

APPENDIX I

The 'Beyond Farmer First' Researcher:  
A play in two acts

LORI-ANN THRUPP and JORGE UQUILLAS

Near the end of the IIED/IDS *Beyond Farmer First* Workshop in October 1992, Lori-Ann Thrupp and Jorge Uquillas performed a short play about the difficulties of operationalizing a *Beyond Farmer First* approach in the field and in a conventional agricultural research institution. The play raised much laughter and provoked many participants to nod their heads in agreement, for while there is more than a hint of irony in it, there is also a great deal of truth.

**Act I: The Beyond Farmer First Researcher and The Campesino**

The *Beyond Farmer First Researcher* (with no disciplinary identity) and the *Campesino* meet in a remote rural village in Latin America. The Researcher is part of an interdisciplinary team from an external support organization which is planning to initiate a farmer participatory research activity in the village. The Campesino is an 'average' peasant farmer. This is their first encounter.

RESEARCHER: Hello, my name is Sharing Interactiva. I work with a dynamic non-government organisation called INPABEFFA, which is the acronym for Interactive Non-Positivist Participatory Beyond Farmer First Associates. I'm very pleased to meet you! What is your name?

CAMPESINO: *Hola, me llamo* Jorge Camposeios – My name is George Dryfields. I live in Macondo. [They shake hands]

RESEARCHER: We've come to construct a creative interface with you and the community in order to engage in an interactive discourse regarding your adaptable indigenous knowledge, to appreciate and examine livelihood strategies, and to sensitively disaggregate differentiated social actors and confront conflictual relationships in order to facilitate a process by which you as agents in this agroecosystem become empowered to engage in analysis, resolve conflicts and legitimize your worldviews, as part of the contextual process of sustainable development.

CAMPESINO: [Looks puzzled] I'm sorry, but I don't understand what you're saying.

RESEARCHER: Excuse me . . . I'll try to use more direct semantics and linguistic clarity: we're very interested in learning from the

'insiders' in your community about your unique epistemologies and cosmovisions, while providing you access to ideas, methods and processes that may create an enabling environment in which the local knowledge base can be dynamized, appreciated by outsiders and validated for effective change.

CAMPESINO: I'm sorry again, Señora, but your words are foreign . . . What are you trying to tell me? You sound like a missionary.

RESEARCHER: Let me explain: we'd like to participate with people in your community and facilitate methods so you can identify and analyse your *own* problems, opportunities and needs, and establish your *own* priorities and action plans for sustainable alternatives and improved livelihoods.

CAMPESINO: 'Participate' . . . 'participar' . . . 'Facilitate' . . . 'facilitar' . . . I hear something maybe interesting . . . But tell me, what are you offering? Do you have money or seeds or fertilizers?

RESEARCHER: No, we don't have money. We instead have some very unique analytical frameworks, very innovative, post-positivist, post-populist methodologies, along with long-term commitment and skills for fostering participatory dialogue and self-critical awareness, for creating interactive and empowering processes!!!

CAMPESINO: [Starts to stand up and walk away] Listen, Señora, a lot of gringos and technical guys from the government come around here using big words and asking questions. They always have big promises, but things never work. We seem to get along better organizing our own ways . . . We don't have much time . . . [Starts to leave]

RESEARCHER: Wait! Wait! Please! Could I just ask a few questions, and maybe talk with your wife and family so we can get to know each other and I can explain?

CAMPESINO: [Hesitates] OK, OK . . . Come to my farm. I'll introduce you to my family and show you our farm and crops and we can start talking together . . .

**Act II: The Beyond Farmer First Researcher and The Deputy Director**

The *Beyond Farmer First Researcher*, whom we saw in Act I, meets with her supervisor, the *Deputy Director* of the Standard National Agricultural Research Institute. The Researcher has been developing a project using a participatory farmer-first approach and has submitted a progress report and proposal to the Deputy Director requesting additional support to begin Phase II. The Deputy Director has several concerns about the initiative.

DEP DIR:

I have reviewed your findings and I have considered your proposal for continuing a project using this farmer participatory approach. I must say that I am somewhat perplexed. Let me start with several questions [spoken in rapid succession]: *One*, where is your quantitative analysis? *Two*, have you used regression models to substantiate the findings and significant correlations? *Three*, what is your sample frame? Where is your control plot? *Four*, where is the cost-benefit analysis that shows the rate of return of investment in this project? *Five*, can you apply this methodology in another area and obtain comparable data? *Six*, the report describes achieving success for improving farmers' livelihoods and sustainability of agricultural ecosystems . . . Do you have measures for these concepts? What criteria of evaluation are used? *Seven*, the report also stresses participation of women in the research. I know this gender issue is important, but do you have *evidence* that women are contributing a significant percentage of labour to the gross agricultural income in this region? *Eight*, the proposal also discusses work with marginalized people in marginal areas. How do you intend to justify this when our institutional mandate is to work in areas where there is strong potential for high-yield production and income generation?

These are a few questions to start . . . I have additional queries and comments, of course . . .

RESEARCHER: Well, sir, I can attempt to answer each of these questions, but first let me explain some basic background information and the premises of this work. As I described briefly in the report, this project is based on a unique methodological and philosophical approach. It can be complementary to conventional methodologies used in this and other R&D institutions, but it is distinct in many ways. This work starts with the principle that the transfer-of-technology mode of research and extension has limitations and has not served the interests of resource-poor farmers in many areas. It argues that an alternative mode or *paradigm* of research and extension is needed to enable peasant farmers living in complex, diverse, risk-prone environments to be fully involved in and control the development process . . .

DEP DIR:

[Interrupts the Researcher] . . . Well, you know that your colleagues here do not generally *agree* with these ideas. Moreover, these new modes are contrary to the models and methods that we learned in our advanced institutions of professional training . . . [Points to the many diplomas and certificates hanging on the wall behind him].

RESEARCHER: I know that, sir, but you see there has been a transformation in paradigms. Farmer-first methods have been tried and used successfully in many parts of the world. Such methodologies are at the 'cutting-edge' of research in the agricultural sciences. They have been shown to generate processes of innovation and technology adaptation that meet the livelihood needs of poor farmers in a sustainable way. Our initial experiences here in this country have also shown great potential . . .

DEP DIR: Let me ask you another serious question: How do you expect to *publish* your results in the *Journal of Agricultural Economics* or *Crop Science*? Do you expect to earn your unit points with these findings?

RESEARCHER: Well, sir . . . perhaps other journals might . . . [Voice fades]

DEP DIR: Hmm, I'm not sure I understand your approach. You will have to present this proposal to the Board of Directors. And, frankly, I am not optimistic. This sounds *too* esoteric, *too* soft, *too* idealistic, *too* . . . suspicious. Maybe they use these participatory approaches in places like England or India, but we have different standards and different priorities here in this country. Given present international economic conditions, we must stress agro-exports and agribusiness productivity . . .

## APPENDIX II

### *Sources of information on agricultural development which are available free or at low cost to Third World readers*

It is not always easy to obtain up-to-date information on agricultural development. Academic journals are often very expensive and sometimes slow to catch up with innovations and trends in the field. Many good books on the subject are over-priced and hard to acquire. However, there are a number of institutions that provide relevant information either free-of-charge or at low cost to Third World readers.

**AFSR/E** – The Association for Farming Systems Research-Extension is a global association made up of individuals and networks involved in farming systems research and development. The association produces the *Journal for Farming Systems Research-Extension*, the *AFSR/E Newsletter*, regional journals and holds conferences and workshops regularly. Clive Lightfoot