

Topic

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# Peer groups of farmers to share technical skills, socio-economic knowledge and provide support with the use of facilitation methods

Technical efficiency



Socio-economic resilience



## Background

To be resilient, farms need to adapt to an evolving environment. Organised support groups enable people to share personal experiences and ideas that push the whole group forward. At a local level, peer groups of farmers help each other adapt to change by sharing knowledge, innovations to be tested, failures and successes. Peer groups benefit from collective strength and professional facilitation.

## What is it ?

Farmers from the same network **meet a few times a year**, depending on their needs, to **share their experiences** on a specific issue and enrich one another with the help of a **facilitator**. They can share ideas about their practices and **launch experiments**.

A group is created when a **common issue** is identified. First, the **objectives** and **action plan** of the group must be defined together as well as the **needs** and **expectations** of each participant to ensure a **follow-up**.

Farmers can create a group for **geographical** reasons or for **thematic** reasons.

## Who's able to organize a peer group of farmers ?

Technicians, engineers, advisors etc. working in farmers' support organisations, who have technical and facilitation skills. According to the farmers' needs and constraints, they will choose the best organisation(s) for themselves.

## How do peer groups of farmers work ?

### Farmers of the group :



### Provide fuel for the discussion

- **Share tips** to one another (e.g. between the most experienced and the youngest)

- Reassure one another

- Share experiences about their **difficulties, success** and **experiments**

⇒ **Farmers are the ones having the answers.**

Meetings can be organized on one of the group member's farm depending on the topic, on a non-member's farm or in classrooms for trainings.

### Facilitator is in charge of :

- **Logistics** upstream :

- theme of the day following action plan
- Choose suitable farm to go to and date
- relevant schedule for the day

- Preparation on **content** beforehand :

- research to better guide discussions
- Get each farmer's needs and expectations (both form and material)

- **Facilitation** on D-day :

- guiding discussions
- making sure everybody has had the opportunity to express themselves
- following schedule, adapt if needed

⇒ **Facilitator should be supportive, not prescriptive**

## Benefits

- Support network for farmers to rely on
- Group force : comforting, helps further progression, faster
- Sharing the other's point of view, not staying alone in one's issues
- Actions adapted to local context
- Opportunity to test new practices
- Ease and sustain exchanges
- Everybody progresses at their own pace
- Social moments that are expected

## Be careful, especially on these points

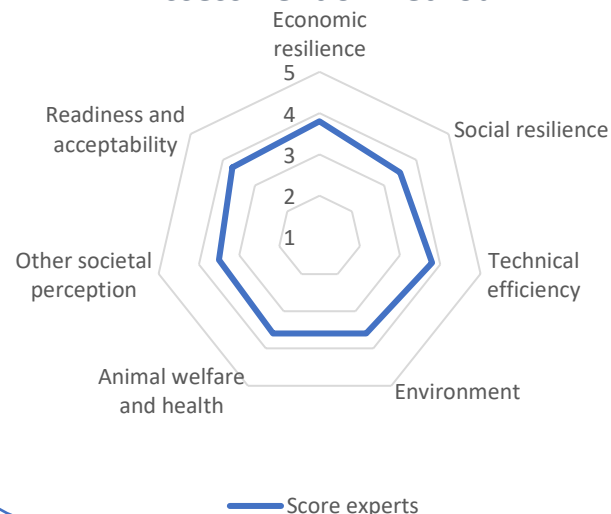
- Choice of facilitation methods
- Actions continuity and individual follow-up
- Dynamics within the group (prevailing profiles)
- Budget balance, finding fundings

## What do the farmers come for ?

Farmers come to the meetings to work on technique, economics, workload and for social reasons.

They look forward to sharing a nice moment with others and escape from their usual routine.

## Assessment of method



## Quotes of farmers :

*"You can't see what's going on in our minds, but you can be sure that tonight each one of us will dwell on their day"*

