From: "Janaiah Aldas" <ajanaiah@igidr.ac.in> To: "Norman Uphoff" <ntu1@cornell.edu> Subject: Feedback after visiting SRI sites in Sri Lanka Date: Tue, 5 Nov 2002 09:48:15 +0530

Dear Professor Uphoff:

I have just returned to Mumbai after my wonderful visit to the SRI fields in Sri Lanka. Dr. Gamini Batuwitage helped a lot in arranging nice field visits to SRI sites.

We visited 4 villages (Mellawalana, Thalammehera, Elabadagama and Bodhimulla) in Kurunegala District of Northwest Province. We had detailed discussions with about 30 farmers who had adopted SRI method besides visiting SRI fields and the main rice research station.

In my 12 years of experience in rice research organizations, including 3 years at IRRI as a social scientist, I did not really get this much excited as I did upon seeing SRI sites.

If super-rice or hybrid rice or super-hybrid rice developed through gene manipulation using advanced tools gets just 15-30% yield gains, requiring higher inputs and a change of varieties, we can consider SRI as an innovation achieved through management manipulation to get 30-100% yield gains, with the same variety and fewer inputs. Breeders may view SRI as a big threat for them to go ahead with their sophisticated approaches like super-rice or so. Nevertheless, SRI is a future solution for millions of poor rice households to sustain their profitability while protecting the natural resource base.

SRI can have tremendous livelihood impacts in rural Asia through various ways: (a) increasing partial and total factor productivity, i.e., efficiency, (b) increasing profitability, i.e., incomes, (c) reducing pressure on the resource-base, giving environmental benefits, and (d) improving overall livelihoods, with poverty reduction, nutritional benefits and other welfare benefits.

Based on my own field observations in Sri Lanka, the following are some average figures on:

(1) **Yields** comparing SRI with conventional practices using direct-seeded rice (DSR): about 8.0 vs. 4.5 tons/ha, respectively -- an increase by 88%.

(2) **Market prices:** farmers are receiving SL. Rs. 1500 and 1300 per ton for SRI and DSR, respectively -- a price gain of about 15% because SRI grain quality is better than that of DSR.

(3) **Total costs** (other than family labor): Rs 18,000/ha for SRI, while 22,000/ha for DSR, i.e., a cost reduction by 18% on account of lower investment in seed and land preparation.

(4) Gross returns: Rs. 120,000/ha from SRI, and Rs. 58, 500/ha from DSR.

(5) Net profit margin: Rs. 102,000/ha for SRI, and Rs 36,500 /ha for DSR farmers.

(6) In addition to these monetary benefits, **family labor earnings** are much higher for the SRI farmers compared to DSR farmers.

(7) Further, SRI **saves water** by 40-50% over DSR method. The economic value of this saved water (both opportunity cost and environmental benefits) is enormous that can lead to long-term sustainability of the resource base....

These are a few observations that I noted during my visit to Sri Lanka. Kindly feel free to ask me anything on this if so. Once again, thank you very much for providing an opportunity to visit SRI fields and to understand more about SRI through discussions with farmers. Warm regards Aldas Janaiah