



## General questions for focus groups

In general it is suggested that no more than 10 or 12 general questions are asked during Focus Groups.

In what follows 6 or 7 main themes have been identified. Within each theme we have tried to address what are the possible sub-questions depending on group's answers. It might be possible that it is not necessary to ask sub-questions, they serve as a guideline in case the discussion gets stuck. It is very important that the moderator and co-moderator lead the discussion towards what it is more important for us to understand.

Keep in mind that the outcome of the focus group is crucial for designing the survey instrument and for final definition of our research questions.

As a general guide for the survey instruments we will have sections on:

- Socio-demographic variables
- Land ownership
- Farming system
- Crop and varieties (main types and advantages)
- Seed system and transaction costs (selling and procurement)
- Pesticide application and utilization (trying to get the differences between platform participants and non-participants or before and after participation)
- Social capital (within or right after this we would have a section on decision to participate to the platform or not). In particular we would like to find out any sort of cooperative or, in case of non participation, competitive behaviour for participation decision
- Off-farm income and opportunities
- Access to credit
- It would be ideal to also have (for a sub-sample of farmers) a section on environmental issues still to identify but that could potentially be related to watershed use or to land-erosion or variety erosion or other problems identified by farmers (hopefully during focus group although they already addressed some during the workshop).

Keeping these aspects in mind, before going into specific questions and sub-questions there are few other issues to take care of and find out either during the starting phase or just with a couple of farmers or leaders before the group starts. These are:

- Try to get an idea of the **type of farmers** in the group and of their local conditions: (their general level of welfare, living standards, average land size, are land ownership's rights clear and can they sell or rent land, average family size, livestock, distance from main centres and from markets –especially seed market and produce market- is agriculture their main occupation? and whether they have off-farm opportunities). By Local conditions it is also important to figure out how do they distinguish the **agro-ecosystem** (as this can vary a lot from community to community). Farmers can distinguish agro-ecosystem using a combination of parameters including temperature, altitude and slope aspect, amount of rainfall, potato varieties more adaptable, problems with drought or frost or land erosion problem, whether they have irrigation or rely on rainfall). Another important aspect to consider is how do they judge **soil quality and fertility** (here again it is often a combination of soil texture, water-holding capacity, soil colour, soil fertility and slope aspect that influence soil quality). Often farmers can identify **varieties** (in our case of potatoes) that are more or less adaptable to specific soil types.

With regard to **varieties** it would be interesting to figure out whether they grow potatoes only for yielding and commercial purposes (especially those linked to the platforms) or whether in addition they grow other varieties and for what purposes (Varieties suitable for inter-crop systems, more nutrient or for cooking reasons, early or late maturing, more adaptable to certain season, varieties

that demand less or more moisture, more resistant to pest and disease, good starching or sugar content, colour, shape and size) etc. Sometimes farmers' named varieties differ from community to community or even from variety to variety there's no agreement. It may be a variety recognized by one name in one area might be recognized with different names in other location and vice - versa. To verify this it would be nice to explore the meaning of the farmers' named variety (although for potatoes and in Ecuador this shouldn't be a problem and we can just confirm with platform leaders or with Patricio but if farmers take potatoes it would be nice to explore this).

- Last but not least it is important to try to get an idea of the main planting season for potatoes (although in Ecuador that can happen all year around) and of the unit of measurement (sometimes the same unit-name can mean a different quantity in kg. We need to make sure to avoid this problem).

## QUESTIONS

**In Bold:** to whom they should be addressed

*In Italics:* Instructions for moderator

Regular: Questions to address

<b>For non participants</b>	<b>For platform participants</b>
<p><i>Need to figure out:</i> Why did they decide to not participate to the platforms?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the plataforma and what are the main activities?</li> <li>• How did they decide to keep out from it? Where they contacted and asked to participate and by whom?</li> <li>• Who else does not participate? Do they know all the participants and non-participants and do they have some specific kind of relationship with the one group and the other (friendship, kinship, relatives etc)</li> <li>• What kind of people are the participants and the non participants. Can they characterise the two groups? How? (richer or poorer, not linked to the other members of the community, no need, etc).</li> <li>• Did they have barriers participating?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. <i>YES:</i> what kind of barriers? Can they describe and talk about them? Would they like to participate if they had the chance? How do they think these chances can be created?</li> <li>B. <i>NO:</i> why? What are the main advantages or benefits of non participating?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Have they had any spillover effects from platform (for example in terms of switching to a different variety, or using different kind of pesticides etc)</li> </ul> <p><i>Here I assume the some aspects important to take into account to then make a comparison between participants and non</i></p>	<p><i>Need to figure out:</i> Why and how did they decide to participate to the platforms?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the plataforma and what are the main activities?</li> <li>• How did they get involved with the platform? Who contacted them first and how?</li> <li>• Who else participate in the community? Do they know all the participants and do they have some specific kind of relationship with them (friendship, kinship, relatives etc)</li> <li>• Who does not participate? What kind of people are these (richer or poorer, not linked to the other members of the community etc).</li> <li>• What are the main objectives of the platforms? What are the main costs and benefits in the broad sense of the terms:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the requirements to participate? (<i>For example: Do they have to pay entrance fees? Participate to meetings and hoe often, what other tasks do they have to handle, what is their role etc</i>)</li> <li>2. What are the benefits and what have they improved through the platforms.</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Do they participate to FFS:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. (no- ask why and double check it was not a requirement for participating to platform)</li> <li>2. How often and what have they learned.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

