The Plant is the Teacher
The success of the Farmer Field School approach in Rwanda
Welcome to the world of FFS

Where farmers are discovering what works and what doesn’t through observation & analysis empowering them for the future

The Government of Rwanda & the Belgian Development Agency BTC are proud to present this success story.

A story of repeating what works!
Program “Support to SPATII”
Market Oriented Advisory Services & Quality Seed

Overview
Period: July 2011 - Dec 2016
Budget: 18,6 million Euro
Area: Nationwide

General Objective
Agricultural outputs and incomes increased under sustainable production systems and for all groups of farmers, and food security ensured for all the population

Outcome
Improved access to advisory services for crops and livestock and access to and use of high quality planting materials and seed, for men and women

Acknowledgements
The FFS program would never be a success without the endless efforts of the more than 2500 Facilitators. Every day again they are out in the field to serve their fellow farmers. No rain or strong sun can stop them because they are extremely motivated to contribute to the transformation of agriculture in Rwanda. We thank them very much.

But facilitators are not alone. They can count on the support of the national team of 44 FFS Masters Trainers who are always ready to advise and assist. We wish to thank these experts for their eagerness to continue to learn and to share.

Special thanks go to JP Busogoro who through his strong commitment has put FFS on the Rwandan map. His technical knowledge and perseverance to go for quality laid the strong basis for the successful expansion.
Last but not least, the authors wish to thank the MINAGRI and RAB leaders for their continued support to Farmer Field Schools (FFS) in Rwanda as well as all other people who contributed to the success, in one way or another.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The principle of FFS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does FFS work?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exciting tools used in FFS</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results of FFS</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking success to scale</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFS in Twigire Muhinzi</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFS success stories</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spin off 1: Community Mobilization Campaigns</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spin off 2: Training for seed growers</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now, in 2016, I have facilitated 13 groups with in total 408 members. Training farmers has become my profession! Together with my fellow facilitators in the district we formed a cooperative. We work now as a professional service provider for the Government and for others. My life has changed completely. And I am so glad I can change the life of so many others!

“My name is Clemence and I am a farmer. In 2009, my groups selected me to become a FFS facilitator. I followed many months of training to build up my technical and facilitation skills. While I was still in training, I started to facilitate my first group of 29 farmers.

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The Principle of FFS

The plant is the teacher

“In the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach, we learn from what we experience. First of all, we are farmers and we have learned from all our years that we farm. All our individual experiences, good and bad, are valid to learn from. By observing and analyzing the plants, we discovered so much! Every week we learn from the decision we took the week before. It truly empowered us to take smart decisions. FFS is such an interesting way to learn and to improve. Just look at the amazing results we achieve!”

And I facilitate the learning process!

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How does FFS work?
FFS is ‘Learning by doing’

FFS is a group based learning approach that teaches farmers how to experiment and solve problems independently. Members of an FFS group meet every week with a facilitator to observe, analyze, discuss and decide what to do. The plant is indeed the teacher and the facilitator’s role is not to lecture farmers but to guide them through a learning process.

Any FFS program starts with an intensive training of elected farmers to become good facilitators. This is done by qualified FFS Master Trainers who teach the new facilitators technical skills, facilitation skills and group building skills.

As part of the training process, facilitators work with their first FFS group where they facilitate the ‘learning by doing’ process and supervise season long experiments in the FFS field plot of the group. So also the facilitators learn their skills by doing! After graduating, the FFS facilitators continue to work with new FFS groups every season.

