

**Statement Prepared by Participants in the Regional Workshop on Farmer Field Schools
in Dakar
(December 7 to 11, 2015)**

The farmer field school (FFS) approach has been used in over 90 developing countries in Asia, Africa, South America and Eastern Europe, after its first pilot by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Indonesia in 1989. In 1995, with the backing of the FAO, the approach was first introduced into Africa by means of individual national and sub-regional projects. Today, as many organizations, countries and donors continue employing the FFS methods, the FAO continues to play an important role in promoting quality criteria and a common understanding of FFS methodology, especially given its flexibility in covering issues as varied as they are diverse (including agriculture, pastoralism, aquaculture, etc.) , and its expansion into new countries.

Historically, the mobilisation of mobilizing experienced local experts to set up projects in new countries provided the basis for the geographical spread of FFS, in what is an example of successful South-South cooperation.

The expertise generated in delivering FFS in numerous countries (such as master trainers, facilitators, managers and project leaders) provides an opportunity to embed sustainable agricultural practices and to sustainably scale up agricultural production at sub-regional level by developing regional networks of dynamic, independent practitioners. These autonomous networks will help to anchor the quality and sustainability of the FFS approach by institutionalizing this intra-regional and inter-regional impetus for collaboration.

This is the context in which participants from 21 countries from Western and Central Africa met in Dakar (December 7 to 11, 2015) under the auspices of the FAO for the Regional Workshop on Farmer Field Schools in West and Central Africa.

During the workshop, participants agreed to establish a regional network of experts on the FFS approach with the following goals:

- To build an information platform for sharing experiences and expertise;
- To provide technical / methodological assistance for enhancing FFS capabilities;
- To help ensure the quality of FFS by harmonizing approaches;
- To carry out advocacy for FFS institutionalization, resource mobilization and visibility.

To this end, **we, the participants** in the Sub-Regional Workshop on Farmer Field Schools in West and Central Africa, being:

→ Committed to meeting the challenges for the sustainable improvement of food security and living conditions of agricultural producers (male and female) in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals approved at the United Nations Sustainable Development summit in September 2015;

→ Guided by a common vision of sustainable agriculture, whereby food security and economic growth belong to us all, with particular emphasis on the most vulnerable groups;

→ Convinced that the FFS represent the best way to promote the sustainable development of grassroots communities;

→ Convinced of the growing interest that governments, civil society and development partners are now showing in using the FFS approach to address challenges such as food and nutrition security, sustainable agriculture, adaptation to climate change, social cohesion, gender, and agro-ecology;

→ And given the successful application of the FFS approach in several countries as an institutional vehicle for technical and technological innovation;

do adopt this declaration, the "Dakar Declaration on FFS Networks", in order to contribute to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals:

Governments, policy-makers, and technical and financial partners should, with the support of inter-governmental organizations (and the FAO in particular), and with the full involvement of rural communities:

- 1- Promote sustainable development centred on the individual and human development;
- 2- Use their respective policies, strategies and programmes to support and further develop FFS and similar

participatory advisory systems for agricultural producers;

3- Support the exchange of knowledge and expertise among actors involved in FFS;

4- Strengthen South-South cooperation to support, enhance and ensure the quality of FFS.

Specifically, we call on:

Governments and policy-makers to:

- 5. Set up an appropriate framework for institutionalizing the FFS approach on a national scale, notably by integrating the approach into national policies, programmes and projects as well as into university and academic curricula and training programmes;
- 6. Oversee an increase in high-quality FFS at country level;
- 7. Facilitate the emergence of consultation frameworks and networks of actors trained in FFS to ensure its quality at country level;
- 8. Facilitate the mobilization of resources for the sustainable financing of local, national and regional networks.

Financial and technical partners to:

- 9. Support government efforts regarding FFS, participatory extension and advisory systems and agricultural research;
- 10. Finance integrated development projects and programmes based on FFS that include issues regarding sustainable agriculture and agro-ecology, nutrition, gender, youth employment, resilience, adaptation to climate change, etc.;
- 11. Promote collaboration among development partners to harmonize interventions and to avoid duplication in order to ensure the impact and efficiency of resource use;
- 12. Encourage South-South cooperation in the field of FFS and the dissemination of technical and institutional innovations.

The FAO:

As the initiator of the FFS approach and the main source of expertise, to:

- 13. Consolidate its strategic and technical support role to countries in the field of FFS;
- 14. Incorporate FFS into the funding of its Regular Programme, especially under the Strategic Objectives (SOs), including the Regional Initiatives (RIs), and integrate FFS into the work plan for South-South cooperation;
- 15. Create a unit and a mechanism responsible for the quality and coordination of FFS that brings together the FAO offices at headquarters and in the decentralized offices;
- 16. Initiate two Technical Cooperation Projects (TCPs) for the two sub-regions of West and Central Africa together with a TCP at regional level to support the creation and operation of regional and national FFS networks.

Dakar; December 11, 2015