

Documentation on the Demonstration Method



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Introductory Note

This fact sheet has been produced as part of a study to map innovative methods and tools in agricultural advisory services in West and Central Africa. This study was commissioned by CORAF/WECARD (the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development) and carried out by RESCAR-AOC (the West and Central Network for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services) across 13 West and Central African countries.

The overall objective of the study was to compile a descriptive directory of innovative agricultural advisory methods and tools for scaling up agricultural technologies and innovations in West and Central Africa.

Several individuals within CORAF, RESCAR-AOC, and beyond, across the 13 countries covered by the study, contributed to the success of this initiative. We extend our gratitude to everyone involved for their contribution.

1. Overview of the Demonstration Method

Demonstration is one of the most common extension methods. It involves showing a technique or a skill, an input, a practice, or a technology along with its potential benefits to a target audience. Some experts distinguish between method demonstrations, which show how to perform a practice or use a technology, and result demonstrations that compare a recommended practice to an existing one. This is a highly flexible method that can be used on a one-time basis or over an extended period, depending on the objectives. Given that location and scale are important for maximum visibility, demonstrations can take place in a farmer's field, an agricultural resource centre, a communal plot, or a school field. Demonstrations can be led by farmers (participatory demonstrations) or extension advisors and can be organised by various types of organisations (public extension services, NGOs, private sector actors) (GIZ, 2020). Demonstrations are an integral part of other extension methods such as farmer field schools, video projection clubs, and community workshops.

2. Brief Description of the Types of Beneficiaries Supported by the Demonstration Method

The demonstration method is used to support all categories of producers (family farms, agribusinesses) and is adaptable to all profiles (crop, livestock, forestry). Because this

method is highly practical, it does not require the producer to be literate in English or even literate at all.

3. Necessity and Objective of the Method

Demonstration methods allow a technique or practice to be shown and explained orally, without the need for reading or writing skills (David and Cofini, 2019). This method therefore offers a degree of flexibility in timing and does not require farmers to be literate to be effective. The topic of the demonstration depends on the problems that need to be solved by the producers and according to their level of knowledge or experience (GIZ, 2020).

Demonstrations were developed to address challenges related to: (i) farmers' reluctance to adopt certain agricultural technologies and innovations, (ii) the limited and localized dissemination of some agricultural technologies and innovations, and (iii) the limited number of producers who possess knowledge of and have adopted new innovative methods for production, conservation, and processing of agrosylvopastoral products.

4. Methodology for Implementing the Demonstration Method

The implementation of the demonstration method follows the following steps:

- Establishing a technical team: A specialised team is formed to manage the implementation of the demonstration.
- Participatory diagnosis: A diagnostic analysis is carried out in collaboration with stakeholders to identify the needs and priorities of the producers.
- Identification of innovations and technologies: The innovations, technologies, or techniques to be demonstrated are selected based on the identified needs.
- Scheduling activities: The dates for implementing the demonstration are planned.
- Preparation for the demonstration: Preparatory activities, including logistics and organisation of the demonstration, are carried out.
- Mobilisation of equipment and inputs: The necessary equipment, tools, and inputs are gathered.
- Site preparation: The demonstration plots are delineated and set up; in the case of livestock, the demonstration herd is identified.
- Implementation of the demonstration: The demonstration is carried out according to the established plan.

- Monitoring and evaluation: The progress of the demonstration is tracked and evaluated to measure its impact and effectiveness.

5. Impacts of the demonstration method

The number of producers who were trained through demonstration plots and livestock demonstrations often depends on the specific programmes in place in each region or country. There is no single figure, as this varies with the different agricultural initiatives and training programs offered. In general, these projects aim to train a significant number of producers to improve crop and livestock techniques.

