

## The importance of participatory research

As mentioned earlier, on-farm seed priming is not a new technology. But farmers cannot appreciate the wide range of benefits from this low-cost, low-risk practice unless they are given the opportunity to experiment for themselves. In the studies described here farmers were encouraged to soak some of their seeds overnight, surface-dry them and sow using traditional methods. The primed and dry seeds were sown in adjacent plots in fields.

Farm walks, in which groups of farmers visited each others' fields, allowed villagers to evaluate the performance of seed priming over the range of soil types and levels of management found in the villages.

These groups then discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the technique and made constructive criticisms and improvements.

The participatory approach was highly successful in empowering farmers to test, develop and adapt seed priming and to appreciate its effects. Participatory development of the technology empowered farmers to the extent that farmer-to-farmer and village-to-village knowledge about seed priming spread rapidly. Evaluations of farmers' opinions indicated that the majority of those who have tried it will continue the practice (see Figure 2). The uptake of on-farm seed priming in areas where farmers have tried the technology for themselves has been spectacular.

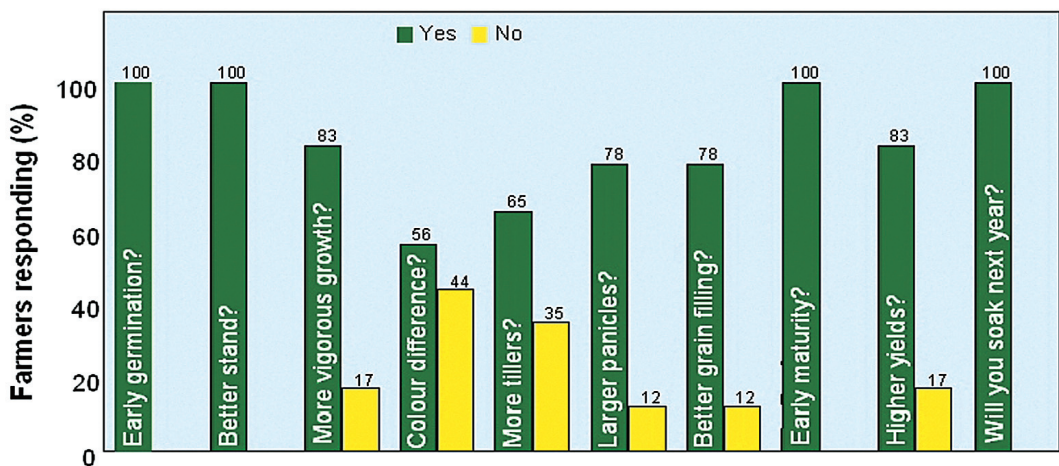


Figure 2. India farmers' views on the effects of seed priming in wheat are essential to understand what happens in the 'real' world.