<p><i>participants. I will distinguish a set of questions for each. It is likely that not all of these can be asked to the same group but 1 or 2 can be selected for each group and as we have 3 we should be able to cover them all and double check at least on the pesticides and commercialization:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>A. Farming system and potato production and input</b></li> <li><b>B. Output system and transaction costs Potato commercialization</b></li> <li><b>C. Pesticides and other chemicals</b></li> <li><b>D. Soil erosion or other environmental issues</b></li> </ul>	<p><i>Here I assume the main aspects and benefits coming out of participating are the following and I will distinguish a set of questions for each. It is likely that not all of these can be asked to the same group but 1 or 2 can be selected for each group and as we have 3 we should be able to cover them all and double check at least on the pesticides and commercialization:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>A. Farming system and potato production and input</b></li> <li><b>B. Output system and transaction costs Potato commercialization</b></li> <li><b>C. Pesticides and other chemicals</b></li> <li><b>D. Soil erosion or other environmental issues</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>A. Farming system, potato production and seed system:</b> <i>The functioning of any individual farm system is strongly influenced by the external rural environment, including policies and institutions, markets and information linkages. Not only are farms closely linked to the off-farm economy through commodity and labour markets, but the rural and urban economies are also strongly interdependent. For example, it is quite common for small farm households to derive a significant part of their income from off-farm activities. Farm women and men are also linked to rural communities and social networks, and this social capital influences the management of farms.</i></p> <p><i>As we have been trying to figure out large part of the farming system from the general information addressed above we mainly focus on potato production here.</i></p>	
<p><b>For non-participants</b></p>	<p><b>Platform participants</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would they describe their farming technique?</li> </ul> <p><i>For example in which main season do they plant? What is their main crop of production? Is their main activity agriculture or other off-farm activities? Do they produce mainly for own consumption or for market? What Kind of tillage do they apply and how often? Do they hire labor? Exchange labor? Do they use animal labor and tractors? What are the main inputs (fertilizers, pesticides) and where do they get them from? How often do they apply?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the most important crop for their family? And why? <i>Explain for each crop they mention.</i></li> <li>• What kind of potato varieties do they grow? Can they describe main characteristics and uses?</li> <li>• Is there any difference with platforms participants in terms of techniques of farming and of potato varieties? ? What kind of differences? <i>If yes describe.</i></li> <li>• Any Have they switched to new varieties of potato since they started their farming activity?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would they describe their farming technique?</li> </ul> <p><i>For example in which main season do they plant? What is their main crop of production? Is their main activity agriculture or other off-farm activities? Do they produce mainly for own consumption or for market? What Kind of tillage do they apply and how often? Do they hire labor? Exchange labor? Do they use animal labor and tractors? What are the main inputs (fertilizers, pesticides) and where do they get them from? How often do they apply?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the most important crop for their family? And why? <i>Explain for each crop they mention.</i></li> <li>• What kind of potato varieties do they grow? Can they describe main characteristics and uses?</li> <li>• Has there been any difference since they started participating to the platforms in terms of techniques of farming and of potato varieties? <i>If yes describe.</i></li> <li>• Any difference with non participants? What kind of differences?</li> <li>• Have they switched to new varieties of</li> </ul>

