



Photo: ACIAR SRFSI

## Project Inception and Planning Workshop

### In this issue:

- Project Inception and Planning Workshop
- Project Linkage
- UWA Seminar
- Project Partners
- In-country Training Workshops
- The FBIP Team

The ACIAR CSE 2012-108 Project entitled “Understanding Farm-Household Management Decision-making for Increased Productivity in the Eastern Gangetic Plains” has officially commenced. The project inception and planning workshop was held at the University of Western Australia (UWA) in Perth on 19-22 July 2018.

Continued P2

## Project Partners

The project team is composed of research practitioners and development workers from the disciplines of economics, agronomy, soil science, plant pathology, entomology, statistics, agricultural economics, behavioural economics, psychology, sociology, extension, and gender studies. In this issue, we introduce the project team leadership from various universities and research institutions of Australia, Nepal, India, and Bangladesh.

Continued P3

“A nudge, as we will use the term, is any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people’s behaviour in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives.”

- Richard H. Thaler  
2017 Nobel Prize



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RDRS Bangladesh



# Project Inception and Planning Workshop



L-R: Dr Md Farid Uddin Khan (RU), Dr Murshida Ferdous Binte Habib (RU), Dr Tamara Jackson (SDIP 2), Dr Renato Villano (UNE), Dr Ram Datt (BAU), Dr Fay Rola-Rubzen (UWA), Dr Roy Murray-Prior (UWA), Dr Eric Huttner (ACIAR), Dr Michael Burton (UWA), Dr Ajoy Kumar Singh (BAU), Dr Md. Elias Hossain (RU), Dr Kalyan K Das (UBKV), Dr Prateek Madhab Bhattacharya (UBKV), Mr Md Mamunur Rashid (RDRS), Dr Yuga Nath Ghimire (NARC), Dr Sudha Sapkota (NARC), Bibek Sapkota (UWA)

With the underlying goal of improving the uptake of promising agricultural technologies, the project aims to understand how smallholder farm-households make adoption decisions on farming systems innovations. In contrast to previous studies of technology adoption, researchers will apply behavioural economics and behavioural insights in this project; hence the project's short name - *Farmer Behaviour Insights Project (FBIP)*.

Professor Robyn Owens, Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research at UWA welcomed the participants from Australia, Bangladesh, India, and Nepal. A total of 18 participants joined the four-day workshop. The first two days were opened to the UWA School of Agriculture and Environment faculty and postgraduate students.



*Dr Eric Huttner (ACIAR Program Manager for Crops) explaining the context of food security in South Asia*

gies, which is focussed on understanding the behavioural aspect of farm household's decision-making in the adoption of farming systems innovations.

According to Dr Fay Rola-Rubzen (FBIP Project Leader), the variable and often low uptake of promising agricultural technologies calls for new ways of understanding the adoption decision making process of smallholder farmers operating in complex environments. She then posed the question: Can behavioural economics better explain adoption or adaptation decisions than conventional models, and if so, how can these behavioural insights be used to "nudge" farmers to adopt or adapt CASI-based technologies?

Participants from India, Nepal and Bangladesh also presented an overview of the farming systems and the challenges and opportunities of CASI adoption in their respective regions.

There were also discussions on the link of FBIP to other ACIAR-funded projects. These include pro-

jects under the Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio (SDIP) 2. Dr Tamara Jackson (ACIAR-SDIP Program Manager) introduced an array of projects under SDIP 2. These include the project on institutions to support intensification, integrated decision-making and inclusiveness in agriculture in the Eastern Gangetic Plains (EGP) presented by Dr Michael Burton (UWA) and Dr Lin Crase (University of South Australia).

The research methodology and research questions were also discussed during the workshop, particularly on how behavioural economics can add value to traditional technology adoption analyses. Partners also presented current decision making and technology adoption studies in their respective areas. The roles of psychology, sociology and gender issues were also explored.

One of the highlights of the event was a visit to Muresk Institute in Northam, where the participants inspected a modern ZT seeder and a sprayer which were linked to GPS guidance systems. With a fully-packed agenda, the project inception and planning workshop was a success, thanks to the support of ACIAR, the program manager, project partners, and UWA School of Agriculture and Environment.



*Tour at Muresk Institute and Perth surrounds*



*Professor Robyn Owens (UWA Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research) welcoming the workshop participants*

The ACIAR Program Manager for Crops, Dr Eric Huttner, provided the context on food security challenges in South Asia and how the ACIAR programs have responded to this challenge. In particular, Dr Huttner highlighted the role of the new project in the scaling of Conservation Agriculture for Sustainable Intensification (CASI)-based technolo-



# Project Linkage



*Dr Tamara Jackson  
ACIAR-SDIP Program Manager*

During the project inception and planning workshop, Dr Tamara Jackson, the Program Manager of ACIAR-SDIP, presented an overview of the SDIP 2 program. The main focus of the program is the sustainable intensification of food systems. Five components comprised SDIP: coordination, synthesis, and communication (component 1), foresight and dialogue (component 2), policy and institutional innovation (component 3), field scale innovation (component 4), and analytical studies (5). From these components, Dr Jackson identified the potential link of the Farmer Behaviour Insights Project to SDIP 2.

