



Farmer to Farmer Extension

Technical brief on **Farmer to Farmer Extension** approach

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Objective: To promote farmer to farmer knowledge and information exchange through farmers' participatory research teams at village level in Malawi

What is Farmer to Farmer Extension (F2FE)?

Farmer to farmer extension (F2FE) is a participatory action, where smallholder farmers and other marginalized groups identify their own problems and develop their own solutions, teach each other's, and share their experiences and knowledge (Bezner Kerr et al., 2018). Farmers and/or other marginalized groups are fully involved in the research and extension process through practical sessions such as recipe days, field days, and exchange visits (Figure 1).



Figure 1: F2F learning & discussion on Maize-legume intercropping trials at Kachali, Kacheche, Ekwendeni, Mzimba sites (Malawi) (Photo by....)

How to implement & upscale F2FE?

The F2FE approach starts with motivated farmers who can reflect their own knowledge and experience. The approach is implemented by establishing Farmer Participatory Research Teams (FPRTs) through the help of the soil, food, health & community organization (SFHC) which is a partner of InnovAfrica project in the case of Malawi.

The motivated farmers serve voluntarily as facilitators and support systems to fellow farmers. They are encouraged to join the FPRTs via in-kind benefits (such as trainings, field trips, exchange visits) and through dialogue on the benefits gained by helping others

SFHC has been successful in implementing and upscaling F2FE in different parts of Malawi, for e.g. in Ekwendeni, Mzimba Lobi, and Dedza districts (Nyantakyi-Frimpong et al., 2017).

Selection criteria for FPRTs membership

- Need to possess effective communication skills;
- Willingness to share information with other farmers;
- Be able to lead others while being cooperative & approachable;
- Willing to take risks on new ideas;
- Gender sensitive -50 percent of the FPRTs members should be women;
- Honesty, trustworthy, and humble;
- Development conscious; and
- Should originate from the same village and be socially accepted

Step 1: InnovAfrica Project staff (in Malawi) facilitate a meeting with local leaders, village committee leaders and farmers to elect farmer participatory research team member.

Step 2: Local leaders and/or village committee members identify and make short-list of potential farmer research team members taking into account the above-mentioned criteria.

Step 3: Local leaders and village committee members discuss and decide who should be a FPRT member through a democratic process.

Training of Trainers

- SFHC imparts comprehensive training to FPRTs members for e.g. on adult education, participatory research methods along with agro-ecological principles and practices and other key concepts.
- The trained FPRTs members will then give trainings to the rest of fellow farmers in the community who in turn also train others.

Key Messages

The F2FE approach:

- + Creates multiplier effects when FPRTs members disseminate their knowledge and skills to others;
- + Helps increase the rate of adoption of different sustainable innovations;
- + Increases the coverage to reach more farmers in wider area with different innovations;
- + Improves farmers' access to information and advisory services;
- + Provides a forum for farmers to give feedback on challenges they are facing; but could encounter some limitations such as high expectations from FPRTs members and difficulties in keeping them motivated in their roles

References & Links

Bezner Kerr, et al. (2018) Knowledge politics in participatory climate change adaptation research on agroecology in Malawi. *Renewal Agriculture and Food Systems*, doi.10.1017/S1742170518000017.

Nyantakyi-Frimpong, et al. (2017) A farmer-to-farmer agro-ecological approach to address food security in Malawi. www.innovafrika.eu



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