

FARMER BUSINESS SCHOOL

With Climate Change and Gender Perspective in Agro-forestry Context

Farmer Business School (FBS) is a participatory action learning process that involves farmer groups' participation in agricultural value chains. As part of capacity strengthening, FBS comprises a series of group-based experiential learning activities over a production-marketing cycle while interacting with other chain actors and stakeholders.



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Sweetpotato food products with label and packaging showcased during the stakeholder validation workshop of farmer group businesses in the INREMP-Bohol

Evolution of FBS: From Indonesia to Philippines Experience

FBS approach was developed by the International Potato Center (CIP) in 2008 through the initiative of an Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR)-funded project that aims to link vegetable farmers with key markets in West and Central Java, Indonesia.

Initially, the project used the Participatory Market Chain Approach (PMCA) to address the marketing problems of the farmers that impede the advancement of the potato sector and minimize the benefits of smallholder potato farmers.

PMCA facilitates participatory processes among different market chain actors to stimulate joint innovations (commercial, technological, institutional) based on

shared ideas and trust. During 2010 mid-project review, PMCA practitioners identified limited business skills and ineffective farmer organizations as key constraints to effective market linkages. Farmers also had little understanding of market opportunities and inadequate access to market information such as trends, prices and demand.

Drawing from the features of Farmer Field School (FFS), a group-based learning process focused on promoting enhanced agricultural practices in participants' farms, the FBS was developed in harmony with PMCA. It is an action learning approach that aims to build farmers' capacity to respond, individually or jointly, to emerging market opportunities.



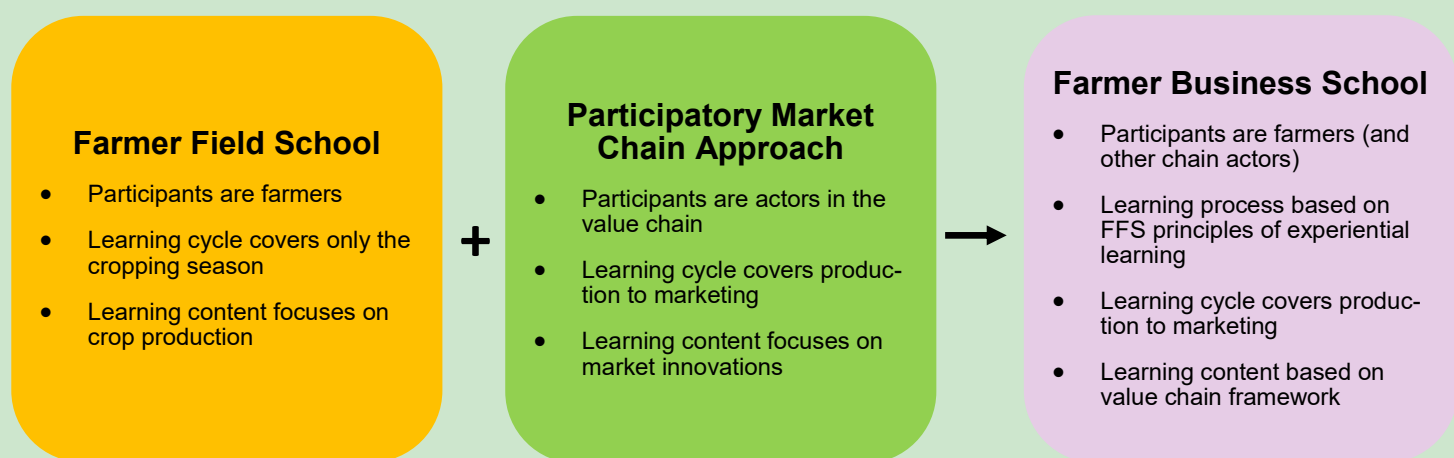


Figure 1. The Evolution of the FBS Approach

Building on the success of FBS in Indonesia, the FoodSTART project, led by CIP, has promoted its adoption in the framework of IFAD investments in Asia with the aim to strengthen farmers' entrepreneurial capacity as they seek to participate in dynamic agricultural value chains.

