



## Using rapid telephone surveys in Ethiopia: Africa RISING participatory research toolkit

### Introduction

In 2013, the Africa RISING project in Ethiopia initiated a series of participatory assessments to diagnose and characterize the farming systems and communities where the project is working.

This brief explains the use of a rapid telephone survey approach which to generate general information through telephone conversation with knowledgeable experts in the 4 Africa RISING sites. The telephone conversation generally took a maximum of 2 hours. Some initial findings from the assessment are also presented.

### Why use this approach

To generate very quick information on farming systems, agricultural production constraints and opportunities, income sources, market access and technological needs in the eight Africa RISING kebeles of the Ethiopian highlands.

### Steps in using the approach

- Prepare a format for data collection.
- Identify partner institutions and respondents for the telephone survey.
- Communicate with the respondents and brief them the objectives of the telephone survey.
- Fix convenient times for the telephone conversation.
- Synthesize interview results.
- Circulate the information for comments and suggestions.
- Enrich the synthesis and make it available for wider utilization.

### Findings from using this approach

The eight Africa RISING kebeles in the Ethiopian highlands are characterized by crop-livestock systems. However, there appears to be variation among the sites in terms of crop diversity, level of land degradation, vegetation cover, soil types, and amounts of rainfall and water availability.

Major crops grown across the sites include wheat, barley, faba bean, linseed and potato. Enset in Lemo and Ensosla in Endamekoni are site-specific crops that contribute to the livelihood of smallholder farmers. The most important constraints that limit agricultural productivity across the sites are:

- lack of access to improved crop varieties both in quality and quantity.
- Crop and livestock pests and diseases.
- Grass and broad leaved weed infestations.
- Animal feed shortage in quality and quantity.
- Inadequate animal health and breeding services.
- Poor management (storage, processing) and competing use of crop residues.
- Soil nutrient depletion due to erosion and poor land management.
- Lack of crop and soil based fertilizer recommendations.
- Insufficient water management and utilization activities.
- Inadequate integration of high value trees and fruit trees into the farming systems.
- Lack of information and training on improved agricultural technologies and practices.
- High crop and livestock input prices and low output prices.

Some sites like Lemo and Sinana experience soil acidity and poor crop diversity. High value vegetables and trees that provide fruits, feed and wood are limited in Sinana as a result of dominance of mechanized wheat farming systems. Faba bean crop varieties that can adapt on Vertisols and tolerate frost are less available in Basona Worena. Soil erosion and rainfall variability in terms of on-set and off-set are challenges in Endamekoni.

## Strengths and weaknesses of the approach

The survey tool is very fast, time saving and an economical way to generate information for immediate use. However, the information generated is rather general.

Telephone surveys are complicated when the respondents need to see some visual material to fully understand some interview questions. Care needs to be given while structuring the types of interview questions. Open-ended questions that require lengthy and detailed responses often need to be replaced with shorter closed-ended questions to save time and resources. Generally, complicated or long questions are not appropriate for telephone surveys.

Properly written questionnaire and a well-trained interviewer are also the best ways to obtain a respondent's full attention and quickly obtain the desired information. It will be useful in the future to conduct telephone surveys with knowledgeable farmers in addition to the trained experts.

This brief was produced by the Africa RISING project in Ethiopia. It summarizes some experiences with the different participatory diagnostic/characterization tools used in the project.

Participatory tools and approaches described in this series include:

- Rapid telephone surveys
- SLATE
- Rapid market assessment
- Participatory community assessment
- Participatory community analysis
- Agro-ecological knowledge toolkit

## More information

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The Africa Research In Sustainable Intensification for the Next Generation (Africa RISING) program comprises three research-for-development projects supported by the United States Agency for International Development as part of the U.S. government's Feed the Future initiative.

Through action research and development partnerships, Africa RISING will create opportunities for smallholder farm households to move out of hunger and poverty through sustainably intensified farming systems that improve food, nutrition, and income security, particularly for women and children, and conserve or enhance the natural resource base.

The three projects are led by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (in West Africa and East and Southern Africa) and the International Livestock Research Institute (in the Ethiopian Highlands). The International Food Policy Research Institute leads an associated project on monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment.

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