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MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE



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National Farmer Field School Standard and Guideline

Acknowledgment

We would like to thank and express our deepest appreciation to FAO, SNV and JICA projects for their technical and financial support for the preparation of the National Farmer Field School Standard and Guideline.


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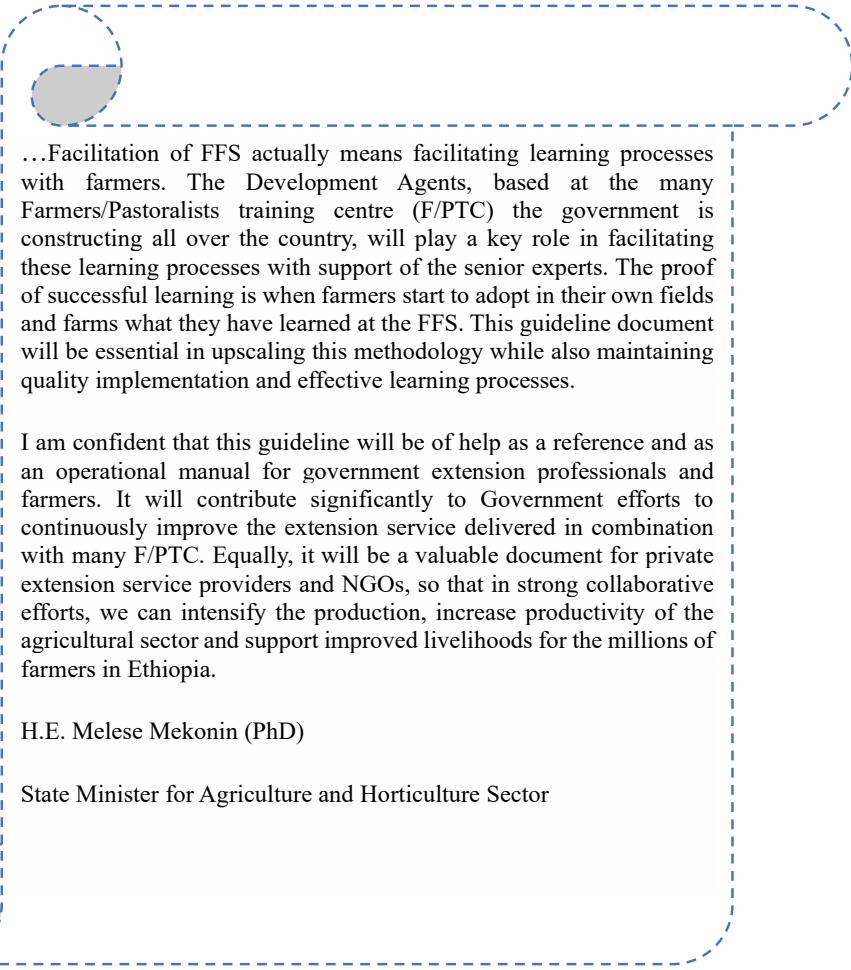
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Note from the Minister

Farmer Field School (FFS) is a participatory extension methodology that brings farmers together to solve production problems through sustainable agriculture. The FFS approach offers space for hands-on group learning, enhancing skills for observation and critical analysis and improved decision-making by local communities.

Several projects are currently applying the FFS group extension method in Ethiopia. It is proven it can motivate farmers, increase yields, improve pest and disease management with less pesticides, and deliver the quality produce markets are requiring. FFS methodology also fits well within the MoA Extension strategy which distinguishes individual extension (advice to individual farmers), mass extension (brochures, radio) and group extension approach. The latter include Farmers- Researcher- Extension Groups (FREGs), Study Circles, Field Days, Demonstrations, and Farmer Field School (FFS).

The Ministry has decided, it is time to upscale the application of the FFS methodology by the government extension system and is therefore taking the necessary steps. In January 2022, MoA declared FFS as a best practice for group extension approach. In September 2022, MoA approved the ‘National Farmer Field School Standard and Guideline’, which has culminated into this document. Next steps will include raising the awareness on this methodology among the extension staff, as well as creating the required knowledge and skills within the extension system to deliver quality FFS programmes. 




...Facilitation of FFS actually means facilitating learning processes with farmers. The Development Agents, based at the many Farmers/Pastoralists training centre (F/PTC) the government is constructing all over the country, will play a key role in facilitating these learning processes with support of the senior experts. The proof of successful learning is when farmers start to adopt in their own fields and farms what they have learned at the FFS. This guideline document will be essential in upscaling this methodology while also maintaining quality implementation and effective learning processes.

I am confident that this guideline will be of help as a reference and as an operational manual for government extension professionals and farmers. It will contribute significantly to Government efforts to continuously improve the extension service delivered in combination with many F/PTC. Equally, it will be a valuable document for private extension service providers and NGOs, so that in strong collaborative efforts, we can intensify the production, increase productivity of the agricultural sector and support improved livelihoods for the millions of farmers in Ethiopia.

H.E. Melese Mekonin (PhD)

State Minister for Agriculture and Horticulture Sector



Acronyms and Abbreviation

AESA	Agro Eco System Analysis
DA	Development Agent
F/PTCs	Farmer/Pastoral Training Centers
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
FFS	Farmer Field School
FHH	Female House Hold
FTC	Farmers Training Centre
IPM	Integration Pest Management
IITA	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PCE	Participatory Comparative Experiments
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PTC	Pastoralist Training Centre
ToF	Training of Facilitators
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
SNV	SNV Netherlands Development Organisation

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Background

Public agricultural extension service is dominant in Ethiopia, and it is FTC-based. A total of 14,065 farmer/pastoral training centers (F/PTCs) have been established and about 90,138 field extension workers known as development agents (DAs) have been trained, and out of this 69,325 DAs are currently working and assisting the smallholder farmers in rural areas. FTCs are positioned to facilitate agricultural knowledge, skill, and information exchange among farmers. Most of the FTC's have at least three development agents one for crops, livestock, and natural resource management. Even if the country has a strong extension system, there has been a gap in service delivery.

Over the past fifty years, several extensions approaches and methods have been implemented to provide farmers with relevant agricultural information and promote appropriate technologies. Among the different extension approach, the group extension approach is the one and implemented largely in our context.

The government has been developing and implementing a national agricultural extension strategy in the year 2017 to strengthen the existing agricultural extension services with the implementation of different extension approach and approaches. The strategy also emphasized the need for a group extension approach. These are farmer development groups, farmers' innovation groups, Farmer Field Schools (FFS), farmers' common interest groups, and farmers' research extension groups, with the general goal of enhancing social networks and farmer learning in extension systems. These group extension approach allow farmers to work together to solve their common problems, support each other and build their confidence through participatory learning. The FFS is one of the group extension approach which is part of the strategy put in place in one of the pillars.

The farmer field school is a participatory and interactive learning approach that emphasizes problem-solving and discovery-based learning. It is also important for facilitators to have good leadership skills, empowering farmers with knowledge and skills to identify their problems and suggest possible solutions and making farmers experts in their fields and ability to make critical and informed decisions.

FFS helps farmers how to organize themselves and their communities and Sensitizes new ways of thinking and problem-solving. It is also helpful to strengthen linkage among value chain actors, facilitate or enhance technology adoption, reassure and recognize indigenous knowledge of the community, encourage the involvement of farmers in technology generation/ dissemination, and empower farmers' resilience capacity in climatic change.

As indicated above, Farmer Field School is one of the extension approach in the extension system that keeps its emphasis on adult learning cycles, learning by doing, farmer empowerment, and autonomous action by themselves. Based on their shared interests and issues to solve, the FFS members formed themselves into groups. Because it is easy to share a common goal and promote the self-help efforts of individual members, new FFS groups are often formed, but at the same time, it can be applied to any existing self-help groups, farmer research groups, and development groups. FFS also utilizes comparative experiments by the groups, which allows significantly more intense learning throughout the entire season.

The FTC plot or FFS-selected host farms will be the sites of the comparative experiment. Then, during scheduled field days, members of the development and/or the FFS group together with surrounding community members will visit the FFS comparative experiments. Additionally, FFS participants are advised to create their demonstration/learning plot on their farm to communicate the lessons learned from FFS to development groups or groups who are not FFS participants. The FFS group members will also be requested to impart their knowledge and skills to the FTC demonstration plots. The FFS graduates could also receive certification from the FTC as farmers' promoters to assist development agents in the provision of extension services to the area. The development agents are in charge of facilitating farmer-to-farmer learning between FFS members and development groups.

After the learning period, which lasts one or two production seasons, post-FFS activities guarantee continuity at the local level and enable the group to exercise entrepreneurial leadership. The group members had the wisdom to start their cooperatives to carry out diverse business activities. The FFS graduates can train other farmers. Additionally, the FFS groups organize their agricultural development initiatives and communicate with input vendors, marketers, transporters, and other participants in the value chain. To pay for their learning expenses and to make it easier for them to get financing, the group members can also form credit and savings organizations.

This Guideline addresses the Key Principles of FFS, Key elements of FFS, Conditions for successful FFS, Roles, and responsibilities of different stakeholders at all levels & master facilitators, standards to implement FFS, facilitator's guide with different Phases and steps for implementation of Field school (preparation, establishment & implementation), strategy for sustaining of FFS and Monitoring, evaluation and learning.

The guideline also guides the running training of trainers and brings agricultural extension staff, NGO staff, and able farmers up to the point of being good farmer field school facilitators. It continues the tradition of teaching, as the facilitators will teach focusing on methods that are practical and readily replicable.

Alignment

From field experience, FFS complements the existing extension system and strategy. Hence, FFS implementers need to align with the existing Farmer Training Centre to create synergy. Furthermore, the development agents need to take part in the overall planning and implementation of FFS.

The objective of the Guideline

- The Guideline aims to align/ build upon the existing national agricultural extension system as one of a group extension approach.
- To ensure the quality of designing and implementing FFS
- To provide strategic directions in implementing FFS and to bring synergy among stakeholders.

