

A woman with dark hair tied in a bun, wearing a purple sari and traditional Indian jewelry including a large silver earring, a pearl necklace, and a gold tassel. She is smiling and looking down at a field of green wheat. The background is a blurred landscape with trees.

# FFS GUIDE

## FARMER SEED PRODUCTION AND MARKETING

## **Farmer Seed Production and Marketing**

This field guide focuses on farmer seed production and marketing at the community level for local or district markets. This first draft draws on a wide range of guides by organizations working with farmer field school methodologies to enhance smallholder farmers' skills and knowledge to make informed decisions about opportunities to engage in seed enterprises and improve their livelihoods. It also draws on various guides developed by the Sowing Diversity = Harvesting Security program ([www.sdhsprogram.org](http://www.sdhsprogram.org)) partners Champion Seeds and PELUM, based on experiences and lessons learned in distinct country contexts. It was developed within the Farmer Seed Enterprise component of the SD=HS program, complementing the program's field guides on participatory plant breeding and nutrition.

Developed and compiled by Connie Formson, Hilton Mbozi and Bert Visser.

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Contact: Bert Visser, Scientific Advisor, SD=HS Program

E-mail: [sdhsprogram@oxfamnovib.nl](mailto:sdhsprogram@oxfamnovib.nl)

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## CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	5
1.0. Purpose.....	6
1.1. For whom is the guide intended?.....	6
1.2. Organization of the guide .....	7
1.3. The principles of a FFS .....	8
1.4. Integrated trainings: various SD=HS FFS topics .....	9
<b>2. PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES</b> .....	10
2.1. Training of trainers .....	10
2.2. Organizing the FFS.....	11
2.3. Why develop smallholder farmers’ seed production and marketing capacity? .....	13
2.4. Gender and youth in seed production and marketing.....	14
<b>3. DIAGNOSIS AND PLANNING</b> .....	17
3.1. Diagnosing potential seed requirements and market opportunities.....	17
3.2. Visioning: looking ahead.....	18
3.3. Action plan for seed production and marketing.....	19
3.4. Revisiting group structures: committees on seed production and marketing .....	19
<b>4. ANALYSIS OF THE SEED MARKET AND CROP SELECTION</b> .....	22
4.1. Understanding the seed value chain.....	22
4.2. Market research.....	23
4.3. Understanding the costs and benefits of seed production and marketing.....	28
4.4. Revisiting initial selection of crops and varieties for market production.....	29
<b>5. INTRODUCING SEED BUSINESS CONCEPTS AND POLICY ISSUES</b> .....	31
5.1. Business planning and record keeping.....	31
5.2. Promoting and marketing your seeds.....	33
5.3. Seed legislation .....	35
5.4. Negotiation and contracting.....	36
<b>6. SEED PRODUCTION, PROCESSING, CERTIFICATION AND STORAGE</b> .....	38
6.1. Managing risks in field operations.....	38
6.2. Plot selection and management .....	39
6.3. Plot preparation and seed management .....	41
6.4. Sowing conditions .....	41
6.5. Use of fertilizers and pesticides, soil management.....	42
6.6. Growth phase.....	42
6.7. Harvesting and evaluation of seed production .....	44

6.8.	Seed processing and storage.....	44
6.9.	Seed inspection and certification .....	44
6.10.	From the field to the marketplace.....	45
<b>7.</b>	<b>END OF SEASON EVALUATION AND PLANNING SESSION .....</b>	<b>46</b>
7.1.	Monitoring and evaluation.....	46
7.2.	The FFS end-of-season evaluation.....	49
7.3.	Planning.....	52
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>53</b>



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of this document is to provide guidance for developing a curriculum on farmer seed production and marketing in the context of the Sowing Diversity=Harvesting Security (SD=HS) program, currently implemented by consortium partners in eight countries and coordinated by Oxfam Novib. SD=HS takes an integrated approach focused on: 1) crop diversity through participatory plant breeding (PPB); 2) farmer seed production and marketing; 3) local food plants for nutrition; and 4) supportive policies.

The second component aims to ensure that indigenous peoples and smallholder farmers enhance their livelihoods, income and seed security through improved production of and market access to high quality seeds of diverse crops and varieties, adapted to farmers' needs and preferences. It is currently being implemented in China, Guatemala, Nepal and Zimbabwe.

Our work on facilitating and supporting farmer-led seed production and marketing addresses the shortcomings of both farmers' and formal seed systems by developing the capacities of indigenous peoples and smallholder farmers to produce and market good quality seeds that are suited for their farming systems and changing agro-

ecological systems and that are currently not available in the local markets. The focus on marketing skills as well as seed production helps farmers to effectively respond to market demand, contributing to their livelihoods.

The guide follows the farmer field school (FFS) learning approach discussed in Section 1.1, and applies it to local seed markets. At the end of an FFS implementing this guide, the expectation is that participants:

- are capable, reliable and self-confident seed producers;
- understand how seed markets work and have developed the skills, knowledge and linkages to capitalize on market opportunities; and
- are able to connect farmer seed production and marketing with other components of the SD=HS program on PPB, nutrition and local foodplants, and policy (see Section 1.5).

The FFS on farmer seed production and marketing builds on the FFS on PPB and nutrition and local food plants. It provides a first step towards activities that may result in

more formalized farmer seed enterprises in the medium to long term.

This guide is a living document. It will be continuously adapted and improved based on lessons from its implementation in various SD=HS partner countries.

## 1.0. Purpose

The FFS aims to improve farmers' understanding of how seed markets work, so they can take decisions on seed production that will improve their own livelihoods and incomes as well as access to appropriate seed for their fellow farmers in the same communities, agro-ecosystems and cultural settings. The guide supports capacity development relating to local and district markets, and does not focus on developing formalized farmer seed enterprises with a wider geographic scope and larger production volumes. However, farmers active in such enterprises may also find elements in this guide useful.

### 1.1. For whom is the guide intended?

The guide is intended for use by FFS facilitators, SD=HS partner staff, lead farmers, extension staff, and key collaborating staff of other government agencies and institutions. It forms the basis for a 'Training of Trainers' (ToT) that builds the capacity of facilitators in the SD=HS program, as well as supporting FFS activities. While it helps if facilitators have some background in farm business management, the guide provides additional resources on business and marketing aspects, so facilitators with a background in agronomy can gain the basic knowledge to support farmers to engage in seed production commercially. It addresses

#### **Empowered and resilient farming communities**

Support for commercialization of selected crops with market value and importance to smallholder farmers is part of the overall focus of SD=HS on crop diversity and resilience in the context of climate change. Work on seed production and marketing in farmer field schools on participatory plant breeding, in particular, helps ensure that farming promotes resilience and is remunerative.

The guide supports smallholder farmers to take an active role in the diversification, sustainable use and management of crop genetic resources by producing and marketing seed of crops and varieties that are well adapted to their agro-ecosystems but not adequately offered by the public or private seed sectors.

all essentials for implementing an FFS, although those relating to the FFS approach are dealt with only briefly as an FFS on farmer seed production and marketing will ideally be preceded by one on PPB and/or nutrition in the same community with some of the same facilitators and participants.

This version of the guide has been reviewed by multiple practitioners; however, it is quite impossible to produce a guiding document that can fit various contexts that change over time. This is an invitation to the reader to make use of this document, adapt it, revise it, modify it to best fit the intended audience.

## 1.2. Organization of the guide

The guide provides a proposed curriculum and all necessary supporting background material for FFS implementation, though it can also be complemented by other guides with congruent objectives. It is divided into seven chapters, as summarized in Table 1

below. A separate Toolkit includes complementary resources that can be reviewed and used by the FFS facilitators where deemed necessary. In this guide references will be made to certain exercises, tools and forms in the Toolkit.

**Table 1. FFS implementation plan**

Chapter	Objectives	Activities	Provisional timeline
Introduction	Setting the context	Facilitators discuss needs and options for FFS, including in the ToT	-
Preparation	Engaging the community and identifying interest and options for seed production and marketing	Community meetings organized by facilitators; Selection of FFS participants; Seeking support from authorities; Organizing the FFS	4–8 weeks
Diagnosis and planning	Selecting crops and varieties and planning for seed production	FFS meetings to agree on plans, targets and ways of working	3 FFS sessions; 3–6 weeks
Marketing analysis and crop selection	Familiarization with the seed value chain, market research and determining which crops and varieties should be produced	Seed value chain analysis; Visiting local markets; Selecting commercial crops and varieties	8 FFS sessions; 3 months
Seed business concepts	Familiarization with marketing requirements and cross-checking feasibility of marketing seed of the selected crops and varieties to improve livelihoods	Business plan development; Record keeping; Negotiations and contracting; Deciding on ways of marketing (branding, actors); Seed regulation	5 FFS sessions; 3–4 months
Seed production and marketing	Monitoring the development of the crop (Agro-Ecosystem Analysis [AESA]), harvesting, processing	FFS group field visits to production sites; Discussing processing and storage options;	6–8 sessions; Full growing season and after-season marketing periods

	and storing the seed, organizing seed marketing	Preparing and inspecting storage sites; Visiting seed markets; Selling seeds in the market	
Evaluation and planning	Evaluating the FFS results , including successes and failures, and planning for the next production season	FFS meeting to arrive at joint conclusions and agree on planning for the next season	2–3 sessions; At the end of a full production and marketing year

### 1.3. The principles of a FFS

The FFS approach is rooted in the conviction that the strongest way to learn is through experience. The FFS is not about ‘teaching’ farmers. It is about facilitating exercises and experiments by and with farmers in which they make their own observations and draw their own conclusions. It is about assisting farmers by providing external support, materials and technical capacity where needed, through the involvement of public research institutions, government agencies, and agri-business specialists. Local knowledge and skills are respected as the strongest foundation on which to build new knowledge and skills. Most importantly, this new knowledge is developed in the FFS and owned by the farmers.

FFS are intended to be holistic, in understanding that farmers are best motivated and will remain committed to the FFS only if it addresses issues that are close to their livelihoods (the ‘gut’), intellectually interesting (the ‘mind’), and emotionally relevant (the ‘heart’). All participatory approaches need to address and respect these motivational requirements.

These principles strongly contribute to building critical thinking and self-confidence and increasing capacity for experimentation and decision making. Farmers build their own

knowledge on the functioning of seed markets by discussing and evaluating their seed sources; the quality, adaptation to local conditions, needs and preferences, and prices of the crops and varieties for which seed is offered in the market; and gaps in seed provision. Farmers also become more aware of the structures in their societies that keep them poor and threaten the sustainability of their work in managing their agro-ecosystems and utilizing plant diversity for their daily diets.

The FFS approach gives farmers the opportunity to learn together, from each other, and practice what they learn as they analyze their findings and make decisions that work best for them. Facilitation and educating adults require specific skills sets. Facilitators need to build practical skills to offer a participatory atmosphere for adult learning.

The central principle behind the FFS is farmer empowerment. The FFS functions as a ‘school without walls’. It involves education and training of adults within their own community and in their own fields. It does not necessarily make use of school buildings. In fact, much of the training takes place in the field.



## 1.4. Integrated trainings: various SD=HS FFS topics

This field guide is not a standalone document. It fits in a program with a much wider set of community empowerment activities. The SD=HS program has developed activities and tools for use in the FFS on PPB and on nutrition and local food plants. As these may lead participants to take up seed production and sale, they lead naturally to the organization of an FFS on seed production and marketing. Activities in this guide build on those usually undertaken in the FFS on PPB and/or nutrition.