<p>1. <b>If no:</b> <i>Anything else has changed in terms of potato production. For example Increased shape, color, size of potato production, no physical damages etc</i></p> <p>2. <b>If yes</b> <i>What kind of varieties, Why did they switch, why are these varieties better? In which way are these better (Nutrients, commercialization, etc);</i></p> <p>3. Was it difficult of costly to switch? <i>If yes. In which way? Please describe</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where do they usually get their seeds? <i>Suppose they answer market. Ask if they also get other seeds for other varieties from other sources such as friends, neighbours, traders etc And especially if indirectly they get them from platforms (for example from platform participants)</i></li> <li>• Do they know their supplier in advance? Do they have a long term relationship with him/her and know the price and conditions in advance?</li> <li>• How often do they replace or renew their seeds and why? Do they buy certified seeds or local variety seeds?</li> <li>• Are there varieties they would like to get but cannot access? What are these? Why they cannot access?</li> <li>• Are there varieties they are sorry to have lost? Why are they sorry?</li> <li>• Are they concerned about loosing number of varieties? <i>If yes why. If not do they think the system resilience and resistance is somehow more vulnerable with fewer varieties?</i></li> <li>• How far is the supplier and the market from their houses? How do they travel there and how frequently do they go? DO they also get other inputs from various sources? Which inputs and which sources?</li> <li>• How do they get information about new varieties and where? Do they think the platform is a good source of information? What is the best source of information about varieties and other important farming topics? If they hear about a new variety or a new farming technique or pesticide techniques how do they go about deciding whether to use these new sources? <i>(bear in mind that they are participants so if they don't mention the platform try to elicit from</i></li> </ul>	<p>potato after their participation to the platform?</p> <p>1. <b>If no:</b> <i>What else has changed in terms of potato production after starting participation (unless they have already talked about this before). Increased shape, color, size of potato production, no physical damages etc</i></p> <p>2. <b>If yes</b> <i>What kind of varieties, Why did they switch, why are these varieties better? In which way are these better (Nutrients, commercialization, etc);</i></p> <p>3. Was it difficult of costly to switch? <i>If yes. In which way? Please describe</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where do they usually get their seeds? <i>Suppose they answer platforms or market. Ask if they also get other seeds for other varieties from other sources such as market, friends, neighbours, traders etc</i></li> <li>• Do they know their supplier in advance? Do they have a long term relationship with him/her and know the price and conditions in advance?</li> <li>• How often do they replace or renew their seeds and why? Do they buy certified seeds or local variety seeds?</li> <li>• Are there varieties they would like to get but cannot access? What are these? Why they cannot access?</li> <li>• Are there varieties they are sorry to have lost? Why are they sorry?</li> <li>• Are they concerned about loosing number of varieties? <i>If yes why. If not do they think the system resilience and resistance is somehow more vulnerable with fewer varieties?</i></li> <li>• How far is the supplier and the market from their houses? How do they travel there and how frequently do they go? DO they also get other inputs from various sources? Which inputs and which sources?</li> <li>• How do they get information about new varieties and where? Do they think the platform is a good source of information? What is the best source of information about varieties and other important farming topics? If they hear about a new variety or a new farming technique or pesticide techniques how do they go about deciding whether to use these new sources? <i>(bear in mind that they are participants so if they don't mention the platform try to elicit from them.)</i></li> </ul>
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them.)

**Output system and transaction costs:** It is important to note that farmers not only exchange seeds through their networks but a variety of information primarily related to food, economic and risks including adaptation, use values, and disease / pests, It is also very significant the role played by transaction costs both for buying and for selling. The input part of both information and TC has been already addressed above here we are only focussing on the output side.

- **for non participants:**
- Do you produce potato for selling? *If yes For how long have you been selling potatoes? How did you start selling?*
- Do you sell directly or through other intermediaries?
- *If directly*
- Who purchase your produce? Do you always sell to the same costumer? Who are your costumers?
- Do you keep the varieties separate?
- Do you also give information about varieties to the buyers? What kind of info?
- Do you know your costumers before? How do you know them? Have you and a long-term relationship with them?
- Do you know the price you sell at in advance? What are the main determinants of the price?
- Do you plant what to grow also on the basis of selling options?
- Would you switch to a different variety if you could sell to supermarkets? *IF yes. Why what are the main advantages? If not why? What are the disadvantages? And or the barriers?*
- What are the main constraints to expanding you selling activity?
- Why don't you sell through the platforms or other intermediaries? What are the disadvantages?
- *If they sell through other intermediaries:*
- What are the main advantages of selling intermediaries? *Describe*
- Who are the costumers? Do they require particular varieties of have other requirements? Which ones?
- Do you keep the varieties separate?
- Do you know the price you sell at in advance? What are the main determinants of the price?
- Do you plant what to grow also on the basis of selling options? Or on the basis of what the intermediaries tell you?
- Would you switch to a different variety if you could sell to supermarkets? *IF yes.*

