

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH - A RESEARCHER'S PERSPECTIVE.

Dr Bruce D Pearce

Senior Programme Manager

The Organic Research Centre – Elm Farm

Participatory Research Continuum



Researcher managed & implemented

On station or on farm.

Researchers design trial & control all treatments.
Farmers rent or donate land

Researchers control all measurements.
Farmers invited to offer their opinion

Careful use of statistics

Researchers disseminate results to farmers & advisors

Researcher managed & Farmer implemented

On farm.

Joint design and selection of criteria.
Farmers encouraged to use controls and replicates.

Researchers collect what quantitative data they can and get farmers' opinions through interviewing

Statistics combined with qualitative assessments of farmers' views

Iterative through on-going interaction of farmer and scientist

Farmer managed & implemented

On farm.

Farmers or advisors decide on trial design and evaluation criteria.
Hypotheses may evolve out of chance events and change during the season.

Researchers document farmers, advisors, evaluation and reflections at certain points during the season.

Results of measurements with attention paid to the establishment/growing conditions

Farmer to farmer with external input to encourage networking sharing of experiences

ORC Participatory Research

- Crops.
 - ◆ Cereal Variety Trialling
 - ◆ Wheat LINK
 - ◆ Wheat Breeding LINK
 - ◆ Legume LINK
- Sheepdrove
- R&D priorities

Cereal Variety Trials

- “Contractual/Consultative”.
 - ◆ OSP & farmers suggested varieties.
 - ◆ Hosted by four farms.
 - ◆ We designed trials and assessments.
 - ◆ Collected and analysed data.
 - ◆ Disseminated through OSP & ORC channels.
- Uncertain how much information that the 20+ farmers got from the trials.

Lessons Learned

- Farmers hosted the trial as a “favour” to ORC!
- Expectations different for different actors.
- Planning.
 - ◆ Field trials & Ownership
 - ◆ Scientific rigour
 - ◆ Training and learning
 - ◆ Dissemination/Communication
- COMMUNICATION, EXPECTATIONS & OWNERSHIP

Current Crops Research

- Wheat LINK
 - ◆ “Consultative/Collaborative”
 - ◆ Farmers helped direct the work
- Wheat Breeding LINK & Legume LINK
 - ◆ “Consultative/Collaborative”
 - ◆ Large number of farmers
 - ◆ Getting information on the performance on their own farm.
 - ◆ Better ownership



Map of participating farms in two ORC run LINK projects



Wheat Breeding LINK project



Legume LINK project

Sheepdrove Organic Farm

- Pigs & Poultry
- “Collaborative/Collegial”
- Farmer/owner identified issues.
- ORC designed trials but in conjunction with farm staff
 - ◆ what to measure,
 - ◆ how best done
- Farmer had input all the way through
- Information from the trial utilised immediately
- Wider distribution through B-BOP, bulletin etc

