Can IPM Training Improve Farmer Skills for Scouting, Ecological Reasoning, and Decision-making? Impact Assessment Experiences from Central America (A04-staver053319-Oral)

Authors:

- C.P.Staver - *CATIE*
- F.Guharay - *CATIE*
- E.Kuan - *CATIE*

Abstract:

Farmers face variable and uncertain growing conditions which affect crops and their food web interactions. An approach for learning and experimentation by crop stage was developed for groups of farmers to analyze their cropping experience and current problems based on scouting results and to set up experiments linked to learning improved crop management. Extensionists training these farmer groups were trained in a group routine in parallel with farmer meetings and crop stage. Four methods were used to measure impact. Over 5000 farmers and 250 extensionists completed pre and post cycle workbooks which measured crop and pest knowledge and the use and testing of practices. Photographic multiple choice questions were used to test identification of pests and beneficial organisms and relations among pests, crop stage, and weather. Small teams of farmer promoters surveyed the perceptions of pests and practices of 100 farmers. A statistical study compared 300 farmers in training and 600 farmers outside of groups and training. Impacts were positive. However, simple knowledge acquisition and use of practices were easier to measure than capacity for reasoning and decision-making.

Corresponding Author Information:

Charles Staver
CATIE
Nicabox 112, PO Box 527444
Miami, FL 33152-7444
Managua, Nicaragua

phone: 505 2657268
fax: 505 2657114
e-mail: catienic@ibw.com.ni

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