

# Change management with farmers



**Solidaridad**

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# Solidaridad

Carlos Hernando Isaza Ramírez  
Francisco Bustamante Gañan  
Mónica Giraldo Buitrago

Illustrations  
José Daniel Valencia Giraldo  
Visual Artist-Illustrator

Dario Angel Pérez  
Style Editor

Design and Layout  
Luz Adriana Alvarez Monsalve  
Visual Designer

Carrie Hibbard  
Translation

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# Presentat on

We are experiencing various problems related to agriculture. The high demand for food must be met, yet the areas dedicated to this activity can not be increased; therefore, it is necessary to optimize land use. A further issue is with small-scale agricultural production, as a segment of the population engaged in this work lacks the necessary knowledge, resources and tools to meet this demand for food while complying with the required standards. As a result, numerous organizations, government agencies and businesses have been formed to support farmers in developing production systems that allow them to improve their living conditions, frequently rising above poverty. At the same time, these systems respond to another issue that is currently of great interest: to promote models of sustainable production that take into account social responsibility, environmental stewardship and economic development.

This situation demonstrates the need to promote changes in the present way of farming. However, in many cases of family farms and small-scale agriculture, the processes of adapting to new sustainable technologies and practices are slow. Adaption does not occur at the pace that is expected, although it is necessary in order to respond to environmental challenges.

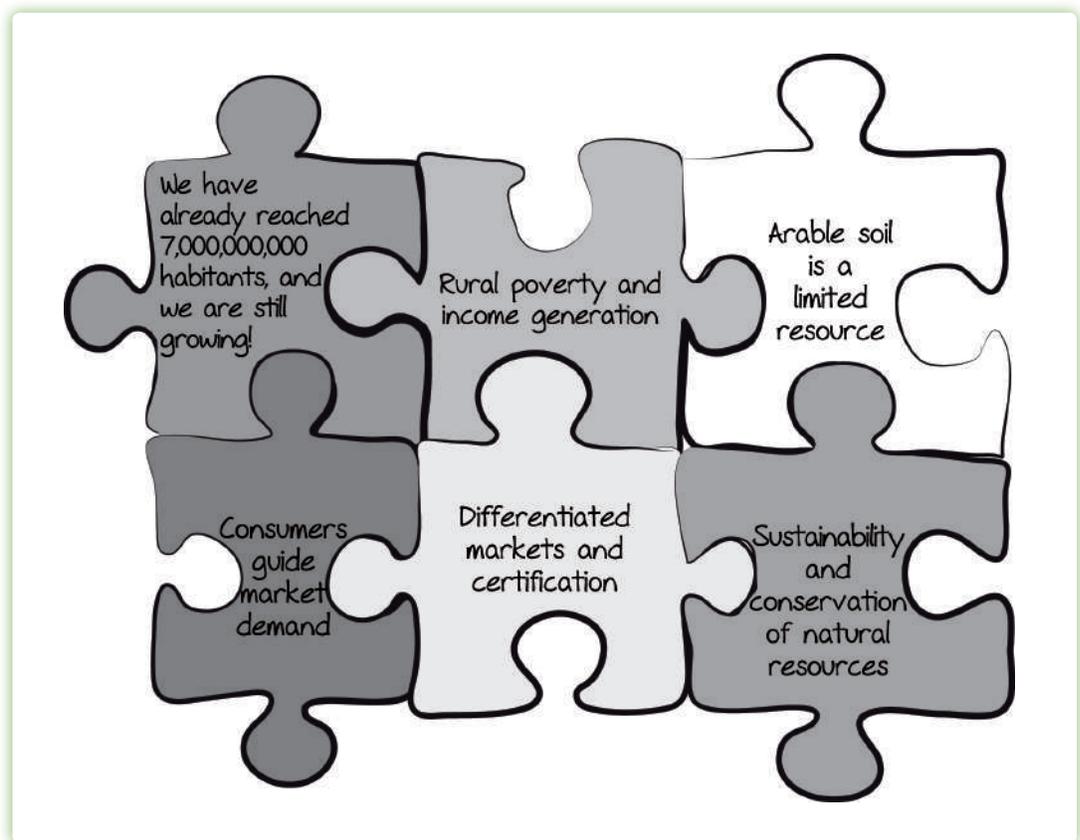
Some of the main reasons to explain this are:

- Irrelevant programs that have not taken into account the needs, culture and knowledge of farming families.
- No link between producers and differentiated market chains to fairly compensate farmers and support them in the production process.
- Limited capacity for self-management in rural communities to confront the problems they face.
- Deficiencies in the methodology of institutions responsible for promoting change.
- Imposition of technologies that have not been adequately adapted to the farmers' needs.
- Personal factors, such as “resistance to change.”