Season long training in the FFS experimental plot

- Land Preparation
- Planting
- Follow up the growth
- Harvest
Two levels of training

Training of FFS Facilitators
- FFS facilitators are organized in “Training of Trainers (TOT)” groups
- Qualified FFS Master Trainers train the FFS Facilitators
- Learning takes place in the TOT learning plot
- FFS facilitators work together in the TOT learning plot
- Season long process
- 1 to 2 weeks training per month

Training of Farmers
- FFS farmers are organized in FFS groups
- FFS facilitators train the farmers
- Learning takes place in the FFS learning plot
- Group members work together in the FFS plot
- Season long process
- Half a day training per week
Discovery-based Learning

Observe & Record

Act

Draw, Discuss & Decide

Analyse
The layout of a typical FFS learning plot of a group

Example of a typical weekly FFS session

- **6:30:** Opening prayer
- **6:35:** Group dynamic exercise
- **6:40:** Attendance
- **6:45:** AESA
- **7:30:** Implementing AESA decisions
- **8:45:** Special topic
- **9:40:** Group building, savings & income generating activities
- **11:00:** Closing prayer
Integrated Pest/Crop Management (ICM/IPM) forms the technical basis of FFS.

**THE PRINCIPLES**

- Proper site selection
- Proper land preparation
- Good planting material
- Right spacing between plants
- Timely planting at right planting depth
- Timely weeding and weeding frequency
- Mulching and use of cover crops
- Pruning and de-suckering
- Good water management
- Regular field observation to allow early identification of a problem
- Conserving genetic diversity
THE RESULTS of IPM/ICM

- A healthy crop
- Conservation of natural enemies
- Reduced pesticide use
- Control of pest and diseases

- Improved soil fertility
- Increased production
- Higher productivity
- Farmers become experts!
What makes FFS different?

Farmers are **empowered**
to make their own decisions.

Farmers **find solutions**
for their own problems.

Farmers are **prepared**
for the challenges
of the future.
53% of FFS group members are women.

29% of FFS facilitators are women.
**The Key Success Factors in FFS**

**FFS Facilitators are intensively trained**
Facilitators become the new style of proximity extension workers in their community. Season after season, they work with more and more groups. That is the reason why we invest a lot to train them up to a top level! Never jeopardize the intensive training of new facilitators!

**Building decision making skills of each farmer**
In the FFS approach nothing is taken for granted. Each group manages their own experimental learning field where varieties and agronomic practices are tested and compared. Each FFS group member is involved in monitoring everything that happens in a part of the plot. By season long evaluations, all farmers build up a deep understanding of the factors that influence agricultural production. Each group must have their own learning plot and all farmers must participate; No exception to this rule!

**Explicit focus on building strong groups**
From the very start, the importance of building a strong group is a key aspect of the training. Group dynamics is an integral part of the training curriculum. Singing and dancing are part of Rwandan culture and play a crucial role in FFS groups as well. It is the effort in creating strong groups that pays off in terms of social benefits. Always keep group dynamics high on the agenda. Never underestimate its importance.

**Always analyze the specific needs**
The work with every new group starts with making a needs assessment. The group decides which challenges need solutions. Good agronomic practices are generic, but a farmer should not just be told what to do. Always allow farmers to discover by themselves and to find the solutions for their challenges.

**Keep having fun**
Having fun is a crucial part of FFS. Farmers enjoy themselves while singing, dancing, doing group exercises and by working together. The experiments can also be fun, like observing which insect might eat the other insect in the insect zoo experiment.
Exciting tools used in FFS
Agro Eco System Analysis (AESA)

The main tool for discovery based learning

Why doing AESA?
• To promote farmers learning through discovery
• To encourage farmers to make their own analysis
• To allow farmers to critically analyse and make better decisions on their own fields
• To draw and understand morphological parts of a plant and their uses during the crop growth
• To familiarize FFS members to describe field situations

How?
• Farmers observe plants in very detail
• They measure plant growth and discover insects, spots on leaves, etc.
• They draw the plant and write down all findings
• They present their finding and recommendations to group members and decide together what to do

When?
• Every time the group meets in the FFS field plot
Ballot Box Test
An important tool to evaluate what group members know

Why doing ballot box tests?
• Because it is a fun way to evaluate what farmers know!
• Because everyone can enjoy this kind of tests!
• Because it is really practical and it is about real plants, insects, weeds,…
• Because it encourages critical observation

