

## Regional Workshop on Institutionalization of Farmer Field Schools at the Local and National Level

Date: 24-27 May 2016  
Venue: Sukosol Hotel in Bangkok, Thailand

### Background:

*'Institutionalization' is a sense of process through which new ideas and practices are introduced, accepted and used by individuals and organizations and become part of 'the norm' (Jonfa and Waters-Bayer, 2005).*

The increasing world population poses a need for production of more food. According to estimations of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), food crop production must grow by 60 percent by 2050 (FAO, 2012a). At the same time, possibilities for expanding crop land by reclamation are becoming more and more limited, which means that agriculture must further intensify. The population that is most hard-pressed to meet this challenge is that of small-scale farmers, as they struggle to feed their families and make agricultural production a more profitable enterprise. Efforts to achieve this are hampered by lack of effectively functioning agricultural extension services. In a survey by the Inter-Academy Council (2005), 24 African countries listed strengthening extension as one of the top priorities for a poverty reduction strategy. However, contradictions within agricultural extension systems complicate these efforts. Broadly speaking, there are two conflicting approaches:

- designing standardized technology packages which maximize yields, to be delivered to farmers in a top-down fashion; or
- entering into partnerships with farmers to foster innovation, creativity and flexibility in dealing with agricultural systems.

The Farmer Field School (FFS) strategy is aimed at empowerment of farmers through field-based experiential learning processes. It was first conceived and implemented 25 years ago in the rice paddies of Southeast Asia as a way of training farmers to apply the principles of Integrated Pest Management (IPM). This approach turned out to be very successful (Kenmore, 1991) and the following years witnessed a strong expansion of FFS activities: in crops other than rice, aspects of crop management other than IPM and, beyond the field, into aspects of processing and marketing.

Notwithstanding this success, the adoption of FFS in national extension often remains problematic (Global FFS Review e-Forum, 2012). Tension between traditional top-down approaches and the new focus on farmer empowerment often weakens institutional support for FFS implementation. Moreover, changes in advisory services are often impeded by a lack of partnership between different actors, limited expertise at the national level, and an absence of political will to promote new approaches (Sulaiman and Hall, 2002). Altogether, the potential for success of the FFS approach appears strongly influenced by a sense of ownership by the parties involved. As farmers take ownership of their innovations and decisions on the farm, local and national governments take ownership of their extension systems on the policy level by creating an environment in which FFS programmes and networks can succeed.

The essence of FFS – empowerment of farmers to learn, understand, and make informed decisions – challenges conventional agricultural extension approaches, yet the creation of an enabling environment for institutional support – one that is conducive to transformative and people-centred approaches – is essential for expanding the effort, improving quality and strengthening impact and continuity. Therefore, efforts to institutionalize FFS approaches to the national systems through various stakeholders have become necessary. In addition, cross learning between countries and regions on their experiences and lessons learnt about institutionalizing FFS at the national and/or local level is essential to assist countries in their efforts to make FFS last beyond project or programme duration.

The purpose of the regional workshop is to share and learn from country experiences and lessons learnt on institutionalization of FFS at the local and national level, discuss and develop guide and recommendations on the institutionalization of FFS (revise chapter of the FAO's Guidance Document on FFS), and exchange and learn across countries and regions through networking.

### **Objective:**

The purpose of the regional workshop is to:

1. Share and learn from country experience and lesson learnt on institutionalization of FFS at the local and national level.
2. Develop guidelines and recommendations on the institutionalization of FFS in relation to the concerned chapter in FAO's Guidance Document on FFS
3. Assess needs and interests for a regional FFS network in Asia.

### **Procedure:**

This regional workshop on Institutionalization of FFS in Asia is organized jointly by the Thai education Foundation (TEF) and Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Participants who have experience on the institutionalization of FFS approach will be invited from 10 member countries of Asia to share and learn their experiences. The regional workshop will be organized in Bangkok, Thailand during 24-27 May 2016. The programme will consist of a 4 day meeting plus a one-day field visit to FFS programme at the local level and national level.

### **EVENT DETAILS**

**Date:** 24-27 May 2016

#### **Location:**

Hotel to be confirmed in, Bangkok, Thailand

Field visit to the FFS programme under the Non Formal Education Center, Nongsue District of Prathumtani Province and the community biocontrol program and production of bio-control by the Plant Protection and Soil and Fertilizer Management Division, Department of Agriculture Extension, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperative, Bangkok, Thailand.

#### **Methodologies:**

The workshop will be highly participatory and participants are expected to participate and contribute to the discussions and exercises actively.

Various participatory approaches will be used, including participatory approaches, group work, talk shows, etc.

Please note! The workshop will be in English only.

#### **Role of the participants:**

Pre-workshop:

- Filling the preliminary study to determine the status and needs of the participating countries
- Prepare a country presentation on their experience in institutionalization of FFS.

During workshop:

- Presentation of their country experience
- Active participation

Post workshop:

- Review and comment on the report if necessary

**Participants:**

An estimated total of 32 persons will participate in this event, representing 12 countries in Asia. The representative from each country can be from the country government, the non-governmental sector, and a farmer leader or community leaders who have extensive expertise related to FFS institutionalization and able to communicate in English.

**Contact Persons:**

Technical focal points:

- Manuella Allara - AGP, HQ FAO
- Delgermaa Chuluunbaatar - AGP, HQ FAO
- AlmaLinda Abubakar – RAP, FAO
- Johannes Ketelaar – RAP FAO
- Kevin Gallagher – RAP FAO

Operational focal points:

- Mr. Marut – Thai Education Foundation
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**Tentative Event Program:**

Date	Timing	Description Activities	Remark
	.	Arrival	
	P.M.	Check in the hotel and registration	
DAY 1	A.M.	Regional workshop Introduction Country presentations	
	P.M.	Summary of country presentations – by a facilitator	
DAY 2	A.M.	Field visit at FFS programme under the Non Formal Education programme, in Prathumtani Province	Speaker is Mrs. Areepan Upanisakorn
	P.M.	Visit the Plant Protection and Soil and Fertilizer Management Division, Department of Agriculture Extension. (Visit the production of the beneficial insect and microorganism and presentation of the Community Bio-control Center based on the FFS)	
DAY 3	A.M.	Re-Cap: Day 1 + Day 2 Reflection from field trip	
	P.M.	Key strategies for institutionalization of the FFS approach based on the common issues identified from country presentations and pre-workshop surveys – group works, etc.  Policy, capacity building, monitoring support, and dissemination. Etc.	
DAY 4	A.M.	FFS guidance/ Recommendations – Group work, Needs assessment for a regional FFS network and next steps	
	P.M.	Wrap up and close	
	A.M.	Departure	