### Note

The other SD=HS field guides are available here:

[Facilitators' Field Guide for Farmer Field Schools on Participatory Plant Breeding \(PPB\)](#)

[Farmer Field School Field Guide on Nutrition and Local Food Plants](#)



## 2. PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES

Implementation of the FFS on seed production and marketing requires well-prepared facilitators. As for all SD=HS FFS, facilitators learn in the ToT so they can

subsequently facilitate the FFS at the community level. Chapter 2 provides guidance on the preparatory process.

### 2.1. Training of trainers

The ToT follows the same approach as taken in the field guides on PPB and nutrition. The assumption is that partner organizations will be responsible for implementing the FFS and are familiar with the FFS approach. Each series or season of FFS is to be preceded by a ToT, which should inspire and motivate the facilitators and discuss aspects of preparing, monitoring, guiding, reporting, and overseeing quality control of FFS activities. The master trainers responsible for the ToT follow the structure of the field guide that will later support the FFS. The ToT also adapts the methodological framework, principles and general approach to the specific conditions in a country.

Where facilitators are not sufficiently familiar with this approach, they may review Chapter 7 of the field guide on PPB – which addresses principles of adult learning in the FFS, participatory action research, and FFS

facilitation – and Chapter 9 of the field guide on nutrition and local food plants, which addresses capacity building in relation to FFS facilitation.

#### Note

The ToT ends with a plan of work agreed by the facilitators, containing an overview of all the planned FFS, the facilitators allotted to each of them, and any specific plans for individual FFS.

#### Duration and timing

A ToT on seed production and marketing can be conducted over five days if most participants are familiar with the FFS approach from PPB or nutrition and have some experience with seed production. The ToT is preferably organized well in advance of the growing season. The learning by farmers takes a full year: it covers one agricultural cycle but starts before the planting season

with diagnosis and market analysis, then continues with seed production activities, and ends with seed processing and marketing.

In keeping with the FFS approach, the aim is to have a maximum of 25 participants in the ToT.

### **Contents and organization**

The ToT focuses on understanding local seed systems, the role and functioning of local seed markets, needs assessment in the communities, requirements for high-quality seed production, and marketing opportunities and strategies for smallholder farmers as seed producers. ToT participants will adapt and develop the FFS field guide to their own agenda. It is key to involve stakeholders such as community leaders, experts in seed business and marketing, seed certification authorities, and holders of traditional knowledge on popular farmers' varieties in the ToT and subsequent FFS activities.

The ToT is the main preparation for the FFS in the selected communities. Its objectives are to (1) create a first team of facilitators to guide

FFS on seed production and marketing at community level; (2) prepare to implement the FFS in the next growing season; and (3) provide feedback on the current draft of the field guide for the facilitators to use. Initial information on local seed markets (seed portfolios, players, volumes) will also help guide the ToT.

### **Preparing for the ToT**

The implementing partner organizations organize the ToT: they need to select and invite potential facilitators, including 4–6 master trainers to coordinate the ToT; invite experts; decide on location and time; and develop a ToT program based on the chapters in this field guide.

Once a ToT has been successfully completed, FFS at the community level can be planned, organized and conducted by the facilitators trained in the ToT. The partner organization will normally select the communities, which will normally have hosted an FFS on either PPB or nutrition. It is recommended that each FFS be facilitated by two facilitators, who can support and complement each other.

## **2.2. Organizing the FFS**

The first step is to decide how many FFS will be held and where. Criteria for selecting the communities could include:

- Evident shortcomings in the identity, diversity, adaptability, or quality of the crops and varieties for which seed is offered in local markets, or the price, quality, and availability of the seed.
- The community having previously held an FFS on PPB and/or nutrition.
- Support of local government and community elders.
- Staff of the implementing organization being easy for FFS facilitators and other experts to reach.

- Interest in seed production and marketing among the community.
- Openness to developing community-level seed production capacity for the local market.

### **Preparatory discussions with the community**

Initial discussions, open to all community members, should provide insights into the functioning of local seed markets and their shortcomings in meeting farmers' needs. These can be informal meetings with community leaders and small, gendered focus group discussions with farmers in the community.

Before an FFS is formed, the facilitator(s) should meet interested members of the community to:

- sketch a general picture of what the FFS on seed production and marketing will involve for the (potential) participants.
- explain how the activities on seed production and marketing will be developed, giving the villagers an idea of the tasks and responsibilities for the participants, and describing the participatory and learning principles of the FFS.
- provide a short description of the production and marketing objectives of the FFS, involving decision-making on which crops and varieties, in which volumes and for which buyer groups.

The FFS facilitator should explain that local knowledge on seed requirements, options and outlets will be the source of learning; the FFS will gather experience with seed production and marketing and analyze results after every session; and seed requirements in local communities are influenced by a changing socio-economic and cultural environment, which affects what is affordable and what is preferred.

### **Selection of FFS participants**

Participant selection should be guided by criteria that are clear, transparent, and agreed with the communities beforehand. Participants should be selected for their willingness to participate in seed production for the market and share the knowledge they acquire with other stakeholders. Participants should be included from both genders and various socio-economic status and age categories.

The ideal number of FFS participants is between 25 and 30 farmers from the same

village. Women need to be well represented, as they play a key role in seed management. Special attention should be paid to including youth, who have different networks, food cultural experiences and preferences, and often a strong interest in commercial activities.

### **Foreseen activities**

Activities focus on conditions for high-quality seed production, and market development to maximize opportunities for farmers to market and sell their produced seed. They will include:

- small groups observing crop growth, flowering, and seed setting and development and reporting in plenary, including on issues of plant health and disease and water, weed, soil and nutrient management;
- a market analysis helping farmer participants to identify the most needed crops and varieties and the best ways to market their seeds;
- addressing group dynamics in plenary to maintain a spirit of liveliness and competition;
- final evaluation of the FFS seed production plots at the end of the season; and
- an evaluation of participants' marketing efforts.

The FFS on PPB or nutrition may have already identified crops and varieties with market demand – for example, those which are not available in the market, or expensive in the formal sector. The first, diagnostic phase of the FFS on farmer seed production and marketing should review potential market demand for farmer-produced seed and evaluate options for market development (see Chapter 3 below).

## 2.3. Why develop smallholder farmers' seed production and marketing capacity?

For some crops and varieties, farmers keep their own seeds. For others, they tend to buy their seeds – each season or intermittently – in informal or formal markets. The seeds they buy in the market may be of local farmers' varieties or commercial varieties. Not all seed sold in local markets is good quality, and not all is for crops and varieties that fit smallholders' farming systems and agro-ecological conditions, especially given climate change.

Smallholder farmer-led seed production and marketing may fill that gap, by providing seed of newly developed and tested varieties of well-known crops or by promoting the cultivation of better-adapted and less well-established crops. It may also include seed of local food plants that improve diets and contribute to nutrition security. As such categories of seed are normally not developed by the formal sector, which includes private seed companies and public breeding institutions, this means smallholder farmer-led seed production can fulfil an important socio-economic role in the community.

Smallholder farmers can earn a substantial income and improve their livelihood by producing seed to sell at an affordable price to fellow farmers in local and district markets.

FFS participants should discuss whether they want to organize themselves as a group to plan and implement seed production and marketing, or they want the FFS to provide support and facilities for individual farmers who decide to produce, and market seed

themselves. Groups could organize to, for example, inspect the seed crops while in the field and after harvest, and provide facilities for processing, storage, marketing, and sales.

Later in the process, participants should decide if they wish to organize themselves in smaller groups, focusing on a particular crop or variety.

The FFS may consist of several such groups. They should decide if all participants will take part in marketing activities, or they will set up a marketing committee to market the seed of all groups (see Chapter 3 for more). Participants might also decide to establish a production committee to oversee all seed production activities and advise individual farmers.

After the FFS, participants may decide to formalize their operations by establishing a farmer seed enterprise. It could be set up as a cooperative in which the members jointly decide on a production plan and share responsibility for harvest, storage, transport, and sales. The establishment of farmer seed enterprises is not included in this FFS curriculum, but can be a follow-up activity.

This FFS does not aim to compete with established commercial markets. It may, for example, choose to sell seed of local leafy vegetables but not compete in the market for international vegetables such as tomatoes or carrots; or it may market seed for open-pollinating varieties of maize, leaving hybrid maize seed to large-scale formal sector producers.

## Questions for discussion in a preparatory community meeting

Season	Well in advance of the growing season
Objective	Interested community members discuss options for developing a seed production and marketing FFS
Timeframe	3 hours for discussion
Materials needed	Flipcharts and markers

### Note

The selection of crops and varieties, or local food plants, that may qualify for seed production by the members of the FFS will be elaborated later.

The facilitator is encouraged to ask:

- Which crops dominate the local seed market?
- What is the quality of the seed for those crops?
- Do local markets offer seed produced by local farmers? For which crops and varieties?
- What are the shortcomings of local seed markets?
- What shortcomings can farmer seed production and marketing resolve?
- What personal motives do farmers have to engage in farmer seed production and marketing?
- Do farmers share the same motives?
- Where can differences be seen?



## 2.4. Gender and youth in seed production and marketing

### The impact of gender relations

Gender – that is, the economic, social, and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being a woman or a man, rather than the biological differences between them – pervades all our thoughts and acts. It changes according to culture, class, time, and place. Gender relations – relations of power between women and men – are revealed in ideas and behavior, differences in roles, division of labor, access to and control over resources, and different

expectations, abilities, desires, and aspirations being ascribed to women and men.

Women and men must have equal opportunities in the FFS on farmer seed production and marketing. There needs to be both gender equality and equity. Gender equality refers to changing norms, values, attitudes and perceptions to attain equal status between men and women, while respecting biological differences between

men and women. Gender equity refers to fairness in women’s and men’s roles and positions, particularly in access to socio-economic resources. Discrimination results from inequitable access to socio-economic resources due to being a man or a woman.

Chapter 8.6 of the Field Guide for Farmer Field Schools on Nutrition describes exercises that can make participants in the seed production and marketing FFS aware of gender relations in their community and their wider society and culture, and what can be done to overcome inequality and inequity. This includes sharing personal experiences of being a man or a woman, identifying stereotypes in men’s and women’s roles, and analyzing the division of labor and issues of access to and control over socio-economic means, such as money and land. It concludes with an activity to strengthen the position of women.

**Note for the facilitator**

Carefully monitor gender relations in the group, and discuss their impact on activities and the need to empower women to participate. The earlier this is done, the more effect it may have on improving the quality of the work.

To promote women’s role, potential women participants can be invited to a separate group discussion:

- Ask them to list their expectations from participating in the FFS: what do they expect to learn? Which seeds would they like to produce and sell in the market?
- Ask the group for the necessary conditions for them to benefit from participation.
- Ask the group on which issues they think that male participants may have other expectations and wishes.

- Discuss with the group how different expectations and wishes may be reconciled.
- Ask the group who would be suited to play a leading role in the FFS (both the production and marketing activities), and which role they might play.

**The position of youth**

Other causes of inequality include age, marital status and income. In particular, young people are often disadvantaged. They have less access to money, often do not own land or other capital items, and are not involved in many decision-making processes.

The definition of ‘youth’ differs between countries and cultures. In Europe, a person is considered an adult from the age of 18. Many African cultures regard people up to the age of 35 as youth, unless they are married.

