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# **Farm Business Schools (FBS)**

## **An innovative approach in agriculture extension**

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# OUTLINE

- 1- WHAT IS A FARM BUSINESS SCHOOLS (FBS)?
- 2- OBJECTIVES
- 3- PRINCIPLES
- 4- APPROACH TO LEARNING
- 5- CHARACTERISTICS
- 6- OUTCOMES
- 7- ESTABLISHING A FBS
- 8- LEBANON EXPERIENCE



# 1- WHAT IS Farm Business School?

- The concept of the FBS was **inspired by Farmer Field Schools (FFS)**. The concept is developed by FAO (also adopted by IFAD) and is now being used effectively in Asia, Africa and Latin America.
- A **unique opportunity** to engage farmers in developing capacity for running profitable market-oriented farm businesses
- A **shift of focus** from production extension to farm management extension focused on profitability
- A number of **specialized training manuals** in market-oriented farm business management
- A **'learning-by-doing'** approach



FBS - Boudai (North Bekaa), 9<sup>th</sup> August 2019



## 2- OBJECTIVES

The **aims** of the FBS:

- Help farmers build knowledge and skills to make their farms more profitable
- Develop entrepreneurial skills and competencies of smallholder farmers
- Support the transition towards market-oriented farming

***How:*** By learning about business

***Where:*** Where the farmers live. The FBS programme takes the school to the farmers



FBS - Baakline (Mount Lebanon), 5<sup>th</sup> August 2019





## 3- PRINCIPLES

- **Facilitation and ‘not’ teaching**

*Farmers learn by working together in meetings. They are largely responsible for their own learning*

- **Learning-by-doing**

*Learning is conducted through discussion, practice and reflection*

- **Interactive and responsive**

*It is used flexibly and in response to the demand of the participants*

- **Season-long approach**

*Learning is synchronized with different stages in the production cycle*

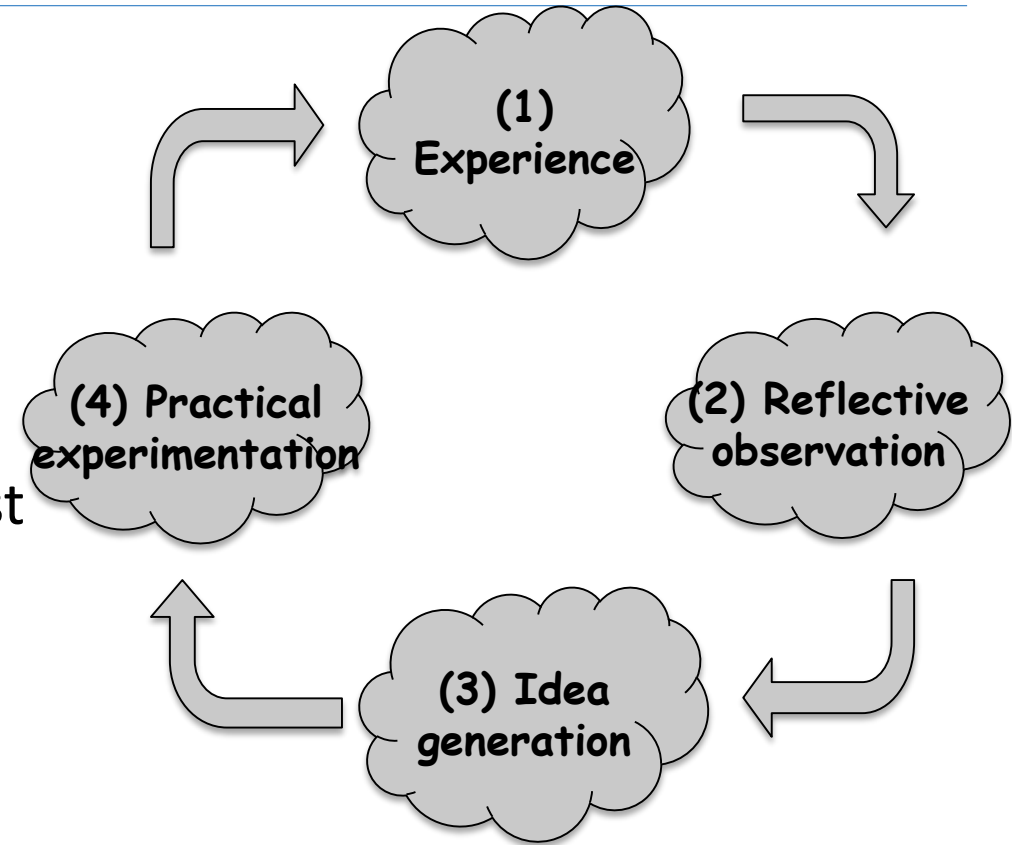


FBS – Jezzine (South Lebanon), 5<sup>th</sup> August 2019



## 4- APPROACH TO LEARNING

- Approach based on 3 principles:
  - 'Reflection and sharing'***
  - 'Generating new knowledge'***
  - 'Motivating innovation and creativity'***
- Participants learn: What to do, How to do it, The cost involved, Potential problems to be confronted, and the Benefits it will bring
- Approach is **'entrepreneurial'** and relies on simpler decision support **tools, checklists** and **strategic questions**
- Learning is consolidated and reinforced through implementing what they have learned **on their own farms**



