

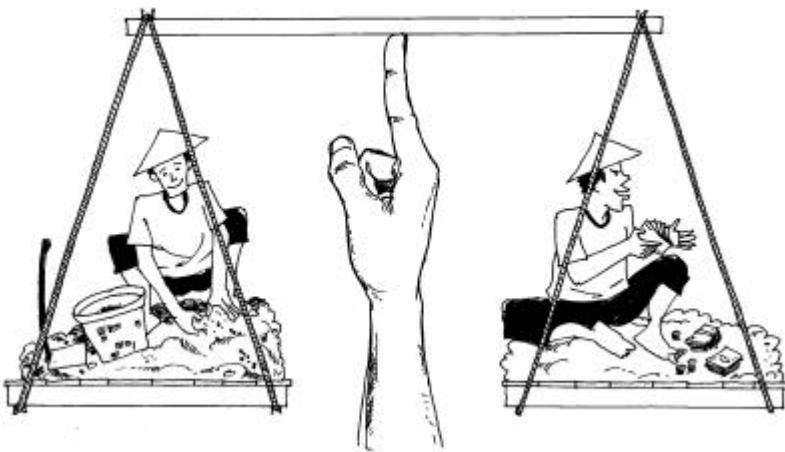
Part III

*Sweetpotato ICM
technical manual*

1 Introduction to Integrated Crop Management

The ecological and socio-economic conditions of a farm are normally very specific, therefore, farming practices differ from farmer to farmer. Technologies offered to farmers should allow adaptation to suit their distinct environmental conditions and farm economics.

Integrated Crop Management (ICM) is a crop cultivation approach in which a balance between ecological and economic aspects of farm management is continuously sought to ensure sustainability of the enterprise. With this principle of balance, the diversity of management among farms must be given particular attention. Integration of farmers' indigenous practices with compatible modern technologies allows a farmer to develop an appropriate management to apply under her or his specific farm conditions. The major goal of this integrated approach is to establish a balance between expenditures and income, and between existing ecological processes and the effects of technology on the farm ecosystem, always keeping in mind the sustainability of the farm enterprise. ICM considers cultivation practices throughout all stages of crop development, from soil preparation to harvesting, and even up to marketing and processing, where appropriate.



ICM is actually nothing new for farmers, since, as long as they have been farmers, they have integrated their own experiences with experiences from other farmers and/or extension guidelines. ICM wants to make use of farmers' capacity to integrate technologies and adapt guidelines, since this is the only way that will ensure successful, farm-specific development of cultivation practices, hence improvement of farm management and output. One element of ICM that farmers are perhaps not fully aware of, or utilizing, is the principle of establishing an ecological and economic balance, requiring some additional problem-solving and decision-making skills. In order to enhance their capacities to implement ICM, farmers should be given the opportunity to gain more experience and improve their existing knowledge through observations, experimentation and analysis directly in the field. The ICM Farmer Field School is designed to provide such opportunities.