

An Assessment of the Factors that Impact the Level of Success of Farmer Field School training in Tanzania: A Descriptive Study

Upendo Kimati

ABSTRACT

Farmer Field School (FFS) is a participatory extension approach that started as an effort to implement participatory farmer training activities in the Philippines. The FFS aims to empower farmers address different problems in their fields, to look for alternative solutions to problems and to decide on the best solution. However, the FFS extension approach has not been as successful as expected despite the efforts made by the government and outside funding agencies. This study was conducted to assess the factors that impact the level of success of farmer field school (FFS) training in Tanzania. Specific objectives of the study were (a) to identify the demographic characteristics of the participants in the study; (b) to identify farmer's motivational factors towards Farmers Field School Training; (c) to describe factors affecting implementation of Farmers Field School designed to address farmer priority problems; and (d) to describe the impact of Farmers Field School training on FFS members and on Non-FFS members. Data were collected from 80 farmer respondents using structured questionnaires. And were analyzed using the program from the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Data suggest that young people participate less in agricultural activities as expected. Females were more engaged in FFS training than males. This was especially true for married females. Misinformation exists about FFS which probably explains why major reasons given joining the FFS training include seeking for general knowledge, the opportunity to increase incomes. Most farmers have very small plots under production, and most of those include in the survey had low incomes. The data collected from respondents indicate that FFS training tended to have a positive impact on crop productivity, market information, and relationship among farmers and between farmers and extension agents. Also, the conduct of FFS reduced the costs for extension activity and increased the ability of extension agents to reach many farmers through farmer-to-farmer knowledge spread. Based on the results of this study it is recommended that considerable effort be made by district offices (a) to train new extension agents on FFS; (b) to ensure that farmers be given correct and detailed information about FFS's; and (c) to ensure that agricultural extension efforts are free from political activity. It is also recommended that future research consider examination of motivational factors affecting implementation of FFS training, particularly those related to the involvement of extension agents in the process because of its impact on successful FFS programs.