Uganda, or too labour intensive to be used in areas where bananas were largely for home use (own food production). This paper discusses case studies through which these and other lessons were learned as a result of increased farmer participation in research and development.

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