

FARMER BUSINESS SCHOOL

A Climate-Smart and Gender-Responsive Approach

Farmer Business School (FBS) is a participatory action learning process that involves farmer groups' participation in agricultural value chains. As part of capacity strengthening, FBS comprises a series of group-based experiential learning activities over a production-marketing cycle while interacting with other chain actors and stakeholders.



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Sweetpotato chips with label and packaging showcased during the launching of farmer group businesses in the Cordillera, Philippines. (Left photo from CCAFS website, Right photo from FoodSTART)

Evolution of FBS: The Indonesia Experience

FBS approach was developed by the International Potato Center (CIP) in 2008 through the initiative of an Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR)-funded project that aims to link vegetable farmers with key markets in West and Central Java, Indonesia.

Initially, the project used the Participatory Market Chain Approach (PMCA) to address the marketing problems of the farmers that impede the advancement of the potato sector and minimize the benefits of smallholder potato farmers.

PMCA facilitates participatory processes among different market chain actors to stimulate joint innovations (commercial, technological, institutional) based on

shared ideas and trust. During 2010 mid-project review, PMCA practitioners identified limited business skills and ineffective farmer organizations as key constraints to effective market linkages. Farmers also had little understanding of market opportunities and inadequate access to market information such as trends, prices and demand.

Drawing from the features of Farmer Field School (FFS)-a group-based learning process focused on promoting integrated pest management in farmers' field, the FBS was developed in harmony with PMCA. It is an action learning approach that aims to build farmers' capacity to respond, individually or jointly, to emerging market opportunities.