Demonstration plots and livestock demonstrations play a crucial role in promoting sustainable agricultural practices. They allow farmers to directly observe the benefits of innovative techniques and to diversify their crops using proven methods, thereby contributing to improved soil health and encouraging more sustainable agricultural practices. The results obtained in these demonstration sites often outperform those of conventional practices, promoting wider adoption of advantageous methods (David and Cofini, 2019).

The use of agricultural technologies and innovations through demonstrations has enabled producers to improve their yields—with increases ranging from 5% to 50%—as well as to boost their incomes by more than 10%.

6. Technologies and Innovations Promoted Through the Method

Several technologies and innovations have been promoted through demonstrations. These include:

- Composting;
- Bokashi (fermented composting for rapid decomposition of organic matter);
- Biopesticides and biological insecticides (using natural solutions such as ash broth, sulfur-lime broth, and neem leaf-based pesticides to control pests);
- Agroforestry (integrating trees to enhance biodiversity and prevent erosion);
- Biochar (adding charcoal to improve water retention and nutrient availability);
- Intercropping;
- Organo-mineral fertilisation;
- Improved seeds; etc.

7. Average Implementation Costs of the Demonstration Method

The costs associated with the demonstration method include training for extension advisors, materials and inputs for the demonstration, maintenance costs, and follow-up activities. According to Ramaratsialonina and Francillette (2011), the average cost of support for carrying out a demonstration is 34,000 Ar (Malagasy Ariary), which is approximately €12.2. Livestock demonstrations generally cost more than demonstration plots because they often require more equipment and infrastructure (Ramaratsialonina and Francillette, 2011).

8. Strengths and Limitations of the Method

The main strengths and limitations of the demonstration method, as identified during national discussion and evaluation workshops and in field interviews on methods and tools, are as follows:

Strengths:

- Availability of sufficient space to conduct demonstrations.
- Presence of qualified technicians to lead the demonstrations.
- High enthusiasm among producers for the method.
- Availability of necessary equipment and tools for the demonstrations.
- A political environment increasingly conducive to agricultural advisory services.

Limitations of the demonstration method

- Availability of a secure space for the “mother demo” plot (the primary demonstration plot used for training all farmers) can be a constraint.
- The selection of farmers to lead the demonstrations can either facilitate or limit the scaling up of the technologies developed through the demonstration.

9. Prerequisites for Success and the Role of Various stakeholders

The successful use of the demonstration method is largely due to the thematic areas addressed being closely aligned with the real challenges and needs of the farmers. The topics include critical issues such as soil fertility, the restoration of degraded lands, adaptation to climate change, short-cycle improved seeds, genetic improvements in animal breeds, and more. The participatory methodology—which includes practical training, peer-

to-peer feedback, and active producer engagement—has been decisive for the success of the method. The quality and dedication of the technicians also play a crucial role in ensuring high-quality training.

For the method to be successful, several prerequisites must be met. First of all, farmers must be engaged and proactive; secondly, qualified technicians must be available to lead the process; and thirdly, the necessary equipment and inputs must be accessible for carrying out the activities. Moreover, farmers participating in these demonstrations must have the capacity to replicate the demonstrations with their peers.

Lessons learned from demonstration experiences show that ensuring the method's success requires mobilising all involved actors, including producers, agricultural technicians, and partners. Training lead farmers or internal trainers has proven to be a key to success, as it facilitates the transfer of knowledge and the adoption of the recommended practices.

For policy-makers and agricultural advisory organisations, it is essential to promote a participatory and collaborative approach by strengthening synergies among the various actors and actively supporting farmers in implementing new practices through demonstrations.

The key lessons and messages from implementing demonstrations are: (i) the importance of convergence among actors for technology dissemination; (ii) adapting content to local needs to facilitate technology adoption; (iii) training and capacity building for actors on the technologies promoted through demonstration are necessary for adoption and dissemination; (iv) access to information in a timely manner sparks producers' interest in the method and technologies promoted; (v) incorporating feedback is essential for continuous improvement of the method.

Bibliography

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