Users of the Guideline

This guideline provides practical guidance on how to set up and support smallholder farmers by implementing Farmer Field Schools (FFS) in different enterprises in Ethiopia. Although FFS has already been successfully applied in many countries, it is still relatively new for the country. The guidelines are intended for facilitators of FFS, communities' facilitators or farmer's promoters, agricultural extension workers, subject matter specialists (SMS), and development partners who would like to implement FFS.

The guideline addresses planning and conducting FFS in the context of farming and related communities. The guideline could be adapted based on the dynamics of livelihood and changing conditions. FFS with pastoralists, with people involved with aquaculture, farmers involved with long-term crops like fruits or short-term crops vegetables or grains will look quite different. Pastoralist Field School as become an accepted concept in Ethiopia, nevertheless, for readability, this document from here onwards use the most widely used term Farmer Field School (FFS).

Necessary Conditions for the Success of FFS

Field experiences show that the success of the FFS approach depends on the goodwill of decision-makers at various levels, especially at the Federal, regional, district, and community levels. Furthermore, trained skilled labor, financial resources, and incentive mechanisms, aligning with the existing extension system, focused on quality instead of the number of FFS groups are some of the necessary conditions for successful implementation and desired outcomes of FFS. The following necessary conditions are discussed briefly.

Commitment

The commitment of key stakeholders in implementing FFS is critical for achieving the intended objectives, it requires the commitment of decision-makers, leaders at all levels, facilitators, front-line development agents (Agri-extension workers), and development partners.

Awareness Creation

Creating awareness at a different level to aware FFS approach should be an entry point before implementing the approach. Awareness events need to address at the Federal, regional, district, and community levels.

Human resource

As an entry point for planning and running FFS, well-trained and energetic facilitators, leaders, and development agents are required to put the FFS approach into practice.

Establish Incentive mechanism

Establishing incentive mechanisms for facilitators is one of the conditions for the success of FFS. The incentive mechanisms could be in-kind and /or

financial resources, motivation letters, providing inputs, recognition, and other strategies.

Create strong linkage among development stakeholders

A strong linkage mechanism has to be created at all levels to avoid duplication of efforts and wastage of resources while running FFS. A functional FFS platform has to be organized to discuss issues concerning farmer field schools to share experiences and coordinate field school activities. The platform brings relevant stakeholders to discuss some of the strategic issues.

Respecting the cultural context

The farmer has age-old indigenous technical knowledge and management strategies. This requires integrating indigenous knowledge and skill with new practices. It is, therefore, valid to consider and respect the local context's cultural values, norms, and beliefs in the planning and implementation of FFS.

Carry out monitoring, evaluation & learning

Farmer Field School intervention requires close monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the learning process by developing a clear monitoring & evaluation plan at a different level. The monitoring and evaluation process entails relevant partner institutions including community facilitators, FFS members, and SMS at all levels. The findings of M&E will be used to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of FFS.

Finance

For running Farmer field School, the Government needs to allocate and/ or mobilize financial resources for running FFS activities such as inputs, equipment/tools, and stationery. In addition, financial resources are required for organizing field days, experience-sharing visits, and conducting experiments. It is also necessary for self-financing mechanisms for

generating financial resources. For instance, the individual contribution of FFS participants is useful for generating resources and creating a sense of ownership. Also, income-generating activities have to be established to create access to financial resources..

Coordination and linkages

The facilitation of linkages is equally important. Farmers often need access to inputs, to market, and to finance to be able to adopt the practices and technologies learned in the FFS. FFS programs should ensure the facilitation of linkages as well, for the FFS to be successful.

PART I: Overview of Farmer Field School (FFS)

Background

FFS was originally developed in 1989 to promote Integrated Pest Management (IPM) among rice farmers in Indonesia, and Asia. Since 1995, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been testing the FFS as a means of helping smallholder farmers in East Africa. It is a complement to the existing research and extension system contributing to an increment of knowledge and skill to boost production and productivity.

The FFS program in Africa started through the efforts of the FAO global IPM facility with the first Training of Trainers (TOT) on Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Farmer Field School was held in Ghana in 1995. Mali established FFS in rice in 1999 through a national IPM program. Applying the FFS approach and methodology to Cocoa farming has been one of the tasks undertaken by the STCP under the IITA program in Cameroon and other West African Countries. At present, more than 120 developing countries including Asia, Africa, South America, and Eastern Europe have been piloting field schools.

Since 1981, FAO has been an active development partner and pioneer in bringing the FFS program to Ethiopia by implementing a wide range of programs and projects to improve the food security and nutrition of its population. And it has demonstrated integrated pest management (IPM) of Fall Army Worm for the first time in all regions and on climate-smart agriculture in East & West Harari and Rice - Fish in the Amhara region.

Since the FFS approach developed as a distinctive extension approach, other programs and projects such as Japan International Agency (JICA), SNV Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), Self-Help Development International, Agri-Service Ethiopia, and integrated nutrient management (INMASP) have practiced the FFS approach to implementing their planned activities.

The collective experience comprising different approaches, combined with the need to have a common and standardized more effective (optional) approach to the country's agricultural extension system as a whole, gave birth to the current farmer field school guideline.

Moreover, the lessons learned from this experience encouraged the Ministry of Agriculture to incorporate and align the FFS approach into the existing extension system. FFS is a group-based adult learning approach that teaches farmers how to experiment and solve problems independently. Sometimes called “schools without walls”. In FFS, groups of farmers meet regularly with a facilitator, observe, talk, ask questions, and learn together. The main aims of Farmer Field Schools are to help farmers learn and adopt new knowledge and skills, and to make better decisions related to the enterprise.

The FFS approach is an innovative, participatory, and interactive learning approach that emphasizes problem-solving and discovery-based learning. FFS is a platform where farmers and facilitators analyze, debate observations or problems, apply their experiences in resolving the problems, and present new information from outside the community. FFS can also provide an opportunity for farmers to practice and test/evaluate sustainable land-use technologies and introduce new technologies by comparing their conventional practices developed with their traditions and culture. FFS provides opportunities for learning by doing. It teaches basic agricultural and management skills that make farmers experts in their farms.

FFS is usually a time-bound activity (generally one agricultural production cycle or a year), involving a group (commonly 25-30 members) of farmers. It is facilitated by extension staff or increasingly by farmer facilitators/promoters. The method emphasizes group observation, discussion, analysis, presentation, and collective decision-making and actions. Such a process builds self-confidence, particularly for women and the poor.

Key Principles of Farmer Field School

Principles of FFS are corner stone for planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the FFS approach is guided by the following non-negotiable principles:

Box 1: Principles of FFS

Learner-led study: Group learning is demand driven, based on needs and gaps identified by farmers, not the facilitator. Farmers decide what is relevant to and priorities for them and what they want the FFS to address is based on their interest and that of the community.

Hands-on and discovery-based learning: The learning process follows the principles of adult education and “learning by doing”. Adults tend to learn best through sharing their experiences.

Learning by doing: The plant is the main learning ground, around which all FFS activities are organised. Farmers learn directly from what they experience, observe and collect from their surroundings, instead of through textbooks, pictures and other extension materials.

Learning takes place in the field: The learning place in the host farm and in the interaction of the group.

Facilitation, not teaching: The facilitator plays a crucial role in effective learning because FFS does not emphasize teaching but on guiding the members of FFS through the learning process.

The farmer as expert: The FFS approach distinguishes the members of the community as the experts within their individual contexts and reflects intrinsic and native knowledge as a source of information to be used within the FFS learning process.

PART II: Standards to Implement Farmer Field School

The Ethiopian agricultural Extension strategy acknowledges Farmer Field School as one of the agricultural extension approaches in empowering farmers to make informed farm management decisions. Considering that FFS is yet to be mainstreamed in the Government extension system, there is to set a minimum standard to ensure an acceptable level of FFS implementation. We hope that these minimum standards and guidelines will assist the FFS implementation process in a harmonized manner with attention to quality and mainstreaming while still ensuring flexibility based on local contexts.

FFS start up

Professionals need to assess the local context to look at whether FFS is suitable for empowering the local community to tackle the existing problems. The assessment will be conducted by subject matter specialists, FFS Master Trainers, the community, and relevant stakeholders. Before starting FFS activities, organizers need to prepare the FFS implementation and financial plan. The best timing of starting FFS activity is based on the agroecological condition of the locality. Organizer needs to identify when ToF needs to start, how many FFS groups are going to establish etc. In addition, it is required proper planning of the required resources in line with the required resources.

Training of facilitators (ToF)

The duration of ToF should be 2 weeks before start of field implementation. The course can be conducted either continuously as one phase or as divided into two phases. Daily sessions are programmed at 7 hours per day, with starting time and ending time dependent on the local situation. The content of the training should include FFS methodology and implementation with practices, participative learning and facilitation and technical topics, and cross-cutting issues. A minimum of two Master Trainers on FFS methodology are recommended to conduct the ToF daily for the duration of the training course. A maximum of 30 and a minimum of 15 facilitators will participate in the training.

Group organization

FFS should apply all the key principles and core activities of the approach.

Group size should be between 25-30 members with the representation of local social minorities, at least 30 % of women. Groups should be organized with a clear leadership structure and operational norms in place. Host teams must exist in a group and take the lead in the session activities; each with a name and slogan, with roles, spelt out.

Learning site

Comparative experimentation and a comprehensive Agro Eco System Analysis (AESAs) should be undertaken as essential components of a successful FFS. Comparative experiments require resources and skills. The size of the experimentation site should depend on the focal learning activity of appropriate size for self-management by the members and visibility.

Comparative experiment

There should be a clear agreement spelled out between the group and the host owner/s of the resources for experimentation (i.e. land or animals used for experimentation), including specification on how to protect/care for the assets as well as sharing of benefits. The learning site should be as close as possible to the experimentation site.

Learning calendar

A learning calendar should be developed together with the FFS members. In addition, Field days should be undertaken to display enterprises and knowledge to the wider community, mid-term during implementation and at the end – possibly linked to the graduation events. Exchange visits to be undertaken during the learning cycle. The costs of the exchange visit should be incorporated into the program costs. The topic of the day should always be part of the daily FFS session. It should be a minimum of 30 to minute-60 minutes per session. Learning sessions should be supported with a mix of learning methods such as field visits, stories, role-plays, energizers, and poems.