Rather than solving business problems for farmers, they develop the knowledge and skills to understand problems and their causes, and reduce dependency on external sources of expertise, while engaging wisely and confidently with experts



## 5- CHARACTERISTICS

- Established at **community level**
- Provides **practical exercises** to facilitate learning of specific knowledge and skills
- A '**curriculum-based**' approach to extension
- The process is **facilitated** by an extension worker
- Designed around **selected farm enterprises** that can be produced locally
- Covers the **production cycle** – from planning to marketing
- Learning is linked to **real farm settings** to reinforce learning and to deliver more immediate impact



FBS – Mristi (Mount Lebanon), 5<sup>th</sup> July 2019



## 6- OUTCOMES

- Farmers will **make decisions** about their farm businesses that are based on their own experiences, observations and analyses ... and they will be able to continue making such decisions post-training, leading to a better performance and increased productivity
- A **stronger team focus** and improved capacity for group cooperation and collaboration
- Farmers will change leading to **profit- and market-orientated farming**
- Farmers would **pass** on the knowledge and skills they have learned **to others**
- Farmers may become **facilitators** themselves



FBS – Aley (Mount Lebanon), 30<sup>th</sup> July 2019





## 7- ESTABLISHING A FBS

- FBS facilitators are supported by **back-up teams** of specialists for coaching and mentoring
- Guided by a set of **training materials** for facilitators & farmers
- Farmers work in **small groups** to build collectively their capacity; they work at their **own pace** and at an agreed time and duration
- **Flexible** to fit it into current farming operations and follows local necessities and needs
- Participants **apply** what they have learned in the FBS meetings to their farming businesses and they **bring back** what they have learned to share and compare results
- Continuous **monitoring and assessment** of FBS lessons
- Finish by a **graduation**



FBS – Aidamoun (North Lebanon), 26<sup>th</sup> July 2019

Facilitators could be: public sector extension services, NGOs, commodity groups with advisory services, farmers associations and cooperatives, and colleges and universities.



## Lebanon's Experience with FBS

- FAO launched the Farm Business Schools approach for the **first time** in the Middle East and North Africa Region and ***in Arabic***
- Under the ongoing Dutch-funded project “***Promotion of Agricultural Livelihoods and Employment through Investment in Land Reclamation and Water Reservoirs***”
- Aiming to **add value** to the farmers investments by assisting small-farmers to compete and take advantage of new market opportunities through the adoption of business tools for more informed and strategic decisions
- Close collaboration with the **MoA Extension Services** and the **Green Plan**



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## Lebanon's Experience with FBS (continued)

### February 2019, Beirut: Training of Trainers

The FAO expert on FBS delivered the first Training of Trainers (ToT) to the core team of trainers made of FAO, and Lebanon's Ministry of Agriculture Extension Service and Green Plan staff.



*Core team of trainers*



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## Lebanon's Experience with FBS (continued)

### March 2019, Beirut: Arabic translation & contextualization of the FBS material

The core team of trainers worked on the adaptation and the contextualization of the FBS manual and training material and exercises.



*Cover of the FBS manual*





# Lebanon's Experience with FBS (continued)

## April 2019, Beirut: Training of Facilitators

FAO experts together with trainers from Lebanon's Ministry of Agriculture's Green Plan and other development partners, have delivered the first Training of Facilitators (ToF).



*21 facilitators trained on FBS*



## Lebanon's Experience with FBS (continued)

**The training served the rollout of 9 Farm Business Schools in different regions:**

1. Karm Chbat – Akkar-Hermel
2. Aydamon – Akkar
3. Qayteh – Akkar
4. Aley
5. Mresteh - High Shouf
6. Baakline - Middle Shouf
7. Jezzine - South
8. Boudai - West Baalbeck
9. Mhaydseh –Rachaya -

Noticeable farmers  
**commitment** and  
**participation**  
and almost **no drop-offs**

*More regions  
to be covered soon...*



Boudai (Baalbeck)



Jezzine (South)

Noticeable farmers  
**commitment** and  
**participation**  
and almost no **drop-offs**



Baakline (Shouf)





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Mhaydseh (Rachaya)



Mreste (Shouf)



Karm Chbat (Akkar)





## Lebanon's Experience with FBS – Next steps

- **September 2019, Beirut: Training of Facilitators:** 35 additional facilitators will be trained on FBS to support 150 women cooperatives/associations involved in agri-food (under the ongoing Canada-funded FAO project *“Support to women cooperatives and associations in the agro-food sector of Lebanon”*) – **Total of 55 FBS facilitators will serve as a pool of trained facilitators to support future FBS activities in Lebanon.**
- **End 2019, Evaluation and lessons learned from the 9 ongoing pilot FBS**
- **Mid-2020: Action plan to integrate/main-stream the FBS approach in the new MOA Strategy (2021-2025)**



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**Thank you!**