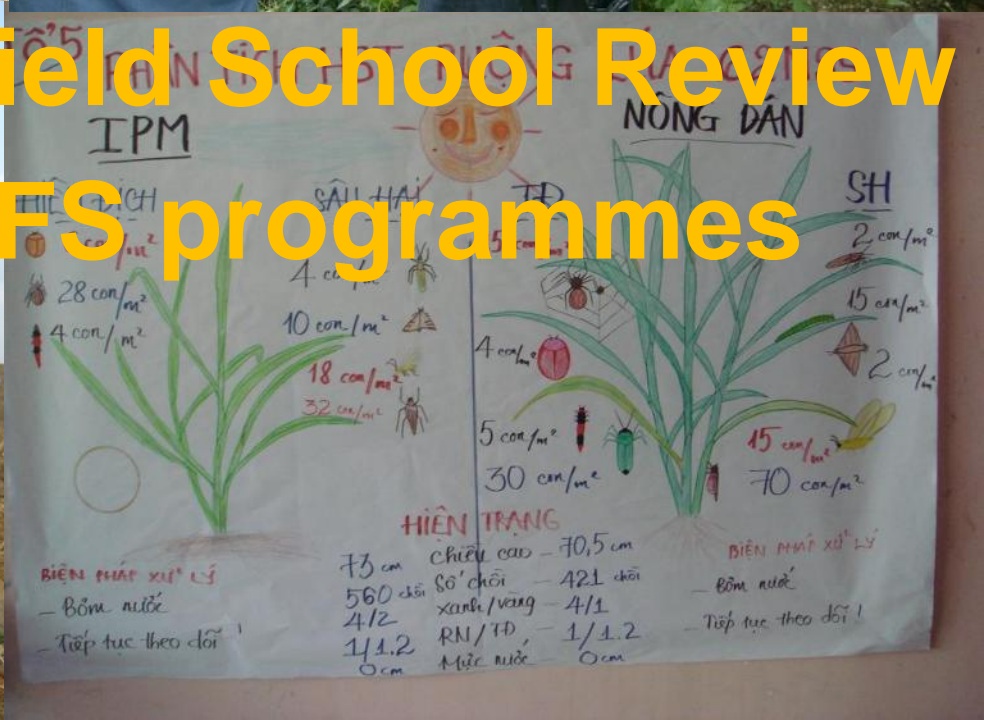




Farmer Field Schools

Global Farmer Field School Review

Challenges FFS programmes





Global FFS review 2012

- Farmer Field Schools started in Indonesia in 1989, on IPM in rice
- Since then many countries in different parts of the world have started to use FFS for an increasing range of topics
- Assess global experience, discuss quality issues



Focus of the FFS review

- Concept and principles of the FFS, quality
- FFS programme start-up and development
- Appropriation of the approach – at community level, national level
- FFSs and the bigger context – challenges for agriculture



Process of the review

- Core group – discussion paper (March 2012)
- Country consultations in 15 countries (April-May 2012)
- Email forums 1 (June 2012) and 2 (September- October 2012)
- Summary report and guidance document (ongoing)



FFS concept

The FFS was originally designed as an **educational approach**. With extension approaches there is admittedly some learning that goes on, but that learning is primarily focused on a technical element. **I wouldn't refer to extension as an educational approach**. Extension is much too shallow; it is better referred to as an information marketing approach. The FFS was designed with reference to the critical theory analysis of Jurgen Habermas of why adults want to learn. His analysis and the FFS approach distinguish three specific areas of social existence: work, interaction and power. These in turn relate to **three domains of learning: technical, social and empowerment**. The characteristics of these domains form the basis for why adults seek to learn.



FFS concept

- FFS is a platform for farmers to learn: technical, social issues, empowerment
- Can be applied to range of topics, nurturing agro-ecosystems approaches, building groups
- Non-formal adult education, local and scientific knowledge – adaptive management



FFS concept

- Characteristics: groups, learning fields, aesa, group dynamics, special topics
- Quality determines success or failure of FFS programmes
- Facilitator selection and training very important to assure quality



FFS concept

*How has FFS changed me? : it moved me from
pests to **people**.*

Alida Laurence



FFS programmes

- FFS programmes in many cases project dependent, in some cases national programmes evolved. Programmes are not static.
- Community has important role to play in implementing what has been learned and driving further development – programmes can put more emphasis on that



FFS programmes

FFS are a remarkable innovation that has opened **new potential and possibilities for thousands**, maybe by now millions. But they remain a drop in the ocean, **weak in relation to powerful vested interests**. Pesticide sales have never been so profitable nor so huge... - and small farmers rarely are in a position to dictate the terms, let alone negotiate effectively in their own interests.