To meet the new challenges and new realities, as well as technological change, requires a change of attitude in how we relate to each other and a change in the way we do things. **Change** is a word that suggests progress, development and improvement, but to humans it also signifies uncertainty, failure and fear. A key challenge for facilitators, in this case related to agriculture, is ***to define how to help people overcome their fears and clarify doubts so that they can incorporate new technology, implement new sustainable production practices and adapt an attitude for continuous improvement in their fields.*** Knowing how to manage these human aspects related to change is a critical factor for success (or failure, if not taken into account) in the work of technical support that development organizations, institutions and governments carry out daily with groups of rural producers.

This document presents some elements of analysis on processes to initiate and facilitate change, intended to support organizations and facilitators that develop projects in rural communities.

# Part one: Background



In the past, since changes occurred at a slow pace, projections could be made on a long-term basis and plans kept with some degree of certainty. But today, with changes occurring more quickly, shifts happen so rapidly that it is difficult to make predictions, even on the short term. *We live in a new and unpredictable world*, where the rules are different, as well as the necessary skills and the steps to achieve proposed goals.

Methods that functioned when the world's pace was slower are no longer effective. Modern challenges can not be faced by continuing to do what worked in the past or assuming that they are still accurate, because what was verified yesterday may no longer be valid today. To anticipate and benefit from change, and to adapt to an increasingly competitive environment, a new way of thinking is needed which involves a high capacity to adapt and try new ways of doing things. A fundamental change in mentality is necessary, just as radical as the current magnitude, level and rate of change.

The next section analyzes the agricultural context and the main challenges it faces today, followed by some ideas on change management and its importance in projects with farmers. Finally, we propose to address change as a process that the farmers go through in different stages, with varying needs and expectations.



# 1. Why is it necessary to change?

## Some elements of the current situation of farmers

The road to change begins once a reason for change has been identified. For example, a problem is overcome by finding and implementing a solution, or if placed in a situation that requires action in order to reach a new condition.

Agriculture is one of the activities responsible for the biggest changes in human life and history. Through agriculture, humans have become sedentary, allowing them to build societies, empires and states. Agriculture encompasses a range of activities where humans make use of plants and animals to produce food, fiber, fuel and raw materials that provide multiple products for their family and for diverse markets.

In a historical context, agriculture has enabled humans to express their creative potential, change their environment and satisfy their needs. Why then are farmers expected to initiate new practices or behavior? Has agriculture not changed enough? What are the situations that are currently leading them to confront permanent change?

To consider agriculture as an activity implies reflecting on the challenges of small farmers and their families who are immersed in a market economy. As facilitators, do we understand the situation of this activity and the circumstantial changes that should encourage adaptation?

Some aspects that describe this situation are:

- Food production and security
- Rural poverty and income generation
- Wise use of soil
- Consumer expectations and quality
- Differentiated markets and certification
- Sustainability and natural resources

## Food production and security

Agriculture supplies food to humanity, a population that is continuously growing. Today we are more than 7,000,000,000 people, a figure that tends to continue increasing ever more rapidly. Will agriculture be able to guarantee food supplies for a population that, on the one hand consumes constantly more elaborate products, and on the other hand finds it progressively more difficult to meet its basic demand for food?

Can production systems be differentiated, from subsistence farmers who are mainly concerned with growing their own food, to industrial producers who are pioneers in the adoption of new technology with a high demand for external capital and supplies? Both segments, and all intermediate production systems between these extremes, are expected to supply more and better food to meet the constantly growing demand and to address the problems of access to basic food for the high proportion of the population that suffers from malnutrition.

Changes needed for agriculture to be able to provide food for a population that is growing every day, and so that the farmer can encounter solutions in agriculture to improve his and the family's diet.

