

Perspectives on Knowledge Sharing in Research

The knowledge Sharing project of

ict-km

Collaborate, Create, Communicate
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Research project: ICARDA Participatory Plant Breeding Program

KS approach: International Farmers' Conference

Perspective: Ruqeia-farmer from Souran

Ruqeia is young woman from the village of Souran, located about an hour away from ICARDA's HQ in Syria. She was one of the Syrian farmers who attended the International Farmers' Conference, held 4th-8th May 2008. A visit was made to Ruqeia to follow-up with her on the Farmers' Conference.

After taking over the farming duties in her household after her father died, she has been facing the difficulties of farming and has been trying out a lot of things to improve her agricultural productivity. Thus when she was invited to participate in the Farmers' Conference she was eager to attend as she is interested in improving her farming knowledge and skills, and felt that the conference would offer her an opportunity to do this and more. When asked what she was expecting from the conference she indicated that her expectations were of discussions on problems experienced in farming and also sharing of some possible solutions.

She told us that at the conference she was at first scared and shy being with new people and in a new place. But when she started talking to people, she became more comfortable. A highlight for her was when she told her story, many people encouraged her and came up to her afterwards and told her that she was very knowledgeable in agriculture and should continue. This gave her a good feeling, made her more confident, and encouraged her a lot. When asked what she learnt from being at the conference, Ruqeia answered that she got a lot of information from each country that was represented about soils, crops, environment and practices. She learnt a lot of new things about planting, using fertiliser, harvesting and good practice for keeping seeds. While she learnt a lot from the farmers from other countries, she felt that the most benefit for her was from listening to and learning from other Syrian farmers who share the same conditions as her. She said that she wrote down everything and will use many of the things she learnt in her fields next year.



Ruqeia

Credit: Nadia Manning-Thomas, 2008.

When asked what could be done better for a conference like this, she responded that while it was good to have stories/speeches from all the farmers, she would have also liked to have speeches from the researchers. She was eager for the scientists to share their knowledge too. When asked what she liked about the Farmers' Conference, she responded that in most other conferences only some people get to talk and everyone else has to listen. But in the Farmers' Conference, everyone, especially the farmers, got to share their knowledge, methods and experiences.

When asked if she liked the storytelling approach as a way of presenting. She said *"of course, it was very helpful,"* and then added *"but it would also been good to have photos or some visuals so that we could see what the other places, approaches and real situations look like."* Other improvements

she suggested were that 'it would be better to sit at a table and tell her story rather than going up to speak at the podium in front of the whole room'. Another suggestion was that it would be better to have simultaneous translation since at times she got confused as the stories were translated between all the various languages.

While she knew about ICARDA before, the Farmers' Conference also allowed her an opportunity to understand better what ICARDA is and does, see and learn about their experiments and to get to know some ICARDA scientists.

Overall she was really happy to have had the chance to share her knowledge as well as learn from others.

As we were leaving, Ruqeia excitedly showed us the plants that were growing from seeds she had gotten at the Farmers' Conference-Seed Fair. She was curious to see what they were so planted them.

Truly a young farmer eager to learn.



Discussing with Ruqeia about the Farmers' Conference.
Credit: Nadia Manning-Thomas, 2008.



Ruqeia showing us the plants growing from seeds she got at the Farmers' Conference.
Credit: Nadia Manning-Thomas, 2008.