revealed that there was low involvement of beneficiaries which may be the factor for non-achievement of the end results. The study therefore suggested that sufficient exposure should be given to the beneficiaries as well as project personnel particularly PIA and WDT for a detail understanding about the guideline for successful implementation of the project.

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Research Notes

Assessment of preferences of farmers using participatory approach

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A study was conducted using Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques as part of a project on Technology Assessment and Refinement through Institution Village Linkage Programme during September, 2003 in a village called Sankaramangalam of Palakkad district, Kerala. Eighty participants including farmers, their representatives, youths, farmwomen, people involved in agricultural business, teachers and extension officers participated in the programme. They were categorised into 5 groups. Through focused group discussion each group was facilitated by a team of researchers to record their preferences of crops, rice varieties using Matrix ranking technique of participatory approach.

For assessing the preference of crops in the area, participants of all the groups were asked to enlist the major crops grown in the area and then develop criteria to rank various crops. They were asked to give their preference for crops in relation to the identified parameters. The average of the scores assigned by each group for a particular crop was summed up and the crop getting the highest score was identified as the first preferred crop. Ranks were given based on the descending order of the total scores. A large number of farm youth were found unemployed and observed the trend of migrating to gulf countries. Hence there was a need to promote agro-based enterprises in the area for self employment generation. Therefore a similar exercise was done with farm youth to assess the preference of various agro-based enterprises.

Matrix ranking of crop preference:

In this method, the group members were asked to give their preference of crops based on the characters of crops and benefits obtained from them. They were asked to develop a matrix having the crops in a line on the top as columns and the characters/benefits on the

Table 1. Crop preference matrix

Crops/Characteristics	Rice	Banana	Vegetables	Rubber	Coconut	Pepper
Food security	10	9	5	1	7	6
Less pest & disease incidence	8	5	2	1	4	7
Low cost of production	7	4	3	8	4	9
Marketability	8	6	4	7	6	7.5
More income	2	8	6	4	4	5
Less labour requirement	8	9	4	5	8	7.5
Total	43	41	24	26	33	42
Rank	I	III	VI	V	IV	II

Table 2. Preference of rice varieties during 1st Crop season

Trait	Jyothi (Ptb- 39)	IR-20	Kanchana (Ptb-50)	Kattamodan	Thekkan cheera
Grain yield	9	7	8	6	6
Grain weight	7	8	7	8	6
Pest/Disease tolerance	6	9	8	9	9
Cooking quality	7	9	7	9	9
Low cost of cultivation	6	8	7	8	8
Non lodging variety	8	8	8	5	5
Marketability	7	7	6	8	9
Volume expansion	8	7	7	7	9
Total	58	63	58	60	61
Rank	IV	I	IV	III	II

left side as rows. There were six crops in the columns and five characters in the rows. The farmers were asked to assign scores ranging from one to ten to the listed crops of their choice considering each of the characters/ benefits obtained from the crops. Based on the group consensus scores were assigned to each crop. Total scores obtained by each crop were worked out. Ranks were assigned in the descending order of the total scores obtained by each crop.

The table 1 indicated the crop preference of farmers based on the characters/benefits obtained from the crops. Among the listed crops, rice was the first preferred crop since the staple food of the population was rice. Second preferred crop was black pepper as farmers felt that it required less maintenance cost and less attention but gave a reasonable income with less fluctuation in market price. Third preferred crop was nendran banana because farmers perceived that it required less

Table 3. Varietal preference of rice during *Rabi* season

Traits	Chitteni	Vellari	Karuna (Ptb-54)	Thekkan cheera	Chettadi
High yield	9	7	8	8	7
Grain weight	9	8	8	9	8
Pest/disease tolerance	9	9	7	9	7
Cooking quality	9	7	7	9	7
Low cost of production	9	9	7	9	3
Non lodging variety	6	6	9	6	6
Marketability	9	3	7	9	7
Volume expansion	9	7	7	9	7
Total	69	61	59	68	57
Rank	I	III	IV	II	V

of labour, more market demand and remunerative crop. Rubber was the fourth preferred crop since farmers gave least preference for non food crops with wide variation in market price. Coconut was also a less preferred crop, scored fourth rank because of the low quality produce as a result of mite infestation, no remedial measures to control mite completely, high labour demand for harvesting the nuts and low price for the produce in the market. Vegetables were the least preferred crop because of the high incidence of pests and diseases, high labour requirement and high cost of production.

Varietal preference of rice during Kharif season:

Preference of rice varieties during first crop season was discussed with the farmers and the results of the discussion are presented in the table 2. Increased grain yield, pest and disease tolerance, cooking quality, low cost of cultivation, non-lodging type, demand in the market and volume expansion were the traits of rice varieties considered by farmers in preferring rice varieties. Jyothi, IR-20, Kanchana, Kattamodan and Thekkeneheera were the rice varieties raised by farmers during virippu season. A maximum total score of 63 was given to IR-20, followed by Thekkeneheera and Kattamodan. Jyothi and Kanchana were given with the lowest score of 58 each.

Varietal preference of rice during Rabi season:

Table 3 showed the rice varieties preferred by farmers during second crop season. A maximum score was given to a traditional variety called, Chitteni (69) and hence it was the most preferred variety during second crop season followed by Thekkancheera(68) and Vellari (61). This is in similarity to the findings of the PRA session conducted in other two villages under Technology Assessment and Refinement through Institution Village Linkage Programme (1995). Karuna gained 59 scores followed by Chettadi (57).

Even after the introduction of more than hundred high yielding varieties of rice in Kerala, farmers still prefer some of the traditional rice varieties for their superior

qualitative characters like good taste, higher straw yield and tolerance during stress situations. Therefore these characters may be considered by the rice breeders to fit into the high yielding varieties during breeding programmes. It was observed that farmers in the study area were not familiar with the characters of many of the high yielding varieties. Hence efforts may be taken up, to popularise the traits and suitability of high yielding varieiteis and making the seeds of the preferred varieties available in time. Efforts may be initiated to engage farm youth in self employment oriented preferred agro based enterprises so that migration may be reduced and thereby human skills may be better utilized indigenously.

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Research Notes

A study on the performance of contract farming in Coleus

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Medicinal plants are the local heritage with global importance. India takes pride in harbouring about 8000 different medicinal plants across its diverse ecosystems and cultures. India is endowed with a rich bio-diversity. Its rich traditional experience and wisdom is established comfortably in the Ayurveda and Sidda systems of medicine. Quite recently, there has been a rapid expansion and spread of the allopathic system of medicinal treatment in India. It creates commercial demand for pharmaceutical drugs and their products in India.

Realising the potential of herbal and medicinal plants, few companies have ventured in cultivation of herbs. Now a herbal revolution is happening in the country to increase the share of India. Keeping this in view, the present contract programmes on Coleus crops has been thought of to be studied, to identify the pros and cons and to take up suitable measures for better performance.

Attur and Gangavalli blocks were selected purposively, because these two blocks had maximum area and maximum number of farmers who cultivated Coleus crop. Manjini and Valayamadevi villages in Attur block, and Othiyathur and Naduvallur villages in Gangavalli block were selected following the random