- **for participants:**
- Do you produce potato for selling? *If yes For how long have you been selling potatoes? How did you start selling?*
- Do you sell directly or through platforms or other intermediaries?
- *If directly*
- Who purchase your produce? Do you always sell to the same costumer? Who are your costumers?
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- What are the main constraints to expanding you selling activity?
- Why don't you sell through the platforms? What are the disadvantages?
- *If they sell through platforms or other intermediaries:*
- What are the main advantages of selling through platforms or intermediaries? *Describe*
- Who are the platforms costumers? Do they require particular varieties of have other requirements? Which ones?
- Do you keep the varieties separate?
- Do you know the price you sell at in advance? What are the main determinants of the price?
- Do you plant what to grow also on the basis of selling options? Or on the basis of what the platforms tell you?
- Would you switch to a different variety if

<p><i>Why what are the main advantages? If not why? What are the disadvantages? And or the barriers?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the main constraints to expanding you selling activity?</li> </ul>	<p>you could sell to supermarkets? <i>IF yes.</i> <i>Why what are the main advantages? If not why? What are the disadvantages? And or the barriers?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the main constraints to expanding you selling activity?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pesticides and other chemical:</b> The platforms has been working a lot thourgh the FFS on teaching how to apply pesticides and other chemicals, what kind of precautions to use etc. Supposedly also non participants might have learners something indirectly but this is what we'd want to verify. In this section it is also very important to find out the farmers' risk bearing capacity or their aversion to risk and what is the role played by information on this. I've tried to address the questions in one direction but if we have the chance of readdressing this section in another focus group it is worthwhile reversing the questions (this apply also to other sections above). So for example if we ask what have they learned though the FFS we later ask how do they apply pesticides trying to check whether they comply with what they have learned. Vice-Versa in a second group we could first start asking how do they apply pesticides and their knowledge about them and then ask about the FFS and what have they learned. The order of questions does have an impact and we might find interesting results with the two-sided approach.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>for non participants:</b></li> <li>• What are the main stresses (particularly pests and disease their potato production is subject to?</li> <li>• Do they apply chemicals to cope or prevent these stresses? What kind of chemicals?</li> <li>• What kind of pesticides do they use for their potatoes? (names and colour of label- red, blue, green-)</li> <li>• How many times do they apply pesticides? On the basis of what do they decide how and when to apply pesticides? Are there specific timings for applications or are there signs on leaves or other signs they have to pay attention to?</li> <li>• How do they apply pesticides? (<i>i.e. what kind of precautions do they use</i>)?</li> <li>• Are they concerned about the effects of pesticides on their health, soil, groundwater, potatoes?</li> <li>• Can they describe the biological cycle?</li> <li>• How have they learned these things? And how do they get information about pesticides and diseases?</li> <li>• Did they learn any of this from other sources? Which sources? <i>describe</i></li> <li>• Do they think the FFS participants use a different approach? <i>What kind of approach and is it better or worse? In what way can they describe?</i></li> <li>• Have they changes their approach towards pesticides over their farming activity? What made they change? In what way?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>for participants:</b></li> <li>• What are the main stresses (particularly pests and disease their potato production is subject to?</li> <li>• Do they apply chemicals to cope or prevent these stresses? What kind of chemicals?</li> <li>• What kind of pesticides do they use for their potatoes? (names and colour of label- red, blue, green-)</li> <li>• How many times do they apply pesticides? On the basis of what do they decide how and when to apply pesticides? Are there specific timings for applications or are there signs on leaves or other signs they have to pay attention to?</li> <li>• How do they apply pesticides? (<i>i.e. what kind of precautions do they use</i>)?</li> <li>• Are they concerned about the effects of pesticides on their health, soil, groundwater, potatoes?</li> <li>• Can they describe the biological cycle?</li> <li>• How have they learned these things? And how do they get information about pesticides and diseases?</li> <li>• Did they learn any of this from the FFS?</li> <li>• Do they think the non-participants use a different approach?</li> <li>• What have they learned from the FFS in particular and did they think it was useful? <i>Describe</i></li> <li>• Have they changes their approach towards pesticides after the FFS? In what way? How many times should they apply</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do they get any information about pesticides and pests?</li> <li>• How much do they think they would lose without any pesticides? And with IPM?</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p>pesticides according to FFS and what kind?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>If they have changed something</i></li> <li>• How much did they lose in terms of harvest before the FFS and how much do they lose now?