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Land conservation knowledge in farmers' language – a case from Tigray, Ethiopia

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Research findings on land degradation and rehabilitation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia over more than 20 years have been published in many journals, and contributed to scientific knowledge that is relevant for rural development and sustainable livelihood. Direct knowledge sharing with farmers was done through (i) the implementation of five development projects, (ii) the organisation of so-called Farmers' Days (a dozen in total) in which research findings were demonstrated in the field, and (iii) the development of three extension manuals (two in the local Tigrigna language and one in English). In a bid to better reach the rural community, to hand the knowledge directly to the farmers, and hence to empower them, we took inspiration from 'almanacs' as they had been used in northwest Europe. One of the traditional functions of such almanacs is, in view of the close links between a calendar and farm works, to make them most useful to the peasant majority of the population. Hence, the objectives of the research reported here were to

- (1) develop a booklet in local Tigrigna language that holds basic research findings as well as local knowledge on land conservation, expressed in simple words in Tigrigna language, and combined with other useful and sometimes lighter information;
- (2) distribute it among farmers in our main research district with the aim that it is not only read by farmers but also passed on and discussed within the communities (farmer-to-farmer extension); and
- (3) evaluate the take-up of the messages contained in the booklet.