

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS TO SUPPORT BALANCED FERTILIZATION

Achieving success at work... a goal we all seek in our working life. This is the situation that the IPNI staff in South Asia now finds themselves, after a number of years of dedicated efforts to develop, evaluate and validate the Nutrient Expert® decision support tool. The tool is now widely accepted by partners in the national, state and university systems as an effective method of making fertilizer recommendations. However, with success comes additional challenges, in this case the development of effective partnerships to disseminate Nutrient Expert to as wide an audience as possible.

Trusting the science to make better nutrient recommendations.

When the program to evaluate and test Nutrient Expert was established in South Asia, one of our key approaches was to engage with as large a group as possible. This meant holding group meetings that involved not only our traditional partners in research, but also more importantly, extension workers from government and industry, as well as farmer organizations in regions we were working within. At all of these meetings we engaged with this diverse group of partners to explain and develop coordinated plans to ensure that we had a solid scientific foundation on which to advance our ideas. We knew that if we moved forward with good science, the opportunity to make sound decisions with the results would find wide acceptance with our partners.

Moving from field verification to last-mile delivery. With a solid foundation of Nutrient Expert for wheat, maize and rice, IPNI staff is now working to engage a wide array of potential users of the decision support tool. This involves holding training events for agronomy advisors who work with farmers in government, universities and industry. It involves the challenge of finding capable individuals who can carry the Nutrient Expert message to their associates in an even wider network of training. And finally, it involves IPNI developing web-based tools for the easy access and use of Nutrient Expert by all interested individuals across South Asia. This web-based version of Nutrient Expert is not only usable on lap-top computers, tablets and smart phones, but is also accompanied by a series of local language videos and user guides, a complete package for users.

The march toward change...the evolution of future food security in South Asia. Equipped with a tool like Nutrient Expert, we expect to see significant changes in the delivery of balanced fertilization recommendations across South Asia. With an expanding population, the need to meet regional food security will become an ever-increasing priority. However, we are well aware that major changes in fertilizer use practices, necessary to address the unbalanced use of nutrients currently holding back crop production in the region, requires more than good recommendations. Lets hope that the successes we have achieved in our agronomic efforts are soon reflected in the policy decisions by regional governments.

BETTER CROPS

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Farmers showing Nutrient Expert® fertilizer recommendation being applied to their rice.

IPNI Image/S. Dutta

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