Facilitators

Facilitators could be development agents and/or locally selected graduated farmers (based on interest) and belong to the local community. If the facilitators are selected from the farmers, their number should be two. Desired criteria for selection of facilitators should include literacy ability (read & write) community acceptance and being available at least one learning cycle of FFS and must be selected by FFS members before graduation. Facilitators (Development Agent) could handle a maximum of 2 Farmer Field schools concurrently depending on their workload. In addition, there should be at least one refresher to improve and refresh facilitators on identified training gaps. See more about Facilitators in Annex 9.

Incentive mechanism

Incentive mechanisms should be designed to motivate good-performing facilitators to make effective implementation of FFS.

Coordination

The FFS platform should be established to reinforce and harmonize FFS advocacy and implementation. Collaboration and coordination mechanisms should be strengthened among relevant stakeholders under the leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Certification

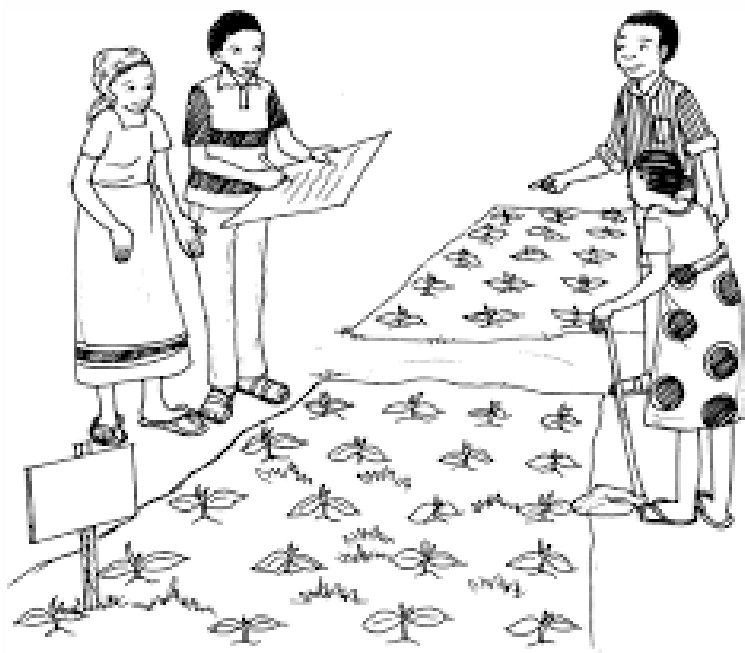
The trained master trainers, training of facilitators, and farmers should be certified with officially accepted certificates by the responsible institutions.

FFS member graduation

Graduation for active members should be mandatory by end of the learning cycle/season. Only active members with 75% attendance. Knowledge and skill, adoption/adaption of good practices, and individual commitment to be also assessed as self-evaluation to encourage members and to prepare action plans.

Monitoring and evaluation

It is critical to closely monitor Farmer Field School learning activities to ensure whether the expected change is achieved or not. This will help to make the necessary corrections, reflect on their learning, and make the necessary improvements. FFS Evaluation will be conducted on the performance of FFS, weekly sessions, and comparative experiments by using participatory techniques and methods.



PART III: FFS Facilitators

Guide

The next-mentioned guideline is prepared to guide FFS facilitators to facilitate FFS at the community level. The guideline is divided into three phases.

Phase I: Preparation

Step 1: Assess the Local Context

Before establishing an FFS in a new area, a simple assessment should be performed by a specialist to assess the conditions for FFS implementation. This will ensure that the environment is suitable for the FFS approach. The following checklist could help in planning the FFS assessment:

The results of the assessment will help to assess if an FFS should be implemented in a particular region, and to determine the target communities. If local officials are supportive and an FFS has been recognized as a potentially appropriate method, the remaining results will help to assess the required resources for establishing FFS.

Box 2: Checklist for assessing local context

- Is FFS the most suitable approach for tackling existing problems?
- Are there any cultural barriers to establish FFS?
- Are there any other FFS or similar program in the region, country? (It is important to link up FFS wherever possible)
- Are there any FFS specialists or Master Trainers available in the area?
- Are there facilitators in the area? Are they willing to act as FFS facilitators?
- How many FFS can be guaranteed implementation after the first ToF course? Are there sufficient resources?
- Assess performance of existing groups in line with group formation standard

Step 2: Organize Training of Facilitators

FFS facilitators need to be identified and trained before commencing any FFS activities. This is due to the facilitator's need to acquire the required skills and knowledge of FFS methodology. Each FFS needs a trained facilitator who supports FFS members to engage participants in the discovery-based learning process. Facilitators must undergo at least a 2-week training. See the training outline in Annex 1.

Step 3: Planning Meetings and Creating Awareness at All Levels

Before establishing an FFS in an area, there is a need to introduce the FFS concept at a different level in areas where there is no awareness. This will ensure from the outset create of a better understanding of the concept and implementation of Farmer Field Schools at the Federal, regional, zonal, district, and community/kebele levels. The objective of the meeting is to provide awareness for stakeholders to discuss and provide a conceptual understanding of FFS and share practical field experience. The meeting would be more effective if it combined with a field visit to a nearby ongoing FFS group (if any).

The following points should be discussed with the district office of agriculture for the effective implementation of FFS.

- Determine the number of FFS to be established in the district and kebele.
- It is recommended to have enough trained FFS facilitators and back stoppers. Identify and assign DAs to take responsibility for the agreed FFS implementation period.
- The number of FFS must be determined according to the budget and resources. For weekly or bi-weekly based FFS, one or two FFS per facilitator is appropriate.

Meeting with local leaders

Following the Training of Facilitators, the facilitators/master trainers undertake initial contact with the community. The purpose of the meeting is to create rapport and a better understanding of FFS. In most places, community leaders and relevant actors should be contacted first to seek their advice and suggestions. Following their approval, facilitators can plan awareness-raising meetings to introduce the FFS approach.

Procedures to implement the step

- Once the FFS implementation plan has been determined at the district level, the assigned facilitators should announce the decision to the village officials.
- DAs should ensure that district and/or village officials are well informed about the FFS in general and particularly in the areas for the coming season and ask for their support for the implementation.
- A facilitator organizes briefing meetings for village and sub-village officials. It is more appropriate if 50% of female representatives can attend as well. It is recommended that the active participation of women is needed in briefing meetings.
- Facilitators need to use the below-mentioned checklist as an aid in memory to move on with the discussion.
- The village leaders, sub-village local leaders' roles and responsibilities should be discussed during the village leader's briefing meeting.
- Following the briefing meeting, village leaders will be requested to organize a community meeting.

Awareness creation meeting at the community level

- Organize community meetings through village and sub-village officials. It is favourable if female members other than household heads can attend as well because a woman can be also interested in FFS learning activities.
- In the meeting, provide FFS-interested village members with a clear view of what they are going to do in FFS and what they can get through FFS
- Explain what the participants are expected to do (use the list "briefing items during FFS introduction and promotion").
- Describe the process of FFS selection through the meeting.
- The facilitator needs to ask and reach a consensus with the community members on the selection criteria of FFS members based on the principles of FFS.
- Discuss and agree on the preferred enterprise.

- As a follow-up of creating awareness at the community level, the next action is to select FFS members (see below).

Note: If both male and female representatives from every household are not present, they cannot be represented to be as members of FFS. It is advisable to take into consideration the issue of the family and decide who represents them in the meeting of FFS.

FFS member selection

- Organize meeting with community members (men, FHH, married women, women, youth, elders etc.)
- Recap basic concepts and process of FFS.
- Confirm their understanding of FFS by asking questions.
- Ask participants to brainstorm the criteria of FFS member selection.
- Consensus on the selection criteria (the criteria need to consider interest, gender, etc.).
- Based on the agreed criteria, the community members select appropriate FFS members.
- If the number of FFS participants is below the expected number (i.e. below 25), the facilitator needs to organize another promotion event.

Phase II: FFS

Establishment

The second phase of FFS is enterprise selection, organizing FFS groups, preparing the learning calendar, and selecting a learning site and host farmer.

Step 4: Participatory Enterprise Selection, Problem Analysis, and Proposing Solutions

FFS learning on the farm is going with one or several crops, which used to be called learning enterprises. It can be horticulture, cereals, nurseries, orchards, fodders, coffee production, or any other livelihood activity. After group formation, the facilitator holds a meeting with FFS members to discuss which enterprise they are going to learn about in the coming season. Target enterprises should be focused on their interest and the improvement of their production system. FFS members should prioritize, select, and agree on the learning enterprises in a participatory manner. The role of the facilitator is to facilitate this process.




If there is already a local enterprise or technical solution that the FFS program can provide, participants could be asked to list the priority enterprises they would like to learn about, and members could select from such options. The facilitator must confirm with the participants what issues they are focusing on and how this learning will help to solve them.

Also, if the enterprise that the FFS program intends to offer is not widely practiced locally, and farmers are unable to come up with it, the Program must have a preliminary list of some enterprises that could be solutions to known problems in the area. These enterprises should be put together in a catalog with their benefits and requirements identified and proposed to the participants, who can then choose from the menu the enterprise they wish to learn about. The advantage of this approach is that it keeps the learning enterprise within the target of the FFS program and the technical background of the implementing organization, while at the same time ensuring the ownership of the participants through an autonomous selection process.

There are several ways in which this selection can be done, and in some cases, the listed enterprises may be compared using a pairwise ranking approach, or if such a process is not clear to participants, a visually accessible method

such as the 10 Stones can be used to determine priorities. Through such a process, the facilitator assists participants to view a list of prioritized enterprises.





a) Discussions on learning enterprises

- Ask members which enterprises/crops they want to learn. Each farmer has their preference for crops according to their importance and interest.
- Agree on a maximum number of enterprises must be announced as well.
- Depending on the environment, however, the member can come up with another enterprise for learning. Do not neglect their requirement but the facilitator must assess the following points:
 -  Is that suitable to set a comparative experiment for that enterprise?
 -  How weekly Agroecosystem Analysis (AESA) will be conducted?
 -  If the ideas raised by members could not satisfy the above questions, suggest that would be conducted apart from FFS, as group Income Generation Activities with their expenses.
- Make a necessary suggestions to the farmer's ideas as facilitator from the technical and experience-based point of view.
- Confirm whether all members agree on some crops as their learning enterprise.

b) Specifying enterprise

- After the decision of the enterprise, there might be some other issues like types of vegetables or crop varieties to be decided for the experiment. In such cases:
- Using Talk Ball and ask all members one by one "What kind of vegetables/varieties do you wish to learn most?"
- Facilitators note and list all required species on Flip chart paper and share it with all members.
- Ask and let them think about how many Learning Enterprises we shall select. As a facilitator, you can suggest that 1 or at most 2 species are

appropriate for effective experiment and weekly AESA and confirm with the group.