How?
• Select relevant specimen of insects, weeds, disease symptoms, fertilizers, soils samples etc.
• Prepare questions with 3 possible answers of which only 1 is correct
• Use plastic bottles and strings
• Set up 10 to 20 questions for a moving exam
• After all participants casted their votes, discuss the results

When?
• When you do a similar test in the beginning and the end, you can evaluate progress
Which of these is an insect pest?
Insect Zoo Experiment
An important tool to learn about the behavior of insects

Why doing Insect Zoo Experiments?
• Farmers learn about the behavior of insects
• Differentiate “Good” from “Bad” insects
• Learn about biological control and natural enemies
• Reducing the use of insecticide

How?
• Farmers observe what insects do to their plants and to each other.
• Put plant leaves and various insects in a plastic bottle & observe what happens
• Analyse what you see and decide what to do
• Sometimes, an insect zoo is just happening without setting up an experiment (see picture: ants attack a caterpillar)

When?
• Whenever you find insects that you are not familiar with
“I really loved the ‘insect zoo’ experiments in which we put bean leafs with plant lice on it together with a ladybird beetle in a bottle and we checked what happened. The plant lice sucked the sap from the leaf but the ladybird beetle ate all the plant lice! That is how we learned which insects attack our plant and which insects are our friends. Learning how to observe makes us confident that we are now better prepared for what the future will throws at us.” says Thomas Habanabakize, FFS Facilitator in Ngoma District.
FFS Facilitators = key persons for 2-way communication with farmers

Centre for Information & communication

- Training booklets
- Training videos
- Radio shows

Extension Website

http://nozubu.minagri.gov.rw

Facilitators access the website dedicated to extension workers and call the HOT line

2 way communication by SMS
Results of FFS
What do farmers say?

98% of FFS farmers are very satisfied with the skills and attitude of the FFS Facilitator.

70% of the FFS farmers apply what they have learned in their own farm.

76% of FFS farmers report that productivity has increased by at least 50%.

73% of farmers report that farm revenue has increased by at least 50%.

Data from Mid Season assessment 2015B with 2924 FFS groups.

What did we measure?

Harvest Survey results (2015B)

73% of FFS Farmers apply Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) vs. 38% of the non trained farmers.

Productivity of FFS farmers (compared to non trained farmers - measured on a scale, average for all crops)

+45%

Value of additional production per hectare

€ 300

Productivity of FFS farmers who apply GAP (compared to all farmers who don’t apply GAP)

+82%

Total value of additional production of 200,000 FFS Farmers per year

€ 20,000,000

Data from the Harvest Survey 2015B with 1400 Farmers.
COFAR, the cooperative of FFS Facilitators of Rubavu District proudly present their big banana bunches. The biggest bunch was 245Kg!
We asked FFS group leaders: “How many % of farmers in your groups apply Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) in their own farm?”

Answered: 2,763  Skipped: 0

We observed in the harvest survey that

73% applied GAP
We asked FFS Farmers: “How much did the productivity of FFS farmers who apply GAP increase?

In the harvest survey we measured an average difference of +82%

(FFS farmers applying GAP compared to all farmers not applying GAP)
What is the most important reason for farmers to join an FFS group?

38% says to belong to a strong group where members can help each other

33% says to have more food for the family

29% says to be able to sell more products to the market
Organized Farmers

= An important result on its own

Groups are entry points for many additional topics.
FFS groups discuss these as special topics during the weekly sessions

**HIV/AIDS**
- Awareness
- & Prevention

**Gender**
- Equality

**School fees**

**Marketing**

**Family**
- Planning

**Health Insurance**

**Nutrition**

FFS groups can invite trainers for special topics.
Some FFS Facilitators are also trained in special topics:
- 60 FFS Facilitators are trained as HIV Peer Educator
- 300 FFS Facilitators are trained as Gender Peer Trainer
The “Men engage” gender approach was introduced in FFS. It aims to change the unequal gender power relations by talking about positive masculinity and femininity. Through family dialogue and a journey of change important problems such as gender based violence and gender discrimination are addressed from its root causes. Male and female FFS facilitators are role models and peer trainers.
FFS can be the start of real economic development