On the other hand, youths may have better education than the older generation in their community, and more familiarity with technology, enabling them to engage with others outside their community. Youth in rural communities may have experience of having migrated to urban areas for work, or be in contact with others who have done so. They may have more interest in creating a living beyond farming. These qualities might be beneficial for a seed production and marketing group to exploit. For example, youth may have the capacity to be involved in marketing and sales, and may be aware of new trends in food preferences in urban areas that open opportunities to create markets for seed of novel crops and varieties and connect them with markets for new food items.

In exploring what their role could be, youth should be involved in developing the FFS from day one, rather than offered a defined role at the end of the preparatory process. They may even be stimulated to take the lead in certain

activities. Potential youth participants should be invited for a discussion:

- Ask them to list their expectations from participating in the FFS: what do they expect to learn? Which seeds would they like to produce and sell in the market? Which other roles do they see for themselves to play?
- Ask the group for the necessary conditions for them to participate: how do socio-economic conditions limit or determine their options? What needs to be done for them to contribute to the FFS and the production and marketing of

seed? Which are their strong points in comparison to the older generation?

- Ask the group on which issues they think older participants may have other expectations and wishes.
- Discuss with the group how different expectations and wishes may be reconciled.
- Ask the participants in the group who would be suited to play a leading role in the FFS and the production and marketing activities, and which role they might play.

**Note for the facilitator**

Carefully explore options to engage young people in the community, actively engaging them from the start of the development process and respecting their interests and capacities. This could improve the chance of the FFS succeeding. The facilitator should use the same exercise as on gender relations, and should also note that youth and gender interplay: young women are often more disadvantaged than young men, though they might also offer capacities that can benefit the group, such as developing new dishes and food items.





### 3. DIAGNOSIS AND PLANNING

The aim of this chapter is to lay the foundations for the FFS on seed production and marketing. It consists of three sessions: 1) a seed market diagnosis; 2) visioning, objective setting and planning; and 3) establishment of a marketing committee.

It is important to take stock of the results of any earlier FFS in the community on PPB and/or nutrition. Those results may point to lack of sufficient seed supplies for particular crops and varieties, whether staple crops or

local food plants. An FFS on PPB may have selected, improved and/or evaluated crops and varieties for which sales of seed have potential. Results of an FFS on nutrition and local food plants may show which food plants can contribute to improved nutrition in the community and its neighboring areas. The diagnostic phase of this FFS serves to analyze strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for seed production and marketing of specific crops and varieties.

**Note for the facilitator**

Remind the group about the objectives of the SD=HS program and this component of it, as outlined in the introduction. Highlight that commitment, hard work and honesty are key for success when producing for markets. Participants will need to understand and reflect on the difference between subsistence and commercial farming.

#### 3.1. Diagnosing potential seed requirements and market opportunities

In the diagnostic stage, the FFS needs to: i) acquire an appreciation of the current status of seed production in the community; ii) define common goals; iii) make an initial crop selection; and iv) develop a common action plan to drive the subsequent FFS sessions. During these diagnostic sessions agreements

must be made on what the FFS will cover and when meetings will be held.

Season	Pre-sowing
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Objectives	1) Set a collective baseline for the FFS; 2) Develop group ownership; 3) Initial crop selection; and 4) Agree on an action plan.
Timeframe	3 hours for each of two sessions
Materials needed	Flipcharts and markers

- What are the major bottlenecks for seed production for such crops and varieties?
- Is farmer seed production for such crops and varieties realistic? Which conditions need to be fulfilled?
- Why would farmers buy the seed of local seed producers?
- Which seed law regulations apply?
- Can the group forming the FFS on farmer seed production and marketing meet the seed law requirements?

### Understanding local seed needs

he first of these two sessions will evaluate for which crops and varieties seed is currently offered in local seed markets, and to what extent this fulfils the needs of farmers in the community. The facilitator may first create a list with all crops grown in the community, with the help of the FFS participants – if preferred, subdivided into staple crops and crops and plants grown in home gardens.

The following questions may be asked:

- For which staple crops is sufficient, affordable and good-quality seed available in a timely way to local farmers?
- For which (traditional and new) staple crops is good-quality seed in sufficient quantities lacking?
- Where do farmers obtain seed and what are the positive and negative aspects of each source?
- Is there a need to compete with available seed sources? For what reason: price, quality, variety?
- Can the members of an FFS group fill such a gap by developing good-quality seed of preferred crops and varieties?

### Initial crop selection

In this session the facilitator supports the group to make an initial selection of prospective commercial seed crops. It is important to refer to the results of any earlier timeline analyses in the FFS on PPB and/or nutrition, and review the results of the diversity wheel exercises, which provide information on the popularity of individual crops and varieties in the community. Much of the analysis mentioned here may have already been done in these previous FFS.

#### Note for the facilitator

Guide the group on their initial crop selection by using the crop identification tool in the Toolkit. The outcome of this exercise determines the crops for which market research will be carried out, as outlined in Chapter 4.2. The final decision should be made after market research. Steps for the initial identification of crops are provided in the [Toolkit](#).

## 3.2. Visioning: looking ahead

In the second session, participants discuss their aspirations as prospective seed producers. What is their vision for farmers' seed production and marketing, based on the needs assessment described above?

- Which farmers in the community should the initiative serve?
- How many neighboring communities should the initiative also try to reach?

- What volumes of each crop or variety could be produced and successfully marketed given the demand among farmers in the area?
- What is the specific role of women, men, and youth in the FFS? What value do they add to the FFS as a whole?
- What is a realistic estimate of additional income for the farmer seed producer?
- What efforts and investments does the farmer seed producer need to make, either as an individual or as a contributor to group efforts and investments?
- How will members of the FFS collaborate? Do they wish to produce and market the

seed on an individual basis or as a community or FFS group?

- What will make participation in farmer seed production and marketing special

**Note for the facilitator**

The visioning processes can be guided in several ways. Participants may prefer to express their vision by jointly drawing on paper, writing down a vision statement, or imagining they are giving a presentation in five years' time describing why their seed production activities have been successful.

and attractive?

### 3.3. Action plan for seed production and marketing

In the same session the FFS group needs to start developing an action plan that deals with:

- Agreement on crops and varieties to be produced, including
- Targeted seed volumes
- Participating farmer producers
- Sources of seed for the farmer producers
- Agreement on the marketing outlets for seed produced
- Local markets?
- Neighbouring district markets?
- Other channels?
- Agreement on group organization
- Internal organization
- Formal registration
- Decision-making

- Connection with other bodies (e.g. local authorities, existing seed sellers, community seed banks)
- Collaboration with existing entities
- Seed companies, public breeding institutions, or farmers in the community as seed providers
- Seed companies or seed traders as marketing channels
- Obtaining approval by seed marketing authorities (where necessary)

The plan needs to document conclusions on these issues but can be short. The next session will also contribute to the plan, and it can be revisited once the FFS has invested in a more thorough analysis of seed marketing opportunities (see Chapter 5).

### 3.4. Revisiting group structures: committees on seed production and marketing

Season	Pre-sowing
Objectives	FFS participants agree in groups on how to organize the

	work on seed production and marketing and on specific roles for members
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Timeframe	1 hour for discussion in producer groups or between individual farmer producers; 1 hour for presentation of group and/or individual plans
Materials needed	Flipcharts and markers

In this session the facilitator guides the group to discuss how they wish to organize their seed production activities: as a single group, in multiple sub-groups, as individuals, or a mixture of these. Consider both the size of the sub-groups and the specialized roles and responsibilities needed in the group as a whole (see Box 1 below). The questions below may guide the discussion:

- Who wishes to act individually and who wishes to join a group?
- Which groups will be formed? What will be the group sizes?
- What capacities does the FFS need as a whole?
- What should be the contributions of individual FFS members?
- How can persons be identified and selected for specific roles (e.g. in marketing or connecting with the authorities to fulfil legal requirements)?
- How should members with specific roles relate and report to the FFS group as a whole?

The facilitator may guide the discussion based on the number of crops and varieties the FFS can simultaneously produce and market, taking into account:

- How many producer sub-groups could the FFS be divided into?

- Which crops and varieties will be selected for seed production and marketing?

Participants may decide to collaborate in the FFS on an individual basis or jointly:

- Some participants may want to be responsible for their own seed production and marketing, but establish sub-groups to exchange experiences and learn from each other;
- Some participants may decide to join forces and form a sub-group to produce and market seed together, potentially dividing roles so some produce and some market.

An initial discussion on crop and variety choice should take place in the sub-groups, after which the plenary reconvenes to discuss their plans. In the first year, it might be best for each sub-group to focus on a single crop and variety. Small group sizes may be preferable, allowing the FFS to produce different crops and varieties – though different sub-groups may choose the same variety if they wish. Women-only groups may be possible. The choices made will be preliminary and should be validated through market research.

The FFS plenary should discuss whether it wishes to establish a marketing committee from its own members. If so, each sub-group may wish to be represented. Such a committee should have clear selection criteria for member inclusion and agreed responsibilities.

The FFS group can finalize its action plan based on the outcomes of these discussions, writing down all major agreements made. This completes the diagnostic stage.

**Box 1. The organization of the FFS and capacities needed among its members**

Individual members of an FFS on seed production and marketing may act as ‘vanguards’ (forerunners) or ‘connoisseurs’ (experts). Building on the action plan, which details the crops and varieties for which seed will be produced, by whom and in what volumes:

- (1) The FFS plenary may decide to establish a marketing committee. Members will explore how the seed produced can best be marketed, in terms of locations, times, packages, and prices. They may identify institutional buyers (e.g. government agencies or relief organizations) and negotiate bulk prices. They may propose how to brand and promote locally produced seed. Not all FFS members will possess marketing skills, but the FFS should have some members who do.
- (2) Other members may help individual farmer seed producers to plan and realize their production, reaching the necessary quality standards.
- (3) Some members may have the knowledge to sort out permission from local authorities to sell seeds, and – where needed – engage with the seed certification agency to agree on procedures and requirements and organize field visits during the growing season.



## 4. ANALYSIS OF THE SEED MARKET AND CROP SELECTION

This chapter supports the FFS group to assess which crops and varieties have market potential, and the extent to which seed production and marketing can improve participants' livelihoods, individually or as a

group. It guides participants on how to undertake market research into which seeds to produce commercially and obtain a clear sense of all key actors involved in seed markets.

### 4.1. Understanding the seed value chain

Objectives	(1) Identify and map key stakeholders and (2) identify and analyze opportunities and bottlenecks for seed production and marketing
Timeframe	2 to 4 hours
Materials needed	Flipcharts and markers
Tools	Value chain analysis (Tool #6 in Toolkit)

This session introduces farmers to the concept of the seed value chain. The objective is that participants appreciate the different actors involved in producing good quality seeds commercially for local markets. The session must highlight the interlinkages between key actors, and why it is important to establish partnerships with some of them. Farmers will develop a value chain map for use in later sessions.

The facilitator may initiate discussions by providing an example of a value chain, prepared beforehand. Once all participants understand what the term means, they can undertake the exercises to think through the seed value chain of a crop variety of their choice, drawing a map to represent it. This is followed by an analysis of the value chain, which will help the group identify bottlenecks and opportunities as they gain an understanding of the market dynamics of their crop of choice.