According to Dr Jackson, using the selected technologies and locations as initial sites for stage 1 of the FBIP would synergise the project's effort with existing projects in the Eastern Gangetic Plains (EGP) of South Asia. The inputs from the FBIP can also help refine recommendations and improve adoption rates. Sharing of infor-

mation on institutional work with the University of South Australia's project headed by Dr Lin Crase would also improve the likelihood of success of FBIP by targeting effective institutions and existing programs.

In terms of gender-related work, the meso-scale mapping of women's engagement in the EGP and identification of factors affecting women's participation would benefit existing projects in the region including FBIP. Similarly, FBIP's local-level insights would improve the foresight work of SDIP 2. Sharing of stock photos and impact stories would also provide communication materials for the various projects.

# UWA Seminar

On 3 August 2018, Dr Fay Rola-Rubzen presented a seminar on behavioural economics and introduced the Farmer Behaviour Insights Project to UWA's Agriculture and Resource Economics (ARE) faculty and postgraduate students. The seminar was also part of the Australasian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society (Western Australia branch) seminar series. Other presenters in the seminar include Dr Ram Pandit who presented his research on conservation and development in Nepal's National Park and Dr Marit Kragt who shared her research on crowd funding as a potential modality for agricultural climate change mitigation.



*Photo: UWA School of Agriculture & Environment*

## Meet the Project Leadership Team



*Dr Fay Rola-Rubzen  
Project Leader*

**Dr Fay Rola-Rubzen** is an agricultural economist/development economist. She has extensive experience in farming systems research and development; farmer behaviour and decision analysis; poverty and food security and gender analysis. Dr Fay leads the project and provides overall project oversight and coordination. She will also lead the research on the analysis of factors influencing farm-household decisions, gender impacts, and design of intervention mechanism incorporating behavioural insights. Dr Fay is an Associate Professor at UWA School of Agriculture and Environment, University of Western Australia.

**Dr Kalyan K Das** is a Professor of Agricultural Economics at the School of Agriculture, Uttar Banga Krishi Vishwavidyalaya (UBKV). He is a socio-economist and will lead, coordinate activities and provide project oversight in India. He will lead the fieldwork activities of UBKV in West Bengal.

**Dr Ram Datt** is an Assistant Professor at Bihar Agricultural University (BAU). He is a social scientist and agricultural extensionist. He will lead, coordinate activities and provide project oversight for BAU activities in Bihar, India. He will lead the fieldwork activities of BAU.



*Dr Kalyan K Das  
UBKV Coordinator*



*Dr Ram Datt  
BAU Coordinator*

**Dr Md Farid Uddin Khan** is an Associate Professor of Economics at Rajshahi University. He is an agricultural economist and has some experience in behavioural economics. He will coordinate project activities in Bangladesh and lead data gathering and fieldwork activities. He will contribute in farm-household decision analysis, econometric analysis, and in institutional and organisational capacity building.

**Dr Yuga Nath Ghimire** is a Senior Scientist and Head of the Socio-Economics and Agricultural Policy Research Division of Nepal Agricultural Research Council. He is an agricultural economist by training and will have oversight of the project in Nepal.

**Mr. Md Mamunur Rashid** is an agriculture and environment senior project coordinator of RDRS Bangladesh. He is an agricultural extensionist by training and has expertise in farming systems research, agricultural extension and market development. He will coordinate all RDRS fieldwork activities and will contribute in the coordination of action research to test selected interventions to support uptake and management of farming systems innovations in the study sites in Bangladesh.



*Dr Md Farid Uddin Khan  
RU Coordinator*



*Dr Yuga Nath Ghimire  
NARC Coordinator*



*Mr Md Mamunur Rashid  
RDRS Coordinator*

# In-country Training Workshops

To kickstart the project, the inception and planning workshop held in Perth was quickly followed by training workshops in Bangladesh, India, and Nepal. The Farmer Behaviour Insights Project, funded by ACIAR, aims to provide new insights on ways to achieve better and faster adoption of technologies that will improve farmers resilience to climate change and improve their incomes and productivity.

The goal of the in-country training workshops was to acquire a consistent understanding of the project objectives, methods, and desired outcomes. Primarily, it is designed to attain a clear understanding of the theory and practice associated with using behavioural economics, participatory evaluation, and increase gender awareness and mainstreaming in the project. Resource persons include Dr Fay Rola-Rubzen, Dr Roy Murray-Prior and experts drawn from local partners in the region.



