

Going Public, the human touch

A quick, face-to-face method

GOING PUBLIC is an extension method which reaches large audiences (without the aid of electronic gadgetry) in public places like markets and bus terminals. Small teams of extensionists and scientists explain a topic, answer questions, run short learning exercises and get feedback from farmers. Unlike other face-to-face methods, GOING PUBLIC is quick, reaches many people from a wide area, and is open to everyone.

How to Go Public

The team sets out a table, and gives a short talk and demonstration lasting no more than a few minutes. Farmers are intrigued by the plant samples, photographs and other props and quickly gather around. The talk and demonstration are repeated several times, as people come and go. The team answers farmers' questions and can even visit several locations in a day. Farmers can receive fact sheets with clear, practical information, to remind them of what they have learned.



Agronomist Gustavo Sandoval discussing an onion disease in a farmers market in Bolivia

In Bolivia, farmers in a market learned to diagnose nematodes using simple tools (e.g. a glass of water and a piece of newspaper), and how to manage the problem through crop rotation. In Kenya, farmers learned that napier grass, a major fodder species, had stunted growth because of disease and not because of poor soil fertility. In Bangladesh, farmers demonstrated home-made tables for drying rice seed they had developed with researchers.

Explaining complexity, promoting practical solutions

Complex agro-ecological information, including diagnosis and management of a pest problem can be explained from the back of a pickup truck or from a market stall. GOING PUBLIC generates excitement and is a quick way to see how farmers react to new things. For example: readily accepting drying tables in Bangladesh, astonishment at seeing nematodes in Bolivia. GOING PUBLIC can reach many people from many communities, in a single morning, unlike most face-to-face methods. While some extension methods target invited farmers only, GOING PUBLIC, as the name suggests, is open to all members of the community.

Contact: Jeffery Bentley | jeff@agroinsight.com

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