



Mediation: Methods to enhance knowledge exchange

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The Challenge: to help participants interpret the information provided

An important aspect of a demonstration is not only which information is provided but, how this information is provided to the visitors. This 'mediation' has a great influence on how well the visitors process the information provided, and how this helps them to assess what may be useful to them. This requires an interaction, between demonstrators and visitors and among visitors.

*Farmers need to make new knowledge 'their own', relate it to their own situation on their own farm - adapting before adopting. This requires not just 'providing objective information' but interacting with farmers and advisors to connect the information provided to their motivations and attitudes, to remove to barriers to adoption. This requires the use of facilitation skills and methods to **make the demonstration interactive**.*

That is the role of mediation.

PLAID lessons: Good practices to facilitate interactions

- **Organise smaller groups** (up to 15 people) which work better to achieve interaction between visitors. For field walks, this can be moderated by a guide who can explain or describe what is observed and who stimulates a discussion on these observations. If a speaker does not have any facilitation skills, it is advisable that a separate **facilitator** moderates the discussion.
- **Stimulate interaction** by asking each demonstrator to propose discussions based on their presentation and/or provide facilitators to do this.
- **Use** different presentation and interactive tools at different places and times of your demo event: indoors and outdoors; with different type of demonstrators or facilitators; practical and theoretical; with visual supports or material; with the possibility to touch and do hands on activities, where feasible; allow and facilitate peer to peer discussion.
- **Train the demonstrators about facilitation** methods they will be useful.
Make the key message clear, limit the number of key messages as people can only process a limited amount of new information. Repeat *the key messages* to make the new knowledge 'stick'.

- Give visitors **materials to take home** to encourage them to review the key messages.
- **Failed examples** are a good way to stimulate learning and also help to raise the credibility of the presenter.
- Being able to **conduct business** at the demonstration is also a way to make the messages stick. This can take the form of directly buying or ordering products or establishing new relations with businesses to follow-up later.
- **Networking** between visitors and with demonstrators is important to stimulate reflection and to make messages stick. Provide **'open space' in the programme** to facilitate such networking and self-reflection.

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

- The presence of several members (male and female) of the host farm to encourage engagement of the participants (Latvia)
- Organisation of the visitors in small peer groups (2-4 people in Latvia, about 10 people in Belgium) to enhance learning and sharing of experiences
- Posters, with field diagrams, figures, comparator photographs, etc., made specifically for demo events and presented during the field visit as well as “mobile” supports such as flyers with templates and figures (France, GB)
- Workshops organized indoor and directly on the field, with the possibility for the visitors to choose the workshops they want to participate in and organisation of exchanges and discussions (France, GB ...)
- The whole demo event in the field with no posters or lectures. Facilitators played the main role in demonstration (Italy). Presence of a “group facilitator” that follows the group with the objective to facilitate exchanges and interactions, to ask questions to participants (The Netherlands)
- Short interactive and practical lecture provided conjunctly by the visiting expert and the local advisers, with visual supports. Open questions during the lectures, with specific time, at several occasions to interact, and for the farmers to express their own practices on their farms (France, Italy, Switzerland). Informal exchanges before and after them (Norway, Belgium).
- Use of the leeks by seed suppliers as communication material; they arranged them in an attractive way and let the product speak for itself (The Netherlands)
- Informal moments (coffee, lunch) to stimulate exchanges
- Organisation of a small quiz during lunch time, with small prizes for the winners (Latvia), or interactive voting systems through a platform accessible from the participants smartphones during the demo (Belgium, Italy, Switzerland)