#### **Exercise**

##### ***Preparation for the facilitator***

*A seed value chain includes management of plant genetic resources and development of well-adapted and nutritious crop varieties; production and multiplication of high quality basic and foundation seed; distribution, marketing, and the adoption of seed by farmers.*

*Seed value chains differ between seed systems and crops, as do operators, service providers, and institutions in the enabling environment. Different*

actors will be involved in open-pollinated or hybrid seed value chains, which also differ according to the potential commercial value in seed production.

Successful farmer seed marketing may depend on proper linkages to value chain actors, for example to ensure certification if necessary, or for assistance with marketing. The FFS group should strive to develop partnerships with actors in their communities who are willing to support them to expand their business over time.

The facilitator may wish to gain a better appreciation of seed value chains through this [Technical Note on Seed Value Chain Analysis](#) and the specific materials included in the Toolkit.

Participants are organized into groups of 4-6. Each group selects a crop and variety they are familiar with to develop the value chain map showing the actors and their relationships. Discussions may be guided by the following questions:

- Who will buy the seed produced?
- Where, to whom and by whom can the seed be marketed?

- Where in the production and marketing chain may value addition take place and what is needed?
- Which service and input providers need to be involved or available for the seed production and marketing chain to work?
- What are the constraints farmers might

**Note for the facilitator**

Pay close attention to the process of developing the value chain map and analyzing it, as this provides a solid foundation for the subsequent FFS sessions. Where necessary it can be carried into a second session. In plenary discussions, pay particular attention to the flow of input services as access to good quality foundation seed is often a bottleneck for smallholder farmers. Consider also how to find out about end-users' preferences and suggest ways to respond to them. Where applicable, refine the action plan developed in 3.3 to reflect the group's analysis. To support this process, see

- experience when marketing their seed?
- Which seed regulations support or hinder commercial production and marketing of the selected crop?

## 4.2. Market research

Objectives	Understand 1) what market research is and why it is important, and 2) how to plan and conduct market research
Timeframe	Three sessions, 2 to 3.5 hours each
Materials needed	Flipcharts and markers

**Note**

The three market research sessions culminate in a simple, easily understandable report to plenary. The facilitator may support the team with a more comprehensive report on opportunities and major risks.

The FFS group will need to conduct market research to make informed decisions about which seed crop to produce commercially. This involves: (1) gathering information about the varieties and grades of seeds they plan to

produce for the market, and those produced by competitors including other farmers in their community; (2) collecting information about the farmers who may buy their seed, to understand their preferences; and (3) understanding the marketplace where they intend to sell their seeds.

### First session: what is market research?

In the first session, participants discuss 1) why market research is important and 2) how it can best be undertaken. The session addresses for which crops market research is needed, and how to plan and conduct the research and analyze collected information: the participants decide who will be involved, and how the activities are organized.

The facilitator starts the plenary by asking what participants understand by market research and which activities it includes. Their responses are noted on a flipchart. The facilitator should demystify the concept of 'research', so participants recognize they have already undertaken research as part of their farming practices, if even unconsciously.

At the end of this session participants can draw conclusions by brainstorming on these questions:

- What types of market research do the FFS members know?
- What types of market research can the FFS undertake itself?
- When can market research be done?
- What is needed to conduct market research?

The facilitator notes responses on a flipchart, then summarizes and clarifies questions as necessary. If no marketing committee has been formed, the FFS plenary needs to discuss who wishes to participate in the market research and, later, marketing the seed.

### Second session: planning market research

Having established what market research is, the group can discuss when and how to perform their own market research and what information they will need to collect. In the second part of the session, selected members (the marketing committee, if formed) will apply what they have learned by conducting a market survey.

#### Note

The next session addresses planning market research, and the third involves a visit to the market.

#### Why is market research important?

- Determine the feasibility of marketing seed of a selected crop and variety.
- Understand what value their product can bring to the market.
- Identify ways to promote their product.
- Identify and communicate the unique qualities of their product in comparison with the products of others.
- Develop a competitive strategy.

Market research can answer the following questions:

- For which crops and varieties do farmers want seed?
- What amount of seed are individual farmers likely to buy?
- What price are farmers willing to pay for seed?
- From where and whom would farmers prefer to buy seed?
- Which other customers besides farmers may be interested in buying seed?
- How much seed can a business (FFS

#### Planning market research.

The session starts with the FFS plenary discussing the main methods available to undertake market research: informal in-person surveys and observation. The facilitator explains that these can gather information on: 1) which seeds and services customers are interested in; 2) customer behavior; and 3) price and quality aspects. The group may then be split into sub-groups that will perform each method of market



research. Informal in-person interviews involve approaching sellers and buyers in the market to obtain strategic information. Research by observation involves visits to markets and shops at different times of the year to see who sells seed, what kind of seed is being sold, the quality of the seed, when people buy seed, and what kinds of questions they ask seed sellers.

The sub-groups discuss in detail how to carry out these activities, regardless of who will later do it:

- From whom to get information: farmers, farmers' associations and organizations, people who sell seed (traders, shopkeepers, input supply shops), farmers who buy seeds, schools that have a farm, and development organizations such as NGOs and projects.
- Interviewing techniques: the need to explain the purpose of the interview and how the information will be used; not talking for too long.
- Sampling: explain what sampling is, and the importance of talking with different types of people. Make sure to select traders who sell seeds, as opposed to those selling grain for food.
- Developing questions: participants are asked to develop questions for different categories of seed users and use a role play to practice good interviewing techniques (see Annex 3).
- Proper recording of the information gathered: discuss and agree on procedures for recording and compiling market information; also discuss options for illiterate participants.
- Selecting crops and markets and composing sub-groups: as a last step, confirm which crop(s) will be the focus of the market visit based on the initial crop selection (3.1.1), which market(s) will be

visited, and which FFS members will participate.

On how many people to interview, the following numbers may be a useful guide:

- Farmer buyers: 20 per village. Select households that belong to different wealth groups (e.g. five rich, eight of average wealth and seven poor);
- Seed sellers: 5-8;
- Seed producers: depends on how many exist in the community;
- Schools: 3-5;
- Development organizations: depends on how many exist.

Different types of information can be collected from each source, using methods outlined in Table 1. Ensure that the information collected is properly recorded, for use in Topic 4.3. This can be done using the tools in Annex 4, which help organize information on demand for seed, seed prices, varietal characteristics of importance to farmers and traders, and demand for seed of different varieties.

The following questions may be discussed in sub-groups as part of the preparations for the market visit:

- What do we need to know about the product and how it is marketed? What do we know already? What information do we need to check?
- How many people should we interview? What types of people – traders, managers, transporters, processors?
- Should we also interview consumers? Why?
- What is the best way to approach people we want to interview? Should we take notes during the interview, or immediately afterwards?

- What sorts of information may be sensitive or difficult to get hold of? Can we find out this information from any other sources?
- Some questions may be sensitive, and interviewees may be reluctant to answer or may give inaccurate responses. Start an interview with non-sensitive questions, then move on to the more difficult questions, e.g. asking about prices towards the end of the interview.
- Be sure that the person you are interviewing has time (if not, arrange to come back at a better time). Do not take more than 15–20 minutes with each person.
- Stop asking questions when the person is dealing with customers.
- Always thank the person you have interviewed for their time at the end of the interview.
- Adapt the interview guide or questionnaire as necessary. The survey team can ask all questions for each product, or only the most important questions.

Once all sub-groups have made a plan for market research, they should reconvene in plenary to discuss.

**Table 2: Market research information**

Whom to talk to	Types of information to collect	Method
Farmers, farmer groups	Seed demand Varietal preferences Varieties being grown Interest in new varieties Issues of concern regarding seed quality Price willing to pay	Informal interviews
Seed sellers (traders, shopkeepers, input suppliers)	Price of seed sold Varieties sold Class of seed sold Quantities of seed Profit markup Problems selling seed Price willing to pay Interest in placing bulk orders Location	Informal interviews and observations
Other seed producers (your competition)	Crops Varieties and type of seed produced Price of seed Quantities produced Cost of production Profit markup Where seed is sold Problems selling seed	Informal interviews and observations
Schools, NGOs, projects	Interest in buying seed Price willing to pay Varietal preferences	Informal interviews

	Interest in placing bulk orders	
Extension agents, researchers	Seed laws and policies	Informal interviews

Note: Appointments should be made where possible with people who will be interviewed. It is important that different kinds of seed actors are interviewed (farmers, input suppliers, NGOs, seed producers, extension agents, researchers, etc., as identified in the value chain mapping process earlier). Sufficient time should be allocated to prepare accordingly.

**Note for the facilitator**

Successful engagement with value chain actors at the market research stage and beyond requires good communication skills. Consequently it will be important to develop good communication skills of the group. This should be done as part of preparing the market visit.

**Third session: visiting the market and analyzing the results**

Objective	1) Gather information about seed supply and demand in the local seed markets and 2) compile and analyze the outcomes to inform crop selection
Timeframe	One full day, visiting market in the morning and analyzing information in the afternoon (or the next day)
Materials needed	Survey questionnaire, large sheets of paper, colored marker pens, notepads, pens or pencils, transport to and from market, refreshments
Tools	Market research tools (see #7 in the Toolkit)

The market visit involves some FFS members interviewing selected persons, and making notes of the responses, while others make observations as detailed above. The market visit will normally take a full morning, depending on marketing opening times. The facilitator should be present to answer questions.

This market visit should be immediately followed by a meeting – the same afternoon, or the next day – to present and analyze the information gathered, and use the conclusions to plan seed production. The findings should be presented in plenary. The following approach is suggested, working in small groups:

1. Assemble the team(s) that conducted the market visit, and ask each interviewer and observer to report their information. Write the results on large sheets of paper as tables or diagrams.
2. Ask the interviewers and observers to present their findings:
  - What did you learn?
  - What did you find most interesting or surprising?
  - What was most uncomfortable or difficult?
  - How should what you learned impact the plans for seed production and marketing?
3. Discuss the findings and analyze their implications for the seed production and marketing plans.
4. Decide who will present the information to the plenary. It may be best to divide the

- task among several members of the survey team.
5. Invite the team members to present their findings to the plenary.
  6. Facilitate a discussion of the findings to interpret them and explore their implications for seed production and marketing plans.

**Note for the facilitator**

Where insufficient information is collected in the first visit, it may be necessary to have more than one visit to the market. In addition, more than one visit further empowers the group. In the first visit the facilitator leads the process. In the subsequent visits the farmers lead the process fully. In the final visit the facilitator may choose not to participate in the visit. In a third visit the farmers independently plan and make arrangements for the visit and report back to plenary additional information obtained. A maximum of three market visits may be organized were necessary. The market visits should be cost-shared where possible.

### 4.3. Understanding the costs and benefits of seed production and marketing

Objectives	Gain a basic understanding of the costs and benefits of producing and marketing seed
Timeframe	One session
Materials needed	Flipcharts, markers and calculators
Tools	Profitability analysis (See #8 in the Toolkit)

**Note for the facilitator**

Profitability analysis, combined with the market research from previous sessions, will help the farmers to determine which crop to work with. Where a marketing committee has been established, its members should be taken through the profitability analysis using the tools and exercises #8 in the Toolkit.

In this session the participants should develop an appreciation of the costs involved in producing good quality seed and the factors that affect their profits. The facilitator encourages sharing of knowledge on:

- Fixed costs;
- Variable costs;
- Selling price;
- Annual income from seed sales;
- Profit (gross margin).

