

# QUESTION GUIDES

(for preparing LFs to conduct: a) Promotion/Training Events and; b) Demonstration Plots)

*[Facilitator should ask the questions to the LF and only provide information from the bullet points if needed and if helpful. The input and ownership should come as much as possible from the LFs themselves.]*

## PROMOTION / TRAINING EVENTS

### 1) What topics and activities will you cover in promotion/training event?

- Recommended agronomic practices
- Introductions to higher level people in the company
- Expert assistance in input supply, production and financial services by specialists in those and other relevant areas

For Outgrowing

- Post-harvest issues
- Issues related to outgrowing operations, planting schedules, etc.
- Distribution of seeds or other inputs
- Past season results and adjusting practices for the upcoming season
- Discussion on procurement plans.

### 2) How will you develop promotion/training event?

- The company training / coaching team can develop a training module or session plan that details the session approach and content and ensures the same message is delivered during multiple sessions with different trainers
- Experience shows that training programs including practical field visits provide better learning opportunities for farmers than those limited to classroom learning.

### 3) Who will be part of your promotion/training event team?

- Company field staff
- Expert farmers, recruited as trainers, who have the following qualifications:
  - Extensive experience growing the targeted crop
  - Basic education
  - Good communication skills and speaking voice
  - Sufficient time to devote to coaching
  - Self-confidence
- Selected resource people.

### 4) Where and when will you organize your promotion/training event?

- There are advantages to arranging training sites near demonstration plots to facilitate field demonstrations
- They should fit within the crop calendar (before planting, harvesting, etc.)
- Common options include:
  - One session – at harvest *[might be most appropriate for input supply companies]*
  - Two sessions—one prior to planting and the other before harvesting.

- Three sessions—one prior to planting, one during the growing season, and the last before harvesting [*especially for LFs doing contract farming – but could also be used by input supply companies that want to demonstrate many products*]

#### **5) How can you make your promotion/training cost effective?**

- Include local *expert farmers* on the training team; farmers can relate to them and they are less expensive than high level resource persons
- Limit duration and use a low-cost training site
- There is a trade-off between larger and smaller groups—large groups may be more cost effective, but small groups offer better learning opportunities.
- Engage well informed stakeholders who have a commercial interest in contributing to the training

#### **6) How will you develop your promotion/training team’s capacity?**

- Organize a training of trainers (TOT) workshop for the training / coaching teams to:
  - Make sure that trainers are familiar with the training session plans (including all technical issues)
  - Introduce adult learning methodologies
  - Allow them to practice the training before giving it to farmers
- Invite expert farmer candidates to the TOT, evaluate them and select the best ones.

#### **7) How you will evaluate the promotion/training results?**

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## **DEVELOPING DEMONSTRATION PLOTS**

### **How will you use demonstration plots to promote your products and educate retailers/farmers in their correct use?**

Demonstration plots are frequently used by companies to demonstrate both effective, modern agronomic practices to producers and the profitability and benefits of adopting the varieties and improved practices it recommends. Farmers who are reluctant to change their agronomic practices are more likely to pick them up after seeing demonstration plot results. Demonstration plots can lead to increased trust and stronger relationships between the company and its farmers and, if used effectively, they can improve farmer productivity—another plus for the company.

#### **1) What are your company’s objectives for having demonstration plots?**

- Motivating farmers/retailers to purchase company products
- Showing farmers/retailers the proper way to handle and use company inputs.
- Help farmers to adopt improved practices and/or inputs for better yields and product quality – that will encourage them to purchase inputs from the company

## **2) What technical production practices and/or inputs will you use on demonstration plots?**

- Production packages should be affordable and readily accessible, and farmers should be able to adopt the demonstrated practices / inputs quickly and easily
- Technical production practices / inputs used on demonstration plots should be practical and appropriate to the local setting. The company must ensure that practices / inputs correspond to local agronomic parameters (soil, climate, geography, etc.).

## **3) How many and what size demonstration plots will you have?**

- It is better to have a few well-cared-for demonstration plots than it is to have many that are not properly tended and, therefore, unlikely to display good results
- Plots should be large enough to provide a good demonstration of techniques, inputs, etc. and small enough to manage easily.

## **4) Where will you locate demonstration plots?**

- Demonstration plots should be in strategic, easily accessible, visible locations for farmers living in the area
- Locating demonstration plots near areas where the company organizes farmers/retailer training / coaching sessions is an advantage.

## **5) What is the company's role in managing demonstration plots?**

Important considerations:

- It is better for a company to be involved in managing demonstration plots—leaving management entirely to farmers could lead to substandard results
- The company should assign a field agent to monitor the plots and guide farmers
- The company should have a checklist for the preparation and management of demonstration plots.

The role of the company in managing demonstration plots may include:

- Selecting experienced farmers with suitable land and location
- Selecting the demonstration plot site
- Testing the soil when possible
- Collecting and distributing inputs such as seeds, fertilizers and pesticides
- Assessing seed quality through purity, germination and vigor tests
- Treating seeds before planting
- Preparing a detailed work schedule, monitoring the plot at regular intervals and providing guidance and supervision to ensure:
  - Proper land preparation—plowing, laddering, fertilizer dosing, soil moisture, etc.
  - Sowing seeds at the appropriate time
  - Transplanting seedlings at the proper age
  - Employing crop management practices such as mulching, fertilizer application, thinning, weeding, rouging, etc.
  - Monitoring for insects and diseases and the application of control measures such as appropriate pesticides and non-chemical / integrated pest management (IPM) alternatives if available

- Harvesting demo plot crop(s) separately from those in other plots at appropriate stages and using proper methods
- Post-harvest operations such as threshing, cleaning, drying, sorting, grading, packaging, storing, etc.
- Weighing and recording crop yield after completing post-harvest processing (both sorted / graded and ungraded / unsorted)
- Recording data in the approved format.

**6) What is the role of the person(s) who will manage the demonstration plots? It is important that:**

- The most qualified and trustworthy farmers should manage the demonstration plots—

*Possible roles for demonstration plot farmers:*

- Assisting the company select suitable land
- Preparing the land according to company directives
- Timely and proper sowing of seeds as advised by the company
- Following crop management practices such as mulching, fertilizer application, thinning, weeding, rouging, irrigation etc. per company advisories
- Visiting the demo plot regularly and advising the company of any problems
- Adopting proper, company-directed pest control measures
- Harvesting, threshing, cleaning sorting, grading and drying crops as directed by the company
- Assist company to record data.

**7) How will you compensate the farmer cultivating the demonstration plot?**

Some companies engage an expert farmer, provide all the inputs and agree that the farmer can keep the harvest in return for maintaining and opening up the plot for farmer field days. The company may consider contributing labor and irrigation costs up to harvest (weeding, mulching, etc.) to ensure they are done correctly.

**8) How will you use the demonstration plot to inform farmers/retailers about the benefit of your products and how to use them correctly?**

- Prepare sign boards with specific information and arrange to display them at the demonstration plot site
- Organize formal *field days* at demonstration plots and invite farmers and neighboring farmers to observe production and harvesting techniques
- Use demonstration plots in conjunction with other events for farmers/retailers
- Keep track of input / output data and share analysis results with farmers/retailers
- Organize and conduct guided visits to the plot at strategic points during soil preparation, planting, growing and harvesting.