- If the total number of species mentioned by the members was not so many (less than 4), a member can decide on 1 or 2 species just by raising their hand.
- If the total number of species mentioned by the members was more than 4, draw each species mentioned on a paper and conduct “Ten stones” to select 1 or 2 species.
- Explain the potential learning enterprise using Enterprise Picture Card to the members and give a very clear overview on:
 -  The purpose of each enterprise
 -  Size of the learning site
 -  Materials and Budget necessary
 -  Expected benefits of each enterprise

c) Analysing selected enterprises

After selecting learning enterprises, list all enterprises selected on the newsprint and you may ask members the following questions for clarification:

1. “Why those enterprises are important ”

This may clarify the problems that participating farmers currently face and direct you to think about an appropriate solution.

2. “Are we able to implement all enterprises selected ”

This may confirm whether the member has enough time and resources to conduct all those enterprises. You may facilitate them to reduce the number of enterprises if it looks a lot. Two or three at most enterprises are comfortable to deal with since several experiments will consume more time for AESA sessions.

3. Considerations !!

The process of decision-making in an enterprise should be in very participatory way but not forced on the members. If the facilitator forces the members to do some enterprises because of his/her opinion or office norms, they will lose their interests as well as ownership, and finally, they start feeling as if they are doing the work because of the facilitators but not for themselves¹. Instead, when an idea of their own has been taken, people show great interest and feel ownership. Therefore, even the FFS program has its own target crops to promote, never force them but ask them whether they like the ideas and get consensus.

At the same time, participatory does not mean hearing farmers' opinions only. If facilitators have better ideas, they have to advise on the issues which the farmers cannot recognize very well. For example, farmers may not know what happens in the new crop market of far capital, long-term soil or environmental degradation cannot be seen by farmers who're concentrating on daily farming, or residual danger of pesticides/chemicals might not be known by farmers. Those invisible issues to the farmers also must be brought on the plenary discussion in FFS enterprise and experiment planning as facilitators' suggestions (not forcing ideas) to be considered in farmers' decision-making.

Both members and facilitators tend to select as many enterprises as possible. However, the facilitator should restrict them to up to (Maximum) of three (3) enterprises at once. More than three enterprises are not practically manageable by an FFS and the quality of the farms and learning will become

very poor. For the dry season, tree and fruit tree nursery enterprises can be possible selected.

Step 5: Organizing FFS Groups

Organizing the group of farmers for participatory learning is very important for the autonomous and efficient running of the FFS sessions. Once this is done, participatory learning can be considered a success. New techniques and skills cannot be passed on only to the leader; they must be passed on to all the farmers. Without the autonomy of the learning group, the facilitator will be too busy looking after all the learning members to run the sessions efficiently.

If there are many illiterate people in the group, the facilitator will have to go around and teach each member, making it impossible to finish the session on time. If there is one person in each organized small group who can read and write, that person can teach the other small group members. In such a case, the facilitator only needs to explain to a few members of the sub-group and the session can continue. At the same time, the members of the group will easily participate in discussion decision-making and the role of responsibility which are essential for the capacity building and empowerment of farmers.

Procedure

Call for a meeting for the selected members and proceed to the process of FFS group formalization and organization.

- As a follow to the selection of FFS participants, the facilitator organize a meeting with selected FFS members.
- The facilitator needs to inform the selected FFS members to implement in their farms what they have learned through FFS and share the information with their neighbors.

1) Selecting FFS leader

Facilitate the members to elect the following FFS group leaders such as:

- ✓ Chairperson
- ✓ Vice-Chairperson
- ✓ Secretary
- ✓ Treasurer

2) Setting the group identification of the FFS group

Facilitate selected members to decide the name and slogan of their FFS group

- ✓ Name of the FFS
- ✓ Slogan (possibly related to the name of FFS)

3) Agreeing on the frequency of FFS meetings

FFSs meetings can be held weekly/bi-weekly. This is because that is the appropriate frequency to monitor the growth of most crops. At the same time, weekly/bi-weekly session is easier for farmers to learn and become accustomed to attending meetings.

The same crops such as horticultural crops that need more intensive monitoring require more frequent visits. For perennial crops such as trees, members do not need to attend FFS every week due to their slow growth. It can be once a month or every other week. In such cases, it is still recommended that FFS sessions be held weekly/bi-weekly in combination with other agriculture crops. This is because it will help keep members more engaged in FFS and help them to continue their participation. Facilitate the members to agree on a convenient day of the week to meet for FFS.

4) Agreeing on the starting time

Starting time should be early enough since observation of the pest on the farm can be done only early in the morning. After that they may disappear and cannot be captured.

A full FFS session takes three and a half to four hours unless it is shortened. The members must agree to attend the whole session.

Formulating Sub-groups in FFS

An effective sub-group for participatory learning is made up of about 5-8 people. All members of FFS are divided into smaller groups to maximize their participation and effective session running. These smaller groups are known as sub-groups.

In FFS:

- ✓ All learning is done in sub-groups
- ✓ Each sub-group is responsible for treatment for comparative studies.
- ✓ Each sub-group plays host on the day of FFS activities and it rotates week by week
- ✓ Each sub-group has its own leaders such as Chairperson, Secretary, and Timekeeper.
- ✓ Each sub-group has its name and slogan/ Motto.

Selecting Sub-group members

Sub-group members are used to be selected random. However, for effective session management following two factors are to be considered at the beginning of Sub-group formation.

Literate members' distribution

In case the literate people are few among the selected FFS members, facilitators must make sure that all sub-groups have at least one member who can read, write, understand the written materials, and able to explain to illiterate members.

The procedures of literate member selection are as follows:

- First, ask literate members to stand.
- Separate them from other illiterate members.
- Divide them into 4 groups (like group 1 to group 4) with the consideration of the level of literacy to become almost equal in all sub-groups.

Gender balancing

Gender also should be equally distributed among sub-groups for effective session running. If the group had clustered on one gender, the discussion will not be very active.

Separate the remaining illiterate members into men and women. Divide sub-groups within them and combined them later so that every sub-group (group 1, group 2, group 3, and group 4) similar number of female and male members.

Step 6: Preparing Learning Calendar.

- Once the FFS group is established, the facilitator together with FFS members develops the learning calendar for the FFS, based on the main enterprises identified above.
- In collaboration with the group, the facilitator decides what activities need to be undertaken to further explore the problems, test the solutions and identify what kind of support is needed.
- Key activities to facilitate learning in the FFS are the AESA, field comparative experiments, and special topics, where group discussion and short- and medium-term learning exercises are conducted.
- Field days and exchange visits with other FFS groups are also useful methods to enhance learning and participants' motivation.
- A curriculum defining the season and outlining dates of FFS events and the topics of discussion needs to be drafted on a flip chart and made accessible to all.

Step 7: Selecting Host Farmer

The host farm is the farmland provided to FFS by the one of FFS group members for learning propose. Host farm is for implementing learning enterprises and it is where experiments or comparative studies are going on. FFS group must find who provide voluntarily a host farm for FFS learning. Farmers who provide host farms are called host farmers.

Activity 1: Criteria for selection of host farmer

- Ask volunteers among the members who can provide his/her farmland/livestock/for the FFS learning purpose for free (or with some perverse on the benefits sharing).
- If they are many, select three to four farmers by voting.
- Carry out site visits to compare possible candidate sites for the trial farm and examine the feasibility.
- Even if there is only one member who proposed the host farm, the site visits must be conducted and the characteristic to be assessed whether it is suitable or not.
- Do not rush the selection of the host farm.
- Facilitators should provide a week for the group to find some good candidates for the selected enterprises and the learning purpose.
- Ask the farmer to direct you to the candidate site for the host farm.
- Visit the host farmer sites with all FFS members.
- Check the farmer and land characteristics and assess whether they are suitable for the crops selected.
- Land size is also to be measured roughly according to the agreed size of experiments.

Activity 2: Signing on the host farm agreement

Once a suitable trial farm site is selected, a trial farm agreement must be prepared and signed between the selected trial farmer and other FFS members.

This agreement must be done before the preparation and establishment of the trial farm itself

Read aloud the “host farm Agreement” and FFS members must agree with the trial farmer(S) on several issues which are indicated in box 3.

Box 3: Checklist on host farm agreement

Whether members are permitted free access to the farm during the learning period

Whether other community members are accepted to visit the farm to see the result of learning and experiment, e.g., Field Days.

How to share the farm produces from the trial farm and other resources developed during the FFS?

How to share the materials e.g., seeds, and cuttings from the host farm during and after FFS?

If those conditions are not clear, the members had better cancel the signing of the agreement. Otherwise, FFS learning will become a problem.

It is also important to consult local authorities or community leaders if members have problems to solve. They may provide advice and become witnesses on the trial farm agreement.

Step 8: Preparing FFS Learning Site

Discuss with FFS members the condition suitable to the learning site for FFS sessions.

Activity 1: FFS learning sites

The learning site conditions might be as follows:

- Close to the host farm where AESA is being carried out every week/bi-weekly. Locate the learning site in the same place as the host farm site for ease of carrying out learning activities.
- Easy to access and within the reach of all members.
- Acceptable to all the farmers and there is no restriction.
- Spacious and have enough data processing place.
- Protected and have adequate security.
- Comfortable and provide facilities in case of harsh weather conditions.

Box 4: Note to Facilitators

Ask members to propose the site with such conditions.

Visit the sites before the next session and confirm with all members whether the site has suitable characteristics for learning the site.

