



Demonstration:

A way to make novelties “your own”

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The Challenge: to make the demonstrations adapted to each individual

*An important aspect of a demonstration is not only what novelty is presented but how information is provided to the visitors. Demonstrations give farmer the opportunity to **see innovations in practice** and experience these ‘hands-on’. Demonstration activities help participant to assess to what extent a new practice, tool, material ... may be useful to them and at which conditions. Demonstrations are particularly effective if participants can see and hear what is demonstrated and if there are interactions between demonstrators and participants, and between participants. Farmers need to make new knowledge ‘their own’, i.e. relate it to their own situation on their own farm. This requires not only ‘showing and demonstrating’ but also to facilitate observation, listening and interaction.*

That is the role of an efficient and interactive demonstration.

PLAID lessons: Good practices of demonstration

- **Organise practical demonstration** gives the opportunity to show how novelties work in practice. Number of attendants, noise and weather may make it difficult to communicate. It is essential to find different ways to explain what is being demonstrated:
 - Ensure good audibility and visibility;
 - Address possible drawbacks and propose relevant answers;
 - Interact with visitors on what is demonstrated and how it can be implemented in participants’ farms.
- **Propose hands-on activities** give participants a real-life experience. The objective is to allow them to touch, test, practice and comment novelties which are demonstrated, or their potential effects. This kind of activities requires:
 - limited group size (5-10 people)
 - a high level of preparation to build very practical activities
 - a high number of demonstrators/facilitators to be able to handle small groups
 - well facilitated interactions with visitors on what is done and what is experienced
- **Show and discuss also failures** where the practice was difficult to implement, the material didn’t work properly ... which serve as important objects for mutual learning and for delimiting the area of relevance of the proposed novelty.
- **Facilitate informal peer to peer discussions:** ‘benchmarking’ ideas with peers increases visitors’ self-confidence and allows them to discuss the potentials barriers to adopting a new approach. These exchanges can take place beyond influence of demo organisers and can be carried out without moderation, in order to improve the quality of exchange. The role of the organisers is therefore to provide ‘free space and free time’ in the demo program to allow self-reflection.

Examples of strengths and weaknesses, tips and tricks from PLAID case studies:

- Demonstrations are often carried out in small groups or workshops, in the fields or the barns, after a first part of the demo day including a lecture or an interactive presentation. A narrative by the demonstrator can usefully be accompanied by a practical **demonstration** or visual observation of an object that is made available for public display. The participation of the host farmer gives more strengths to the demonstration. (Latvia, United Kingdom, Italy, France).
- The Field Event can involve a tour of the estate and organised farm stops where speakers demonstrate and present a specific subject around the farm stop topic. The aim for each of the farm stops is to generate knowledge exchange and encourage discussion between the group, sharing their experiences, answering and asking questions, rather than just presenting an innovation or approach to them (United Kingdom, France).
- The participants can be asked to be active during the whole event: enter the “holes”, touch, smell and taste the soil and compare their impressions. They can do their own diagnosis of the soil status and propose managing solutions that were discussed with the host farmer, advisers and the other participants (Italy).
- The expert can first talk about a health card for soil, and handed out a written mapping tool so the participants could do the mapping work in their own fields as well. Then the expert specifically demonstrates how to conduct these soil samples, and gives the opportunity for participants to learn how to study the quality of the soil, by for instance looking at the texture, counting earthworms, and smell the condition of the soil. (Norway)
- During the demo, participants (students in this case) can be able to try handling seedlings and plants by hands, to smell some specific seedlings for recognition, to handle machinery (Croatia).
- When the hosts are present along the field walk they can draw attention to different items in their respective area of responsibility and can bring the group to spots where some damage or failures could be observed (e.g. poles that did not manage to hold up apple trees in the recent strong wind), which serves as an important object for mutual learning (Latvia).
- It is helpful if farmers can show both the front yard and the backyard of the farm without eliminating the traces of any failures faced in their farming experience. It represents an important factor for demonstrating real-life conditions and for encouraging the process of **peer-to-peer learning**. This can trigger a mutual exchange of experiences in dealing with similar problems on one’s own farm. According to the participants in the demonstration events, it is very important, and it is crucial for farmers involved in the demonstration to speak out about the problems and mistakes they face. Sharing, including negative experiences, is also important for effective peer education. (Bulgaria, Latvia)
- Most of the demo can be speaker frontal presentation, but with numerous examples and experiences from seedling and vegetable production. Speaker demonstrated not only good experiences, but also some mistakes from the past and learned “how not to” do some things. Speaker also encouraged students to ask questions, so communication was not only one way direction but in reciprocity. Students were able to try handling with a planting machine, planting seedlings, glasshouse maintenance and vegetable handling (Croatia).

