



FarmDemo



**EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO ENHANCE DEMONSTRATION
FOR FARMERS, FACILITATORS AND DEMO ORGANISERS**

FARMDemo POLICY BRIEF

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ANNE-CHARLOTTE DOCKES,
MARLEEN GYSEN, PETER PAREE,
BOELIE ELZEN, LIES DEBRUYNE

COLOFON

FarmDemo is a close collaboration of 3 European projects (PLAID, AgriDemo-F2F and NEFERTITI) funded under Horizon 2020. They all aim to enhance peer-to-peer learning and focus on farm demonstration as a tool to boost innovation uptake. This policy brief is one of the main outputs of the cooperation between PLAID and AgriDemo-F2F, and were developed based on input received from all partners, and during several stakeholder workshops.



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FarmDemo

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1 | INTRODUCTION

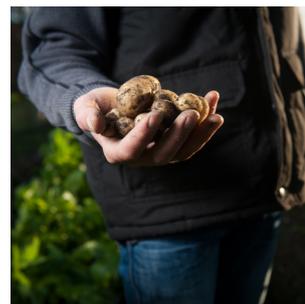
PLAID and AgriDemo-F2F Horizon 2020 MA projects cooperate to form the FarmDemo network. The main objectives are to develop an EU inventory of demonstration farms and to collect best practices for demonstration events and processes. The projects have the joint aim to enhance peer-to-peer learning and focus on on-farm demonstration as a tool to boost innovation. On-farm demonstration events focus on showing and understanding innovations within a commercial working farm context or a local setting. FarmDemo zooms in on demonstration activities from the early stages of conception right through to impact assessment, leading to the identification of best practices, innovative approaches and overall recommendations to foster demonstration activities. FARMDEMO will in the next years also cooperate with the follow-up Horizon 2020 MA project NEFERTITI which will set up concrete demonstration activities based on the outcomes and learnings of PLAID and AgriDemo-F2F.

In general, the findings of these projects confirm that:

- On-farm demonstration is an effective way to innovate / to foster innovation / to disseminate research results and best farming practices or systems to a wider audience
- Effective demonstrations foster knowledge exchange among farmers but also between students/farmers/advisors/researchers/businesses joining the events
- Effective demonstrations fare a way for scientists, students, teachers, farmers and advisors to build and share innovation and knowledge
- On-farm demonstration events are a very effective education tool, particularly if farmers have an active role to play in the demo
- On-farm demonstrations have evolved from being a more one-directional way to introduce farmers to innovation, to 'meeting places' where experiences are shared in a farmer-to-farmer setting, and to support knowledge co-creation between farmers and other actors.

The degree of social interaction between the demonstrator and participants and the active engagement required by the farmers is thus crucial. This should become the new understanding of what a demonstration event entails, to be called a peer demonstration or a demonstration 2.0

PLAID and AgriDemo-F2F have cooperated to formulate a set of key messages, primarily intended to support R&I policy-makers and funders in the European Commission, in National Ministries and Regional authorities to increase the impact of their programmes with these advantages. However, these recommendations are also intended to provide value to the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) including educational bodies and the demonstration organisers themselves.



The key messages have been developed into four policy briefs:

- Demonstration as part of dissemination activities in EU innovation support projects
- **Education and training to enhance demonstration for farmers, facilitators and demo organisers**
- Supporting Demonstration through Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) Funding Schemes
- Setting long term (EU) demonstration networks and cross-border exchange programmes

These recommendations have been designed and improved in interaction with experts and stakeholders, and inspired by data collected throughout the project. This was a multi-step process, which was initiated at the start of both projects, with the development of a visionary framework. Data was collected through a pan-European inventory of demonstration farms, developed by PLAID and AgriDemo-F2F. As part of this process, consortium members and sub-contractors identified the trends in on-farm demonstrations in the EU 28, Norway, Serbia, and Switzerland. Furthermore, an in-depth analysis of a set of 56 case studies was conducted of demonstration activities on commercial farms in 18 European partner countries to assess the processes involved in achieving efficient and effective on-farm demonstration activities.

Based on this data, a set of best practice guidelines were developed for organising, doing and evaluating on-farm demonstrations. Data was discussed and validated during 3 supranational workshops (Southern Supra-regional workshop Venice, Italy 7th February 2018; Eastern Supra-regional meeting Krakow, Poland March 2018; Northern Supra-regional meeting Leuven, Belgium March 2018), during a number of National Consultative Stakeholder Group meetings in partner countries and during 2 recommendations workshops (Alberese, Italy 25-26th February 2019; Den Bosch, Netherlands 2nd April 2019). In addition to these international workshops, data was also presented and discussed during several national stakeholder consultancy group meetings. As a final step, policy recommendations were presented and validated in 2 workshops, one during and one after the FarmDemo conference (Brussels, 21-22nd June 2019), and sent to the members of the SCAR AKIS network for review and final validation (August 2019).

