

Videos made in Asia are OK for Africa

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How important is “culture”?

White-collar agriculturalists often assume that farmer training videos must be made locally, because they think that farmers will reject images of farmers from foreign cultures. To see if this was true, we visited farmers in Nigeria to see how they reacted to 11 videos on rice seed health (made in Bangladesh), on parboiling (filmed in Benin) and rice cultivation (from Burkina Faso and Mali).

Farmers criticized techniques, not looks

The farmers were definitely willing to criticize the videos, but the Nigerian farmers liked the films from Bangladesh as much as the ones from West Africa.

The southern Nigerian farmers reserved most of their criticisms for the videos from nearby Mali, not for the ones from Bangladesh, because the Mali videos showed lowland rice, grown in the wetlands between the low hills of the West African plains, while the southern Nigerians mostly grow rice on the drier uplands. But rice farmers in northern Nigeria’s Kano State loved the videos from Mali, because the rice in Kano is lowland rice, just like in Mali.

The farmers paid attention to the techniques shown on the videos, like tarps to keep rice free of stones, and transplanting rice. They even analyzed tools that were only shown in the images but not mentioned in the narration, like the width of the hoes.

Conclusion

The farmers did not care about the skin colour of the people in the film or how they were dressed or their hair styles. The Nigerian farmers only cared about the technical content of the film. This is an important, practical conclusion, because it is much easier and cheaper to dub a film into a second language than to film it over again.



Nigerian farmers liked the videos of Bangladeshi farmers’ innovations, such as painted earthen pots for storing seed



Farmers with upland rice don’t want to see techniques adapted to lowlands only, no matter where they are filmed

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