

Report of the Workshop Day 2 in Vietnam

Date: 3rd May 2013

Place: Science Center of Fertilizer and Soil, Hiep Hoa District

Stakeholders: 8 smallholder farmers, 2 members of the Agriculture Extension of Hiep Hoa District, 3 traders and 4 scientists of Institute of Fertilizer and Soil – Hanoi.

1. Questions from the science team to the farmers

- Do you think you use too little fertilizer?
→The farmers do not know what is overuse and underuse. They do not know how much fertilizer means too little.
- Do you think you use too much fertilizer?
→The farmers do not think that they use too much fertilizer.
- Do you use different methods of fertilizing for different kinds and amounts of vegetables?
→Yes, it depends on the time of the crop of the vegetable
- Where and from whom did you learn these methods?
From the science guideline of the Academy but they changed the method a little bit.
- Do you use organic fertilizer?
→One farmer use manure as she has a lot of livestock on her farm (cows, buffalos, pigs and chickens). She immediately applies all manure to the plants which she has available, and does not care whether it is too much or too little. If not, it smells bad at her farm.
- On what criteria do you apply fertilizer to the plants (amount, time...)?
→Based on experience and the look of the plants: on the colour and the shape of each plant at each period. E.g.: at the current time, if the plant are not nicely green or they seem to be small, they use more N fertilizer...
- How much do you pay for fertilizer a year?
About 10 Mio. VND (about 450 USD)
- Do you think the fertilizer is worth this amount of money?
→A farmer has 4 crops a year and 50 Tones/ha/crop. He earns about 8 Mio. VND/0.38 ha/year. So he is willing to invest 1 Mio. VND/0.38 ha/year. He think that it is worth to pay so much money for fertilizer.
- What do you think if you lose 50% of the current cost for fertilizer to the environment? It is a loss a lot of money and a pollutant to the environment. Instead you could save this money and care for the environment as well as your next generations, if you pay only 2 USD for the soil testing in order to get the right methods for each plants on your land. Are you willing to do this?
→Most of them are willing, but they are scared, if the result is bad. They do not want any risk.
- What do you think, if you join the project with us We do a soil testing at the Institute of Fertilizer and Soil in Hanoi. The scientist will, based on the result of the soil testing, give you recommendation on using fertilizer. We will compare the result with an other control group (which do the planting as usual). If you have a loss in the quantity of crop, we will compensate the money. So you work with the scientists and we can learn from each other. We give you scientist recommendation and you do the practical work. You also can change the

method a little bit, but you have to write down every week (about 1 hour/week) what you have done and why you decide to change this method. We will meet together every month and discuss about the progress during the next 4-5 months. You should really have fun in this project.

→Most of them are interested, but are still afraid of the risk, if they lose money.

2. Questions from the science team to the traders

- Do you give advice or recommendations to the farmers when selling fertilizer?
→Yes, we always give them advice/recommendations based on the science guideline of the Academy. Then again we are also smallholder farmers. We are willing to share the knowledge we received, also from our own cultivation experiences. But we can not control, or be sure, if the buyers follow our advice.
- How many from your colleagues have the same thinking and willing to share the recommendations to the buyers?
They do not know how the other traders do their job.
- For what reasons do the farmers come to you to buy fertilizer and how much do they usually buy?
→It depends on the farmers: sometimes there are economic reasons (they need to buy only for the current harvest) or they have good financial capital from an investor for a large land...
→It also depends on the traders: the traders have good relationship with the buyers (family, relatives, good friends), the traders are honest and give good recommendation, the price of their products are reasonable, the traders are flexible and the farmers could pay after the harvest (for the same price)....
- How do the farmers pay the fertilizer?
→30% of the buyers pay before the harvest, 70% pay after the harvest as most of them work for other companies (industry, service) as their main jobs. They usually pay later when they get their salary. Most of them pay the higher prices at other traders.
- How many kind of fertilizers do you have?
→We have a lot of choices and each kind of fertilizer from different countries (Vietnam, China, USA...). But they do not know whether the quality is good.
- What do you think if you join our project. You advise the buyers to do the soil testing and convince them to follow the recommendation/method (based on the result of the soil testing) of the scientists. And you earn a percentage of the cost of the soil testing. You send the soil samples to the Center of Fertilizer and Soil in Hiep Hoa District and we will send you the results plus the recommendations.
→They are interested to this project, but they are afraid that they lose their reputation, if the results of crops of the buyers will be worse.

3. Questions from the science team to the members of Agriculture Extension

- How often and how do you work with the farmers?
- Do the farmers follow your recommendations/advice?
- What do you think if the farmers lose a lot of money for fertilizer. Are they willing to follow our method, if we can prove them that they can earn more money if they use less fertilizer and still get the same quantity and quality of their crops?
- Do the farmers ask for a credit from the bank to buy fertilizer?

We have a system of mostly smallholder farms. The investment for fertilizer is not high compared to a big farm. Otherwise, the conditions and procedure for a micro credit are very complicated. So most of the farmers lend money from their relatives or friends or they can pay the traders after the harvest (small benefit and uncomplicated) .

4. Questions and feedback from the other stakeholders to the science team

- What are the conditions to the farmers, if they join this project (how much time do they have to invest each week, what do they have to do, do they get money, if they invest a lot of time for this project as they all have other jobs beside the farm).
→We have to write an action plan first to know exactly how much time you need for this project. If you have to invest more than 1 hour/week, we can discuss about this issue. But in whole, you should have fun and it should be a good experience and a win situation for you. Otherwise, we will compensate the money, if you earn less money compare to the control group.
- A farmer give an excellent input/idea: we could split the land. One half we give fertilizer as usual. The other half we use the new method. So you do not need the control group anymore. Further more, you could compare the result directly on your own land.