Agree on the learning site with them.

Activity 2: Learning Site Preparation

- It is not necessary to establish the learning site at once since there are many tasks at the beginning of FFS.
- It is recommended to arrange the bench or sitting materials in U-shape so that everybody can see the presentation at the center. This layout is also suitable to perform group dynamics. However, the layout may depend on the convenience to the location.
- The sitting place of the host team should be demarcated separately so that everybody can recognize their assignment,
- Establish suitable seating under a tree.

Step 9: Participatory Comparative Experiments (PCE)

After selecting an enterprise, analyzing problems, and proposing solutions, a facilitator discusses with FFS members on comparative experiments. Experimentation is a follow-up process to the problem diagnosis in the FFS process. The main actors in the experimentation process include FFS members, facilitators, and researchers who have complementary roles in the experimentation process.

It is important to note that comparative experimentation in FFS is seen primarily as a learning strategy for empowering participants.

Basic Principles of PCE

- Experiments should be based on the community priority problems.
- Experiments should be developed with the participation of the FFS group;
- The process has to be owned by the participants, so they should design and implement the experiment, keep the records, perform the analysis, and draw their conclusions.
- It should be simple: - the experiment should not be complicated.
- It should be cost-effective.
- It should be a uniform situation.
- Easily Applicable to the

Box 5: Why we need PCE

The main basis for experimentation in FFS is to create a learning process through which farmer test, monitor and evaluate new ideas, technologies, or innovations for improving productivity of farming systems.

Field comparative experiments within FFS are implemented to empower participants (both farmer and facilitators) with observational and analytical skills to investigate the cause and effect of major production problems.

Farming practices are tested and compared with other available solutions to solve identified problems.

Analysing the results allows farmers to decide which solution (technology and/or practice) is best suited to his/her situation.

Field experiments are also used to demonstrate new production opportunities and to help farmer diversify

Steps in FFS Experimentation

Good planning is the basis for systematic experimentation which involves a range of steps.

Based on the identified enterprise problems in step 5, identify and prioritize solutions that could be addressed by testing experiments.

- The clear understanding of the problem is the basis for setting the learning and experimentation theme.
- This should be based on identified and prioritized constraints and opportunities (pair-wise ranking tools can be used).
- One experiment should only test one topic/problem at a time.
- Come up with all possible solutions or options to solve the main problem identified in step 1
- Analyze and rank the solutions using PRA tools such as group discussion and pairwise ranking for prioritization.

Box 6: Criteria that can be considered in option selection include:

- The degree of probability that the technology will address the identified constraint.
- Potential benefits in terms of profitability, reduced risks, equitability, and sensitivity to gender issues.
- Ease of adoption, that is, compatibility with the farmer system; and,
- Ease of experimentation with the selected technologies in terms of resource requirements and management

Principle of a “no risk zone”. The high economic value of animals does not allow any experiment involving risk or even medium-term loss of productivity. Animals involved in the experiments should at no time be under any health risk. This precludes the use of control groups if conditions will put animals at risk

Activity 1: Select options/treatments to experiment

This should include a mixture of local/traditional practices and “new” options (such as practices introduced by research/extension staff).

Activity 2: Define the experiment objective

- An experiment needs to have clear objectives as a basis for learning.
- Define a clear objective of the experiment to be conducted. What is to be tested and what result do we expect?
- This should be linked to the previously identified local priority problems.
- The objectives of the comparative experiment(s) or study field are jointly formulated with all the FFS members and facilitators.

Activity 3: Determine the treatments to test

- The optimum number of treatments is usually 2-4 per experiment. Too many or too few treatments will not result in useful information.
- Having more than four treatments/options makes the experiment too complex.
- The treatments should be kept as simple as possible by minimizing the number of factors (having only one factor under study at a time is recommended).
- If an experiment has too many variables it will be difficult to evaluate which one is responsible for the results.
- Similarly, if the treatments are very similar it will not be possible to see any difference.
- First, determine a control treatment, which could be a standardized practice with known results, such as farmer's practice, or the standard recommendations of the extension service
- The other treatments contain variations from the control.
- Apart from the different studies select all other factors should be kept the same for the various treatment plots

Phase III: FFS

Implementation

This phase discusses organizing regular FFS sessions, organizing field days and exchange visits and standards for organizing FFS members.

Step 10: Regular FFS Sessions

FFS members meet on a specific day of the week/bi-weekly and conduct FFS sessions. Complete FFS sessions used to spend around 3-4 hours. If the session is less than that, there is a possibility of skipping some important parts of the session. If the members had drawn, up a timetable with the facilitator and posted it at every session. Compile own FFS timetable with members for weekly sessions agreeing on the time, activity, objective, necessary material, and person in charge step by step. This can be used until graduation and guide them the whole FFS period. The omission of Timetable would not have taken place.

Example of FFS timetable

Time	Activity	Responsible
08:00-08:05	Prayer, Roll Call	Host team
08:05-08:15	Brief Recap of the last session	Host team
08:15-08:45	AESA Taking	All
08:45-09:15	AESA Processing	All
09:15-10:45	AESA Presentation	All/Host team
10:45-11:05	Group Dynamics	Host team
11:05-12:05	Today's topic	Facilitator
12:05-12:10	Review of the day's activities	Host team
12:10-12:20	Planning of Next week session	Host team
12:20-12:35	Announcements	Host team
12:25-12:30	Roll Call, Prayer	Host team





Each of the above-mentioned learning activities are described below:

Learning activity 1: Opening and closing prayer

This activity is based on the cultural context of the area.

Learning activity 2: Roll call

Checking the attendance of the participants is one of the critical activities in the FFS session. The secretary of the FFS group takes attendance using a prepared registration book. Attendance is taken twice at the beginning and end of the session:

Example of taking attendance	
Members present at the opening	
Members are not present at the opening	
Members present at the end	
Members are not present at the end	

- The attendance would be used to measure the level of participation of the FFS participants.
- Attendance could be an indicator for the facilitator to find ways for motivating absentees in engaging the learning process.
- Attendance is also used as a means of verification for graduation.

Learning activity 3: Brief reflection session

A brief reflection session should be the responsibility of the host team to facilitate this session.

The host team must be aware that the learning points of the week/bi-weekly will be presented during the following week's recap/reflection session. The reflection session should emphasize topics discussed, key learning from the

topic, and how are they going to put into practice the learning. The role of a facilitator in a reflection session is to assist to synthesize the key points from the day's sessions and activities, clarify any unclear points, and motivate the host team to make use of creative ways of facilitating the session.

Learning activity 4: AESA taking, processing, presentations, and discussions

AESA is a comprehensive on-farm monitoring and evaluation method for enterprises such as crops, livestock, etc. It is the cornerstone of the FFS. It involves regular (weekly/biweekly) observations of the enterprise and close observation of the interaction between livestock/crops and other biotic/ biotic factors coexisting in the field. Each of the activities are described below:

Activity 4.1: AESA taking (field observation and data collection)

The sub-groups carry out AESA taking, field observation and data collection. At the early stages, the facilitator should introduce and emphasize the need for conducting AESA-taking methods. All members of the sub-group must participate. The host team or the facilitator assigns each sub-group p a plot based on the comparative experiment design. Each sub-group p then goes to the field and records measurements, field observations and results. See Annex 2.

Activity 4.2: AESA Processing

Field observation data are analyzed and compiled on the AESA chart for presentation, discussions and decision-making for collective actions. All sub-group members who collected field data should sit together during AESA processing to reflect on their findings and opinions. The AESA chart has eight sections as shown in Annex 3.

Activity 4.3: AESA presentations and discussions

After each sub-group compiling field information into an AESA chart, the Host Team facilitates the AESA presentations sessions and discussions to agree with further actions on the PCE. Each representative of every sub-

group presents their findings displayed on the AESA chart. Every week, the presenter is rotated within the sub-group. Women and illiterate members are usually shy and may not want to present. However, these people should be encouraged to do so because the presentation of the AESA is as an opportunity for them to build self-confidence. After the sub-group's presentations, the facilitator conducts a discussion session. If some actions are required such as eliminating pests, applying organic pesticides, etc., the facilitator leads the discussion and asks members to decide on the actions required. At the end of the whole AESA session, the facilitator wraps up the discussion and summarizes the lessons learned and decisions made.

Learning activity 5: Group Dynamics

Group dynamics is one of the FFS activities of the FFS session involves many kinds of group exercises which relax participants, build partnerships among them and increase the coherence of the group. It helps illiterate people to understand key learning concepts with experiences. The selection and use of these activities depend on the cultural context of the group.

Learning activity 6: Topic of the day/special topics

The purpose of this session is to provide participants with the required knowledge and skills on different technical areas. The topics could be related to the implementation of FFS such as seedbed preparation, transplanting, pest control, livestock

feeding, animal disease, fodder production etc. In addition, the topic of the day may focus on emerging issues that affect/support related to livelihood.

Box 7 Role of a facilitator in the topic of the day

The role of the facilitator is very critical in selecting today's topics and facilitating the learning process. She/He is expected to make use of existing/own prepared learning materials and to be well-prepared on the topic before the session. It is also important to use various participatory learning methods to facilitate the learning process. She/He could invite relevant expertise on the subject area. Usually, a topic of the day lasts for a maximum of 1 hour.

The facilitators need to consider the following points while facilitating a session on the topic of the day. Guiding points have been set in Annex 4.

Learning activity 7: Review of the day's activities

This activity helps members to summarize key learning points from the day sessions and activities. The host team with the support of the facilitator could facilitate the summary.

Learning activity 8: Planning for next session

The “Planning for next week” session is the other activity, which helps to do the necessary preparations for the upcoming session. The planning could be harvesting, weeding, drying, visit to FFS sites, field days, etc. This activity helps to share responsibility for next week activities

Learning activity 9: Announcements

Announcements including the arrival of guests or communal events can be introduced at the end of each session. This will prevent interruption of the learning process during the session and contribute to better planning.