If necessary, the facilitator corrects explanations provided and highlights common errors regarding:

**1. Distinguishing between business and personal costs:** Farmers may fail to distinguish business costs from personal

costs, such as the cost of running their homes. The time investment of farmer producers may be regarded as a business cost, in particular if they have an alternative way of earning money. Ask participants examples of various costs they incur and ask them to decide whether these costs are business or personal costs.

**2. Source of money to start a business:** Startup costs must be met from personal savings, money from relatives or friends, or borrowing. They should be regarded as fixed costs.

**3. Time lag before making a profit:** There will be no money from their activities until a crop has been harvested successfully and sold.

The facilitator should ensure that participants have a good sense of their estimated seed production incomes and expenditure for one year. Finally, discuss whether participants

feel they have enough money to start seed production for the market and what they think the likelihood of success is.

#### 4.4. Revisiting initial selection of crops and varieties for market production

Objective	Verify if the initial selection of crops and varieties qualifying for commercial seed production meets the conclusions from the market survey
Timeframe	3 hours
Materials needed	Flipchart paper, marker pens Information gathered during the market survey
Tools	Crop selection tools (See #9 in the toolkit)

In this session, the FFS group returns to the question of which crops and varieties to produce commercially, using the information collected during the market research. Farmers already discussed this question in the diagnostic phase (see Chapter 3.1). It is now possible to make a decision based on potential profitability – though some minor crops and varieties with low potential profit margins may also be included if they are important for food and nutrition security, perhaps because they are better able to cope with changing climate conditions or have high iron content or vitamin levels. Such crops are more likely to be successfully produced if the community has already been exposed to issues of climate change adaptation and dietary diversity through FFS on PPB or nutrition.

The FFS group may also reflect on the results of the diversity wheel exercise from Chapter 3.1, identifying crops and varieties the community showed interest in and for which

there was insufficient seed. The group may consult local community seed banks, if they exist, to explore if sufficient seed of such crops and varieties might be available to allow commercial seed production.

The group should also discuss again the pros and cons of producing seed of more than one crop. As discussed in the diagnostic phase (Chapter 3.1), advantages of producing more than one crop include:

- less risk stemming from seasonal weather problems;
- less risk if demand for a selected crop or variety diminishes;
- different crops can be grown in rotation in subsequent seasons.

Disadvantages of producing more than one crop include:

- higher labor requirement;
- more equipment and expertise.

In the first season(s) it is best to limit the number of crops to one or two per producer sub-group, choosing varieties that will sell easily.

##### **Note for the facilitator**

The crop selection form provides a convenient and systematic way to analyze the information collected through market research and the potential profitability of crops in question. The group may again need to revisit their action plan. Guide participants on the final selection of crops through the tools and exercises #9 in the Toolkit.

### Exercise

To facilitate the discussions on the final selection of crops and varieties, the group should split into sub-groups that revisit the initial selection from Chapter 3.1.1. All sub-groups should then present their results in plenary, indicating whether the selected crops and varieties:

- have a sufficiently high market demand (estimated on information from the market study);
- are likely to provide a profit (refer to the cost-benefit analysis carried out in Chapter 4.3); and
- can be grown by all or some of the farmers in the FFS group.

### Seed classes

Depending on the crop of choice and national regulations, FFS groups might produce certified seed, quality declared seed, or regular farmers' seed. They should take into account if seed inspection or certification will be needed or desirable, and whether the requirements and costs can be met (see Chapter 6).





## 5. INTRODUCING SEED BUSINESS CONCEPTS AND POLICY ISSUES

In the previous chapter the FFS group selected which seed crop(s) they will produce and market. This chapter takes the group through business principles they will need to professionally manage their seed production and marketing activities individually or as a group. The four topics in this chapter aim to help groups gain the basic skills to optimize their limited resources to get their seed to the market.

Implementing this chapter requires time, commitment, and sufficient interest and capacities among the participants. Not all participants need to engage in book-keeping and marketing activities, depending on agreed task division in the FFS, but all should be able to analyze if the income they derive from their seed production exceeds their investments in time and money.

### 5.1. Business planning and record keeping

Objectives	(1) Help farmer groups understand why they should develop a business plan, write a basic business plan, and (2) plan activities for the production cycle
Timeframe	Two sessions, though it depends on the detail and complexity of the business plan
Materials needed	Flipchart paper and marker pens (different colors), sample business plan template, record-keeping templates, cost benefit analysis, different colored paper
Tool	Business model canvas (See #10 in the Toolkit)

Experience shows that the failure of various farmer-led seed multiplication undertakings can in part be attributed to failing to articulate a clear vision in a business plan. Based on Chapters 3, 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3, FFS groups will already have gathered much of the information that needs to go into a business plan.

**Key message:** Only produce what you can sell!

## **Business planning**

### **What is a business plan?**

In this first session, the group discusses what a business plan is and why it is important. The facilitator may provide a copy of a sample business plan, and kick-start discussions by asking participants what they understand a business plan to be about and what it should contain. Explain that a business plan describes the commercial objectives of an FFS seed producer and marketing group, including:

What resources (human, financial, etc.) are required to achieve the seed producers' commercial goals (either as an organized group or as individuals);

- Where these resources will come from;
- How these resources will be utilized; and
- What risks may be faced, and what approaches can be used to mitigate those risks.

### **What should a business plan contain?**

Business plans often follow a standard format, and the process of developing a plan should be kept simple. Focus on detailing the resources that farmer groups will use, where these resources will come from, how they will operate to bring their seeds to the market, and – in general – how to manage their endeavors in a professional manner. Make sure

individual farmers understand the need to distinguish between their personal finances and the operation of their family farm for commercial seed production.

### **Exercise 1**

The business canvas exercise is a helpful way to deal with the challenges in developing a business plan by visualizing and ordering information. The facilitator should introduce the exercise, then participants should form sub-groups. Alternatively, this exercise may be performed with the marketing committee.

**Note**  
All the information gathered so far – market research, profitability analysis, selected crops and varieties, action plans – are inputs for the business plan. Make a simple sample business plan available to the group. Prepare a blank template in advance to facilitate Exercise 2 below

### **Exercise 2**

Ask each participant to prepare their own personal business plan as homework, bringing together the content from earlier processes. Highlight that the plans should be simple and in an agreed format. Have 3-4 participants present their plans and discuss these examples in plenary. Remind the farmers that they can use their personal business plans to plan both individual production and small group production.

### **Record keeping**

Objective	Enable farmers to understand the meaning, importance and types of basic records of expenditures and revenues
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Timeframe	1 hour
Materials needed	Flipcharts and markers
Tools	Record-keeping tools (See #11 in the Toolkit)

- Why is record keeping important?
- What kinds of records should be kept?
- Who is responsible for record keeping?

Note for the facilitator

Guide discussions such that key financial and operational records are addressed during the session. Draw on Chapter 4.3 to move the group towards identifying the minimum basic records they need to keep at an individual or group level to support their operations. Use the tools #11 in the Toolkit to facilitate this session.

### What is record-keeping?

The facilitator initiates this second session by asking participants what records they keep. The facilitator should have examples of various types of records to share with participants as necessary. Discussions should address:

## 5.2. Promoting and marketing your seeds

Objectives	Introduce (1) the concept of marketing and its importance and (2) marketing strategies
Timeframe	2 to 3 hours for each of two sessions
Materials needed	Flipcharts, markers, pens, seed samples in plastic bags and cups, writing cards, and illustration charts

Carefully analyzing market opportunities is important to foresee potential complications and devise a strategy to address them. Where a marketing committee is in place, they can be the main participants in these sessions.

### What is marketing and why is it important?

In this session, participants are asked to share their knowledge and experience on the questions below. Hand out cards and ask participants to fill in their answers. Collect the answers and display them by question on a big sheet of paper.

- What is marketing?
- Why is marketing important?

- What is collective marketing and why is it important?
- Who produces the products?
- To whom do you sell your products?
- What is your relationship with your buyers?

## Exercise 1

Role play or case studies may be used to show bad customer care and emphasize the importance of good customer relations and treating customers well. These exercises should be based on participants' experiences:

- Ask four members to volunteer.
- Have two seed samples each in a cup – one at a higher price and the other at a lower price.
- Have two seed samples in plastic bags – one at a higher price and the other at a lower price.
- Ask the four volunteers to sell their seed to other members, explaining to customers about their product, price and packaging.
- Ask the members what they notice during the sales.
- Allow for questions, feedback and clarification.

**Marketing strategies** In this second session, participants develop a marketing strategy based on the market research undertaken in Chapter 4.2. The strategy should address the four Ps – product, place, promotion, and price – also referred to as the marketing mix (see Figure 1 below). The marketing strategy:

- Describes your products and services;
- Explains the position and role of your products and services in the market;
- Profiles your customers and your competitors;
- Identifies the marketing tactics you will use;
- Allows you to build a marketing plan and measure its effectiveness; and
- Allows the FFS group to assess the risks involved and how these can be mitigated.



Figure 1: The Marketing Mix

## Exercise 2

Participants are divided into four groups. Each group is given cards for one of the Ps and asked to answer the questions below.

Product:

- What quality is for sale, from you and from competitors?
- What quantities does the market require?
- What will make your product unique?

Place:

- Where are you going to sell your seed? At the farm gate? At the market? Why?
- How will your products reach the market?

Price:

- What price do you expect to obtain?
- How are you going to ensure that the quality of your produce is worth the price requested?
- How will the customers pay for the seed (terms of payment)?

Promotion:

- How are you going to promote the seed?
- How are you going to convince traders to buy from you?

### Note

The four groups' discussions should be presented in plenary and feed into the development of the FFS group's marketing strategy, which will be a component of their business plan.

### 5.3. Seed legislation

Farmers should discuss the consequences of the national seed law, and options to produce quality declared seed. Address the following questions in plenary:

- What legislation affects the right to market seed and sets conditions on the seed marketed?
- Why have these laws been established?
- What opportunities do they offer?
- Is your selection of crops and varieties in line with these opportunities?
- What legal limitations are there on farmers producing and marketing their seed?
- Can and should farmers be registered as seed producers?
- Can farmers' varieties be registered?
- Can the farmer group work within those limitations?
- What requirements must be met by seed producers?
- Is seed certification obligatory? For all crops?
- Are different certification schemes possible?
- If needed, can certification be organized and is it affordable?
- Can the group meet these requirements?

#### Note for the facilitator

Almost all countries have adopted seed laws, because buyers cannot reliably assess the quality and variety of seed at the time of purchase. Seed laws are meant to protect the buyer by obliging the seller to guarantee the quality and identity of seed by means of standardized inspection and testing procedures. Seed laws should also protect the seed developer and producer from unfair competition.

Seed laws commonly provide the procedures and standards for:

- variety release systems, in which varieties of proven value are registered and made available through the formal seed system by registered seed producers;
- seed certification, which aims to monitor and guarantee varietal identity and purity throughout the seed chain;
- seed quality control, which checks on characteristics such as viability and health.

#### Preparations by the facilitator

The facilitator should check the applicable laws and be able to explain options and requirements, in particular in relation to the crops and varieties selected. Laws are publicly available, and the facilitator might take a copy to this session. Some countries allow the production and marketing of 'quality declared seed' for certain crops. This system is less rigorous than regular seed certification, involving fewer field inspections. It gives subsistence farmers the option of buying seed that is cheaper because the producers have not had to incur high costs of elaborate certification procedures.

