



– International Fund for Agricultural Development –  
– Identifying and sharing innovation in Western and Central Africa –

– Farmer initiative plots –

**I. Context**

**1. Name of the innovation**

Farmer initiative plots: tools to boost agricultural extension channels and build up the capacities of farmer actors

**2. Country – Region**

Niger: Maradi Region, Aguié Department

**3. Organization**

Project for the Promotion of Local Initiatives for Development in Aguié (PPILDA)

**4. Who is the innovator?**

PPILDA

**5. Actors involved**

- Farmers, both men and women (trainees and horizontal trainers)
- Project team
- Local monitoring and evaluation committees
- Researchers
- Government agricultural service

**6. Starting date**

Trials in 2006 and 2007

**7. Type of innovation**

Technological, institutional and organizational

**II. Key concepts**

**8. Summary**

Farmer initiative plots represent an extension approach based on partnership among farmers, researchers and extension workers. They are a participatory mechanism to try out and demonstrate various local and outside technologies that have been identified as promising, resulting from research and/or farmer innovation. These technologies are tested on farmer fields set up, monitored and evaluated by the farmers themselves with support from the project and partner operators. Evaluation of this action is an ongoing, full process ranging from the plot level to consumption and including conservation. Farmer initiative plots aim at boosting farmers' technical, operational and organizational capacities through:

- The acquisition of new technologies to improve agricultural production (seed, cropping techniques and practices)
- Optimization of local innovations
- The transfer and dissemination of local and/or outside technologies and innovations
- The sharing of knowledge and experience among farmers and research and extension partners
- Consolidation and strengthening of the partnership of those involved in implementation
- The local assumption of responsibility for rural extension work

Farmer initiative plots are always set up on a major road to facilitate access for beneficiaries and producers who could be interested.

**9. What problems does this innovation seek to solve?**

The innovation seeks to solve the following problems:

- The decline in agricultural production as a result of pressure from parasites and the lack of seed and high-yield varieties suited to local conditions
- The low adoption rate for technologies in rural areas
- The "instrumentalization" of farmers in agricultural trials

The impact is seen in terms of an increased adoption of technologies by local people and the constitution of a local supply of services based on groups entrusted with supporting the national extension mechanism.

**10. Factors for successful replication**

- The existence of groups of farmer extension workers
- Implementation of innovations at the inter-village level
- Organization of open days and visits among farmers
- Organization of a seed fair that validates diversity fields and where the facilitators of farmer initiative plots also take part in the sharing of experiences and varieties

## 11. Main results

Adoption of these tools has led to:

- An improvement in relations among farmers and research and development workers
- The adoption of several types and varieties of seed by farmers
- The adoption of agricultural intensification technologies promoted by research (sowing density, respect for the cropping calendar, pest control etc.)

## 12. Target group(s)

All groups and social categories

## 13. Difficulties encountered

- Lack of available land
- Illiteracy of some facilitators

## 14. Financial aspects

The estimated cost of a farmer initiative plot is CFAF 500,000, corresponding to support in foodstuffs to facilitators, teaching materials and the supervision expenses of local technical officers.

## III. Technical aspects

15. Implementation of the innovation entails the following technical stages:

- Village self-assessment that identifies needs for trials
- Consultation with the beneficiaries on needs in terms of technologies and seeds to be tested, and the choice and definition of objectives and criteria at the village and cluster level
- Identification of facilitators responsible for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation commissioned by the villages and clusters
- Negotiation of experimental layouts and the implementation, monitoring and evaluation mechanism with the facilitators, monitoring committees and cluster leaders
- Implementation and monitoring, encompassing two sub-stages:
  - Plot establishment work, carried out by facilitators and operational partners
  - Interviews and monitoring of plot development, carried out by facilitators and partners
- Holding of discussions and exchanges:
  - Exchanges among farmers from the villages and clusters concerned
  - Exchanges among facilitators and farmers from other clusters
  - Village- and cluster-level self-evaluation
  - Validation and choice of tested, effective technologies that offer an advantageous cost-benefit ratio for potential adopters with facilitators, farmers from the clusters and partners
  - Consultations and exchanges on mechanisms for disseminating the selected technologies
- Capitalization on the technical and socio-organizational results obtained by all the partners (analysis of technologies and the organizational framework, replication possibilities, publications, production of technical data sheets etc.)

Three other major stages are anticipated, depending on the final results of participatory self-evaluations: (i) translation of dissemination mechanisms into activities: implementation of support actions (access to inputs, tools, training etc.); (ii) integration of these actions into village or inter-village action plans; and (iii) the implementation of certain technologies on farmer initiative plots and operationalization of dissemination mechanisms.

## IV. Further information

### 16. Key contacts

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### 17. Internet link

FIDAFRIQUE network, above-listed addresses or [ppilda@intnet.ne](mailto:ppilda@intnet.ne)

### 18. Key documents (document title + link or contact or address)

Apport localisé de la fumure de petits ruminants: une innovation dans la gestion rationnelle de la fumure organique (= Localized application of small ruminant manure: an innovation in the rational management of organic manure)

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