## Rural poverty and income generation:

A large proportion of the population in developing countries is below the poverty line, and as a result have significant nutritional problems. However, these are also the countries with the highest levels of rural population and greatest relative importance for their agricultural activity.

**Can these countries overcome poverty without a productivity that provides a greater and improved food supply and income generation?**

**Can problems of rural poverty be overcome without intervening in problems of family farming?**

## 1. Why is it necessary to change?

The only resources families dedicated to agriculture generally have are their labor and the land that produces their sustenance, and there are few possibilities to encounter opportunities in a different economic sector. There have been many cases where the development of more adequate and efficient agriculture has dramatically contributed to help overcome the problems of poverty, in terms of generation of income and opportunities.



If farmers and their families want better income that permits them to meet their basic needs and achieve well-being, changes are necessary.

## Wise use of soil

The need to conserve forests and other sensitive ecosystems impedes the idea of trying to meet the increased demand for agricultural products by incorporating new areas for agriculture. The agricultural frontier has its limits.

The current agricultural area should find its best vocation for the production of food, raw materials and biofuels, as well as raising livestock and reforestation. This balance is almost impossible because the scale favors those products that sell best on the market, which affects, often negatively, food supply and promotes a land use that does not always coincide with its vocation. Wise use of soil means making the most of agricultural areas through the best productive activities that are recommended for soil preservation.

Changes needed because agricultural soil is a limited resource. Farmers must work to obtain the maximum benefit, applying the best use of soil and satisfying the demand for the multiple products that come from agriculture.

## Consumer expectations and quality

When immersed in a market economy, consumption guides the major decisions. Consumers change their tastes and expectations of quality for products in demand. Farmers should adapt their production systems and practices in order to stay in a competitive market that increasingly expects more for the price paid.

Failure to adapt to market demands, in areas such as quality, result in the farmer's rejection or replacement by other suppliers, and consequently a diminished or lost income.

If farmers wish to continue participating in the market and receiving income, it is important to change.

## 1. Why is it necessary to change?

### Differentiated markets and certification

In an increasingly globalized and better informed market, consumers and industries are becoming more important and empowered. In recent decades, the concept of certification of products, practices, systems and processes in agricultural production has emerged to attend to a segment of the market with specialized information and a desire to wield some control over agricultural practices applied to the products they seek.

While not yet a mass market, certified products are increasingly more in demand than those that are not certified. This has generated differentiated conditions for access to niche markets and the resulting possibility of a better price.

The common basis for certification programs includes aspects such as good agricultural practices, management of social conditions and benefits for workers, ecosystem conservation and traceability. These are further complemented with specific practices, whether per farmer or according to the objectives of the standard-setting organization.

To access these niche markets and benefit from commercial opportunities and improvements resulting from the implementation of a certification program, farmers must make changes in their productive system and adopt the suggested practices for each model.

Change is essential for the farmer who wants to implement a certification program and benefit from this initiative.

### Sustainability and natural resources

All of the above arguments can be summarized in the concept of sustainability. If traditional agriculture practices are maintained, they will continue to worsen the situation of poverty and the pressure on natural resources.

An example is that over the past several years, access to water, a vital resource for agriculture, has become increasingly limited. Agriculture, and certain products in particular, are starting to be seen as highly demanding of water, in some regions even

competing with the water supply for humans. Crop yields have become more affected by changes in precipitation cycles, whether drought or excessive rainfall.

Other aspects, such as the use of genetic resources, biodiversity, application of agrochemicals and soil erosion, affect agricultural development on the medium and long term.

Current agricultural methods must be changed if we want farming to be a sustainable activity and to conserve natural resources.

Farmers change every day, in many ways, but facing particularly unstable conditions today, the changes they choose to implement need to be more precise and effective if they expect to maintain or improve their standard of living through an activity that is highly dependent on the natural environment and changes in the market. An obligation of the facilitators is to help farmers better understand their context and to develop an organized process of change wherein the farmers have more influence on the areas they wish to change, which also implies that development projects should be adjusted both to their reality and market requirements.

Nevertheless, faced with this reality, many farmers and professionals who work in the production process continue to act and think according to a backward vision of the world; whereas many others continue to wait for a solution to arrive from the outside, or for the world to mold itself to their needs and ways of thinking.