Most FFS groups do more than learning alone. Group saving models and group income generating activities are interesting examples:

**Savings**
- Monthly contributions by all members
- Group members can borrow money from the group at low interest rate
- Members can decide on how to use their savings

**Income generation**
- Groups invest in an economic activity to earn income for the group. These activities include leasing land and produce for the market, a shop, livestock, fishery, forestry, value addition etc.
FFS tomato/potato group invested in **pig production**

FFS potato group invested in **potato seed production and storage**

FFS soyabean group ventured into **commercial forestry**

FFS banana group invested in **large scale banana production**
71% of FFS groups have internal savings

22% of FFS groups have an extra income generating activity for the group
Sustainability!
FFS groups are sustainable

3 year old groups (and older) are still active!

86% of FFS groups created between 2009 and 2012, have still an experimental FFS plot in 2015 & and the groups meet weekly

Older groups can sell more of their production to the market

Groups that can sell more than 50% of what they produce on the market:

18% of groups created in 2015

51% of groups created in 2013 - 2014

80% of groups created in 2009 - 2012

Source: Mid Season assessment 2015B with 2924 FFS groups
First, **farmers became proximity extension agents**! Later on, they organized themselves in cooperatives to become **professional service providers**!
At the end of their training, FFS facilitators officially graduate and receive a certificate.

In each district, the FFS facilitators formed a cooperative to be able to work as professional service provider.

The cooperatives of FFS facilitators have signed performance contracts with the District and the Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB).
Taking Success to Scale
The FFS Program in Rwanda was finalist of the DAC Prize 2015

For Taking Development Innovation to Scale
“Innovation is by construction and not just instruction. This principle of ‘constructionism’ is what the FFS project has applied to improve crops yield. This makes farmers more inclusive in the solution that is welcomed in an ever dwindling and constrained resources world of today. Any education environment can learn to apply this concept for better results.”

Julius O. Akinyemi, member of the DAC Prize Jury, Resident Entrepreneur at Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Media Lab
Taking Success to scale

**IPM Project: 2009 - 2011**

- **25,000 Farmers** (Achieved)
- Growth: 8500 new Farmers/Year
- **1.3%** of Rwandan Farmers

**SSPAT II Project: 2011 - 2016**

- **200,000 Farmers** (Achieved)
- Growth: 35,000 new farmers/Year
- **10%** of Rwandan Farmers

**Twigire Muhinzi: 2016 - 2020**

- **1,800,000 Farmers** (Target 2020)
- Growth: 300,000 new farmers/Year
- **90%** of Rwandan Farmers
Map of the 8,700 FFS groups in Rwanda in 2016

2531 FFS Facilitators
8700 FFS groups
200,000 Farmers
Strategy behind the scaling up?

Repeat

FFS is not new...

We simply respected all success factor and made them stronger

Innovate

Farmers become FFS Facilitators

FFS Facilitators become professional service providers

Localize

FFS Facilitator cooperatives sign Performance contracts (Imihigo) with the government
FFS in Twigire Muhinzi
A Rwandan Home Grown Solution to Increase Yields and Foster Solidarity

- Reach all farmers immediately through Farmer Promoters (FP) and Demo plots
- Reach all farmers gradually through Farmer Field Schools (FFS)

**Farmer Promoter**
(Target: 14,600)

Farmer Promoters facilitate access to inputs and invite all farmers to visit the village demo plot 3x per season to learn good agronomic practices.

**FFS Facilitators**
(Target: 5,000)

FFS Facilitators facilitate the learning process in the FFS groups.

**FFS Plot**

FFS group members work every week in the FFS plot and get deep understanding of crop production through observation & analysis.

