

**SUMMARY OF THE FSN FORUM DISCUSSION
PROMOTING COLLABORATION OF STAKEHOLDERS
IN AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT
FROM 6TH AUG. TO 20TH AUG. 2008**

Proceeding available at:

http://km.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fsn/docs/proceedings_promotingcollstakeholdersagrdev.doc

I. ISSUES RAISED

- The **communication and coordination** among stakeholders involved in rural development projects **are often absent**. (C. Ramezanpour).
- In Field education models like FFS the tools for learning are not often combined with the tools for application. (C. Ramezanpour).
- Many Farmer Field School (FFS) projects are implemented without looking at the local needs, testing the technologies with farmers' participation and, above all, very few FFS come out with FFS curricula (M. Anantharaman)
- The FFS participatory learning and experimentation is not effectively linked with the efforts of other stakeholders (D.A. Pezo)

II. OPPORTUNITIES AND SUGGESTIONS

- **Opportunities for enhancing collaboration in rural development:**
 - The **voice of the people** on the ground, specifically the farmers supported by the FFS program, can provide some of the most **effective feedback** for enhancing and expanding the FFS program (C. Ramezanpour)
 - There is the need of **greater collaboration** among the many stakeholders in agriculture development and this can only be done through **greater forms of communication** (C. Ramezanpour).
 - It is necessary to help the farmers on the ground with a more regular **interaction** and **sharing information**. (C. Ramezanpour).
 - **Technological interventions** should be **based on local needs** identified by participatory agro-eco system analysis (M. Anantharaman, C. Ramezanpour).
- **Suggestions** (C. Ramezanpour):
 - The new technology might encourage collaboration and strengthen the connection with the people on the ground, e.g handheld **cellular** devices (and **personal computers**). There will be an opportunity for more organizations and stakeholders (even at the village level) to access and share information.
 - It could be useful to create a **web-based network** of communication among the stakeholders, where sharing educational audio and video files (for local radio and TV

use), contact links to important agriculture-related services, relevant papers, news, market linkages;

- Field education models can better serve their target audience when the message taught is supported with the **secondary tools** that will help to apply that message;
- There are **experts** (World Bank, Care, Plan, K-Rep, etc.) who could **assist** field education models like FFS, in provisions of services to supplement the agriculture training – like credit access, irrigation support, and health training.

III. BEST PRACTICE: THE FARMER FIELD SCHOOL (FFS) PROGRAM

▪ Features of the FFS Programme

- FFS is an **ongoing education process**, if not lifelong, if the farmers can "sustain" the group (by paying for the facilitator, locating a communal plot, and purchasing the trial inputs for future crop trainings) (C. Ramezanpour)
- FFS are supposed to respond to **local needs** and not be something that is dropped into communities without any relationship to what actually improves lives (K. Gallagher).
- In FFS programs the **group** has a big **value** beyond the training exercises. The power of the group, or of many groups, is the best way for many small-scale farmers to **access** high-value **contract farming opportunities**. (C. Ramezanpour)
- The FFS group is a **social network** that often connects numerous groups across villages for benefits beyond farming (like health). (C. Ramezanpour)
- **Post-FFS activities** are extremely important for continued learning as a group and doing activities with mutual support. (K. Gallagher). This makes a distinction between the real FFS and the farmer group that continues to stay together. (M. Freeman)

▪ Advantages of integrating the FFS methodology within FS Programmes (K. Gallagher)

- There are many programmes which use FFS as an entry to creating or strengthening **self-sustained** groups.
- Field education models like FFS are **inputs** to a process which fits in some situations and not into most.
- FFS should be used **within a strategy** where they link to the overall direction of development and add to moving forward.
- FFS may **help groups** be formed.
- The **real value** of the FFS program is putting continued **learning into cash crops** (M. Freeman).

▪ Challenges/suggestions for improving the FFS approach

- The **success** of the FFS program in the near future **depends on support to the agriculture extension officers** that can help relay feedback from the farmers to the FAO officers (C. Ramezanpour)
- The effectiveness and potentiality for application of learning in FFS could be enhanced by **linking FFS** participatory learning and experimentation efforts **with other stakeholders**

(D. A. Pezo, C. Ramezanpour).

- FFS should remain as clear **budgetable** items with start and finish dates and with the **release** of their facilitators (or transfer of facilitator responsibility) so that new FFS may be established (K. Gallagher).

- **Case Study: FFS Experience within CATIE/NORWAY Project, GUATEMALA** (Danilo A. Pezo)

The project was developed in Central America for five years and concentrated on developing livestock FFS applying silvopastoral approaches and also analyzing the effects of exogenous factors (e.g. market access, local and national policies, farmers' organization, provision of services, etc.).

Lessons Learnt: The establishment of better contacts with local governments, the milk private sector, and local funding agencies encouraged the implementation and expansion of the technologies that the farmers valued as good to excellent and that do not require external inputs or only signified changes in attitude. Improvements in access to markets by repairing rural roads, and the establishment of milk collection centres were also factors that affected positively technology changes by farmers.

IV. REFERENCES

- **Farmer Field School (FFS)** (C. Ramezanpour).
<http://www.farmerfieldschool.info>