The entire process resulted in four specific key recommendations, as listed above. This policy brief focuses on "Education and training to enhance demonstration for farmers, facilitators and demo organisers", and presents the main challenges, lessons learnt from PLAID and AgriDemo-F2F and the recommendation itself. Throughout the document, stakeholder quotes have been included. These are illustrative, and are only there to support our research findings.

"Compared to other knowledge transfer tools, such as brochures or websites or so on, I think that demo activities are a great option for farmers to learn in a very open context. So, in demo-activities they have the possibility to decide themselves: is this practice that I am seeing relevant for my farm, and do I want to integrate it, yes or no" (advisor, Germany)

2 | BUILDING THE RECOMMENDATION

2.1. THE RECOMMENDATION AT A GLANCE

PLAID and AgriDemo-F2F projects showed that the dissemination and peer-to-peer learning effect of a demonstration event depends on a well-structured event as well as specific skills for the hosting farmers, organisers, facilitators, and demonstrators.

Education and training programs for effective demonstration should be funded, facilitated and encouraged in each of the EU countries or regions, targeting host farmers, demo organisers, demonstrators, and facilitators.

2.2. WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

Demonstration events, or in short 'demo events', focus on visually showing and understanding innovations 'in action' within a working farm context or a local setting. There are many different types of demo events, but they all have in common that they provide authentic showcases that facilitate knowledge exchange: farmer-to-farmer and with innovation actors (advisors, researchers, input providers...). **However, to be effective, demo events must be well targeted, prepared, carried out, evaluated and improved. They are a complex activity that require well-developed and diverse specific soft and hard skills.**

The demo events we observed and analysed in the PLAID and AgriDemo-F2F projects often showed some place for improvement, in their organisation, in the demonstration methods, or in the organisers' skills, hence the need for training. Training courses can also give demo organisers the opportunity to exchange ideas and practices.

2.3. WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM PLAID AND AGRIDEMO-F2F?

2.3.1. Best practices for on-farm demonstration activities

From the 56 PLAID & AgriDemo-F2F case studies, we learnt how to target, prepare, carry out and evaluate effective demonstration activities (more information on <https://trainingkit.farmdemo.eu/demo-design-guide/>). The most important elements that should be considered are listed below:

Defining the demo objectives and target groups

Defining clear objectives of the demo determine all the other decisions an organiser makes during the preparation and organisation of the demo event. **Having a clear objective and key message aids to the success of the demo.** However, case studies showed that the specific objectives of a demo event were rarely made explicit.

The demo objective should specify what the organisers seek to achieve with the demo. It should start by addressing the **'why'** (why are we organising this demo), then the **'what'** (what do we want to demonstrate, what 'message' should visitors take home), and also the **'who'** (the targeted audience for the demo and the actors you want to involve in the organisation). These three aspects together have a big influence on the **'how'** (how will the demo set-up and learning methods be organised).

Preparing an on-farm demo event

Good preparation and planning is key for a successful demo event:

- choosing a host location (host farmer, facilities and equipment ...)
- a suitable demo period (season and time)
- establishing the implementation team (including people with good facilitation skills)
- preparing a balanced programme
- recruiting adapted to the target groups
- budgeting

Good preparation should start well in advance, for example: for a small to medium sized event one needs two months to make sure the right people can be involved in the organisation and can be well informed about how to actually carry out the demo; for a large event planning can start as early as a full year ahead of a demonstration especially if live demonstrations of field trials are to be used. Communication between people involved during the preparation and the demo event itself can be facilitated by periodic preparatory meetings, virtual discussions and a collaboration platform, etc.



Carrying out an on-farm demo event

It is important to take special care to set up the agenda of the demo event. The consecutive activities carried out during the demo event should create good learning opportunities:

- Relate learning content to the farming practice of visiting farmers
- Communicate and highlight a few clear and concise key messages of the demo
- Engage participants in active knowledge exchange – allow participant interaction through questions and answers
- Use a variety of learning methods and educational tools
- Ensure professional facilitation to ensure a smooth running event which results in good learning opportunities and exchanges
- Support active networking between participants
- Anticipate troubleshooting

Follow-up and evaluation of an on-farm demo event

A good organised evaluation and follow-up can help to increase impact and effectiveness. Doing an evaluation of the event, to reflect on what happened according to the demo event plan and what can be learnt for future events, can support organisers to learn from the experiences during the demo event. In addition to evaluating the demo set-up, also evaluating the learning outcomes of the demo provides valuable information.