Janice Jiggins



FFS and the bigger picture

“Who needs FFS and **how does it fit into the changing agricultural reality that is sweeping our world?** It has obviously no place in the heavily promoted industrialized agriculture that has been spreading over the world as a result of globalization in which farmers function more as farm laborer for global corporations who have to follow fixed procedures. Or do we see FFS's role in improving a country's comparative advantage with regard to its export crops while it is forced to import subsidized food crops from industrialized nations? Or should FFS help the millions of subsistence farmers that fall through the cracks of the modern agricultural system, but then, who would pay for their education? If we want to find the comparative advantage of FFS, we need a vision of future agricultural systems and a strategy **for building sustainable food production**. I firmly believe that certain aspects of FFS can play an important role in this future.”

Gerd Walter-Echols



FFS and the bigger picture

- FFS can play important role in educating farmers in sustainable agriculture intensification
- Quality is important
- Support to what happens after the FFS needs more attention – community level
- New ways of financing FFS programmes to be found



Challenges

Concept of the FFS

- Common vision, shared principles (vs anything goes) – Quality of training
- Time needed, funds needed
- Ecosystem approaches, sustainable agriculture
- Scaling up with quality and flexibility
- Community action after FFS



Challenges

Project/programme design

- Is the FFS approach suitable for envisaged objectives? Field-based assessments, ensure community input. Build in space for post-FFS activities, innovations.
- What other FFS projects/programmes are in place already? And what is the quality?



Challenges

Project/programme design

- Scale, size of programme and strategy to implement? Duration of project?
- Investments for capacity development: facilitators training, farmer training
- Mechanisms to deliver at field level – community ownership
- How to support quality? M&E, coordination



Challenges

Project/programme design

- Partners for implementation, structure for implementation?
- Expertise required – what is available locally? Regionally? Where to find?
- Realistic costing



Challenges

FFS programme implementation

- Quality – technical, process (ToF, FFS)
- Scaling up with flexibility and quality
- Post FFS – farmers to take leading role in developing local programmes
- Nurture innovations, flexibility and space to evolve (vs ‘one size fits all’)
- Networking and exchange



Challenges

FFS programme implementation

- Ensuring adequate support to field level
- Delivery mechanisms
- M&E, Impact
- Coordination with other partners, organizations that implement FFS
- Gaining policy support

Looking forward

Friends, this forum has provided impressive evidence about how FFS participation has changed the ways in which millions of farmers all around the world **go about their daily lives and gain in self-esteem and confidence**. The huge achievements of the FFS movement are quite remarkable, but largely unsung. But the forum has also **highlighted the fragility of the changes** that have come about and how, in some countries and at the global level, the proponents of input intensive farming are regaining the upper hand. It has also shown how, in most countries (and communities), **only a small proportion of potentially interested farmers** have been able to participate in FFS.

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To me, the Forum suggests that the basic principles on which FFS are founded remain as relevant as they were 20 years ago, even though the range of issues to which they have been applied has widened enormously in response to farmer demand. **Rigorous attention has to be given to assuring trueness to these principles and to maintaining quality as the scale of programmes increases.**

It looks as though we have to find alternative and more sustainable funding arrangements to escape from project dependency, including through capturing incentives for the adoption of sustainable farming systems. We also need to give more attention to lengthening the period over which FFS usually run (but with self-financing mechanisms), nurture networking between FFS, and promote the emergence of farmer-led institutions that translate the FFS experience into policy advocacy, setting publicly funded research agendas, and consumer education. And while this must be done with the support of governments and international institutions, we must recognise that the bureaucratisation of FFS is like a kiss of death to creativity and initiative. Getting the balance right between overt government support and potentially smothering take-over isn't easy!

Andrew MacMillan, Italy