**Demo Plot**

FFS facilitators train Farmer Promoters in the establishment of DEMO plots, based on FFS best practices.
Farmer promoters quickly reach all farmers to provide access to inputs combined with basic extension messages through mobilization and demonstration plots. Each village has identified one farmer promoter through a participatory exercise. Farmer Promoters ensure that eligible farmers in the village are included in the input requirement lists of the subsidy program of MINAGRI (CIP). He/She collaborates with the agro dealers to ensure that the requested subsidized inputs are in line with the guidelines and specific situation of each farmer (land size, crop, etc). The farmer promoters mobilize the farmers to consolidate land, plant in time and use the inputs appropriately. They promote the use of both organic and inorganic fertilizer. An important tool to convince the farmers in the village is the demonstration plots in which the farmer promoter shows the potential of using good inputs combined with agronomic practices. To facilitate the work of the farmer promoters, farmers are organized in groups of about 20 farmers. The groups visit the demonstration plots at least 3 times during the season. Currently, a total of 14,200 farmer promoters are trained to disseminate basic extension messages to the farmer groups.

FFS Facilitators gradually reach all farmers with in depth knowledge by offering an experimental learning experience in the Farmer Field School (FFS) plot. Farmers are organized in FFS groups which are facilitated by 2350 FFS Facilitators. In FFS, the plant is the teacher and the FFS plot is the school. The FFS approach builds the skills and capacity of farmers to identify and analyze problems, to conduct experiments aiming at developing local solutions appropriate to local specific challenges. Based on the principle “Learning by doing” farmers truly develop their decision making skills which help them to handle current and future challenges effectively and thus farmers become progressively managers of their own economic activities. Each FFS group needs a competent facilitator (with strong technical and facilitation skills) to lead FFS group members through the hands-on learning process. Each FFS group has its own experimental learning plot in which the group members meet on a weekly basis.
FFS Facilitators play a crucial role in capacity building of FFS Farmers & Farmer Promoters.

The village model

- Village
  - FFS Facilitator
  - Farmer Promoter
  - Village Agricultural Committee
  - DEMO PLOT
  - Twigire Groups (15-20) x 5
    - 3-5 members per Twigire group join the FFS groups
      - FFS Group 1
        - FFS Plot 1
        - Crop 1
      - FFS Group 2
        - FFS Plot 2
        - Crop 2
      - FFS Group 3
        - FFS Plot 3
        - Crop 3
The ultimate goal is that all farmers have access to inputs and advice on how to use them through a Farmer Promoter & get access to in-depth learning through experimentation facilitated by a FFS Facilitator.
FFS Success Stories

Be inspired by the success stories of these facilitators and their groups!
A women full of confidence

Ms Modeste UWAMAHORO
34 year old cassava facilitator from Kamonyi district

MY STORY

“I was chosen by the district in August 2012 to start with the FFS training in cassava. I was just a normal farmer, but maybe they saw that I had confidence to train and coach others. After the training, I started facilitating 1 group in better & more productive agricultural techniques. I also applied what I had learned at home and the production increased. The neighbours saw the difference in my household because now we are eating better & our living conditions improved. That is why they started copying the FFS techniques. I developed a higher self-esteem because other women came to me for advice. I can openly talk to people instead of being just a mother at home taking care of the children. Now my husband is also caring for the family and I am surprised that he is a good cook!”

“Now my husband is also caring for the family and I am surprised that he is a good cook”
We became entrepreneurs

Ingelimubuhinzi
Farmer Field School group
Muko sector
Active in tomato & potato
since 2010

OUR STORY

We started as FFS group in 2012. Our facilitator trained us in tomato and potato. As such, we can change both crops according to the season. With the income from the tomato production, we bought 3 pigs. They produced piglets which we distributed to all members of the group. Now we all have organic fertilizer and we started a business of selling piglets to other farmers. So thanks to FFS, we were able to develop a business and earn a lot from that. We also developed a saving scheme to help 1 group member each month. In the future we hope that all group members can have a cow as well to start the same business. We are now smart in our way of thinking, we see business opportunities!

“Thanks to FFS, we were able to develop a piglet business and earn a lot from that”
We are researchers!