*Participants from Bihar Agricultural University and UBKV University during the India workshop*

The workshop in Siliguri, India was attended by 11 participants from Bihar Agricultural University (BAU) and Uttar Banga Krishi Vilad-jayawa (UBKV) University on 11-13 September. The BAU team was led by Dr Ram Datt, an agricultural extensionist. The team is composed of academics specialising in agricultural economics and agronomy. The UBKV team was led by Dr Kalyan K Das, a socio-economist. The team is comprised of a soil scientist, plant pathologist, agronomist, agricultural entomologist, agricultural statistician, agricultural extensionist, gender specialist, and conservation agriculture specialist.

The workshop in Lalitpur, Nepal was attended by 24 research and development staff from Nepal Agricultural Research Council (NARC) on 29-31 October. The team was headed by Dr Yuga Nath Ghimire, an agricultural economist. NARC team is composed of agricultural economists, socio-economists, agricultural specialist, and gender specialists.



*Participants from Nepal Agricultural Research Council during the Nepal workshop*

During the first day, workshop participants were introduced to the project goal and objectives. The local farming system contexts were highlighted, focussing on Rangpur and Rajshahi in Bangladesh, West Bengal and Bihar in India, and Sunsari and Dhanusha in Nepal. Participants were introduced to theories and applications of

behavioural economics for understanding farm-household decision making. Seminars on the behavioural economics approach to policy design and the research approach of the project were key features in Day 1 of the workshop.

The second day was devoted to facilitated discussions on selecting and prioritising potential choice experiments while Day 3 focussed on gender awareness and mainstreaming activities. The outputs of the workshop include:

- Diagnosis and investigation of potential choice experiments on farmer behaviour
- Focus group discussion questions to further investigate the identified choice experiments
- Gender strategy and indicators for gender mainstreaming in the project

Workshops in the three countries ended with an action plan, which participants enthusiastically committed to deliver.



*Participants from RDRS Bangladesh and Rajshahi University during the Bangladesh workshop*

The workshop in Rangpur, Bangladesh was attended by 14 participants from RDRS Bangladesh and Rajshahi University (RU) on 6-8 September. The RDRS Bangladesh team was led by Senior Project Coordinator Md Mamunur Rashid, a farming systems research specialist/ agricultural extension and market development specialist. The team includes rural development specialists, gender specialists, education and training development and management specialists, agricultural extensionists, and value chain development specialists. The Rajshahi University team was led by Dr Md Farid Uddin Khan, an agricultural economist. The team members are academics from various disciplines such as economics, agricultural economics, behavioural economics, psychology, and sociology. Participants also visited farms where CASI-based technologies have been adopted.



*Highlights of the workshop activities*



# The Farmer Behaviour Insights Team



University of Western Australia



**Dr Fay Rola-Rubzen**  
Project Leader  
Agricultural Economist  
Development Economist



**Dr Roy Murray-Prior**  
Agricultural Economist  
Behavioural Economist  
Agricultural Extensionist



**Mr Jon Marx Sarmiento**  
Project Officer  
Agricultural Economist



University of New England



**Dr Renato Villano**  
Agricultural Economist  
Econometrician



Uttar Banga Krishi Vishwavidyalaya



**Dr Kalyan K Das**  
UBKV Coordinator  
Socio-economist



**Dr Apurba Kumar Chowdhury**  
Plant Pathologist  
Conservation Agriculture Specialist



**Dr Abhash Kumar Sinha**  
Soil Scientist



**Dr Arunava Ghosh**  
Agricultural Statistician



**Dr Biplab Mitra**  
Agronomist



**Dr Deepa Roy**  
Agricultural Extensionist  
Gender Specialist



**Dr Prateek Madhab Bhattacharya**  
Plant Pathologist



**Dr Tapamay Dhar**  
Agricultural Entomologist  
Conservation Agriculture Specialist



Rajshahi University



**Dr Md Farid Uddin Khan**  
RU Coordinator  
Agricultural Economist



**Dr Md Abdur Rashid Sarker**  
Economist



**Dr Md Elias Hossain**  
Agricultural Economist  
Behavioural Economist



**Dr Murshida Ferdous Binte Habib**  
Psychologist



**Dr Bijoy Krishna Banik**  
Sociologist



**Dr Rejaul Karim Bakshi**  
Economist



**Mr Md Istique Asif**  
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Bihar Agricultural University



**Dr Ram Datt**  
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**Dr Sanjay Kumar**  
Agronomist



**Dr Ranvir Kumar**  
Agricultural Economist



**Dr S.M. Rahaman**  
Agricultural Economist



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Australian Centre for  
International Agricultural Research

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**Dr Eric Huttner**  
Research Program Manager  
for Crops



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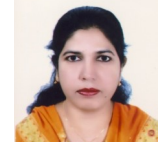
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**Dr Mohammad Enamul Kabir**  
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Senior Program Manager  
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Education and Training  
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**Mr Ashish Kumar**  
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Nepal Agricultural Research Council



**Dr Yuga Nath Ghimire**  
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**Dr Krishna Prasad Timsina**  
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**Dr Sudha Sapkota**  
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