The possibilities of facing and anticipating changes will be determined largely by the actions that farmers and their families take towards their development of potential and learning. There is a need for farmers and facilitators (technical and professional) who are committed, empowered in their work, absolutely convinced of the productive activity's chances for success and with a creative and proactive thinking style.

## 2. An overview of change management

### How is change management useful?

To start the topic, we invite you to ask yourself the following questions:

Has there ever been a situation where participants did not apply the contents of a training that you developed?



Have you ever felt that the participants did not respond to the projects you developed with sufficient speed or that they did not implement the proposed actions?

Have you tried to motivate a group to apply a new technology that, in your view, would bring many benefits, but was not recognized by the group?

When you hear the word change, what do you associate it with?

Change is something that is present in our lives every day. However, in the case of agriculture, although it is a dynamic and changing sector, often the actors that are involved (farmers, support professionals, managers of support organizations) do not have the capacity to generate new alternatives, to adapt to new realities or to simply do things differently. Organizations launch numerous, often fruitless, efforts to try to get farmers to implement new and better ways to manage their plots of land. When the expected changes fail to happen, the organizations tend to assume that it is the farmer's fault for being resistant and reluctant. They rarely look at the promoters and facilitators of change (we don't ask ourselves 'how have we failed?'). Over the past several years, a number of disciplines, group techniques and academic areas have been integrating, which when properly applied, facilitate beginning and implementing change.

This document defines change management as a set of knowledge combined with the application of techniques and tools by a facilitator, designed to promote or facilitate the change that is required to achieve established objectives.

In any change management process, ranging from incorporating a new crop management technique, motivating a new attitude toward community service or implementing a program of good agricultural practices, it is recommended to take into account the three strategic elements that are involved:

The **content of the change** is related to what specifically the organization and group of farmers need to change. It could be a way to manage crops, implementation of a certification standard or the integration and organization of farmers to market their products.

The **people involved** in the change process, taking into account the behaviors, emotions, attitudes and willingness of farmers and whomever else are affected by the change or are targeted to implement it.

## 2. An overview of change management

The **process of change** itself refers to how and when the changes will be designed, planned and implemented, both in content and in attitudes.

Traditionally, organizations have focused primarily on content and occasionally have backed it up with various tools to instill motivation and generate commitment. This document provides elements of the third component: the process of change. It should be noted that the change discussed in this document has an intention and should lead to an improvement of a particular existing condition. Thus, change is conceived as a positive element during project execution or in a training or technical support activity.

To begin to understand change, you must realize that the adoption of new aspects does not happen by decree but by conviction. Those who use the technology and processes are people, and **people act if they are motivated to do so.**



Try the following exercise: Go back 12 months ago and recall the various trainings you have held with farmers. Of all the people that you trained, how many adopted and applied the knowledge you provided? Of those farmers who applied the new knowledge, how many incorporated it into their everyday practices because they noticed the improvements resulting from the new work style?

On a scale of 1 to 5, rate the degree of change that happened at that time, as a result of the training that you provided.

Now project yourself two years into the future and rate the changes that farmers will incorporate if you maintain the same work style that you've used so far, instead of renovating your methodologies as a facilitator.

You will likely ask yourself: If the process of training or support for a group of farmers has been well conceived, if I have applied innovative resources for the task, if the information I transmit is vital to the farmer, why does change fail?

Why? Because it is people who turn ideas into action, people put strategies and new methods into practice. Farmers are the ones who have to apply them, and if they do not support the new technologies, they will be of no use to them.

People are the key link in achieving significant and sustainable changes. Their power of decision is the secret to success for the incorporation of any idea, process, behavior or technology.

Change management considers strategies to work with people. It is a “style” that takes into account the causes of resistance (fears, discomfort, uncertainty) and works with them to transform them into levers that facilitate achieving the proposed changes.

