

# HOW TO DEVELOP AND SUSTAIN A PARTNERSHIP THAT SERVES FARMERS?

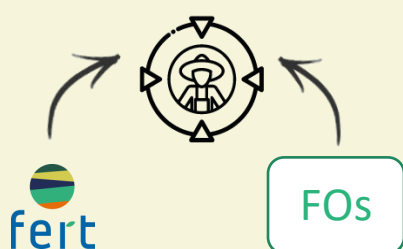
## WHAT IS IT ABOUT ?

Partnership can be defined as “an active association of different stakeholders who, while maintaining their autonomy, agree to pool their efforts to achieve a **common goal** related to a clearly identified problem or need in which, by virtue of their respective missions, they have an interest, a responsibility, a motivation, or even an obligation.”  
[source : Wikipédia]

This method sheet focuses specifically on the partnerships between Fert and FOs.

The basic principle governing Fert's activities is that of **the farmer at the center**. The establishment of a partnership between Fert and a FO is conditioned by this vision being shared by both parties:

### TO SUPPORT FARMERS' PROJECT



« Fert works in partnership with organizations that share the same values: putting farmers at the heart of decisions, solidarity, and professionalism. »

Jean François, Chairman of Fert

« For Fert, a partnership with a FO is not really about looking into each other's eyes, but rather looking together at where the FO wants to go in order to support it on its journey. »

Fert Project Manager

## STEPS TO ESTABLISH THE PARTNERSHIP

### 1 STARTING FROM A COMMON BASIS : SHARED DIAGNOSIS

Every partnership begins with a shared diagnosis that allows both parties to agree on the needs of farmers. Fert does not have a ready-made tool for this diagnosis. It is primarily a matter of observation and listening in the field, followed by discussions between Fert and the FOs.

This stage confirms that both partners share the same vision of “the farmer at the heart of the action.” Throughout the following stages, it will be necessary to ensure that everyone remains aligned with this vision and translates it into daily actions. Fert is very committed to this, and both elected officials and teams regularly reiterate this during the various stages described below.

### 2 JOINTLY DEFINE THE TERMS OF COOPERATION

Once the assessment has been completed, the terms of cooperation (working together) must be defined: objectives, action plan, commitment, roles and responsibilities, human and financial resources, and how the partnership will be managed.

These rules must be defined and validated together. Several tools can be used to formalize them: in general, a partnership agreement that outlines the broad lines of the partnership, complemented with multi-year agreements that precisely define the implementation, and finally annual action plans/budgets and monitoring tools, etc.

### 3 SUSTAIN THE PARTNERSHIP IN THE LONG TERM



Partnership is a non-linear process that must be monitored over time, as it evolves with time. It must remain dynamic and adaptable, requiring regular assessment of its progress in order to adjust its development according to needs. Its implementation also enables the partners to progress together, get to know each other, and work in an atmosphere of trust and respect.

To do this, it is necessary to constantly meet with farmers in the field to listen, see, and understand their realities to take them into account in the management of the partnership. Opportunities for dialogue during missions or steering committee meetings and regular communication should enable sincere exchanges between partners, allowing them to share their successes, questions, and difficulties: it is important to accept that there will be periods of doubt, misunderstanding, and mistakes.

### 4 ASSESS TO IMPROVE



The partnership is monitored continuously through technical and financial reports. Above all, review meetings are organized regularly (usually once a year) to ensure that:

- The vision is still shared
- The actions implemented are serving the objective well,
- The rules and commitments are respected.

These moments can lead to tensions, but also to the redefining of objectives to go further together. The roles and responsibilities of each party can be clarified for the most effective intervention possible in the interest of the members.



Initial diagnosis mission, CGA-Fert, 2014.



The signing of the Fert-Fifata partnership agreement, Madagascar, 2023.



Field assessment, cowpea FO chairlady and Fert chairman, 2018.



Joint field visits Fifata-Fert, Madagascar, 2023

v1– december 2024



Joint CGA-Fert partnership review mission, Kenya. 2023



## FUNDAMENTALS TO REMEMBER

### Building partnership together

- A shared vision and values : actions firmly focused on grassroot farmers
- A shared diagnosis to meet farmer's needs and work together to find solutions
- Clearly defined and jointly agreed rules (agreement, planning, reporting, management, etc.)

### Knowing each other and communicating

- Sincere and regular communication, including time for review
- Transparency as the basis for mutual trust
- A willingness to engage in dialogue, consultation and co-decision making
- Passing the relay to new leaders
- Preventing potential crises through dialogue

### Progressing together in a balanced partnership

- During the implementation of the partnership, adapt to changes in order to constantly take into account the needs on the ground.
- Progressive development for a well-managed responsibility-taking process
- Continuous support for building skills of elected officials and staff.



## WORDS FROM STAKEHOLDERS

*"In a partnership, it is important to maintain balance. It is up to the FOs to decide what they need to do. Fert can support, but it will not do the work on behalf of the farmers."* – President of Fert

*"Fert was the first partner to ask us what we wanted to do to improve services for our members. We really appreciate this way of working."*  
Director of CGA, Kenya

*"Fert pushed us to grow up quickly, but it's not always easy to find the right position. FOs should not position themselves as children who are told what to do."* - President of Fifata

*"Fert has sometimes ended partnerships because we were no longer in line with the direction taken by certain FOs. We respect their choices, but sometimes we prefer to withdraw and part ways as good friends."* – Director of Fert