FFS Session Management

Following the above procedure of the FFS timetable, the facilitator needs to be familiarized with the following activities during the FFS weekly/bi-weekly session.

a) FFS stationaries:

FFS stationery kit to be distributed. The FFS treasurer should check and count the items according to the FFS stationaries delivery format and sign after the confirmation. The kit consists of the materials as shown in Annex 5.

Box 8: The role and responsibility of the host team

- Arrange the venue and keep the learning site clean,
- Check the attendance of members,
- Facilitate recapitulation session (To be done by previous host team),
- Introduce the resource person/guest speaker,
- Facilitate the members to follow the program,
- Serve as the timekeepers,
- Distribute the training materials and others,
- Assist presentation with necessary materials,
- Provide the Energizers/Group Dynamics,
- Do other assigned functions by the facilitator?
- Hand over the host team duties to next host team (Sub-group) at the end of session.

Timing considerations: **Agree on starting and ending** times at members' convenience. Use a timetable constantly, follow strictly the schedule, and prepare with durable materials.

b) Selection and assigning Host Team:

The host team is a sub-group that oversees all the activities in an FFS session. Each sub-group should play a host on an FFS day and they should be rotated session by session or week by week. The selection of the host team can be done as followings: Each sub-group draws a lot written 1, 2, 3, and 4. Assign each sub-group according to the numbers as the coming week's host team respectively.

c) **Rotating the responsibility to other members:**

During FFS sessions, there are a variety of tasks for members to carry out, such as facilitating, presenting, and participating in discussions, and this is essential facilitation for each member to carry out the tasks for them to be empowered and strengthened. FFS facilitators should be keen on each member's level of empowerment and make sure every task is distributed to all members and rotating routinely.

Step 11: Field Day & Exchange Visit

There are several ways of sharing the findings of FFS with other community members such as field days, exchange visits, individual demonstrations, and other ways of social interaction. However, the common practices used in the FFS program are field days and exchange visits.

Activity 1: Field Day

The step is to provide the opportunity for the communities to learn from the good practices of FFS members when the performance of their enterprise can be seen on the field. This will be done before harvesting the results of their enterprise. The surrounding community members are invited to FFS host farm, and activities, experiences, and lessons learned in FFS will be demonstrated and shared to local communities and others. Field days are also good opportunity for the FFS organizer to promote appropriate enterprises and technologies to the visitors. However, field days are not only a dissemination process but also an opportunity of capacity building, self-esteeming and confidence building process for members as well as a socialization process of them to the community. It also creates awareness for senior officials of the relevance of FFS approach. Moreover, impressed farmers during the opportunities will become candidates to the next FFS groups. The detailed steps in organizing the Field Day is indicated in Annex 6.

Activity 2: Exchange Visit

An exchange visit is the other experience-sharing activity conducted during

FFS which takes one FFS group to visit the other FFS group and vis versa to share their experiences. This used to be used as problem-solving practice when an FFS group has particular problems in conducting sessions while other groups are managing such issues very well. Organizing exchange visits requires certain resources and it should be planned ahead of time as it mobilizes people. Necessary preparations indicated in Annex 7

Step 12: Result Analysis

At the end of an enterprise, the results of enterprises and experiments should be carefully analyzed and summarized. The objective of the experiments in FFS are to conclude which option is suitable for them and their farms. Farmer's interests in introducing new enterprises or new techniques would be mainly to get higher yield and higher profits. At the same time, they might learn a sustainable way of production and how to conserve their environment through FFS. However, without appropriate analysis, farmers will confuse the results and they may take the wrong options. Therefore, result analysis is an inevitable process for proper decision-making of farmers. The process also enhances participants' capacity to analyze the results of experiments critically and systematically. At the same time, FFS members will understand the importance in analyzing expenditure and profit through simplified calculation exercises and become aware of the cost implication of farming.

For this session, facilitators must review all materials developed by the farmers concerning the target enterprise such as collected findings or data, discussion results or recommendations acquired through AESA sessions. Apart from existing data, all knowledge of members also is incorporated into the analysis. The material prepared through Result Analysis can be presented or displayed during FFS events such as graduation ceremonies.

Selection of Important (non-economic) criterion

Ask the members which other factors, apart from yield and money, might be important to them while dealing with the experimented enterprise.

Examples of evaluation criteria are as followings: Growth rate (fast or slow,

sometimes fast growth will ease management), Duration to harvest (short or long, short harvest treatment sometimes secures the produce, especially in dry areas.), Preference to the market/consumers, Taste of the product (important especially in case of subsistence farmers), Size of the plants or products (large or small), Quality of the product or attractiveness to the buyers, Labour/Working load, Health/Vitalness of plants, Survival rate or Number of plants dried/survived, Level of pest/insect attacks, Resistance to some particular diseases, Quantity of hazardous chemicals needed and Tolerance to some particular environment (heat, drought, salinity, wind, etc.)

- Try not to mix two criteria and avoid repetitions, which may confuse farmers.
- The facilitator can suggest adding some necessary criteria if the members are not able to mention them. On the other hand, it can be also suggested to omit some criteria which are not significant.

Evaluation with (non-monetary) criterion

- Once the left column has been filled with identified criterion, ask the members to value each plot according to each criterion or fill the cells with figures (See Figure##)
- It is recommended to use pictorial symbols in filling the matrix cells so that even illiterate members can understand the difference easily.
- It is also good if the matrix can be summarised within a sheet of paper so that the members can overview easily.
- After all cells in the matrix have been filled, ask members to summarise the advantages and disadvantages of each plot according to the criteria.
- Finally ask to members to judge “Which one looks better for your farm?” and facilitate the plenary discussions. It is also good to clarify the reason by asking as “Why do you think so?”
- Conclude which option is suitable for their farm. It might be several options to be mentioned depending on the condition and environment.
- It is also useful to remind them how the comparative experiments and monitoring through AESA have contributed to their decision-making.

Evaluation of general process

There might be several new cropping techniques applied to the host farm. However, some of those techniques cannot be evaluated through the above process when it is equally applied to all plots. To remind the effectiveness of those equally applied treatments, it is recommended to evaluate those general processes.

Possible items for evaluation will be Land preparation method, Base manure/fertilizer, Number/Quantity of seeds, weeding method, thinning method, Application of repellent, Application of fungicide, Application of pesticide, Top dressing method, and Harvesting method.

Step 13: FFS Evaluation

The step includes attendance assessment, knowledge assessments, and self-evaluation of the farmer and his/her farm/field performances in the year. In addition, the member is expected to have a plan based on the knowledge and skills he/she gained.

1.Attendance assessment

FFS members with a good record of attendance (75% of sessions) can graduate for the specific activities completed during the FFS learning cycle.

2.Knowledge assessment (Ballot Box Exercise)

The organising offices and the FFS facilitators need to know how much the FFS members have understood what they learned through FFS. At the end of FFS, the facilitators can assess whether the knowledge was new or not, by asking the members. In the FFS program “Ballot Box Exercise” which will be shown below, is used to be employed as for knowledge assessment method because of the following reasons. It is easy to answer even for illiterate members. Where some participants cannot read, the facilitator or other volunteers can assist them to read out the questions, in the local language. The exercise is fun since it is conducted as a filed game.

3. Self-evaluation by FFS members

It is self-evaluation in which the members assess passed FFS experiences by themselves. It will recall the important findings of what they experienced and help them to conclude FFS toward graduation. It is important, for the members to know their change and level of empowerment after FFS, and to realize their strengths so that they can try new ideas and act confidently against their problems in the future.

If this session ends with poor participation, that means the whole FFS sessions were not active because it brought no impressive experiences, no interesting findings, and no significant changes in the members nor in the group.

4) Farmer's field/farm evaluation

The objective of extension works through FFS is not only learning from a host farm but also the application of learned technology to all member farms. In this regard, the assessment of “What the members applied to their farm” is the most important issue to be monitored and evaluated by FFS organizers.

This exercise will also make FFS members to realize how their farms changed after FFS and help implementers to capture a general impression about what happened in the farms after FFS learning.

1) The way forwards/plan

At the final stage of the FFS cycle, FFS members have to think about what they are going to do as the FFS group or as an individual farmer after graduation, using the knowledge and skills acquired through FFS sessions.

The Way Forward session will help FFS members become aware of the need for self-reliance activities and to promote the continuation of group activities after graduation. Finally, the facilitator gives the members some suggestions and recommendation to the plan for the way forward. The result of the Way Forward Session is to be reported to facilitators with pictures of all sheets of the “Individual Action Plan” and “Group Action Plan” prepared by members.

Step 14: Graduation

At the end of an FFS cycle, a graduation ceremony shall be conducted. The celebration is to thank the members for the time devoted, to realize their achievements, and to appreciate knowledge and techniques on particular subjects.

Participants are awarded certificates by the district offices or organizer. Many farmers in rural area have few chances to get a formal education and that characterize complex feeling to educated people. Through FFS, however, they can learn about farming as their profession and get certificates that acknowledge their difference from other farmers.

After the ceremony, they will be recognized as “Farmer Experts”; the farmers who know how to resolve their problems by themselves and the FFS facilitator might have put their large efforts to get that final output. Through well-managed FFS sessions, dependency is often no longer an issue for many graduates. The organizers motivate the graduating members to practice what they have acquired onto their farms and promote it to others.

The graduation ceremony is also a forum to pass on the lessons learned during the FFS to the public; similar to the field days. The harvest obtained from host farms will be displayed. At the same time, other community members will be attracted and may develop an interest to join the next planned FFS in their locality.

The steps to be followed to during organizing the FFS graduation ceremony and Program are indicated in Annex 8

PART IV: Monitoring and Evaluation Learning

Introduction

MEL is the regular collection of information and assessing the overall results and performance to determine the extent to which the implementation of FFS activities is being conducted according to the work plan.

