

The Farm Walk – Farm-Led Demonstrations

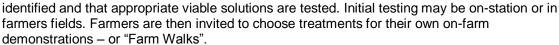


What is a Farm Walk?

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



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
 - o **Easy access and good visibility**: Use fields close to roads and/or the village center.
 - o 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.

For more information visit: http://ip.ucdavis.edu
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