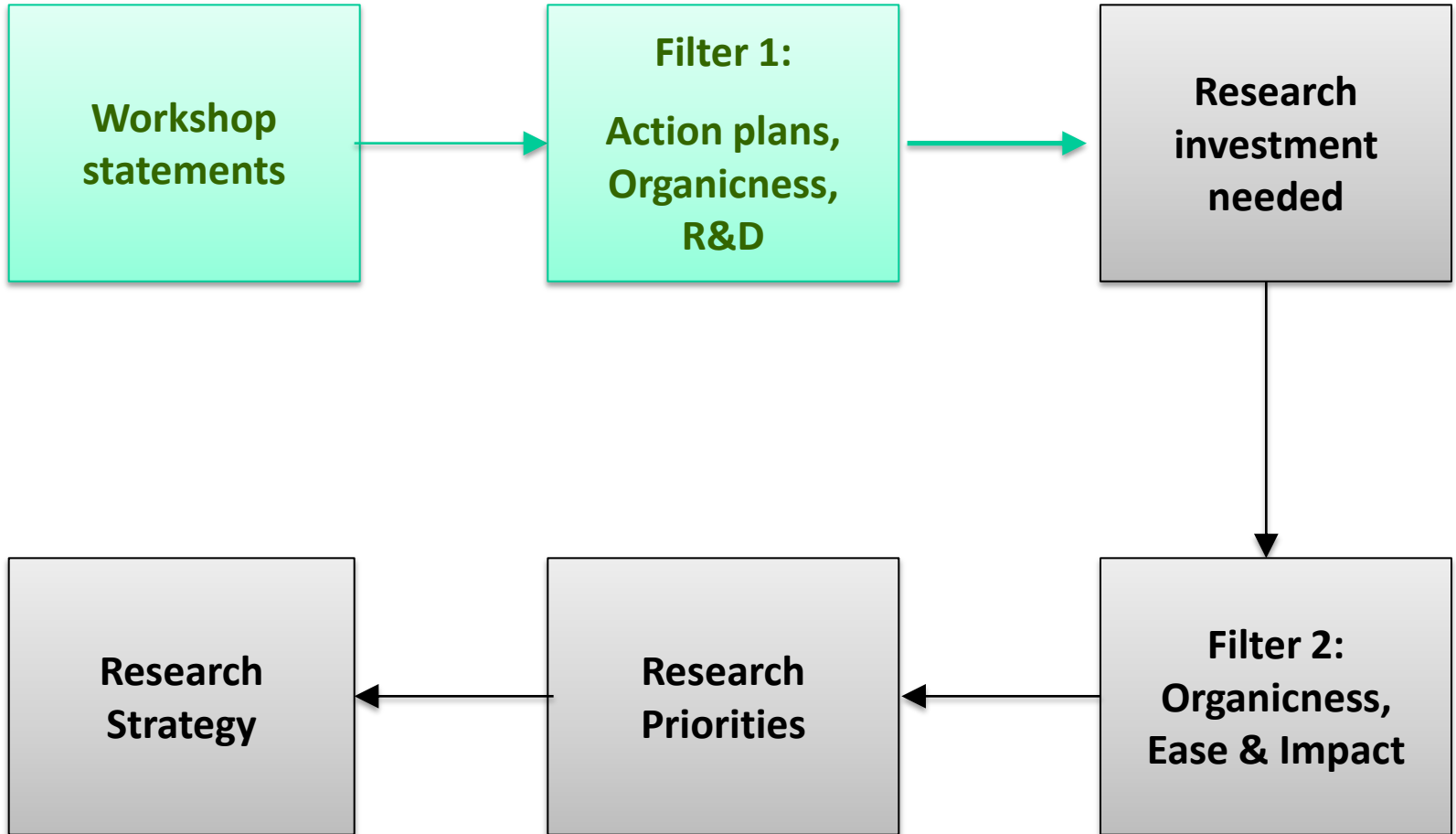
SOF Lessons Learned

- Ownership of the trial has been generally good
- Communication hard work as all busy
- Expectations continually need to be managed
- Can have differences between farmers needs and scientists needs.
 - ◆ Design
 - ◆ Assessments
 - ◆ Publications
- Good dissemination

R&D Priorities

- Probably not research but definitely “Consultative”.
- What issues and aspirations do stakeholders feel should be addressed by publicly funded research into organic farming in the UK.
- 19 workshops throughout the UK & a website.
- 330 individuals – 75% none researcher.
- Asked two questions
 - ◆ What should R&D deliver for the organic sector by 2015?
 - ◆ What are the most urgent information or knowledge gaps that R&D should address?

Process



ORC Participatory Research Lessons Learned

- We aim to be and I hope I have shown that we are to a lesser or great extent participatory in our approach
- Scary!
- Frustrating!
- Not all research has to be participatory
- It tough and not a cheap or easy option
- Good communication is essential
- Need to deal with differing needs and expectations
- Need to be a team and all own the work

ORC Participatory Research Lessons Learned

- You can get meaningful and very useful results
- Build strong teams with good communication
- Helps to develop good R&D programmes
- **REWARDING!**