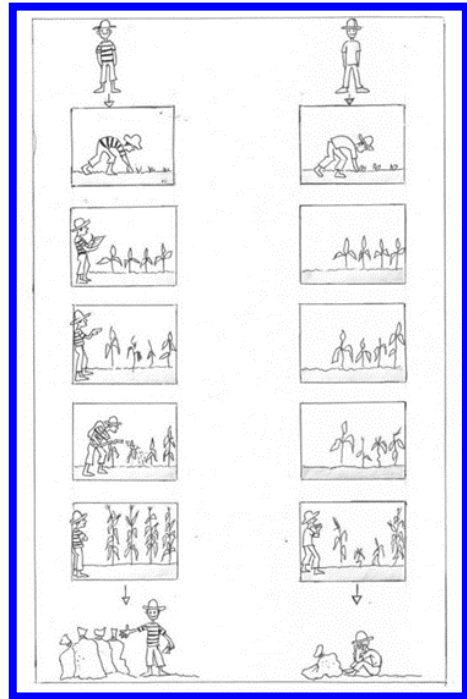
The major objectives of MEL are to:

- Keep the FFS learning on track
- Adapt to circumstances that may arise along the way
- Assure the quality of the process (Identify the strengths & weaknesses of the learning approaches/methodologies and
- Make better future plans

Main actors in FFS MEL

Facilitators and FFS group members have the primary responsibility for M & E. They have the responsibility for monitoring and evaluating of A/pastoralist's performance as well as the performance of facilitators (both DAs and community facilitators) throughout the learning process.

The process engages relevant stakeholders who are actively involved in the FFS activities either as a planner, participants, facilitators, implementers, and collaborators at all levels (federal, regional/ zonal/local administration officials, woreda offices of agriculture, and DAs). The collected information from the M&E process will be used to improve the learning process of FFS.



Frequency of MEL in FFS

- Monitoring is introduced from the beginning of FFS while evaluation could be conducted at the end of an FFS season, or mid-way, or the end of an FFS program and involves all stakeholders.
- MEL should be conducted systematically and continuously throughout the project implementation process. Facilitators and FFS group members (FFS level) are the primary implementers of M & E.
- FFS group members have the primary responsibility for M & E the FFS group performance as well as the facilitators' performance throughout the FFS learning season & conduct meeting weekly.

MEL of FFS activities

It is vital to monitor FFS learning activities to ensure whether the expected change achieved or not. This will help to make the necessary connections, reflect on their program and to make the necessary improvements. Evaluation will be conducted on the performance of FFS, weekly sessions and comparative experiments.

Monitoring of FFS learning activities

Monitoring Questions	Indicators
Are members participating in learning activities?	Attendance rate/drop-out rate
	Number of FFS sessions held
	Number of AESAs carried out
Are members developing self-confidence and collaboration?	Number of group dynamics per session
	Self-confidence among members to present in front of the group
	Number of poems and songs developed
How is the FFS facilitator performing?	Participants' satisfaction at end of each PFS session

Steps for monitoring and evaluation of FFS:

- Each host team is asked to draw three glasses of water. One almost empty, one-half full, and the other full.
- Explain to participants empty glass represents a low level of satisfaction, the half-empty glass means that one is partially satisfied & a full glass represents satisfaction.
- Ask each participant their feelings on the glass of water
- Ask participants to put their pieces of paper in a box next to their chosen glass
- The host team opens each box & counts how many votes are for each glass
- The facilitator can ask why they prefer their choice of the glass

Evaluating Comparative Experiments

The main objective of experimentation in FFS is to enhance farmers' skills of observation, analysis, and decision-making. Learning how to evaluate each of the experimental treatments allows farmers to make a well informed decisions on new technologies.

Box 9: Steps for monitoring and evaluation of comparative experiment:

- Ask participants about the objective of the experiment
- Ask participants what we need to measure which treatment is best
- The experiment indicators could be milk yield, resistance to disease availability of inputs technologies;
- The indicators identified need to be evaluated through experiments
- The facilitator need to ask participants to evaluate each of the treatments against each of the criteria
- The other option could be to demonstrate how to conduct pairwise ranking
- The evaluation of the experiment should be done during AESA
- Each of the FFS groups needs to keep adequate records of FFS

Example: Experiment evaluation format

Treatment	Germination	Yield	Etc.
BH 540			
BH 660			
BH 545			

Evaluating FFS Performance

- The performance of FFS will be conducted before and after commencing the bi/weekly FFS sessions. The results of the evaluation will be used as a benchmark to compare the contribution of FFS in social, economic, natural, and human aspects.
- The assessment could be conducted by ballot box test (pre and post) and by conducting baseline assessment by preparing simple assessment formats. In both cases, the assessment should be conducted before and after conducting the FFS session.

Learning outcomes Knowledge and skills Change in income. Quality of life Changes in productivity Adoption of technology/practices	Sustainability Ability to mobilize resources. Linkage with other institutions Availability of income-generating activities Follow-up action plans Collective actions
Signs of empowerment Farmer's confidence Farmer's participation groups decision making Active participation of all FFS members Sense of innovativeness Well-informed decision-making capacity	Group profile Ideal membership 25-30 Common interest groups Availability of Group norms Gender composition
Learning process Inclusiveness of learning curriculum The selection process of Enterprises Process of conducting Comparative experiments Sessions on the topic of the day; Process of taking AESA Participation of FFS members	Documentation FFS Membership FFS members Registration Host farm agreement Goods purchased, donated, and received Reports
Group experimentation Availability of host pastoralist agreement Learning site Demand-driven enterprises AESA carried out regularly	FFS facilitator Trained in FFS methodology Trained in facilitation and participatory techniques. Facilitation not teaching process Visual aids prepared Session plans Session evaluation feedback
The group follow-up an action plan Clear objectives and goals of the group Availability of follow-up an action plan	

Monitoring and Evaluation tools

There are the number of participatory monitoring and evaluation tools of FFS activities. Some of the monitoring evaluations tools are described below

- Ballot box test
- Focus group discussion
- Changes in success stories
- Evaluation wheel

In most cases the facilitator is responsible to

coordinate the evaluation process. It is important to involve CBOs, woreda, zone, and region SMS.

Box 10: M&E tool 1: ballot box test

- The ballot box test is a tool that helps to measure changes in FFS members changes.
- It will be conducted during the first and last FFS sessions. The post-test results are indicators of the progress made because of FFS.
- Materials
- About 10 questions indicate three multiple choices. Give 10 pieces of paper for each FFS participant.
- Time: it takes 4-5 hours, and the boxes have to be prepared beforehand.

Steps for conducting ballot box:

- Does the facilitator prepare each test by preparing a question?
- To answer the question, participants choose from three alternatives
- The questions could include samples of diseased crops, nitrogen deficiency, pests, and others.
- Each question & the three answers are written on a cardboard.
- Each participant receives a piece of paper, one per question with a number linked to their name
- Example of writing the summary of the question & its answers

Ballot box questions/answer sheet			
Name of FFS _____			
Question	Answer A	Answer B	Answer C

Ballot box score sheet					
No.	Name	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	Elias		x		
	Belay				

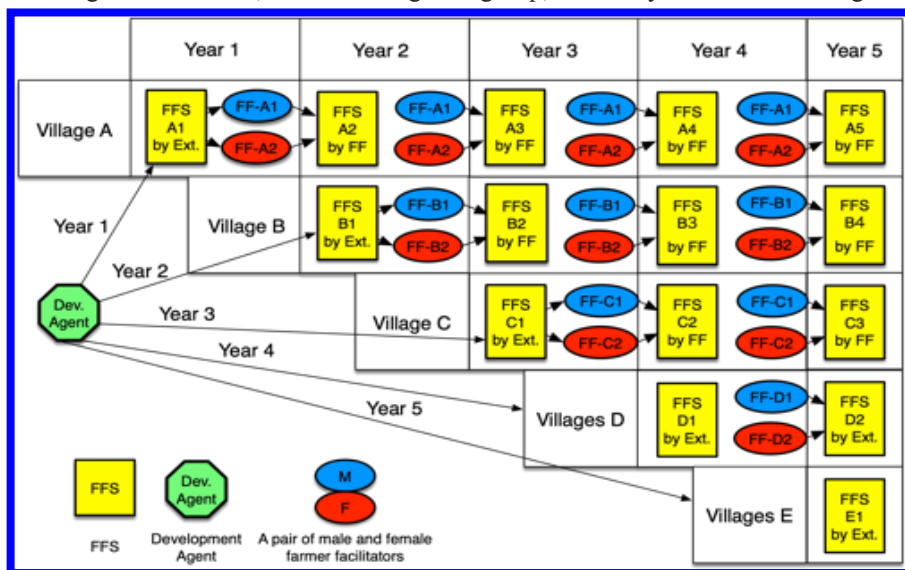
PART V: Scaling up of Farmer Field School

Ministry of Agriculture is indicated in its tenth-year plan, to engage farmers' promoters in the expansion of the extension. The Farmer Promoters will be trained on the field school methodology and facilitation skills and receive intensive training on some of the technical topics of the learning topics.

FFS expansion through Farmer Facilitators

Farmer facilitators are farmers who can facilitate FFS groups in the same way as extension workers and are usually selected by members of groups that have already experienced FFS, and after a short training period, help neighboring farmer groups implement FFS.

It is also possible to train farmers who have never experienced FFS to become facilitators, but this is less common because of the lengthy training process (several months or more) and training costs. On the other hand, farmers who have already experienced FFS understand how to run autonomous sessions, create host farms, the actual AESA, the content of the assignment lectures, how to manage the group, and many FFS events through



experience, so they only need a very short training period to become FFS. They can facilitate groups.

The use of farmer facilitators is essential to further disseminate the new practices introduced, which is one of the outcomes of FFS, in the community. Because the number of extension agents who can facilitate the implementation of FFS in any region is limited, and because of their other duties and time to prepare for FFS, they are only able to conduct two FFS per week. If we could train a pair of farmer-facilitators from one FFS group, the number of FFS that can be conducted would increase dramatically. For example, if an extension agent trains one FFS group per year, only five groups can be trained in five years, while some may question whether a farmer can play such a role, the ability of farmer-facilitators is not to be underestimated, and they frequently run sessions. FFSs are also contributing to discovering such hidden talents, and in many cases, their abilities are discovered through FFS, and they become very important players in the community.