Legislation may impact in various ways on farmers' seed production. Laws on plant breeders' rights may prevent the sale of seeds of protected varieties. National seed laws may require all seed sellers to be registered, which means the FFS group would need to register or associate with another entity that is already registered (another farmers' group, for example, or a seed company). Seed laws may allow the sale of only certified seeds of registered varieties, for all crops or specified crops.

In general, the options for small-scale farmers to sell seeds of their own produce vary widely from country to country and from crop to crop. Requirements for registration

and certification of seed lots might be more or less demanding. It is important for the FFS groups to discuss and verify if they are able to work within the legislation, and it is advisable

to bring in expert advice for this session – for instance, from a staff member of the seed certification agency or a regional seed center.

## 5.4. Negotiation and contracting

Objectives	Develop negotiation skills and an understanding of various forms of contracts between buyer and seller
Timeframe	3.5 hours
Materials needed	Flipchart paper, markers, sample contract

Farmers producing seed for commercial sale will need to understand the basics of contract negotiation. The facilitator needs to take the group through contract farming and negotiation skills.

### Negotiation

The facilitator may start the session by asking participants what they understand by negotiation. Note the responses on flipchart paper, and explore the ideas further through a role play.

### Exercise

In the role play, a buyer is meeting potential sellers, who represent groups of farmers. One person is selected to play the buyer. The other participants are divided into three groups, and each group chooses a delegation of two to make the deal. Their aim is to get a better price and better payment terms. In the role play, the buyer sits in an office and the farmer representatives, in turn, knock on the door. All the groups observe all the role plays, but there is no discussion until all three role plays are completed.

(Note: The facilitator instructs the buyer to be willing, but slightly skeptical and not to make the final deal, but this is not known by the three groups!)

The facilitator leads the plenary discussion after the role play, asking:

- What was good in the first, the second and third scene?
- What was not good in the first, the second and the third scene?
- How did you prepare your delegation?
- Did the meeting create a closer relationship between the buyer and the seller?
- What should the first group do to make a new meeting better?
- What should the second group do to make a new meeting better?
- What should the third group do to make a new meeting better?

(Duration: 60 minutes)

### Contracting and contract farming

In the next part of the session, the facilitator introduces the topic of contracting. The facilitator may ask participants if they have ever engaged in a contract and what they understand a contract to entail. Responses should be noted on the flipchart paper. The facilitator then provides an example of a contract between a company and farmer, writing the main points on a flipchart and explaining them, while also highlighting the elements the farmers may have raised.

**Exercise**

Form three groups and give each a copy of the contract presented by the facilitator. Ask the groups to list the advantages and disadvantages of agreeing on this contract, and present their lists to the plenary. In a

plenary discussion, the farmers say whether or not they would be ready to enter into such a contract.

(Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes)



## 6. SEED PRODUCTION, PROCESSING, CERTIFICATION AND STORAGE

This chapter looks at field activities to efficiently produce high-quality seed of selected crops and varieties that fulfills marketing requirements regarding identity (is it what it says it is?), viability (high germination rate), purity (no significant contaminants), and health (no pests or diseases in the seed lots).

In earlier chapters, farmers chose the crops and varieties they would produce based on projected demand. Growing seed efficiently is important to lower production costs and maximize profit. The success of the FFS depends entirely on the quantity and quality of seed produced, so the field activities need the best possible preparation. FFS sessions during the growing season will help the group attain the goals they set. It is essential to discuss problems the group or individual members encounter, and decide in the group how they can best be resolved.

The FFS might decide to establish a production committee to oversee production activities. The members should preferably be farmers who have experience in commercial seed production.

### Note for the facilitator

Implementation of this chapter may be complemented by the use of crop-specific seed production manuals and guidelines for the crops selected by the FFS.

### 6.1. Managing risks in field operations

Objective	Identify major risks in commercial seed production and agree on coping strategies and measures
Timeframe	One session

Materials needed	Flipcharts and markers
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When planning field operations the FFS should discuss potential risks and coping strategies associated with commercial seed production:

- Risk of crop failure. Weather, ineffective crop management, insects, birds, rodents, and disease could make the yield lower or of poorer quality than anticipated. The crop may fail altogether.
- Risk of post-production failure. Lack of proper transport or packaging, or pest infestation, could cause seed loss during or after harvest.
- Risk of market failure. A glut of supply of seed of the same crop or variety could drive down prices and make it harder to find buyers.

How well those risks are managed can make or break farmers' commercial seed operations. When possible, coping strategies should include backups of seed stocks, early monitoring of pests and diseases, moderate and controlled use of pesticides, and options to provide extra water to the crop in case of temporary droughts. These issues are elaborated below.

Seed producers can try to keep their costs of production low while increasing their yields by:

- Planting high-yielding varieties;
- Planting varieties that are tolerant to the diseases and pests prevalent in the area;
- Planting good-quality seed;
- Choosing soils which are fertile or using fertilizer, compost or green manures to improve soil fertility; and
- Managing the seed fields well – planting on time, keeping the fields clear of weeds, managing diseases and pests, harvesting on time and storing the seed properly.

**Note**

Diversification is a way to manage risk: working with new crops, introducing new varieties of existing crops, or selling produce as well as seed.

## 6.2. Plot selection and management

Objective	Identify suitable plots (either a single FFS plot to be subdivided, or several plots)
Timeframe	One session, before the growing season
Materials needed	Flipcharts and markers

Discuss with the group and make sure agreements at the end of the session are clear to all.

Farmers need to select the most suitable site(s) for seed multiplication. This could be a garden offered by a member or a rented piece of land. It should be large and fertile enough to produce all the seed the group plans to market. Ideally it would be near a busy road or public place to aid visibility. If seed of different crops and/or varieties is produced, optimal division into sub-plots should be agreed. The group may decide to establish small subgroups of two to four farmers, producing either the same or different crops. Alternatively, FFS members may decide to grow the crops on part of their own lands.

Take into account:

- Previous use of the land – it should not have been used to grow the same crop(s) for at least the past two seasons.
- Topography – the slope and direction of the land should be appropriate for the selected crops and varieties, as should the soil type and depth. Preferably, an external water source should be available. Soil fertility should be checked.
- Isolation requirements – if the crop is cross-fertilizing, the seed production site should be far enough away from other land where the same crop is produced to avoid cross-fertilization. For example, maize and pearl millet should be at least 300m away from the nearest field growing the same crops, or alternatively sown around 20 days before or after the other field. For self-pollinating crops, there is no need for isolation.

- Land ownership – no disputes should exist over ownership. Where relevant, all members should sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the land owner to avoid any misunderstanding.

Suggestion. The following questions can help members to select and plan a site:

- Should the FFS site have similar agro-ecological conditions as regular farmers' fields in the community? Why?
- Should the FFS site be easily accessible or not? Why? Easily seen by non-participants or not? Why?
- How should the FFS site be divided, considering the number of sub-groups that have each been assigned their own sub-plots?
- What are the responsibilities of the sub-groups in the management of their plots, and in monitoring plant growth and health?
- What is the planting density (according to type of crops)?
- What is the size of the total site and the sub-plots within the site?
- Who shall be responsible in preparing the (sub-)plots for planting?
- Who shall sow each (sub-)plot?

It should be decided whether or not to form women-only groups. This may be particularly relevant in cases where women's crop and trait preferences clearly deviate from those of men.



### 6.3. Plot preparation and seed management

Objective	(1) Decide on plot preparation for optimal seed production and (2) ensure timely procurement of the needed volumes of foundation seed
Timeframe	One session, before the growing season
Materials needed	Flipcharts and markers

The quality of land preparation will influence the success of seed multiplication. Any errors at this point may be hard to correct, especially concerning plant density. An extension service agent or other expert should be available from this stage until sowing is finished. All participants should be involved in establishing the seed production plot to ensure that they gain hands-on skills.

Land should be prepared early. If possible, first ploughing should be done at least two months prior to sowing. Some crops require nursery establishment, especially vegetables. This should be planned for in advance.

It is very important to properly label the sub-plots in the FFS field with durable sticks and tags so the varieties sown can be easily identified. Also, make a map of the field on paper indicating where each variety is planted.

The seed must be received and prepared at least a week before sowing. It must be of high quality: if the seed is not obtained from a regular seed supplier, it is important to verify beforehand with the provider the quality of the seed, and explain the purpose for which it will be used. If possible and relevant, ask for a seed certificate stating the quality of the seed to be provided before purchase and delivery. If the seed is obtained from a public or private breeding company, the seed batch should be foundation seed.

If farmers are working under rain-fed conditions, sowing time will be determined by rainfall. The seeds must be properly stored given the possibility of delays. When delayed rainfall or other weather events might cause a failure of seed germination, withhold a sufficient amount of seed to allow for a second round of sowing.

### 6.4. Sowing conditions

Objective	Agree on proper sowing conditions
Timeframe	One session, prior to the growing season
Materials needed	Flipcharts and markers

Plant spacing differs per crop. For example:

- For maize, one seed per hill, with 0.2m between hills and 0.9m between rows, resulting in 278 plants per 50 m<sup>2</sup>.
- For sorghum, the same as for maize except two seeds per hill are planted and one seedling is removed a week after emergence of the crop.

- For pearl millet, the same as for maize and sorghum except three seeds per hill are planted and two seedlings per hill are removed a week after emergence of the crop.
- For groundnut, one seedling per hill at a distance of 0.25m between hills and 0.5m

between rows, amounting to 400 plants per 50 m<sup>2</sup>.

**Note**

Spacing and thinning are determined by fertilization type, size of seeds and size of plants.

## 6.5. Use of fertilizers and pesticides, soil management

Objective	Agree on proper plot management conditions
Timeframe	One session, prior to sowing; may be combined with the above session on sowing conditions
Materials needed	Flipcharts and markers

Fertilizer application levels should follow recommendations for the variety, or farmers' experiences. They should be determined for each plot separately in consultation with the entire FFS group. It is important to apply fertilizer (organic or inorganic) in strictly uniform quantities, as it may considerably influence the performance of the plants and the final seed production.

For pest and disease control, normal farmers' practices may be applied. Early warning and response is important given the high value of

investments relative to regular grain, legume or fruit production. Regular inspections by all FFS participants throughout the growing season are essential.

Usual weeding practices should be applied. Optimal soil tillage practices should be used.

**Note**

All these practices can be identified and agreed on with the FFS group in the pre-season discussion.

## 6.6. Growth phase

Objective	Monitor crop performance
Timeframe	A series of regular sessions, consisting of field inspections immediately followed by group discussions
Materials needed	Flipcharts and markers, notebooks for full-season documentation of plant performance
Tool	Adapted AESA form (see #12, attached to the Toolkit)

To optimize the quality of seed production, farmers should conduct regular inspections of their (sub-) plots and take away off-type, retarded or diseased plants:

- Between planting and flowering, observe the germination rate, plant vigour, leaf colour, early flowering, flower colour, and responses to pests and diseases;

- Post-flowering, during ear or pod or seed development: observe seed setting, growth habit, and responses to pests and diseases;
- Maturity period, just before harvest: observe early maturity, number of seeds per plant, number of pods, number of seeds per pod and total seed yield.

During the growth phase, the FFS group should meet regularly, preferably weekly. Each subgroup should report on their field observations from the past week in a plenary session. The entire group should visit the field to observe crop development and allow group analysis, following the AESA protocols of the FFS on PPB. While crop uniformity might be monitored, differences between individual plants or plant rows are not as relevant as they are for plant selection and breeding.

