Research And Extension’s Experiences with the 
Use of PRA Tools in Northern Province, South Africa

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Introduction
Participation is a buzzword often heard, but not practised often enough. The participatory 
approach (PRA) to help communities decide on their own futures, developed in the 1980’s out of the 
rapid rural appraisals (RRA) that had started in the 1970’s.

Purpose of Poster
It is important to understand that the correct use of PRA tools can help build a strong 
community, but that its benefits are also shared with research and extension.

Major Points
• Communities reap the following benefits:
• Get to know their own strengths and weaknesses and develop a self-worth
• Decide what their own plans for their future is
• Learn to make use of these tools to help them in solving their problems

Extension and research reap the following benefits:
• Get to know how communities function and what the networks are
• Know the stakeholders in the community and build their interventions upon this
• Ensure effective, adapted solutions that farmers have asked for
• Participation ensures farmer buy-in if it addresses their felt needs

Conclusions and Educational Importance
The correct use of PRA tools can help farmers articulate what it is they really want. A 
partnership between research and extension will ensure that any adaptive research needed will be 
focussed, and based on farmer’s real needs. Both institutions can learn to work with communities, get 
to see all stakeholder’s points of view and build capacity. The importance of co-operation is often 
forgotten when working with communities.