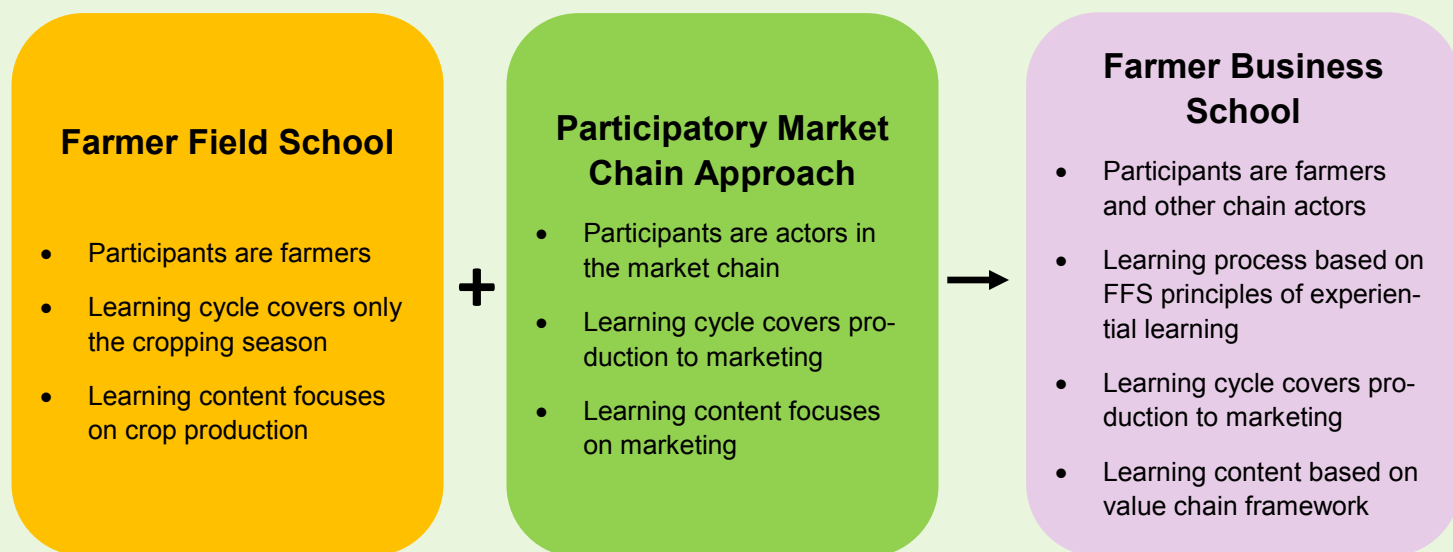


Figure 1. The Evolution of the FBS Approach

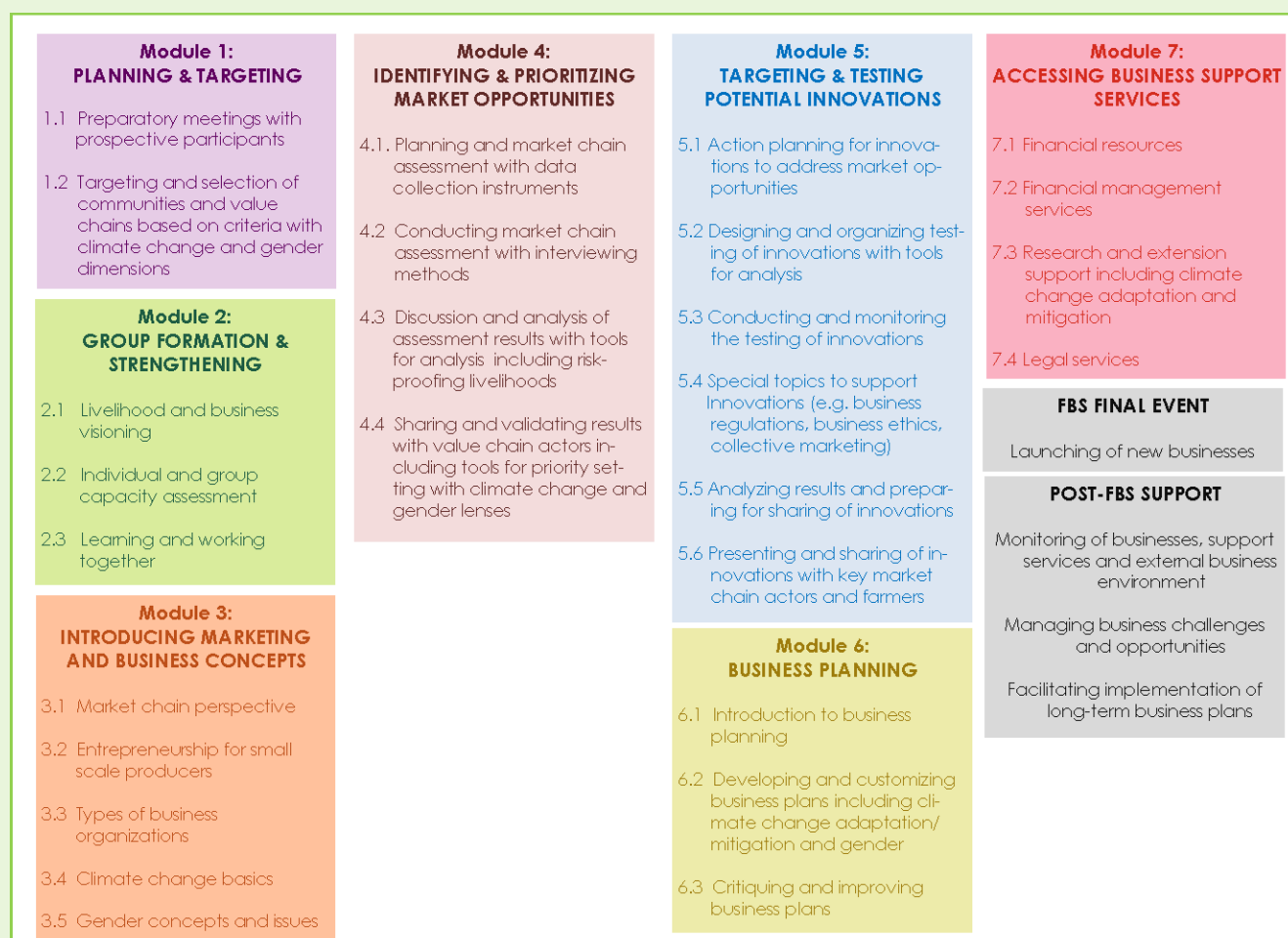


Figure 2. FBS Curriculum with Climate Change and Gender Dimensions

FBS participants are individual farmers in a learning group, interacting with market chain actors and stakeholders. The approach facilitates experiential, field-based and joint learning over a four to six month crop production-marketing cycle. As tangible outcome of FBS, farmer-participants are expected to have actual businesses initiated or strengthened upon completing the FBS learning process.

Adapting FBS: IFAD investment projects and FoodSTART/+ Collaboration

Building on the success of FBS in Indonesia, the FoodSTART project, led by CIP, has promoted its adoption in the framework of IFAD investments in Asia with the aim to strengthen farmers' entrepreneurial capacity as they seek to participate in dynamic agricultural value chains.