In the first phase of FoodSTART (IFAD grant, 2011-2015), CIP partnered with CHARMP2 in the Philippines. CHARMP2 implemented FBS with more than 80 farmers groups, and still continues to use it as their main livelihood approach. Presently, being FBS graduates has been included among the requisites for accessing loans provided by the project.

The second phase of FoodSTART (FoodSTART+, IFAD/EU grant, 2015-2018) is currently scaling out FBS with a number of IFAD investments in the region: INREMP and Fish-CORAL (Philippines), Megha-LAMP (India) and SOLID (Indonesia). The FBS approach has evolved over time to make it more comprehensive and responsive to important cross-cutting issues, such as climate change, gender and nutritional value of marketed commodities (fresh or processed). FBS curriculum is also flexible and adaptable to specific context and needs of partner investment projects. In 2016, INREMP adapted the FBS approach for piloting and eventually supporting livelihoods of communities living in its target agro-forestry areas.



FBS participants conducting the market assessment and engaged in discussion and analysis of results to come-up with the commodity chain map in Module 3.

What is Farmer Business School?

FBS is a participatory action learning approach to support farmer groups' participation to and benefit from agricultural value chains guided by a market-chain curricular framework, through a series of learning activities over a production-marketing cycle, including interaction with other chain actors and stakeholders. It is a modular/ step-wise platform for developing or upgrading value chains especially fit for small farmer-entrepreneurs.

FBS participants are individual farmers in a learning group. The approach facilitates experiential, field-based and joint learning over a four to six month crop production-marketing cycle. The FBS curriculum is flexible and driven by market needs and opportunities.

Through FBS, farmers are able to (1) develop market-driven product innovations; (2) establish and expand linkages with markets - local and regional; and (3) generate new and additional profits through increased volume and value of their products. As a tangible outcome of FBS, farmer-participants are expected to have actual business initiated or strengthened upon completing the FBS learning process.

The FBS learning objectives are:

- 1.To form and strengthen farmer groups for marketing-oriented learning and action.
- 2.To identify and describe key actors and their roles in agricultural value chains.
- 3.To analyze and prioritize value chain opportunities towards increasing business profitability of farmer groups and their individual members.
- 4.To introduce technological, commercial and institutional innovations in collaboration with other chain actors and stakeholders to respond to market opportunities.
- 5.To develop a business plan to make use of new market opportunity by building on innovations.
- 6.To develop strategies for enhancing farmer's access and use of business development support services.

