Agricultural Innovation in the Volta River Basin: An Analysis of Changes in Knowledge, Skills and Livelihoods brought about by the Volta Basin Development Challenge

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Farmers in Volta Basin Development Challenge project sites are generally not developing brand new practices on their own. Information about new technologies is slowly spreading from projects to the wider community, but adoption of these technologies could be strengthened by creating an enabling environment. This would mean taking into account the five determinants of adoption identified here and programming accordingly.

Outcomes

New Practices in V2 Communities
• Tied and regular ridges that trap rainwater and prevent erosion
• Technique for sowing maize in rows using a rope with one seed per hole
• Ventilating livestock pens, building larger pens, cleaning pens more frequently
• Livestock vaccinations, free for project participants
• Mixing manure with inorganic fertilizer
• Using crop residue as fodder
• Composting (only new in some cases)
• Intercropping maize and soybeans
• Water pits to collect water for livestock
• Recording expenditures and budgeting
• Linking with market women (only mentioned by farmers’ group leader)

New Practices in V3 Communities
• Composting
• Onion storage houses with raised racks
• Transplanting technique for rice
• Improved varieties of rice and onions
• Technique for planting maize in rows and sowing only one seed per hole
• Waiting until market is high to sell
• Unity and conflict mediation

Purpose

1 To identify changes in knowledge, skills and practices that project participants and their neighbors report as a result of participating in the Volta Basin Development Challenge

2 To typify or characterize an “innovator” based on farmers’ adoptions and/or adaptations of new technologies

Method

A total of 44 semi-structured qualitative surveys were conducted, with a roughly equal division of gender and age:
• Upper East region: 10 participants, 9 non participants
• Upper West region: 20 participants, 5 non participants

Findings

Determinants of Adoption of V2 and V3 Technologies
1 Participation in projects
2 Access to inputs
3 Access to information
4 Ability to sell resulting products
5 Ability to mitigate risk