

Farmer First Revisited



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Agriculture is an urgent global priority and farmers find themselves in the front line of

some of the world's most pressing issues-climate change, globalization and food security. Twenty years ago, the Farmer First workshop held at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, launched a movement to encourage farmer participation in agricultural research and development (RandD), responding to farmers' needs in complex, diverse, risk-prone environments, and promoting sustainable livelihoods and agriculture. Since that time, methodological, institutional and policy experiments have unfolded around the world. "Farmer First Revisited" returns to the debates about farmer participation in agricultural RandD and looks to the future. With over 60 contributions from across the world, the book presents a range of experiences that highlight the importance of going beyond a focus on the farm to the wider innovation system, including market interactions as well as the wider institutional and policy environment. If, however, farmers are really to be put first, a politics of demand is required in order to shape the direction of these innovation systems. This calls for a major rethinking of agricultural RandD, the boosting of the knowledge and capacities of farmers' organizations to innovate, the strengthening of networks and alliances to support, document and share lessons on farmer-led innovation, and the transformation of agricultural higher education. "Farmer First Revisited" should be read by students, policy makers, development professionals, and natural and social scientists aiming to bring the concerns of grassroots farmers to the forefront.

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目录:

[Farmer First Revisited_ 下载链接1](#)

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