



HOW TO DEVELOP A LEAD FARMERS SYSTEM?

Cross-cutting tools

Getting better organized together

Improving the value of your products

Improving farm management

Improving production

The fundamentals of advisory services

WHAT IS IT ABOUT ?

Lead farmers (LF) can be called by different names: farmer advisor, farmer instructors, farmer vaccinators, seed multipliers, etc. They work alongside field advisors to offer specific services to members of their farmer organisations.

→ *Livestock lead farmer (LLF) is a LF for animal health and Crop lead farmer (CLF) for crop farming.*

Why Lead Farmers?

- Where possible, FOs mobilize field staff to provide the services their members need
- However, as member's needs generally grow, field staff cannot respond to every need
- Over time, some farmers who receive support acquire solid skills. They can then be mobilized as LFs to provide certain services in addition to those provided by the field staff
- LFs make it possible to offer specialized, concrete services locally at a "social" cost defined with members
- A complementarity between lead farmers' and field staff's knowledge

→ **Lead farmers for sustainable local services in farmer organizations (FO)**

The mission of a Lead Farmer

A lead farmer is chosen by members of his/her FO to provide one or more specific services (vaccination, seed production, etc). The LF performs 2 complementary functions for the members of his/her FO:

- Facilitation / information / technical advice
- Provision of a service at a social cost defined with the members

The 2 functions are complementary. The more the LF's advice is beneficial, the more confidence the members will have and the more they will seek his/her advice.

STEPS TO ESTABLISHING A LEAD FARMERS SYSTEM

1 DEFINE THE SYSTEM AND ITS ORGANIZATION ACCORDING TO NEEDS

Each local FO has specific needs that must be clearly identified. In conjunction with its FO, a LF provides a service that meets those needs: animal vaccination, seed production, etc.

The FO will negotiate a kind of moral contract between the LF and the members to define the terms of the service: who are the beneficiaries, what tasks are entrusted to the lead farmer, who trains the LF, how and how much is the service paid, who supports and equips the lead farmer, to whom is he/she accountable? ...

2 IDENTIFY AND TRAIN FUTURE LEAD FARMERS

Prerequisite qualities/skills ★★★

- Members of the FO (chosen by the members)
- Leadership and dynamism
- Good technical skills, recognized as a role model on their farm or in a particular service
- Educational level/ literate

Other possible criteria:

- Interpersonal skills
- Training skills
- Long-term commitment
- Availability and willingness

Training

- Role and responsibilities
- Technical training
- Facilitation, communication, and training
- Use of tools (records, time management, etc)



Work tools

- Small equipment (ex : vaccination kit)
- Tool sheets, training aids



3 COORDINATE THE WORK OF THE LEAD FARMER WITH THAT OF A STAFF

The lead farmers do not substitute the FO's field staff (advisor), rather they work alongside them :



LEAD FARMER

- Is before anything else, a farmer on his/her own farm
- Local scale : 1 LF → about 10 to 50 farmers supported
- Proximity to other farmers
- Farmer's reasoning: convinced by farmer's actions and language.
- Provides a well-defined service (e.g : seed production/marketing, etc)
- Source of information and data (references, monitoring and evaluation)

FO's ADVISOR

- Is employed by the FO or a partner organization that mobilizes them to support the FO
- Local/Regional scale: 1 advisor → about 75 to 150 farmers (about 7-20 FOs)
- Provides technical reassurance (theoretical knowledge, innovations, etc)
- Provides targeted support and ensures follow-up
- Organizes capacity building for the LFs (training, access to information, networking)



4 DEVELOP THE FINANCIAL MODEL OF THE SYSTEM

A service at a SOCIAL COST

Benefits in kind for the LF (training, small equipment)
Definition of service costs and appropriate service terms with members (in kind or in cash)
Possible commission for the FO on the payment of the service (e.g. marketing)

Sometimes voluntary commitment from LF (especially at the start)

Payment for services by members, in kind (cereals, chicken, etc.) or in cash

Possible payment for services by the FO via membership fee

Funding by farmers



Madagascar



Burkina Faso



Kenya



Madagascar



FUNDAMENTALS TO REMEMBER

- Lead farmers have “endogenous” expertise that they combine with their knowledge of new techniques that they have tested themselves: this gives them great persuasive power and legitimacy towards other farmers.
- LF always seeks to meet the needs of members over time and that it does not prioritize the source of income rather than the quality of service
- Thanks to lead farmers, services are more resilient: lead farmers provide a well-defined service on an ongoing basis and in close proximity to farmers. They act as a transmission belt: they understand and disseminate messages from the grassroots to the FO, and vice versa.
- The field staff (advisor) - lead farmer duo is a winning combination: the lead farmer draws on the advisor's expertise, while the advisor grows through the lead farmer's know-how.



WORDS FROM PROFESSIONALS

"The lead farmer brings practicality and legitimacy. If he/she can do it at home, then another farmer can do it too."

"You don't have to be afraid of being envied or criticized: in the end, others will always be grateful for the work you've done."

"I wanted to endorse this role because it is the collective work and co-construction that is interesting. I could have stayed alone on my farm, had a quieter life and perhaps earned more money, but I would have made less progress...Today, I am happy to have worked in collaboration with my neighbours; there are achievements that cannot be measured by money. Helping your country and your neighbours to progress is priceless."

"It really is voluntary work, but there are still benefits. As a potato seed producer, I earn money by selling seeds to the farmers I support. I also take pride in sharing my knowledge, with the aim of helping all farmers move forward together."



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Webinar : " Complementarity and coordination between lead farmer and field staff ", July 2020

Roundtable discussion: " Lead farmer, key players in a sustainable advisory system that is closer to farmers ", report, Nakuru (Kenya), July 2019

