Farmer Field School methodology

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ILRI Research Themes

1. How can livestock contribute to pathways out of poverty?

2. How can adoption of livestock innovations be accelerated?

3. How can the poor access the benefits of emerging livestock markets?

4. How can livestock biotechnology best be used for development?

5. How can livestock contribute positively to human and environmental health?
ILRI revised strategy

ILRI will contribute effectively and demonstrably to sustainable poverty reduction through livestock-centred research and capacity building with diverse partners that will impact on the following 3 pathways out of poverty:

- Securing the current and future assets of the poor
- Improving productivity of agriculture systems of the poor in which livestock play a significant role
- Enhancing participation of the poor in livestock related markets
The farmers, the extension officers and researchers are all stakeholders, participating from the initiation of the research (Lovell et al., 2002)
Researcher can no longer remain exclusively external actors, but need to engage themselves in action research to develop appropriate solutions together with resources users (Hagmann et al., 2002)
Find a different approach

Information dissemination

Knowledge generation

Participatory data collection
The FFS approach was developed by FAO in southeast Asia in the late 80's for small-scale rice farmers to investigate, and learn for themselves the skills required for, and the benefits to be obtained from, adopting integrated pest management (IPM) practices in their paddy fields.
During the 1990’s an estimated 2 million farmers were trained in South and Southeast Asia (Pontius et al., 2000).

In Africa, FAO is currently working in over a dozen countries from Senegal to South Africa (Simpson & Owens, 2002).
Farmer Field Schools

• (FFS) are based on an innovative, participatory and interactive learning approach
• Focus group of 25–35 farmers with common interest
• Regular meeting to access information
• Grant or loan of +/- 600 USD to financed their activities and the facilitation costs.
Farmer Field Schools: 5 key principles

1. What is relevant and meaningful is decided by the learner and must be discovered by the learner.

2. Learning is a consequence of experience.

3. Cooperative approach are enabling.

4. Learning is an evolutionary process with open communication, confrontation, acceptance, respect and the right to makes mistakes.

5. Each person’s experience of reality is unique.
Farmer Field Schools: Non-negotiable

- Farmer-centred
- Competent facilitators: T.O.T
- Curriculum development:
  * Topic should be chosen by the community
  * Training based on farmer’s limited knowledge
  * Training based on basic needs of farmers
  * Participants are involved in curriculum development
Farmer Field Schools: Non-negotiable

Systematic training process:

* Observation
* Group discussion and analysis
* Conclusion and action plan
* Agro-ecosystem analysis
* Regular and frequent meetings
Farmer Field Schools are conducted for the purpose of creating a learning environment in which farmers can master and apply specific management skills. The emphasis is on empowering farmers to implement their own decisions in their own fields.

"I am always ready to learn, but I do not always like being taught."  
Sir Winston Churchill
Farmer Field Schools

Objectives

To build the farmers' capacity to analyse their production systems and to identify their main constraints.
Farmer Field Schools
Objectives

To test possible solutions suitable to their farming system using comparative experiment
Farmer Field Schools

Objectives

Build on existing knowledge enabling farmers to adapt their existing technologies so that they become more responsive to changing conditions, or to adopt new technologies.
Adaptation of Farmer Field School Techniques: Tools for diagnosis

- Agro-ecological system analysis (AESA)
- Participatory technology development (PTD)
- Special topics
- Participatory epidemiology
Agro-ecological System Analysis

- Systematic observation
- Problem identification
- Introduction of recording system
- Analysis of change
- Systematic observation
Systematic observation
- Problem identification
- Introduction of recording system
Problem identification

Introduction of recording system
Participatory Technology Development

Classical PTDs:

Design comparative studies to test possible solutions or available technologies.
Comparison of existing farmer practices
Ex-post PTD analysis
Special Topic

- Enable farmer interaction and sharing of information
- Ensure demand lead information dissemination
- Promote interaction between farmers, extension officers and scientists
- Opportunity for non-livestock related issues
FFS and Participatory Epidemiology

• Increased awareness of disease impact
• FFS could be another essential network needed for data collection and to allow epidemiology to be performed in a participatory way.
Group project

- Generate income
- Sustain groups
  new objectives
- Savings due to bulk
  purchases of seasonal inputs

Collective action
“Education is not received.... it is achieved”
FFS partners

• ITC in The Gambia.

• LoL: 50 dairy FFS funded by USAID in Kenya

• Special Programme for Food Security FAO: Poultry, pig, sheep & goats

FFS in Lesotho and Swaziland

• Danida: up to 300 FFS in 2004-05
How FFS could help in alleviating poverty

- Improve livestock management by general skills training for young people
- Increase productivity and quality of the products with emphasis on high nutritive food (vit. A)
- Enable new production like poultry, pig or bee keeping
How FFS could help in alleviating poverty

- Develop labour saving techniques
- Increase community and family solidarity
- Share manpower for labour intensive activities
How FFS could help in alleviating poverty

- Improve the efficiency of veterinary services
- Increase income levels
- Improve market access
FFS' Advantages

• FFS can easily be integrated into the existing extension service
• FFS recreate the link between farmers, extension agents and scientists
• Farmers are empowered and decide when and which information they want to get
• Possibility to scale up
Dissemination of information
The New Agriculturist
Leisa magazine
Wren Media
Kenyan Daily Nation
ILRI web site

www.ilri.org
www.farmerfieldschool.net
Integration of FFS in the Regional FFS programme

- Capacity building: 2 weeks TOT
- Monitoring and evaluation: design of a strategy and 2x2 weeks on sites
- Comparative study to capture the lessons learned: analyse data and report: 2 weeks
Estimated costs:

- Capacity building: +/- $600/pers
- Monitoring and evaluation & Comparative study: +/- $1,400/pers
- Average cost per pers: $1,700
- Economy of scale: More facilitators reduce the costs per person

(all costs are subject to ILRI management approval)
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THANK YOU

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" Psalm 23