

# HOW TO CARRY OUT AN EXCHANGE VISIT?

## WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

Exchange visit is a **support for discussion among farmers**.

It promotes the idea of sharing. Farmers first approach their direct entourage to discuss their problems and difficulties and try to find solutions. If no solution is found at the local level, an exchange visit can be organized in remote locations.

Exchange visits help to:

- **gaining a better** understanding of on-farm issues and learning lessons from them
- **sharing with farmers** experiences through observation, listening, discussions and practices
- **creating connections** among farmers
- **identifying any sticking points and finding together solutions** to be implemented



### The advisor's role

- helping to implement farmers' suggestions
- helping with the preparation and organization of the visit (including logistics)
- facilitating and structuring discussions
- listening to farmers and making a synthesis of the discussions
- identifying leaders who will later help to spread new practices
- facilitating feedback sessions
- accompanying the implementation of the solutions identified during visits

The advisor acts as a **facilitator**, s/he should not impose his/her point of view.

## STEPS FOR CARRYING OUT AN EXCHANGE VISIT

### 1 IDENTIFYING FARMERS' NEEDS

FO must analyze with all farmers the expectations linked to a given issue. Then, the question is whether the exchange visit will meet these expectations or not.

The exchange visit can respond to different issues: improving farming practices, gaining a better understanding of financial management practices, getting better organized within one's FO etc.



### 2 PREPARING THE EXCHANGE VISIT

Each exchange visit is unique. A visit that may have been interesting for one group will not necessarily be adapted to others. Therefore, it is important to prepare upstream each exchange visit together with the group.

**Identifying the right time** either to observe an agricultural practice during an exchange visit, or for participants to be more available

#### Organizing logistics

Good logistics will create a peaceful environment more favourable to dialogue between farmers. Note that a remote location makes the logistics more complex to manage the exchange visits (booking accommodation, transports, etc.)

**Identifying the location of the exchange visit** that will enable the group to observe practices and to work on solutions to be implemented according to their own problems.

**Identifying participants** who are able to ask questions and actively participate in the discussions and put into practice what they have observed back on their farm.

### 3 ACCOMPANYING AND FACILITATING EXCHANGE VISIT

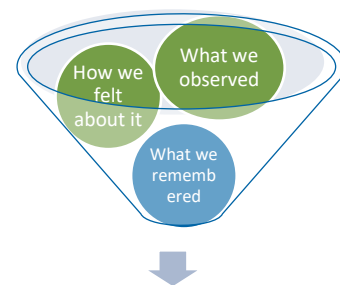
**Direct observation** of agricultural techniques or management practices can raise questions and encourage discussions among farmers.

**Facilitation** is important to create an environment that promotes discussions. The advisor plays a key role.

### 4 REVIEWING

- by giving feedback at the end of the day to share "immediate feedback" on what everyone has observed and remembered
- by a report at the end of the visit
- through feedback sessions to members of the group back home.

**Reviewing is an important step to implement what has been learned in the field.**



**Feedback to group members and implementation of actions**



Kenya – exchange visit in the fields



France – exchange visit with Ceffel



Madagascar – Feedback workshop on an exchange visit



## FUNDAMENTALS TO REMEMBER

- Exchanging views is a state of mind. Farmers should be willing to share and experience moments together to discuss.
- Exchange visits should be part of the implementation process of the FO's project. Reviewing at the end of the exchange visit is important to transform what has been observed and adopted into concrete actions.
- Discussions occur first both at local level and among farmers. It is important to make sure that the grassroots FO is strong and that real discussions among members of the group exist before considering organizing discussions with more remote farmers.



## WORDS OF PROFESSIONALS

*"Exchange visits are a source of great richness and openness to others. It is easy to close ourselves up in our models and these discussions question us about our convictions."*

*"Discussions are enriched by sharing information on the way we experience our life as a manager or how we manage our responsibilities. It is both a great technical and human resource."*

*"Visits between farmers only enabled us to have more freedom in our discussions and visits accompanied by the technician were better prepared to respond to specific technical problems."*

*"We should encourage farmers to be, live and work together. The first step is the grassroot organization, the farmer must be able to feel valued in his/her FO."*

*On his/her side, the technician should be responsive and at the service of farmers. In this way s/he will be accepted by farmers and recognized for his/her work"*



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### Example of tools:

- Terme of reference (ToR)
- Exchange visit's report

**Webinar:** Promoting farmers' projects through exchange visits

**Practical guide** for organizing study trips - Fert

