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The process of choosing a farm as a Technological Reference Unit (TRU) in the Integrated Crop-Livestock Systems (ICLS): the experience in Ribeirão do Boi Territory

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Introduction Since 1970s, agricultural research produced many technologies and knowledge that were never properly used by farmers. Various extension methods are designed to increase the adoption of technologies produced in universities and research centers, by farmers. One method is the Technological Reference Unit - TRU- which consists of a farm selected for presentation of technological novelties. The selection of this farm, however, is not a simple task. Therefore, we will present the experience occured at 'Território do Ribeirão do Boi', located in the northwest of Minas Gerais State, Brazil. We will also discuss the criteria for choosing a farm that would constitute an TRU in the Integrated Crop-Livestock Systems (ICLS), a complex technology, concerning to huge agricultural knowledge required for adoption that method.

Material and Methods
In meetings conducted with the inhabitants of the territory Ribeirão do Boi by Bioatlântica Institute (IBIO), ICLS technology has emerged as market opportunity based on the existing tradition in production of eucalyptus, milk and corn. After identifying the proper technology, the TRU, local leaders indicated sixteen farms that have been visited by technicians IBIO, following methodological guidelines of Balbino (2011). Of these, four were chosen for the final selection, by Embrapa Dairy Cattle and IBIO team. The criteria for selection were: a) the possibility of use all ICLS components: crops, livestock (pasture and cow's milk) and forest (eucalyptus); b) the farmer's characteristics; c) motivation and interest of the farmer to use the new technology recommended by the technical team. The guiding principle was homophily: "the degree of similarity of pairs of individuals interacting on some attributes, such as beliefs, values, education and social position" (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1974). The authors explain that "the ideas are transferred with maximum frequency between a source and the similar receiver and homophily", one of the most fundamental principles of human communication.

Results and Conclusions
The farmer chosen for receiving the TRU in his property has its income exclusively from agriculture and is not cosmopolitan, which reduces the suspicion that the implementation and the good results of innovation has aroused from external and privileged interpersonal relationships. In socioeconomic terms, education, scale of production and available resources (tractor and implements) were average among other neighbors, which leaves no doubt about the capacity of adoption by visitors in concerning of the new technology.

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