

Participatory Interactions to March 2003

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Models are created with people and for people. They would be worthless if people can not take advantage of them. Involvement of stakeholders in the research process and in building the models guarantees useful outcomes. The best way of involve stakeholders is through real participation, inputting and feeding back in the complete research process.

Interaction with stakeholders, including people from private, State, Federal, and local offices as well as dairy farm owners is a must on this my research.

Lightfoot et al. (1987) mention as Farming Systems Research and Extension (FSRE) participatory methods: group meetings: key informants meetings, and informal surveys.

Additionally Hildebrand et al. (1988) make a list of “choosing methods that work” for FSRE and they list:

- The diagnostic that provides researchers with the information required for identifying farmer problems and determinate appropriate solutions
- Examining secondary data that have been collected and summarized from unpublished and published sources.
- Key informant surveys that are an important data collection choice early in the FSRE process that can make future data more efficient. Key informant interviews are discussions with individuals who represent an institution or type of individual within an area.
- Informal surveys. Informal surveys are field studies in which researchers conduct informal farmer interviews and visit farms to develop an understanding of the farming systems. Informal surveys are especially useful for learning about farmers’ values, opinions, and objectives.
- Formal surveys, which use more typical standard survey procedures. Finally, they mention
- Observations and case studies as participatory methods. Observations are researcher estimations about systematic observation, while case studies are follow ups of farm activities over a period of time.

As stated on my research proposal, involvement of farmers and stakeholders is crucial at all times. I am and I will be using several participatory methods during all the research process. Following, there is a list, without being comprehensive, of participatory actions I have undertaken so far:

Date	Stakeholder(s)	Method
09/11/02	Donald Graetz (SWS, UF Professor)	Informal interview (request information)
09/12/02	Jaime Sánchez (SWS, UF Phd Student)	Phone conversation (awareness of his current research)
09/27/02	Albert de Vries (Dairy Science, UF Professor)	Informal interview (request for contacts)

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09/27/02	Dr. Donald Graetz (SWS, UF Professor)	Informal interview (review information of Suwannee Farm)
09/30/02	Patrick Inglett (SWS, UF PhD Student)	Phone conversation (request for referral for information)
10/11/02	Darrell Smith (Suwannee River Partnership Coordinator)	Informal interview (request for involvement in research)
10/25/02	Chris Vann (Lafayette county dairy extension agent)	Informal interview (request for involvement in research)
10/31/02	Technicians of SWS lab (Suwannee Farm)	Field trip visit (participation on nitrogen measurements row crops)
11/12/02	Sabine Grunwald (SWS, UF Professor)	Phone conversation (request GIS information in Suwannee)
11/15/02	Darrell Smith and "small group" (6 people) (Suwannee River Partnership)	Meeting (discussion of my proposal research)
11/15/02	Mr. Piechocki (owner of Oak Grove dairy)	Informal interview and field visit (some discussion of my proposal)
01/13/03	ALS 5813 Class (Preparation to conduct a "sondeo" with 7 class students)	Informal Dissertation proposal presentation (discussion of topics)
01/17/03	Darrell Smith (Suwannee River Partnership Coordinator)	Meeting (request for help with the "sondeo")
01/27/03	Proposal Seminar (public meeting, some stakeholders)	Presentation and defense of my research topic
01/29/03	Meeting of the Suwannee River Partnership (24 organizations represented)	Conducting "sondeo" interviews to different stakeholders. Class students as interviewers
01/30/03	Wendy Graham (ABE, UF Professor)	E-mail communications (request information)
02/08/03	Alliance Dairies and Oelkfe Dairy (Mr. St John and Mr. Oelkfe dairymen)	Guided visit to dairy farms. With Dr. deVries class
02/21/03	Darrell Smith and "small group" (8 people) (Suwannee River Partnership)	Formal presentation of my research proposal and discussion
02/21/03	David Hornsby (Groundwater pollution specialist in the Suwannee River Basin)	Informal interview (request for information about nitrogen trends in water bodies in Suwannee)
02/24/03	Report of sondeo research by class students (stakeholders invited)	Formal presentation of sondeo findings. Report available
03/04/03	Del Bottcher and Barry Jacobson (Soil and Water Science Technologies, Inc.)	Informal interview and meeting (request for sharing information and complementary work)

Date	Stakeholder(s)	Method
03/06/03	Jessie Wilson, Bill Reck, and Nga Watts (NRCS, USDA)	Formal presentation and discussion on my research proposal
03/07/03	“Manure Lunch” (many stakeholders, organized by Soil and Water Science Technologies, Inc.)	Discussion of new EPA and DEP regulations regarding livestock operations

I have approached stakeholders in the issue of nitrogen pollution, dairy operations, and environmental protection. I have used mostly interviews, meetings, presentations, and e-mail and phone contacts. I have also taken advantage of field trips and on-farm observations.