An approach to the planning of projects to improve the rate of grower adoption

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As outlined in a previous paper, the rate and extent of adoption by growers of some technical information is poor. This is because significant constraints to adoption exist within grower groups and these are not being recognised. It is proposed that a more careful consideration of these constraints in the planning of projects might ensure a greater level of adoption of technology arising from research.

In examining the case studies in the previous paper, it is probably worthwhile to examine approaches which may have improved adoption.

Irrigation scheduling using evaporation pan data

As the techniques developed in this project have been successfully adopted in other areas it cannot be said they are not adoptable. It is apparent that the technology was not geared to the needs of growers, the farms they operate and the level of management they employ. In southern coastal areas of Queensland, the development of a technique which requires high management skills and careful adjustment for a variable environment, could

be questioned. The development of simple arbitrary guidelines for water usage that could be adapted to various soil types and which give a visual direct reading would be more appropriate. The question arises - can such a decision be effectively made before entering first into a line of research?

Managed pest control in macadamias

If similar pest monitoring programmes in other crops are examined, it would seem that growers in most areas have difficulty in confidently adopting pest monitoring systems. The approach taken elsewhere is to employ "bug checkers". Properties in the macadamia industry are so scattered that the economics of such a system is questionable. There may be a viable approach but how do we find it?

Vibra-packing of citrus

Where technology being promoted implicates people outside the growers control, such as marketing, adoption potential becomes a very complex issue. This means that more consideration of adoption constraints is necessary in these cases. It is obvious that change in the selling system was required in this instance to gain adoption. If this was not considered feasible, the decision to proceed with research work on vibra-packing should have been questioned.

The case studies suggest certain basic reasons for adoption not being considered. These could be:- (i) research officers do not recognise the existence of, nor regard it their responsibility to consider adoption constraints, (ii) extension officers have had little understanding of adoption theory and have paid little attention to it, (iii) lack of co-ordination between research and extension officers in the planning of research projects has not prompted the evaluation of the reasons for the failure of adoption.

A structured approach being evaluated at M.H.R.S. is designed to investigate adoption constraints with respect to social, economic, and physical issues. This is done in a way to evaluate the benefit arising from and the potential adoption of research or development findings. The system is designed to be employed by extension officers but it is believed it will provide a formal and objective way of bringing influence on research programming.