After these regular field visits, ask the farmers to discuss the following:

- Describe the general plant development for each variety. Are the different crops and varieties developing as expected? Can you observe differences between individual plants in a seed production sub-plot? How do the weather conditions influence plant development? Which fertilizer and other management practices were applied during the week? How did this affect crop development for the different varieties and sub-plots managed by the FFS (sub-groups)?
- Compare the pest and disease situation with that of the previous week. Are there more insects? Has disease pressure increased? Is it clear why? Are pest and disease levels still acceptable with a view to later seed inspection? In case of different varieties of the same crop: is the development of pests and diseases the

same on all varieties, or do some have fewer insects or less disease?

- What experiences have the different subgroups observed and reported? Did they not include any important characteristics? Why are these characteristics important to one or more of the other subgroups?

## **Field visits**

FFS field visits can be done in different ways.

**Diagonal field inspection:** the inspector (or FFS sub-group) divides the field into two, three or four equal parts depending on its size, then moves through each along imaginary horizontal and diagonal lines, allowing for a representative sample to identify of the observable features mentioned above.

**Field inspection by sampling:** certification of seed production ultimately depends on the number of impurities in a 10m<sup>2</sup> sample. Preferably with the help of a technical inspector, sampling can help the group decide if action is needed to improve eventual seed purity.

**Extension support:** If possible, arrange for extension staff to visit FFS fields and sessions regularly to monitor the quality and progress of the training. Extension staff can also serve as resource persons on group dynamics, as they will usually be well acquainted with the farmers in the community.

### **Note**

Draw up a quality control checklist for monitoring and inspection. Use a record book to document all relevant observations. Make sure tools are available for weeding, disease control or fertilizer application, as needed.

## 6.7. Harvesting and evaluation of seed production

Objective	Agree on optimal harvesting time and procedures
Timeframe	One session shortly before harvesting
Materials needed	Flipcharts and markers

This phase should be prepared before the crop reaches maturity and assessed through continuous field monitoring. The right time and practices for harvesting depend on maturity signs specific to the crop.

Each sub-plot containing a different variety should be harvested separately, and the seeds should be dried and weighed separately: when different varieties of a crop

### Note

Guide the farmers in evaluating seed quantity and quality, taking into account the potential for different preferences associated with gender.

are grown in adjacent plots, ensure that the seeds cannot be mixed.

## 6.8. Seed processing and storage

Objective	Agree on optimal seed processing and storage conditions
Timeframe	One session closely before harvesting; may be combined with the previous sessions
Materials needed	Flipcharts and markers

Processing, such as threshing, should avoid physical damage to the seed. Drying should preferably take place under controlled conditions in an indoor space. In case seed needs to be dried in the open air, avoid direct sunlight as UV irradiation may damage the seeds' DNA. Cleaning, to remove physical contaminants and broken or aberrant seed, raises the quality standard.

Storage practices should avoid contamination, pest and disease attack, and quality degeneration. All seed lots should be

carefully labelled, indicating the producer, crop and variety, weight or volume of the seed lot, and date of arrival at the storage facility. Storage should be in well-sealed rooms under dry conditions that prevent damage by birds, rodents, insects, fungi and viruses.

### Note

At all times, seed handling practices should avoid contamination between different varieties.

## 6.9. Seed inspection and certification

Objective	Plan seed inspection and certification
Timeframe	One session after harvesting
Materials needed	Flipcharts and markers

As explored in Chapter 5.3 above, almost all countries have laws that regulate the seed market. In deciding on the crops and varieties to produce, the group should have accounted

for the requirements they will now have to meet. The production committee, if established, may help to ensure that requirements are met.

## 6.10. From the field to the marketplace

Objective	Plan the seed delivery chain
Timeframe	One or more sessions, depending on the number of seed lots and markets
Materials needed	Flipcharts and markers

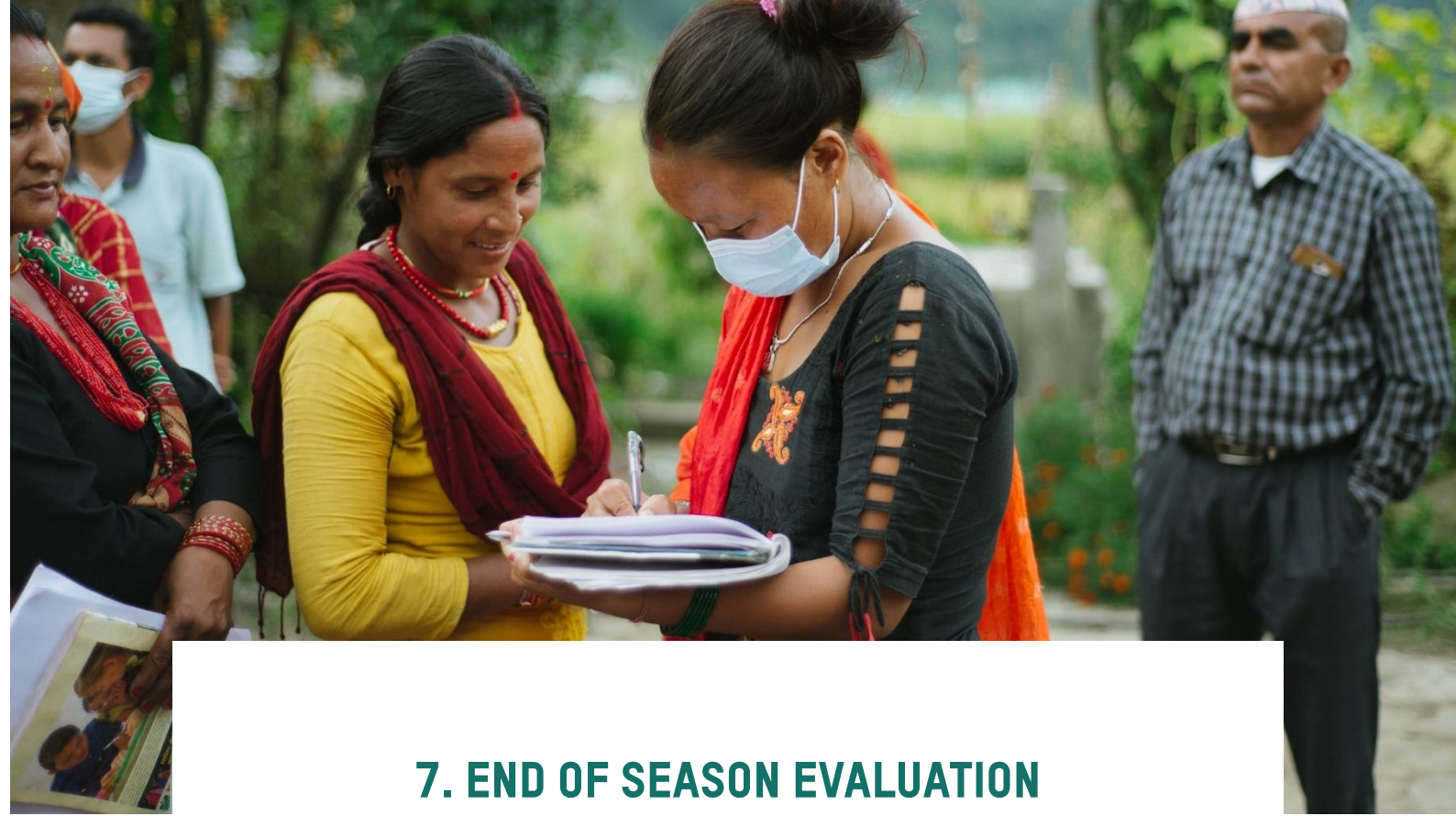
The FFS should discuss and finalize preparations for the marketing of the seed produced. For example reaffirm:

- What branding will be used? This could entail reference to the community where the seed has been produced, to build a brand name for the FFS group.
- Who will determine when seed is brought to the market?
- Who will bring it to the market?
- How is the price decided? Who will sell the seed?
- Who returns unsold seed?

### Note

The individual producers or sub-groups may be responsible for these decisions, or the producers may delegate some or all of them to the marketing committee (where applicable).





## 7. END OF SEASON EVALUATION AND PLANNING SESSION

This chapter responds to the need to identify what went well what didn't during the FFS sessions, listing issues to be improved and evaluating progress towards the original goals. This can help those involved in the FFS decide what to do next.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is not a one-time activity, or only to be done at the end of an FFS. M&E is an ongoing and continuous effort: progress must be measured at every stage and every session, with information collected and analyzed to see how the next session can be improved. Every session has already had some M&E elements, and now they should be brought together. The end of

FFS activities is an important moment to put all these pieces together and look at the cycle-long process to decide whether or not to continue, and how.

This is a participatory process, involving all members of the group and empowering them to take corrective action. The facilitator plays a key role, though not as evaluator – instead supporting the process to ensure that everyone participates, as this leads to better results. FFS are encouraged to make use of the FFS Self-Assessment Tool (#14 in the Toolkit) to take stock of the FFS developments mid-season and during the end-of season evaluation.

### 7.1. Monitoring and evaluation

Objectives	Prepare for, plan and start an evaluation process, identifying the key elements to consider
Timeframe	2 hours

Materials needed	Flipcharts, markers, space for small sub-group discussions, beans
Tools	Group ranking, graffiti, T-chart, ballot box

The session starts with a short presentation on the purpose and benefits of M&E. Start by reviewing the participants' expectations and learning goals. Explain that the M&E process aims to measure the activities implemented and results achieved, and compare them to the targets set at the beginning. It also looks at the effects of the activities and training. That means it looks not only at how the seed production and marketing initiative developed, but also changes in know-how, skills, confidence, cooperation, and empowerment – although these are more difficult to measure, they give a better indication of the work done. It should also look at the effects on food security, as the program's overarching goal. Guiding questions include:

- **Relevance:** Did the program respond to the specific needs of the local area? Did the discussions meet the participant's expectations?
- **Performance:** Did the activities follow a logical sequence and relate to each other? Did they comply with the plans and strategies?
- **Progress and results:** Is it possible to see outputs and outcomes? Have the original objectives been reached?
- **Effect:** Do the different activities point towards a long-term impact? Is it possible to see a difference as a result of the work of the FFS?
- **Sustainability:** Did the team build the necessary conditions for activities and results to scale up and continue in the long run?

### Which ideas to consider?

Too long a list of indicators may lead to a process that is too long to be useful, so it is necessary to make a selection: looking at the

indicators already used in the other FFS sessions, what exactly do we want to measure?

The group will want to focus on (a) activities the FFS set out to start, i.e. production and commercialization of seeds, and (b) the FFS itself, and its long-term goals of enhancing collaboration, knowledge and empowerment. Instead of using pre-defined indicators, invite participants to use their own words.

### Exercises

**Group ranking** . One way to select the best indicators to use is to divide participants into smaller groups and ask each person to think of one or two issues they would like to measure (from the more abstract concepts, such as empowerment, to more concrete ideas such as the role played by the facilitator, topics covered, and results seen). Write all the suggested indicators in a first column, and the names of participants in subsequent columns.

Indicators	Frank	Joyce	Miriam	John
...				
...				
...				

The order of ideas in the first column does not matter, and the group does not need to agree before an item is included. When the list of suggested indicators is complete, each person is given an equal number of beans. Working individually, they distribute their beans between the rows under the column with their name: their preferred idea gets the most beans. Now add up the total number of

beans in each row to find the group's the preferred indicators.

