

Local innovation in a global context: documenting farmer initiatives in land husbandry through WOCAT

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Abstract

Innovation by farmers in land husbandry was the focus of the project Promoting Farmer Innovation (PFI), which was operational in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda from 1997 to 2001. One of the project's final activities was to document best-bet innovations. It was decided to make use of a questionnaire available under the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT) to collect data on a selection of these technologies. Data were fed back into WOCAT's global database. Eighteen technical initiatives were recorded in this way, and the findings added to existing data and in-house knowledge. This information was analysed and a technical report produced (Mutunga and Critchley, [2001](#)). The technologies included turning gullies into gardens, digging planting pits for millet and sorghum and harvesting water from roads. Each combined aspects of land conservation with improved plant production. While several required relatively high initial labour input, all were considered economically beneficial by the farmers. Adoption by other farmers was generally rapid, partially as a result of farmer to farmer visits under PFI. The value of the PFI-WOCAT exercise was not restricted to recording and disseminating information, however. It was also a test of the utility of WOCAT *within* a project. There were a number of interesting findings. Although those who filled the questionnaires found it an onerous task, they felt that they learned a good deal as they went through the process. One of the main conclusions was that the questionnaire could be a very valuable template to help guide internal monitoring and evaluation, if used from the start of a project intervention. Copyright © 2002 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.