Recommendation Domains

Tips & Facts Sheet

Recommendation domains are geographic areas where a single recommendation has broad application due to similarities in both socio-economic and environmental conditions. Different terminology may used (e.g. mega environments), but the goal is the same: to identify uniform areas where recommendations can be applied and improve the probability of success associated with adoption of new practices or technologies by men and women farmers.

(Photo A. Bohn)

How to develop a domain

Use maps and local input to define uniform areas based on major bio-physical and socio-economic characteristics that will affect a recommendation. Some useful resources include soil and topographic maps, rainfall and temperature data, socio-economic data and local informants including men and women. The following are key characteristics to pay attention to:

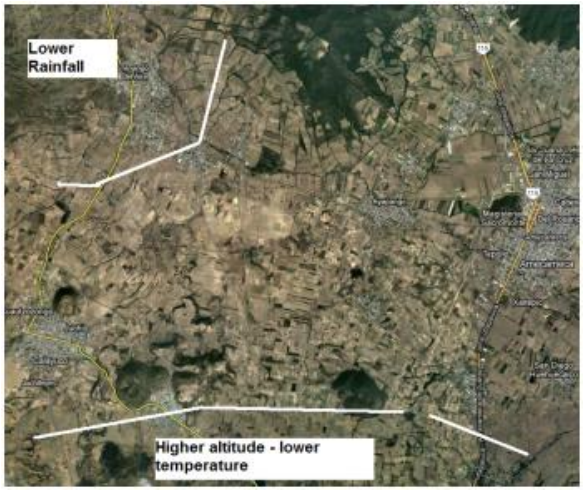
Characteristic	Example and significance
Soils	Are there soil characteristics that will affect crop growth potential and potential yields? (e.g., fertility, drainage, texture, pH, salinity, slope, etc.)
Water	Is the access to reliable sources of quality water? Water availability can be a key limiting factor to crop production. Map rainfall distribution patterns and irrigated vs. rainfed areas.
Topography	Slope and altitude affect erosion risk, water infiltration rates, and temperature (north or south facing slope?). Differences in temperature affect evapotranspiration and growth rates.
Wealth and credit	Access to finances affects the ability to test and adopt practices. Pay attention to any differences between men and women's access to financial resources to prevent barriers to adoption.
Labor availability	Labor shortages at critical times (e.g., weeding or harvest) can limit productivity and scale of production. Understand differences in men's and women's participation in activities and the availability of men's and women's labor considering factors such as men's migration , women's participation in household activities, and women's mobility constraints.
Farm size	Farm size determines suitability of agricultural practices.
Cropping system	Cropping patterns including rotation, determines timing and suitability of cropping schedule (e.g., planting date, harvest date, soil planting conditions).
Threats	Diseases, pests and other problems may change the suitability of a practice.
Input and market access	Are inputs available? Are market options viable and profitable? Is transportation a limiting factor? Are there any differences between men and women's access to inputs or markets?

Example Outcome

Online maps (e.g., Google) offer powerful new ways to look at variation across areas. Superimpose on these maps socio-economic and other factors. For example, three domains are readily identifiable in the example at right.

1. The lower rainfall area (North west),
2. "Normal" – (Central area) "regular" rainfall with ready access to markets
3. Higher altitude (South - lower temperature with implications for evapotranspiration and diseases).

The output can then be a recommendation with conditions – e.g., "For farmers on heavy clay soils, planting maize after wheat ….."



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