FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

My dear readers of Journal of Extension Education,

Tell me and I forget, show me and I may remember,
involve me and I will understand

- A Chinese proverb

I was going through an interesting paper entitled, *Participatory action research: Easier said than done* (Simonson & Bushaw , 1993) recently, wherein the authors explain through cases how an ideal participatory research model did not work during that time due to several challenges faced while implementing. It has been over 25 years since the study was taken up and the situation has not improved significantly. Involving farmers as participants in the research process has still not been followed widely as it should have been, over the years.

Farmer-led research, which is also sometimes called farmer participatory research, is an approach where farmers and researchers work together – from the design of the project, to meet the diverse needs of different categories of farmers. It is not just asking the opinion of the farmers or inviting them to visit field trials; it is letting farmers make decisions about what kinds of technologies will be developed to carry out research themselves.

In the late eighties, Biggs (1989) had come out with four approaches to farmer participation:

- *Contractual:* Scientists contract with farmers to provide land or services.
- *Consultative:* Scientists consult farmers about their problems and then develop solutions.
- *Collaborative:* Scientists and farmers collaborate as partners in the research process.
- *Collegiate:* Scientists work to strengthen farmers' informal research and developmentsystems in rural areas.

Of the four approaches, Farmer Participatory Research stresses the third and, to a lesser extent, the fourth.

There is a general complaint that scientists who develop farm technology packages do not realize the extent to which farmers conduct informal experimentation with components of these packages. Before formal research and extension services existed, farmers' own experimentation had directed them to adopt or reject new technologies. Sociologists say that this farmer-experimentation acts as a springboard for developing locally appropriate technologies. Keeping this in mind, a project was taken up in ICAR-Sugarcane Breeding Institute, Coimbatore entitled, Farmers' Participatory Action Research Programme (FPARP) , during 2008-11 with farmers' participation in experimentation on improved sugarcane production technologies (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GL5kin1fZuI). In India, FPARP was implemented in 5000 villages, as suggested by the sub-committee on 'More crop and income per drop of water' headed by Prof.M.S.Swaminathan.

This project, which adopted the participatory approach, had shown that about 9.5 % yield improvement is possible with about 19 % water saving. This approach had given the much-needed confidence among the sugarcane growers that yield improvement through adoption of improved sugarcane technologies is possible with optimum irrigation water usage. Another significant achievement of this research is sustaining the farmer participation beyond the initial diagnostic stages of the project up to the evaluation stage. This was made possible as the experiments were conducted by the farmers in an independent manner facilitated by a multi-disciplinary team of researchers from the Institute, working out holistic solutions applicable to the local situations.

Therefore, it would be worthwhile for the extension practitioners to follow this participatory approach as and when necessary to initiate a systematic dialogue between the participating farmers and the scientists in order to provide sustainable solutions to the agricultural problems.

This issue of JEE contains papers on various interesting topics such as social media's influence, food consumption pattern, marketing behavior and attitude towards eco-friendly farming practices. Do send your feedback on these papers to editorextension@gmail.com.

Chief Editor