



# HOW TO ORGANIZE A RELAY FARMERS SCHEME?

## WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

Relay farmers are called pilot farmers, farmer trainers, farmer vaccinators or multipliers. For several years, within farmers organizations (FOs), farmers have been providing services to their peers.

### Why relay farmers?

- Historically, the agricultural advisory services provided by FOs have mobilized employed advisors
- Needs for proximity that require time and that are difficult to finance by farmers themselves
- Limited duration of 'projects' financing advisors' positions
- A need to extend the service to a larger number of farmers (change in scale)
- A complementarity between farmers' and advisors' knowledge

→ Relay farmers providing sustainable local services in Fos

### Their missions

Facilitation and technical training:

- Local facilitation: relaying information, managing learning farms etc.
- Technical training
- Advisory service / individual or group follow-up
- Technical-economic recording

Up to economic services:

- Vaccination and production of chicks
- Multiplication and sale of seed potatoes
- Storage management and marketing
- Post-harvest management and marketing

## STEPS FOR SETTING UP RELAY FARMERS

### 1 DEFINING THE SCHEME AND ITS ORGANIZATION ACCORDING TO NEEDS

Each local FO has different needs and builds its relay farmers scheme according to its context: which services, which beneficiaries, which missions are assigned to the relay farmer, which organization?

Depending on the structure, it will be necessary to define the role of the grassroots and regional FOs in the steering of the scheme: Who is recruiting him/her? Who is training him/her? Who is accompanying and equipping the relay farmer? Who is financing him/her? To whom does s/he report? Etc.

### 2 IDENTIFYING AND TRAINING FARMERS

#### Prerequisite qualities

- FO's member (appointed by FO)
- Leadership and dynamism
- Good technical level, recognized as a model on his/her farm
- Good level of education / literacy

Other possible criteria:

- Relational qualities (federating)
- Teaching qualities
- Long-term commitment
- Available and volunteer
- Young and healthy
- Co-opted / validated by regional FO

#### Training

- Roles and missions
- Technical training
- Facilitation, communication and pedagogy
- Use of tools (recording, time management, etc...)

#### Working tools

- Small equipment
- Vaccination kits
- Sprayer
- Follow-up forms / notebook

### 3 COORDINATING THE RELAY FARMER'S WORK WITH THE ADVISOR'S WORK

The relay farmer is not meant to take over the job of the advisor employed by the FO, but they rather work together:


#### RELAY FARMER

- Is above all a farmer in his/her farm
- At local level: 1 RF → 10 to 15 accompanied farmers
- Proximity to other farmers
- Farmer's mindset: committed and talking the same language
- Carries out pedagogical actions in his/her group
- Is a source of information and data (references, monitoring-evaluation) for the technician

#### FO'S ADVISOR

- S/he's a staff of the FO or support organization that puts him/her at the FO's disposal
- At local / regional level: 1 advisor (100 to 150 farmers (10 groups))Hindsight with more theoretical knowledge: brings confidence
- Provides punctual support and follow-up
- Organizes capacity building of FOs (training, access to information, networking)

### 4 CONSIDERING A FINANCIAL MODEL

Advice at a lower COST 

- Payment of a compensation (no remuneration).
- Few travel expenses.
- Compensation for his/her absence on the farm.
- Material and small equipment.
- Training and support.

- Resources for regional FO.
- Contribution in kind or in cash from basic FO or farmers benefiting from this service.
- Levy on products sold (appro) or collected (marketing).
- Performance of paid services.

RESOURCES for financing it 

Cross-cutting tools  
Getting better organized together  
Improving the value of your products  
Improving your farm management  
Improving production  
The fundamentals of advisory services



Madagascar



Burkina Faso



Kenya



Madagascar



## FUNDAMENTALS TO REMEMBER

- Relay farmers have 'endogenous' expertise combined with new techniques they have tested themselves: in that way, they have great persuasive capacity and credibility towards other farmers.
- Thanks to relay farmers, services are more resilient: relay farmers provide continuous minimum services and in close proximity to farmers. They are a kind of 'transmission belt': they understand and relay messages from home to FO, and vice versa.
- The advisor - relay farmer pair is a winning combo: relay farmer feeds on the advisor's expertise, and the advisor grows through the relay farmer's skill.



## WORDS OF PROFESSIONNELS

*"Relay farmer brings both applicability and credibility. If s/he can do it at home, then other farmers can do it too"*

*"One should not be afraid of being envied or criticized: in the end, others will always be grateful for the work done."*

*"I wanted to get involved in this mission because collective work and co-construction are interesting. I could have stayed alone in my farm, had a quieter life and perhaps earned more money, but I would have made less progress...Today, I am happy to have collaborated with my neighbors, because there are riches that cannot be calculated in money. Helping one's country and one's neighbors is priceless."*

*"It is truly a voluntary work but there are still advantages to it. As a potato seed grower, I earn money by selling seeds to the farmers I accompany. I also feel proud to be sharing with others; with the objective of helping all farmers to progress together."*



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Webinar:** "Synergy and coordination between relay farmers and technicians", July 2020

**Round table:** "Relay farmers, as key stakeholders, in developing more sustainable advisory services and working closely with farmers", report, Nakuru (Kenya), July 2019