Follow-up can substantially increase impact through ‘anchoring’ and ‘scaling’. Anchoring is about the application of the demo content by the participants of the demo event. Scaling refers to the impact of the demo on the wider farming community, including not only those who participated in the demo event. Follow-up activities can, therefore, make an important contribution to achieving the demo objectives set at the beginning. Follow-up activities to stimulate further learning and networking could include e.g. providing online videos and reports of the demo event or creating an online platform, social media groups, blogs or physical networks.

2.3.2. Main skills and roles of the demo actors

Host Farmer(s)

The host farmer contributes to the success of a demo event, specifically when his or her role goes beyond that of merely providing the demo site. A host farmer can be involved in different degrees in the preparation and the demo event.

“It is most effective if at least one of the demonstrators is the host farmer who can go into the specifics of using the demonstrated innovation in practice, also addressing possible downsides or the skills that are required to apply the innovation. Visiting farmers see such a farmer as one of their peers, and are more inclined to accept what he/she has to say” (policy officer, Slovenia).

The host farmer can be involved in a wide range of activities such as:

- providing and/or preparing the demo site and infrastructure;
- providing or organising catering; contributing to the overall management of the demo;
- (co-) deciding on the demo topics;
- providing content for the demo topic;
- welcoming the participants and introducing the demo event;
- performing the demonstration;
- answering specific questions;
- guiding a farm walk

The role of the host farmer is essential to establish trust between the participants and host.

Useful skills:

- Organisation and logistics
- Management
- Technical skills (not addressed by this brief)
- Speaking in public
- Active listening
- Facilitation

Demo Organisers / Logistics manager/Communication manager

The role of demo organiser is to supervise the overall organisation of the demo activity, which is targeting, preparing, carrying out and evaluating the event, but also managing the demonstration team.

Logistics manager refers to the person who has close contact with the hosting farm in the run-up of the event taking care of administration and organisational issues, taking care of a good follow-up of the programme and who keeps track of time during the event, and is the contact for troubleshooting. A good communication manager is also needed to ensure good attendance of the target audiences,. Please note that especially for smaller demonstration events, the various functions can be integrated in one person.

Useful skills:

- Organisation and logistics
- Project Management
- Planning
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Risk management



Demonstrators or speakers

The demonstrators or main speakers are the (technical) experts who provide information and content to the demo event. They can give presentations, demonstrate machinery or practices, demonstrate the results of field experiments, but can also be involved in the preparation of infographics, information panels, leaflets and booklets.

The quality of the demonstrators can have a big impact on the perceived effectiveness of the demo event by the participants. In general, participants refer to a demonstrator as someone being: expert in his/her field, aware of the local context, good speaker able to communicate and transfer knowledge to the end-user, known and trusted. Certain host farmers are excellent demonstrators, some may prefer to take a lighter role.

It is most effective if at least one of the demonstrators is a farmer who can go into the specifics of using the demonstrated innovation in practice, also addressing possible downsides or specific skills that are required to apply the innovation. Visiting farmers see such a farmer as one of their peers, and are more inclined to accept what he/she has to say because this is more related to the situation at their farm.

Useful skills:

- Communication
- Active listening
- Educational tools
- (Practical) expertise (not addressed by this brief)

Demo Facilitators

Besides the demonstrator, the presence of someone performing the role of a neutral facilitator is crucial. His/her role is:

- to facilitate group processes,
- to encourage discussions,
- to articulate questions and comments from visitors,
- to reword and summarise the main issues,
- to ensure a constructive, positive atmosphere, and
- to keep the focus on the demo event topic

Facilitators can be specialist facilitators, researchers, farmers or advisors, but they should foster active listening, learning, and questioning by providing (non-confrontational) feedback, raising questions, stimulating people to talk, as well as translating and structuring information.

“Demonstrations and farm walks are really important to me, because I learn from other farmers on what they do, and how they do it practically. You can read all the books you like, but to go and see it in the flesh, is the difference.”
(farmer, Ireland)

Useful skills:

- Active listening
- Facilitation
- Feedback
- Learning methods
- Educational tools

2.4. WHAT WE RECOMMEND

Training programmes to enhance demonstration should be supported and implemented in each of the EU countries and regions, targeting host farmers, demo organisers, demonstrators, and facilitators. Specific training should be organised at national level to train the trainers. Training of demonstration organisers and demonstrators is crucial to develop and improve the aforementioned skills, and to raise awareness on good practices for on-farm demonstrations.

