

Challenges facing Farmer Field Schools (FFSs) in Fayoum Governorate

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Abstract

FFSs have been used as an effective group learning approach in rural Egypt. In each FFS a number of farmers (20-25 males, females or mixed) meet regularly (on a weekly basis) with their facilitators, who perform the needed activities to make group learning easier by organizing the FFSs' communication and educational activities through organized and interactive discussions, participatory learning among farmers.

This study investigated the challenges facing FFSs' facilitators and farmers while participating in FFSs and the suggested solutions confronting these challenges. The study was conducted in Fayoum Governorate. All the Ministry of Agriculture extension workers (47), who work, in 3 Districts of Fayoum, and function as facilitators in the investigated 20 FFSs, were personally interviewed by using a questionnaire designed and pretested for data collection. In addition, a sample of 196 farmers, representing 49% of all the members of FFSs, in the three districts, was selected and personally interviewed. Frequencies and percentages were used for data presentation and analysis.

The study results revealed that:

1. Several challenges facing the FFSs' facilitators include: lack of transportation facilities (as reported by 36.2%), lack of appropriate incentives for facilitators (34%) and lack of funds allocated by the Government for FFSs (32%). Facilitators' recommendations to face these challenges were: providing them with convenient transportation facilities and financial incentives.
2. Challenges facing the FFSs' members were: high prices of inputs (as reported by 35.2%), lack of irrigation water at the ends of the canals (27.6%), lack of demonstration fields for FFSs (19.9%), and lack of incentives for farmers (13.8%). Farmers' recommendations to face these challenges include: conducting demonstration fields for FFSs (as reported by 21.4%), visiting the distinguished farms (21.4%), providing incentives for FFSs' members (18.9%), and providing production inputs at supported prices.