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III.9 Slash-and-burn versus slash-and-mulch in Eastern Amazonia -Brazil- farmer's perception

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The technique of slash-and-mulch land has been adapted and validated, during the last seven years, as an alternative to the traditional slash-and-burn agriculture in Northeastern of Pará State, Brazil, as part of a Brazilian/German initiative (Embrapa Amazônia Oriental/ITA- University of Göttingen and ZEF-University of Bonn) as part of the SHIFT Program. A number of outstanding studies were carried out and are underway adopting a researcher managed on farm research approach, focusing on agronomical and ecological aspects associated to this system, which is being faced as a way of reducing the nutrients losses and the undesirable emissions to the atmosphere associated to burning, and of increasing the fertility of the soil through the organic matter accumulation, consequently increasing crop productivity. Trying to fulfill the gap of understanding the perception of the local family agriculture farmers, with respect to the new technique, a study was started in the community of São João, municipality of Marapanim, Pará State, involving six small farmers which are comparing the performance of maize and cassava, in 1/3 ha plots prepared by the slash-and-burn (50%) and slash-and-mulch (50%) techniques. Farmer's perception is being assessed through weekly discussions with the farmers about the advantages/disadvantages experienced along the cycle and raising suggestions to improve the system; by using participatory appraisal techniques; and by comparing technical coefficients with the data raised along the study.