



Working with a Translator

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info sheet

Nine tips to help when working with a translator.

1. **Use local skills.** Find a translator from where you are working. They will be familiar with local customs, and with local technical and farming terms.
2. **Clarify technical terms.** Before starting, review technical terms with the translator. Where possible, provide presentations in advance for the translator to review.
3. **Use simple language.** Speak in clear and simple English. Make simple statements and ask simple questions. Avoid jargon, slang and overly specialized terms. Complicated and technical concepts may need to be expressed with simpler language. Avoid complicated questions with long answers. Break up multifaceted questions into parts. Encourage your translator to seek clarification.
4. **Speak slowly and use complete sentences.** Speak at a pace that your translator can keep up with and encourage them to take notes. Speak in complete sentences so that it is easier to translate complete ideas. Pause after every 2 to 3 sentences for translation.
5. **Be clear.** Be clear on the key points you want to make or ask about. During a translated talk or discussion, only say what you want translated.
6. **Speak - one person at a time.** Discourage side conversations that may distract or confuse the translator.
7. **Speak to the person or audience.** Look at the audience, not the translator. Use direct personal language e.g., Ask “Do you plant wheat in November?” rather than “Ask this person if they plant wheat in November?”
8. **Make sure your translator understands.** If you suspect that your translator does not understand what you are saying, ask them. If necessary, rephrase what you are saying. Do not embarrass them in front of others. Do not ask “Do you understand?” rather “Is my point/question clear?”
9. **Give time for rest.** Translating is tiring. Your translator will get tired and the quality of their work decreases after 30 to 40 minutes. Take short breaks as needed.



Photo: Nick Madden

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For more information visit: International Programs ip.ucdavis.edu

Primary Reference: http://shmatkov.info/translator_tips.html

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