

Innovative parboiling with videos

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Stimulating innovation

People who want new equipment, like metal pots, but cannot afford them, may be able to invent ways of using local material. The question is which is the best way to stimulate innovations, with conventional extension or videos?

Video vs. workshop

Parboiling rice (pre-cooking paddy by steam) is common in West Africa. Parboiled rice sells at a higher price and allows rural women to earn extra money. With traditional parboiling in a pot, some of the rice on the bottom stays in the boiling water and gets over cooked. The rice is then dried on the ground and contaminated with stones.

NGOs in Benin were offering two-day workshops on improved parboiling. A metal rice steamer with holes in the bottom was filled with paddy and placed on top of a pot of boiling water, to keep the paddy out of the hot water. Some other women's groups watched a video on rice parboiling.

Researchers interviewed 200 women and 17 women's groups in 20 villages in central Benin, including four control villages. Videos stimulated more innovations than the workshops did. 58% of the women in the workshops adopted the equipment supplied by the NGOs, but only 19% of them innovated, while 67% of the women who saw the videos innovated, often by using local materials to keep rice out of the boiling water.

Videos and workshops were mutually reinforcing; about 92% of the women who attended both video and workshops developed creative ways to parboil rice. More than 90% of the women who watched the video improved the quality of their parboiled rice, for example, by removing dirt, washing rice several times and drying rice on tarpaulins.

Women who watched the video also picked up other ideas, such as an improved stove that consumes less wood, and demanded training on developing such stoves from their local NGO.

Conclusion

Watching a video stimulates more innovation than attending a two-day, hands-on workshop. The video stimulates innovation by teaching basic principles and by showing how farmers themselves have adapted the ideas.



Women who saw the video on parboiling rice with steam came up with clever ways to avoid the rice touching the boiling water

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