In the first phase of FoodSTART (IFAD grant, 2011-2015), CIP partnered with CHARMP2 in the Philippines. CHARMP2 implemented FBS with more than 80 farmers groups, and still continues to use it as their main livelihood approach. Presently, being FBS graduates has been included among the requisites for access-



(Left photo) FBS session with men and women farmers in the field; (Right photo) Booths during the FBS business launching event in Cordillera, Philippines

ing loans provided by the project.

The second phase of FoodSTART (FoodSTART+, IFAD/EU grant, 2015-2018) is currently scaling out FBS with a number of IFAD investments in the region: INREMP and FishCORAL (Philippines), Megha-LAMP (India) and SRDP (Vietnam). FBS implementation with SOLID (Indonesia) is scheduled to start in early 2018. Based on lessons learnt during the first phase of FoodSTART climate change and gender perspectives have been integrated in the FBS curriculum while the nutritional value of marketed commodities (fresh or processed) is being progressively incorporated.



FBS with IFAD investment projects partnering with FoodSTART/+

Through FBS, participating farmer groups are able to (1) develop market-driven product innovations; (2) establish and expand linkages with markets - local and regional; and (3) generate new and additional profits through increased volume and value of their products. Presently the FBS approach is supported, adopted and adapted by several IFAD investments to capacitate farmers to develop their micro/small enterprises and businesses. Implementation is co-funded by the grant and the investment:

CHARMP2: As of December 2016, 80 farmer groups with 1,387 graduates (83% women). In 2017-2018, the scaling up project is continuing to implement FBS with 18 new villages. Over 100 FBS facilitators trained. Each FBS group has received

the livelihood assistant fund (US\$ 2,000) for developing the new agri-enterprises. CHARMP2 benefited of higher repayment rates by FBS graduates.

INREMP: FBS currently piloted with six groups. 10 FBS facilitators trained.

FishCORAL: 30 FBS facilitators trained and piloting scheduled to start by end 2017.

Megha-LAMP. 18 FBS facilitators trained. FBS currently piloted with six farmers groups.

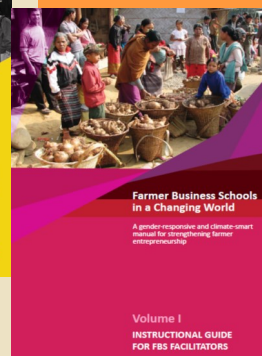
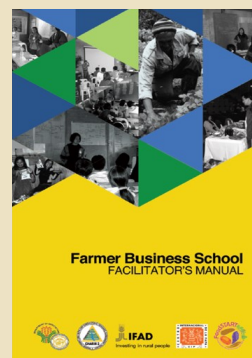
SRDP: two mini-projects supported by the investment planned to be implemented through FBS in 2018.

SOLID: 10 FBS scheduled to start in early 2018. 20 facilitators expected to be trained.

Development of FBS Facilitator's Manual

FBS facilitators must understand the whole process of FBS to ensure that objectives are met after every session of each module. The manual guides the facilitators in conducting the FBS and the processes presented in this manual may be customized according to the local conditions and environment of the community.

To date, CIP has developed three versions of facilitator's manual for FBS Indonesia, FBS with CHARMP2 and FBS with Climate Change and Gender Dimensions. These materials are developed in close collaboration with key partners, FBS facilitators and in consultation with value chain, climate change and gender experts from CIP Headquarters.



FBS Final Event



FBS Final event is a business launching activity that provides an opportunity for the participants to showcase their products through different promotional activities. It is a venue for market promotion to attract market chain actors and investors and to know more about the agri-products developed by the FBS groups.

Integrating Climate Change Perspective and Gender Dimension in the FBS Approach

Experiences in FBS applications across Southeast Asia have increasingly highlighted the need to address climate change risks in promoting farmer business development, including: 1) local adaptation strategies to ensure sustained crop production for markets, 2) targeting of and investment planning for agricultural value chains guided by long-term scenarios for climate change impact, 3) vulnerability analysis as part of business planning among micro- and small agricultural enterprises.

Integrating a climate change and gender perspective potentially makes FBS a more robust action learning approach by enabling men and women farmers to capture wider business opportunities in value chains while enhancing climate smartness on-farm.

This also promotes cross-learning and knowledge-sharing between FBS proponents and other organizations/programs involved in farmer capacity building for local adaptation/mitigation to climate change.