</li> <li>• How much do they think they would lose without any pesticides? And with IPM?</li> <li>• <i>If they have not changed anything</i></li> <li>• Why? Do they think the FFS has not been beneficial at all with respect to pesticides? Why?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other environmental issues:</b> As we think that agro-biodiversity is not a big issue in Ecuador, we would like to get information about other issues of environmental concerns in the area. We should try as much as possible to elicit this from the farmers. I'm only addressing here two examples that came out of the workshop and from talking to farmers during our previous visit. The first one is related to soil erosion and prevention taught by the FFS. The second one is related to the watershed management of the Cuenca de Licto. However there are also other cuenca in the areas and at the same time there might be other environmental issues interesting to address but that we need to find out. Please this is very important as we still don't know what to address precisely in our Hh survey with respect to one of these issues and we cannot be too comprehensive as we have a time limit.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>for participants:</b></li> <li>• <b><u>Soil Erosion</u></b></li> <li>• Do you have any sort of land or soil erosion concern? <i>No</i> Is this because you apply precautions or because it doesn't exist? <i>If precautions:</i> what kind and how did you learn these. <i>If doesn't exist:</i> But we've heard that the platform teaches through the FFS how to prevent land erosion. Why do they do that if you don't have such a problem? What about loss of soil nutrients (same questions)</li> <li>• <i>If the answer is yes:</i> What kind of land erosion or loss of soil nutrients do they have? Can they describe?</li> <li>• Do they apply any practice to avoid or prevent it? What kind of practice? Is it individual or communal?</li> <li>• Where and how did they learn it?</li> <li>• Do the platform-participants apply any of these practices?</li> <li>• If yes: What kind?</li> <li>• <b><u>Watershed management:</u></b></li> <li>• How is the cuenca managed? <i>Can they describe and then on the basis of that:</i></li> <li>• Who's leading it? Is the platform related to the management at all?</li> <li>• Are they part of the management system?</li> <li>• <i>IF YES:</i> How? What are their roles and tasks? How did they get to be part of it?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>for participants:</b></li> <li>• <b><u>Soil Erosion</u></b></li> <li>• Do you have any sort of land or soil erosion concern? <i>No</i> Is this because you apply precautions or because it doesn't exist? <i>If precautions:</i> what kind and how did you learn these. <i>If doesn't exist:</i> But we've heard that the platform teaches through the FFS how to prevent land erosion. Why do they do that if you don't have such a problem? What about loss of soil nutrients (same questions)</li> <li>• <i>If the answer is yes:</i> What kind of land erosion or loss of soil nutrients do they have? Can they describe?</li> <li>• Do they apply any practice to avoid or prevent it? What kind of practice? Is it individual or communal?</li> <li>• Where and how did they learn it?</li> <li>• Did they get any input from FFS and from platform on this? What kind</li> <li>• Do the non-participants apply any of these practices?</li> <li>• <b><u>Watershed management:</u></b></li> <li>• How is the cuenca managed? <i>Can they describe and then on the basis of that:</i></li> <li>• Who's leading it? Is the platform related to the management at all?</li> <li>• Are they part of the management system?</li> <li>• <i>IF YES:</i> How? What are their roles and tasks? How did they get to be part of</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>IF NOT and in both cases:</i> Do they have access to the water? Can they use it? What do they need to do to get the right of using the water? Do they have costs to bear? Or tasks, roles or activities to do? (i.e. <i>Cleaning the system once a month, checking the fees payment, checking leakages etc</i>)</li> <li>• What are the benefits of using it? What has changed in their lives and farming system through the cuenca? Do the platform participants have any additional benefits? If yes what kind?</li> <li>• What uses do they make out of this water? How much is available? Is it potable? IS there a max limit allowed to each user? What is this limit and how do they check for it?</li> <li>• Do they know whether there are people in the community or elsewhere that use the cuenca's benefits without paying their costs?</li> <li>• If yes: are they annoyed and how and what do they think they can do to avoid or prevent such behaviour?</li> <li>• What kind of people are these free-riders?</li> </ul>	<p>it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>IF NOT and in both cases:</i> Do they have access to the water? Can they use it? What do they need to do to get the right of using the water? Do they have costs to bear? Or tasks, roles or activities to do? (i.e. <i>Cleaning the system once a month, checking the fees payment, checking leakages etc</i>)</li> <li>• What are the benefits of using it? What has changed in their lives and farming system through the cuenca? Do they have any additional benefits thanks to being also platforms participants?</li> <li>• What uses do they make out of this water? How much is available? Is it potable? IS there a max limit allowed to each user? What is this limit and how do they check for it?</li> <li>• Do they know whether there are people in the community or elsewhere that use the cuenca's benefits without paying their costs?</li> <li>• If yes: are they annoyed and how and what do they think they can do to avoid or prevent such behaviour?</li> <li>• What kind of people are these free-riders?</li> </ul>
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