



The Farm Walk

Farm-Led Demonstrations

Tips & Facts Sheet

What is a Farm Walk?

Farmers first and foremost believe other farmers' experiences and believe more what they can see than what they hear. The **Farm Walk** – where farmers present their experiences in their own fields to other farmers – is thus as an effective way to promote farming options.



Planning a Farm Walk

Real needs and real solutions: Start by making sure major farmers' needs are being addressed, that the true cause of the problems are identified and that appropriate viable solutions are tested. Initial testing may be on-station or in farmers' fields. Farmers are then invited to choose treatments for their own on-farm demonstrations – or “Farm Walks”.

Training: Training in key aspects of the new technology may be required to ensure that new options are correctly understood and applied.

While researcher-led demonstrations can raise awareness, farmer-led demonstrations are more likely to lead to change.

Establishing the Farm Walk

- **Treatment selection.** Based on initial discussion, the farmers choose the technology(ies) they want to test.
- **Field selection.** New practices are established in just part of a farmer's field. Use fields with
 - **Easy access and good visibility:** Use fields close to roads and/or the village center.
 - **Representative.** Fields should be representative of other fields in the area
- **Contrast.** Establish plots side by side to show the difference between the new practice and existing farmer practice. Plots in a field corner or along the side of a field work well for ease of showing comparisons.
- **Size matters.** Make plots large enough to be believable e.g., minimum 10 m x 10 m.
- **Promotion.** Have a sign posted showing: What is being tested and who to contact for more
- **Monitor.** Visit fields with the farmer during the season to check farmer understanding and plant growth, note any farmer-led innovations and/or note problems that may be arising (through either incorrect management or due to unforeseen circumstances).

Conducting the Farm walk

- **Promotion.** Promote the farm walk event through local communication channels.
- **Preparation.** Visit sites just before the farm walk to discuss effects with the farmers;
- **Logistics.** Consider providing refreshments and make transport plans if farmers will need to move to different sites
- **Farmer-led.** Allow the farmer to lead the demonstration and explanation of their plots. The researcher or extension work can provide support;
- **Accept feedback.** Be open to criticism of the technology so that farmers see you are genuinely interested in their concerns and viewpoints. Use feedback to improve the technology and/or how it could be presented;
- **Assess.** Informally (and in a non-threatening manner) wander through the group and assess farmer views on the technology and other farmer needs – what do they like? What are their farming needs? Would they use the technology – if not, why?, etc.
- **Be open.** Accept questions outside the area of the technology being demonstrated.
- **Comfort and clarity.** Have general discussions in areas where all participants can see, hear and be comfortable (e.g., under shaded areas). If necessary use a portable loudspeaker or megaphone.