We propose training at three levels:

- Specific training courses for demo trainers (train-the-trainer) in each EU country, followed by training for demo actors in each region
- Integration of demo activities in agricultural vocational education in each country followed by modules that enhance (young) farmers and advisors to take responsibility in demonstrations
- Organization of regular cross visits at national and EU level, learning from each other's approaches for on-farm demo-events

A training programme about demonstration activities could be carried out by each country's agricultural training and education bodies, with an involvement of scientists, facilitators and demonstration practitioners. Actors of the FarmDemo projects could be involved in the setting-up and the implementation of these training programmes. The funding of this programme should cover at least training of trainers and the initial development of the training



programme. Some regions or countries could choose to fund all the training courses in order to support the development of demonstration activities and skills in areas where they are still less common. We see this set-up of a training programme as largely national and regional. Consequently policy stimulation is needed at these scales. EU level funding should be focused on the facilitation of trans-national learning (2.4.3).

2.4.1. Specific training courses for demo trainers and for demo actors

Specific training courses should be supported by training funds in each of the EU countries (relevant level for training the trainers) and regions (for the demo actors). These funds could support the direct training cost, the time spent for training, and the costs of cross visits to facilitate learning between demonstrators. This is particularly important for farmers' training.

Possible target groups of training

- Demo trainers (experienced and skilled demonstration organisers, interested in sharing their knowledge, and with training abilities)
- Host farmers,
- Demo organisers and logistics managers,
- Demo facilitators,
- Demonstrators or speakers

Possible objectives of training

- To professionalise the organisation of demonstrations
- To support the development of demonstration skills.
- To communicate demonstration best practices and tools developed by the FarmDemo team

Possible content of the training for demo actors

- Presentation and test of 'best-fit' demonstration practices
- Showing videos of demo events to illustrate the different demo steps and roles
- Visits to demo event with a role of monitoring and evaluation and organized feedback sessions to the organisers
- Practical work to prepare, implement or evaluate demo-events

Possible content of the training of trainers

- Pedagogical tools and approaches for training demonstration actors
- Participatory elaboration and test of training courses for demonstration actors

2.4.2. Integration of demo activities in agricultural education

Demonstration activities should be part of the agricultural (vocational) education at different educational levels. This can include:

- Participation of students to demo visits with preparation before the event, a role of monitoring during the demo day and a feed-back organized after the event, about what was observed and learnt on the topic of the demonstration
- Invite the demo organiser into the classroom to discuss the set-up of a planned demo with the students
- Organisation of demonstration events on educational farms targeted to farmers and advisors of the area as well as to students and involving students into preparation, carrying out and evaluation of the events
- Implementation of specific courses about demo activities and learning methods in order to develop the specific skills needed for demo activities and to do the best practices known to the future hosts, demonstrators, and facilitators.

2.4.3. Organization of regular cross visits at national and EU level

These cross visits should specifically have the aim to exchange about experiences with organising on-farm demonstration events, and associated skills. It is recommended to organise them around an effective demo event in the hosting country. The FarmDemo online inventory is a valuable tool to facilitate these exchanges, and as such it would be valuable that the online inventory and platform of demonstration farms in the EU is further expanded and maintained.

Possible target groups of training

- Demonstrators' trainers
- Demonstrators
- Demo organisers and facilitators
- Host farmers

Possible objectives of training:

- To support the development of demonstration skills.
- To find out more about interesting techniques and tools in the country where the visit takes place, identifying local good practices
- To exchange about other good practices and tools, e.g. those developed by the FarmDemo team
- Overall, to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences on demonstration activities at national and EU levels and share knowledge on the various types of practices

“The key role of the teachers and the setting within the course is very important to underline. It is the role of the teachers to help prepare the interaction between students and demo presenters. Students (especially in vocational training) do not constitute an easy to drive public. The pedagogy and vocabulary, and the place in the study programme where the intervention is fitting, are very important. Quite often an event or presentation which is not mandatory in the course is a presentation that students might avoid or skip.”
(policy maker, France)

Possible content of the training

- Presentation of a set of good demonstration practices
- Showing videos of various types of demo events and the different demo steps and roles
- Visits to demo events. Visitors focus on evaluation and provide feedback and exchange with local demonstrators afterwards
- Practical work to prepare, implement or evaluate training about demo-events