Having selected the indicators, the FFS group should make sure that sufficient information is available or can be collected. Identify the main secondary sources (FFS plans, documents or reports) and the main primary sources: all the farmers and other participants who joined the FFS sessions or activities and saw the results first hand. Their opinions can be collected in different ways: conventional methods include interviews, focus groups and questionnaires, and other simple methods are suggested below.

**Graffiti.** Invite all participants to write on a large piece of paper, without any rules or order – whatever he or she thinks, positive or negative, long or short, as long as it is an opinion about the FFS. Separate pieces of paper can be used, with each collecting ideas about different elements (e.g. the program, the facilitator, preparation and logistics, results and conclusions).

**T-Chart.** Draw a T-shape on a large piece of paper, forming two columns – one for activities deemed to be good, and one for activities that 'need to be improved'. Participants write these activities or results on cards, and stick them to one of the columns. The activities that 'need to be improved' are then discussed to find solutions or recommendations.

**Ballot Box.** Use multiple-choice questions on field situations to test farmers' knowledge and skills at the beginning and end of the FFS cycle, or of a single day. As everybody answers the same questions, it is possible to tabulate responses and make comparisons (between 'now' and 'then', or between one group and another).

### **Analysis and conclusions**

It is important to go beyond merely describing the activities and counting up the numbers – on how many sessions there were, how many

people joined, or how much money was made. To generate lessons that can be put into practice, it is necessary to analyze this data: if lots of people joined, what attracted them? If not much money was made, why it was difficult to create bigger revenues? Challenge participants to reflect collectively and discover the reasons behind the obtained results.

Analysis and lessons. Working in groups, this exercise starts by inviting all participants to select some of the indicators already identified. List these in the first column in a table, and add columns on the main factors that contributed positively, the main factors that prevented the group from having better results, and the conclusions that can be drawn. Note that the objective is not to repeat the outputs or results, but to list the factors that made them possible (or not).

Indicators	Factors that contributed positively	Factors that contributed negatively	Main lessons / recommend
Number of publications in local language			
Number of field visits			
...			

Once all groups have filled in their table, the facilitator guides a discussion in plenary, starting with a short presentation of the main findings per group. What were the factors behind positive results, and those preventing better results? Do all members of the group agree? Do different groups have different opinions?

The analysis helps identify ideas that can be summarized and taken up in planning to continue the work.

The next step is to make sure the data and information is well documented so it can be



shared with others. This typically means writing a report on the main findings. But the results of the evaluation process can also be shared in other ways, such as audio or video files. The best option will depend on the target audience: who does the group want to reach, and what is the best way to reach them?

### The role of the facilitator

During this session it is important to discuss the role of the person who will guide the process. Make it clear that he or she will not give an opinion, but only support the process

and invite others to share their opinions. The role of the facilitator is to create conditions so everyone feels free and confident to talk:

- planning the session and keeping time to ensure it can be completed;
- keeping the discussions focused;
- making sure nobody feels too shy or unwilling to participate, and nobody dominates;
- mediating in case of conflicts; and
- ensuring that all ideas are properly documented so they can be shared.

## 7.2. The FFS end-of-season evaluation

Objectives	Identify the main successes and failures of the FFS and analyze why these happened
Timeframe	2 to 3 hours
Materials needed	Flipcharts, color cards, markers
Tool	Timeline analysis, demand and supply, fishbowl, crowd sourcing

Involving facilitators, project staff and all participants, this session looks back over the whole season of the FFS to measure and analyze its achievements. This is the moment to look back at the original aims and ask whether or not they were reached, and why: look in detail at the factors that helped or hindered the team in reach its objectives. Consider all elements of the FFS, including the content (curricula and guide), process (forming a group of participants, the work of the facilitators, developing skills and competences, the various gender and social inclusion issues) and the procedures put in place (planning, reporting and documentation).

### The point of departure

Start by looking back at the FFS's original objectives and participants' expectations,

discussed in detail several months ago. What did the group decide to do before the first FFS session? What did it want to achieve? Often these aims will be about empowerment, developing skills, learning concepts, and working together to put them into practice.

These original ideas form the goal the group wanted to reach. They are discussed along with individuals' expectations: what did each member of the group think he or she would learn when the FFS was about to start? How did they expect to benefit? Put these aims together with a baseline: if the intention was to work together, is it possible to say that farmers were not working together before the FFS started? If it was to develop marketing skills, did farmers know how to buy and sell products and make a profit?

### Exercise

Look back at the steps taken as a group, starting with the first session. What did we do together? How many times did we meet, and what did we talk about? List all the sessions, look back at the topics covered and remember who participated. Look at the outputs: the number of people who joined, the amount of seed produced and brought to market, the number of farmers reached with new seeds, sales and income. Produce a general overview with a timeline, and share this with all participants.

Working in sub-groups, use the timeline analysis tool. Each group chooses the period to focus on (the FFS cycle, or one calendar year) and draws a line on a big piece of paper, marking the dates (months, weeks) and key

moments. Participants can use words, numbers or drawings; the facilitator can help by asking questions and pointing out key sessions, results, or difficult moments. Share and discuss the groups' timelines in plenary.

### Different aspects

A review of all the steps taken will show there were many different activities and results, and many elements that can be looked at in detail. Some participants may feel that the results depended heavily on the role played by the facilitator, for example, while others may feel that the content they discussed, or the work of the participants themselves, was more important. List all these elements, and select the questions the group wants to answer.

Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was it relevant to the needs of this community?</li> <li>• Was it new, or had participants already discussed it?</li> <li>• Did it build on what farmers knew, or had discussed in the past?</li> </ul>
Organization, sequence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the curriculum complete?</li> <li>• Did the sessions follow a logical sequence?</li> <li>• Were they linked to the farmers' day-to-day activities?</li> <li>• Were sufficient training materials available?</li> </ul>
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did all farmers/community members join?</li> <li>• Were they able to share their ideas and concerns? Did they play different roles?</li> <li>• Was there a good division in terms of gender/youth?</li> </ul>
Facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did the facilitator guide the process efficiently?</li> <li>• Was he or she well prepared?</li> </ul>
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did farmers learn new concepts, discover new ideas, develop new skills?</li> <li>• Did farmers agree to work together and collaborate?</li> <li>• Do farmers feel empowered as a result of their participation?</li> </ul>
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a need to continue working together, and is this possible?</li> <li>• Are there sufficient resources or conditions for continuing?</li> <li>• Are other farmers also willing to join?</li> </ul>

Participants will need to select which aspects to consider, and which indicators to use to measure them. They will need to identify different sources of information, both quantitative and qualitative, considering their

own opinions and the records they kept during the FFS sessions. They may also consider secondary sources, such as project reports. They will need to register all this in a way that helps them to:

- see progress, or changes in time – showing, for example, that the number of farmers who joined the sessions was smaller at first, with more farmers joining later;
- see if individuals' opinions represent the group – if one participant thinks that the facilitator was not well prepared for the sessions, do all other participants have the same view?;
- compare results within the group (for example, showing the different views of men and women) and with results of other FFS groups (for example, showing that more people are willing to continue working together in this community than in another one).

Participants will need to use varied indicators to complete the analysis: sharing their opinions, finding the factors that contributed positively or negatively towards results in the field, and drawing conclusions and recommendations. This is best done as a joint discussion exercise, sharing ideas (see previous session). Simple exercises can help participants draw and share these ideas in advance.

### **Exercises**

***Demand and supply.*** Give every participant two cards of different colors, and ask them to look back at the FFS. On one card, they write a positive result, such as something they learned well enough to explain to somebody else. On the other card they write an idea or activity they found difficult, or about which they would like to get more information. In an open space, they work in pairs, sharing the ideas they wrote. After a few minutes, the pairs change and each person talks with somebody else. This is repeated a few times, then a plenary session collects the main lessons and difficulties from the group.

***Fishbowl*** (from IFAD). Chairs are put in two concentric circles, with four in the inner circle. Those who sit there start the discussion, while everybody else listens. When someone in the outer circle wants to intervene, he or she has to change places with one of those inside. When everyone has had a chance to share their ideas, the process finishes in a plenary, listing the main issues raised.

***Crowdsourcing*** (from 'Liberating Structures'). Every participant writes an opinion on a card. Standing in a group, they mill around and pass the cards from person to person, many times. When the bell rings, people stop passing cards and either read their card silently or pair up to exchange thoughts on the cards in their hands. Then they write on the back of the card a score of 1 to 5, indicating their level of agreement (1 for low and 5 for high). The process repeats until the cards have been scored five times. At the end of the fifth round, participants add up the scores on the back of the card they are holding. The ideas with the top ten scores are identified and shared with the whole group.

### **Conclusions that can be used**

Discussions, analysis, and revision of the original objectives and expectations will help participants draw conclusions and present clear recommendations. In some cases, these will help improve implementation of FFS sessions – for example, the materials provided and used, the way the group works together, the performance of the facilitator, the roles played by the different participants. In other cases they can help improve this field guide, or identify farmers interested in becoming facilitators.

Make sure they are presented clearly, and they reach the people who will be able to use them: project staff, facilitators, and the participants themselves.

### 7.3. Planning

Objectives	Plan and prepare for new activities, agreeing on the best way to proceed
Timeframe	2-3 hours
Materials needed	Flipcharts, chairs, color cards, markers
Tools	Postcard from the future, high five, troika consulting

Having looked at results and identified the factors that helped and hindered, this is the moment to set new goals (or adjust the previous targets) for the following production and marketing season.

The first question to ask is if participants want to continue working together. If the results have been positive, the answer will probably be yes. The next question is how: it is possible to run the same activities, but should they be adjusted so they lead to better results? This requires all participants to think of new goals (what do we want to achieve? Where do we see ourselves after one year?), paying special attention to the recommendations that came out of the analysis.

#### **Exercises**

**Postcards from the future.** All participants get a card, and on it they write a short message that is (a) written in an imagined future a few years from now, looking back at what has happened, and (b) addressed to themselves or their group. For example: ‘Ever since I joined the meeting in June 2021, I have been... This let me work with the government and see...’. The message explains what the group agreed to try, and what resulted in this imagined future.

**High five** (from CDI). All participants draw a copy of their hand on a sheet of paper. Each finger indicates a step to take to make the plans they have been discussing come true. The thumb is for what is going well and should continue; the index finger for what the team should be careful about; the middle finger is

for what needs to change completely; the ring finger for links and connections that are needed; and the little finger points at small steps to be taken immediately. The ideas are collected and shared in the group.

**Troika consulting** (from ‘Liberating Structures’). Participants are divided into groups of three, who sit knee-to-knee. In each round, one participant is the ‘client’ with a particular problem while the others are the ‘consultants’, who listen and try to provide solutions. After presenting the problem and a few clarifying questions, the client turns around, with his or her back to the consultants, and listens to them discussing solutions. Together, the consultants generate ideas, suggestions and coaching advice, but do not interact with the client. After a few minutes the client turns around and discusses with the consultants. Groups switch and repeat these steps.

#### **Developing an action plan**

The next step is to develop a simple action plan, assigning roles and responsibilities, identifying the necessary resources and inputs, and deciding when each activity is expected to take place. This has to consider the continuation of the FFS (a new cycle) and the work of the marketing committee (where applicable), paying attention to the conditions necessary (the ‘enabling environment’) for all activities to be implemented. The action plan was described in Chapter 3.3.

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