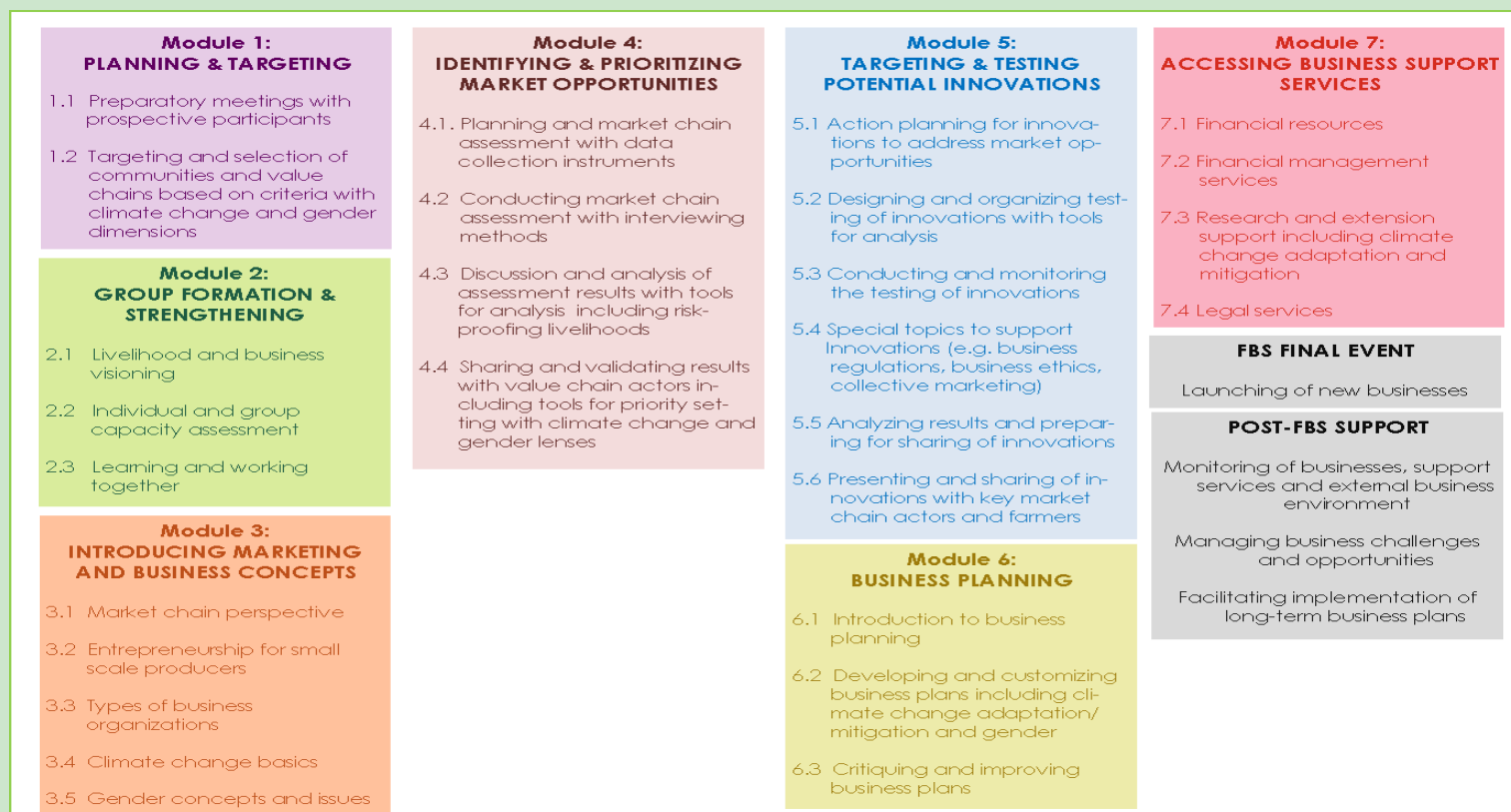


Figure 2. FBS Curriculum with Climate Change and Gender Dimensions

Adapting FBS in agro-forestry: INREMP and FoodSTART+ collaboration

INREMP implements the Farmer Business School approach in the Wahig-Inabanga River Basin in Bohol province. Twelve (12) FBS facilitators trained by FoodSTART+ experts have actively conducted the FBS modules in six INREMP project sites in Danao, Inabanga and Pilar. The six pilot people's organizations are CLEAP, LETMULCO, ISFA, NMVSA, SCARED and SMART. A total of 125 farmers (33 male and 92 female) have

been enrolled in FBS. The FBS groups will officially launch their new micro-enterprises focused on root crops in July 2018. The products include sweetpotato and taro chips (in different flavors), sweetpotato jam (mixed with pineapple), sweetpotato beverage (in mango and Philippine lemon flavors), sweetpotato ketchup (mixed with tomato and banana), sweetpotato candies, sweetpotato muffins, and cassava cakes.



FBS with IFAD investment projects partnering with FoodSTART

Presently the FBS approach is supported, adopted and adapted by several IFAD investments to capacitate farmers to develop their micro/small enterprises and businesses. Implementation is co-funded by the grant and the investment:

CHARMP2: As of December 2016, 80 farmer groups with 1,387 graduates (83% women). In 2017–2018, the scaling up project is continuing to implement FBS with 18 new villages. Over 100 FBS facilitators were trained. Each FBS group has received the livelihood assistance fund (US\$ 2,000) for developing the new agri-enterprises. CHARMP2 benefitted of higher repayment rates by FBS graduates.

FishCORAL: 50 facilitators were trained in Aqua-based Business School (FBS adaptation for fisherfolks) and currently piloted in 17 sites in Eastern Visayas, 5 in Caraga and 6 in ARMM with focus on milkfish, grouper, rabbit-fish, sardinella, seaweeds, mudcrab, squid, mussel, lobster, cassava and sweetpotato.

Megha-LAMP: 18 FBS facilitators were trained. FBS piloted with six groups focusing on cassava and potato.

SOLID: 20 facilitators trained and 10 FBS groups currently implemented with sweetpotato, cassava and fishery products.