Icyerekezo
Farmer Field School group in cassava
Kabagari sector

OUR STORY

When we started as a FFS group in 2012, we compared different cassava varieties on our experimental plot. We saw that the local varieties were doing much better than the varieties we were using before, even with the same amount of mulching & fertilization. Our production was five times higher than before and these local varieties are disease resistant. Thanks to this success, we could buy land to produce even more cassava. We have become examples for our neighbors because now we are out of poverty! We were able to improve our nutrition, buy new clothes, mattresses, and even cows ... Above all, the group connects people together. We are taking care for each other. And we will continue to do our own research.

“We selected the best local varieties and the harvest is five times more than before.”
Women can also grow bananas!

Female members from 5 Farmer Field School groups in Gashanda sector All active in banana

OUR STORY

We started with the FFS activities in 2010. Before that, we used to stay at home and our husbands went to the farm. We actually did not know what was going on in the field. But our FFS facilitator learned us good agricultural practices to produce bananas. After harvesting, our husbands saw the change: instead of saving 500 RWF on each banana bunch, we could save up to 6000 RWF! Now we are training everyone in our family how to produce bananas. Before FFS, we were poor, but now we are somehow rich. Instead of depending on our husbands, we can buy our own clothes, and even buy clothes for our husbands. We are proud that all group members can all pay the school fees for the children and provide healthy meals for our families! Most of all, we are proud that we can make our own decisions!

“Before FFS, we never went to the banana field. But now we are training everyone in our family how to produce banana”
Discovering the seed market

Tuzamuranebahinzi
Farmer Field School group
in Busasamana sector
Active in potato since 2009

OUR STORY

We started as a FFS group in 2009. Before FFS we were also growing potatoes, but we were using a lot of seed and energy, while the production was low. Thanks to FFS our production increased a lot. Our group was strong and in 2010 we received an official cooperative certificate. Our facilitator trained us how to produce potato seed as well as how to store it in a good way. We all worked hard to contribute money to buy land for seed production & to build a store. Potato seed has a good price on the market and our income increased a lot. Some of the members of our group are affected by HIV. We are proud that as a group we could buy cows for them. The daily fresh milk helps them to fight malnutrition. We are really committed on helping & supporting each other. Every week we visit a member of the group to see if we can do something to improve the family’s life.

“Potato seed has a good price on the market and our income increased a lot.”
I was elected as facilitator by other farmers

Mr Thomas NIZIYIMANA
56 years old banana Facilitator in Nemba sector

MY STORY

The first time I heard about FFS was when another FFS facilitator came to our community to mobilize all farmers to fight banana diseases. When I went back to my farm, I did what that FFS Facilitator had explained. Then the farmers in my area elected me to go to the FFS banana training for new facilitators. They thought I was a good example farmer in different crops and capable to train them when I would be back from the training.

Now I facilitate 4 FFS groups and I also assist other neighbors who need my advice on good banana production. I have developed many skills and I receive many visitors. I have gained decision power in the community because I showed them that I could even produce big banana bunches on bad land. They were so surprised that they gave me a certificate to talk about the banana disease BXW in the whole sector. I am really happy now and have a lot of motivation.

"The local leaders thought I was lying. But I showed them that I can even produce big banana bunches on bad land."
Successful Spin Off n°1

Community Mobilization campaigns are technically led by qualified FFS facilitators
Community Mobilization Campaigns (CMC)

A spin-off that delivers

CMC is a coordinated intervention to eradicate diseases such as *BXW* in banana and *Striga* in cereals.

242,000 farmers united to fight diseases on over 10,000 hectares

Governors, Mayors and local leaders mobilize the farmers to work together in a consolidated land areas to fight diseases. The specific actions to be taken depend on the severity of the infection: heavily infected banana fields need to be uprooted completely, while in lightly infected areas only diseased plants are removed. The surrounding fields are rehabilitated to make the plants stronger and thus to prevent the disease of coming back. The FFS facilitators play a crucial role in disease identification and they technically lead the interventions!
Successful Spin Off n°2

The interactive training of seed growers was inspired by the success of FFS
SEED PRODUCERS

Enabling the private sector to produce seeds

“No, Agronome, we can do it differently!” interrupts a seed producer, in response to a statement by a trainer from the Rwanda Agricultural Board (RAB) on how to deal with weeds in her plot.