Annexes

Annex 1: Training of Facilitators Outline

Objective of the training

The main objectives of the training of facilitators' course include:

Explain the basic concepts and principles of FFS;

Practice how to establish and run an FFS group;

Describe the core activities of FFS;

Practice how to facilitate FFS sessions in an interactive way;

Prepare an action plan for putting into practice the lesson learned in the training

Participants

It is recommended to have a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 30 participants for each ToF training course in order to ensure maximum participation in practical activities. Majority of the participants of the ToF should be those who will serve as the actual FFS facilitators charged with the full responsibility of facilitating the learning sessions. The facilitators those who live in the local community and are committed to changing the local area.

<p>Trainers</p> <p>A minimum of two Master Trainers on FFS methodology are recommended to conduct the ToF for the duration of the training course. An FFS Master Trainer is a person with thorough experience and training in FFS methodology that has undergone a season-long Master Trainer training course on the FFS methodology. Technical specialists should be invited on a need basis.</p>	<p>Methodology</p> <p>The training will be facilitated by employing various interactive methods and the experiential learning cycle so that participants can effectively internalize it. A key strategy will be to stimulate reflections on what would be done in an actual FFS in the community setting as much as possible. The sharing of real examples from previous experiences is a vital contribution to the training. The facilitator's focus shall be equipping the FFS members with skills and tools for facilitating learning by discovery.</p>
<p>Duration</p> <p>The ToF can be conducted either continuously in one phase or divided into two phases. It takes ideally a minimum of two weeks. Daily sessions are programmed at 7 hours per day, with starting time and ending time dependent on the local situation.</p>	<p>Venue</p> <p>The training venue should have suitable training facilities, flexibility in room layout, enough space for breakout groups and group exercises, and a farm/place for field practicals. It should be easily accessed by the participants. The venue should also if possible be located near existing FFS groups for hands-on experience. On the day before the training starts, it is important to visit the room to check the layout and its cleanliness.</p>

Field Visits

A minimum of three field visits during the course to ongoing FFS groups in the locality are recommended to equip the participants with hands-on experience and for the participants to practice facilitating an FFS session. On the first visit, the participants will get exposed to the FFS overview. On the second visit, the participants will practice establishing FFS groups, analyzing the problem with the group, selecting a learning enterprise, and preparing a learning calendar. During the third visit, participants should practice how to facilitate an FFS session.

Evaluation

The trainees will be required evaluation performance tests at their level and acquire a certificate of competency to be qualified as trainers. Then, the certified DAs will then provide intensive practical and theoretical bi-weekly season-long training for 3 hours on subjects covering the enterprise cycle as identified as gaps and prioritized by members of the FFS.

Annex 2: What would happen if there is no AESA?

When FFS is conducted without AESA, farmers may not acquire skills of monitoring the farm regularly, observing the herd/crops systematically, and practicing critical analysis. As a result of failure to build A/AESA skills, they would not be able to build their capacity for informed decision-making.

- Furthermore, the field observation during A/AESA leads to a presentation during FFS.
- The absence of A/AESA also means that FFS members lose the opportunity to develop self-confidence in presenting their ideas and findings in front of other people, and making decisions for the next step as well as selecting solutions collectively.
- Thus, the absence of A/AESA can lead to poor capacity building and reduced potential for empowerment of the farmers.

Annex 3: Example of a typical format of crop A/AESA Sheet

Name of FFS: A/AESA number: Date: Week no.:		
General Information		Parameters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variety: Date Planted: Age of Crop: Spacing: Fertilizer: Weather: Plant Population: Germination: 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Length of leaves: Width of leaves: No. of leaves: No. of diseased leaves: No of dead Leaves: Length of plant: No of pods:
Pest observed:	Drawings	Natural Enemies observed
Observation		Recommendation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soil Moisture: Diseases: Insect pest: Plant Health: Deficiency: Weeds: Predators: 		What management practices should be applied:

Annex 4: Guiding points in facilitating the Topic of the Day

- ✚ Make sure the participants are comfortably seated.
- ✚ Ask participants to recall back last week topic of discussion; Provide a link between the previous session with this session;
- ✚ Present the session objective this session the topic discussed Create an informal rapport with the participants;
- ✚ Introduce an activity in which the participants experience a situation relevant to the session objective. The experience might be practice, demonstration, role-play, group discussion, or presentation.
- ✚ If you use presentation, you should support with visual aids, demonstrations, and discussions;
- ✚ Allow sufficient time for becoming familiar with recently acquired skills and knowledge.
- ✚ Use simple and clear language.
- ✚ Ask participants what they have learned from the experience. How they are going to apply in their local situation?

Annex 5: Example of FFS Stationary

Item	Qty	Use
Mark book	1	Rolle Call
Flip chart paper	5	FFS in general
Scotch tapes	4	
Felt Pens (Black, Blue, Green & Red)	4	
Ropes (30m)	2	Host farm establishment
Tape measure (30m)	1	

Ruler (50cm)	4	AESA Taking
Cloth Tape measure (1.5m)	4	
Steel tape measure (5m)		
Notebook	4	
Ball pen	4	
Crayons (12 colors)	4	AESA Processing
Group weekly report	1	Weekly Reporting
Carbon paper	6	
Counter book	1	General Record Keeping
Notepad	1	For Letter Writing
Envelope	12	
Spring file PVC	1	Document keeping
Account book	1	For accounting
Receipt book	1	
Clip	4	Presentations in general
Wood board (60x80cm)	1	
Wall clocks	1	Time Keeping
Battery Cell	2	
Plastic sheet (14m)	1	For Shelter
Storage bags	1	To keep above

Annex 6: Organization of a Field Day

The facilitator needs to discuss with FFS members the topic of the day to discuss the detailed activities of the field day. The planning includes when, who, how, and what activities to be presented in the field day event. The success of FFS depends on proper planning of the field day event.

Objective: The objective of the field day is to share experiences of FFS with other non-participating FFS members.

Annex 7: Organizing Exchange Visit

The objective of the exchange visit; objective of the exchange visit is to share experiences, and ideas, and to compare their level of performance on FFS.

Steps in preparing Exchange Visit:

Identify FFS groups to be visited. Check resources/ budget allocation/ contribution from the groups.

Share preliminary exchange visits arrangement between the district office of agriculture and a facilitator.

There is no special program for the exchange visit. Usually, the group receiving visitors follows the normal FFS timetable and the time of “Today’s Topic” is used for discussion and exchange of views.

Arrangement of the Host groups (Groups to be visited) is very important. A careful selection of the host groups is necessary to have a successful exchange visit.

The mode of visits or how the groups visit others are different according to the program and local environment.

The best time to conduct an exchange visit is just before the field day or graduation when they can observe the result of the experiment on the host farm.

Weather condition is a critical limiting factor, which determines when exchange visits are conducted.

Facilitators make sure that all members arrive at the host group on time. Remember that AESA sessions used to be conducted early in the morning and if the visitors delay, they would miss an essential part of the session.

Follow the FFS session as planned by the Host FFS group so as not to interrupt the program and also to observe their regular performance. Visitors can use the tors delay; they would miss an essential part of the session to their FFS host farm.

Introductions, Q & A, or Experience sharing sessions need to be conducted either during Today's topic session or announcement time.

Free discussion and exchanging ideas and comments on any knowledge or innovation may help other group members.

There is need to hold a wrap up discussion after the visit probably the same day or in the

Conduct wraps up discussions on Exchange Visit and evaluate visited group and hosted group using Exchange Visit Report format.

Compile exchange visit and forward the report to the woreda agriculture office

Annex 8: Example of FFS Graduation Program

Time	Program	Responsible person
9:00-9:30	Registration	Organizers
9:30-9:40	Introducing the program	Facilitator
9:40-9:50	Opening speech	Woreda official
9:40- 11:30	Share-to-share	FFS groups
11:30-12:00	Refreshment	Private
12: 00-12:30	Feedback from participants	Participants
12:30-1:00	Awarding certificate	Guest of honor
1:00-1:20	Vote of thanks	Village Leaders
1:20-1:30	Way forward remarks	Guest of honor

The facilitator should inform the graduating members the criteria for graduation at the beginning of FFS session;

As a criterion of graduation, FFS members should average score of minima of 75% for knowledge and skill assessment;

The graduation ceremony is usually organized by woredas office of agriculture, FFS facilitators and FFS members;

The facilitator and woredas office of agriculture should plan ahead of time the date, the venue, the participants (including officials, farmer's representatives) preparation of certificates, participant's registration formats, and other required logistics;

The facilitator should prepare and forward to the respective woreda office of agriculture the list of graduating FFS participants based on attendance, knowledge and skill assessments, participation in the learning process, adopting the practices to her/his own farm and action plan prepared.

Woreda office of agriculture should invite officials to take part in the graduation event;

The facilitator motivates the graduating members to share their presentations by using creative ways of information sharing techniques such as using posters, drawings, models, farm visits, photographs, role plays, etc.

Participants are awarded certificates by the Woreda Agriculture office.

After the graduation ceremony, they will be recognized as "farmer experts on the study enterprise"

Annex 9: About Facilitators

At the core of the FFS approach is hands-on group learning and each FFS needs a technically competent well- trained facilitator to lead members through the hands-on exercises toward success following the principles of FFS.

It is essential that FFS facilitatorshave strong facilitation, participatory training and mentoring skills, and the right FFS mindset about Pastoralist Field School core activities. These core activities are comparative experiments, Agro -ecosystem analysis (PESA), Topic of the day (special topic), Group dynamic exercises and Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM & E).

Facilitator could be agricultural extension staff, DA's, community members. Usually, government extension staff and/or NGO staff are generally in charge of at least the first round of FFS in an area. Once local community facilitators have been trained and graduated, these staff take charge of backstopping and mentoring the facilitators.

The context of FFS implementation and the complexity of the FFS program, as well as the time available for implementation, will determine the capability of the facilitators to be used

Box 11: Major roles and responsibilities of FFS facilitator

have agricultural training of some kind, formal or informal, or have some level of advanced skills, knowledge, and experience in agriculture/livestock/fisheries.

- ✚ be technically competent for the agroecosystem at hand.
- ✚ be available to facilitate the FFS process.
- ✚ be able to share experiences and connect well with other community members.
- ✚ have good people skills and an aptitude for informal and participatory ways of working.
- ✚ have at least some readings and writing skills.
- ✚ Live in the local community.



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