

PP177: Innovation platforms: A novel tool for improving food legume productivity and farmer's livelihood, and enhancing food security in Morocco

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Food legumes (Faba bean, lentils, chickpea and pea) are important crops that come in rotation with cereals in the rainfed regions of Morocco where the cereal/food legume cropping system predominates. While these crops were very abundant in the seventies when Morocco was an exporter of these commodities, presently, the productivity is very low, and the country is obliged to supplement the deficit in its needs via increasing imports. The main focus of the present study, which is conducted within the India-Morocco Food Legume Initiative, was to initiate innovation platforms (PI's) for the different food legume species. The objective of these PI's is to bring together efforts and contributions of all stakeholders (farmers, decision makers, input companies, dealers etc.) in order to diagnose and resolve



the pit falls and bottlenecks and boost these crops productivity and rehabilitation. In the Chaouia region, the Innovation Platforms were created in 2 different communities (El Gara and Ouled Bouziri) where food legume producer associations were appointed as key players of the PI's. Farmers' fields were selected to establish trials of the PI, were the different new crop management technologies that are practical, environmentally sustainable and economically and socially appropriate, were demonstrated to farmers in collaboration with the various regional development agencies. More than 30 trials were established over the last 2 years, and hundreds of farmers were able to participate in the different events held around these trials. The results showed that the PI's are an excellent tool to disseminate integrated crop management options of chickpea, such as IPM and cultural practices. Indeed, the major pests were controlled (weeds, chickpea leaf minor, and *Ascochyta* blight) using appropriate methods, in addition to good crop management practices such as fertilization as a starter and use of seed drill. These options helped to clearly reduce crop losses and productivity gap due to damage inflicted by noxious insect pests, weeds and diseases. A very net increase in yield, up to 4 folds, was obtained as compared with farmers' practices and spring sown chickpea. This yield gain will boost farmers' income and improve their livelihoods, in addition to improving the national production of chickpea. Involvement of all actors of the chickpea value-chain will result in functional innovation platform that will enhance the food security.