Then tell us how you would do it, and give us your reasons for the method you choose,” the RAB trainer responds.

The seed producer proceeds to state her case while the rest of the participants listen carefully.

The scene of this exchange is a training session in Kinigi for a group of private seed potato producers from the Northern Province. This particular day, the group is visiting the field of Musabiyimana Emmanuel and members are discussing two crucial issues: weeding and the proper use of fertilizer and manure.
The main advantage of the new training methodology is that it is hands-on and carried out in the field and offers the possibility of sharing experiences amongst the seed producers,” Jean Pierre Nduwimana, RAB trainer.

The training programme of private seed producers is accompanied with other initiatives to improve the seed value chain; preparing the seed sector in Rwanda for a future with increased regional harmonization of the seed trade regulations that require a strong and independent Seed Quality Control System.

In partnership with the Belgian Development Agency (BTC) under the Support to SPAT II Programme, MINAGRI and RAB are developing the capacity of private seed producers to produce high quality certified seed. According to Musabyimana Emmanuel, a seed producer: “My harvest has gone up significantly ever since we started receiving training. As a result, my income has also improved and I can afford a better lifestyle.” Banzamihigo Aaron, another seed producer, says what he likes most about the training is the fact that he can share experiences with fellow seed producers. “You might think you are facing a new problem, yet one of the members faced it before and can give you good advice,” he explains.

**Key Facts**

**On the training program for Private Seed Producers.**

- Builds on best practices from the FFS and adapted to the specific needs for seed producers.
- 33 seed producer groups in Rwanda, including 365 registered seed producers.
- Each group meets in the seed producers own fields at five critical stages during the growing season.
- Trainers: RAB crop experts, seed producers themselves, “fields and plants”
- Interactive and practical hands-on training methodology tailor made to the specific needs of each group through group discussions, sharing of experiences, questionnaires and ballot box tests.

The very idea of a rural seed producer expressing disagreement with an official from a government body over technical matters would come as a surprise to many, and yet this sort of frank exchange is a routine occurrence in the seed producers’ meetings.

After the seed producer’s submission, the group engages in a lively discussion of both proposals before coming up with a solution that satisfies everyone. The less experienced seed producers listening with interest to the more experienced ones.

“When we are in the field, we are very open with each other. That is the best way to encourage learning. Even when they do not follow our recommendations exactly, they tell us why; then we have a discussion and together come up with a way forward,” says Aloys Musabyisoni, trainer from RAB.

This scene is typical of the interactive training methodology that was developed by picking best lessons from the successful Farmer Field School model that is characterized by observation and open discussion among group members, and then modifying it to suit training for private Seed producers.
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The FFS activities are implemented by Rwanda Agriculture Board with support from the Belgian Government through the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources and the Belgian Development Agency BTC.

The FFS activities are now integrated in the national extension approach TWIGIRE MUHINZI, which is implemented through MINAGRI and MINALOC, with the support of several development partners.
**KEY FIGURES**

of Farmer Field Schools (FFS) in Rwanda (2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FFS FACILITATORS</strong></td>
<td>2531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated after season long training &amp; coaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FFS FACILITATOR’S COOPERATIVES</strong></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With 2300 members working as Professional Service Providers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FFS FARMERS</strong></td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowered to take smart decisions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OF RWANDAN VILLAGES</strong></td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>benefiting from at least one FFS group in the village</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRODUCTIVITY INCREASE</strong></td>
<td>+45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of FFS farmers compared to non trained farmers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+ € **20,000,000**

Estimated value of ADDITIONAL production of all FFS farmers in 2016