“People are the gatekeepers of change. They have the power to either give life to a new program or to kill it. If they are enthusiastic and positive, it will be ‘Open sesame.’ If not, which is what happens most of the time, the door shuts in our face.” (Robert Krugel)

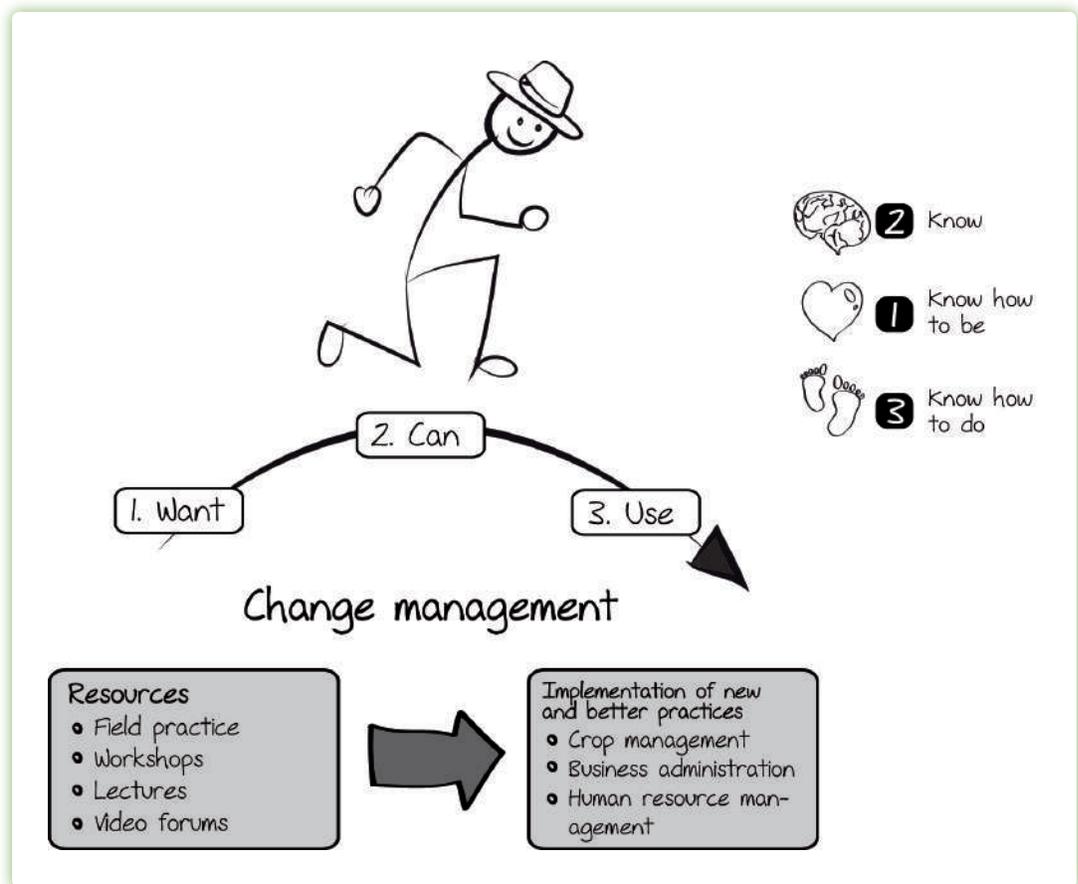
## 2. An overview of change management

### What is change management for? To ensure that farmers:

**Want:** They are willing, eager and motivated to accept change.

**Can:** They are capable, with the skills and knowledge necessary to implement the new work schemes.

**Use:** They not only understand, but apply the new ways of working in the context of their farm.



The objective of change management strategies is to facilitate and achieve a new way of doing things, to produce movement and action.

Attempts to implement a new practice, for example a good agricultural practices program or steps to obtain certification, are often frustrated by the farmer's fear

of the possibility that things will go wrong or not work. This feeling can produce anxiety, doubts, and finally resistance, a situation that will prevent the fulfillment of objectives, unless the facilitator or technician can understand:

- How the change process is developed.
- How farmers think and act during the process of change.
- How to help farmers and their families in times of doubt and uncertainty (hard times).

### 3. When s t t me to change?

#### Two approaches

As this document has discussed, several factors influence the decision to change; it is not as simple as stating that “we are resistant to change.” More than just “resisting” to leave the current situation, to stop the usual way of doing things, it is also a lack of real reasons or motivations to embark on the adventure of doing things differently.

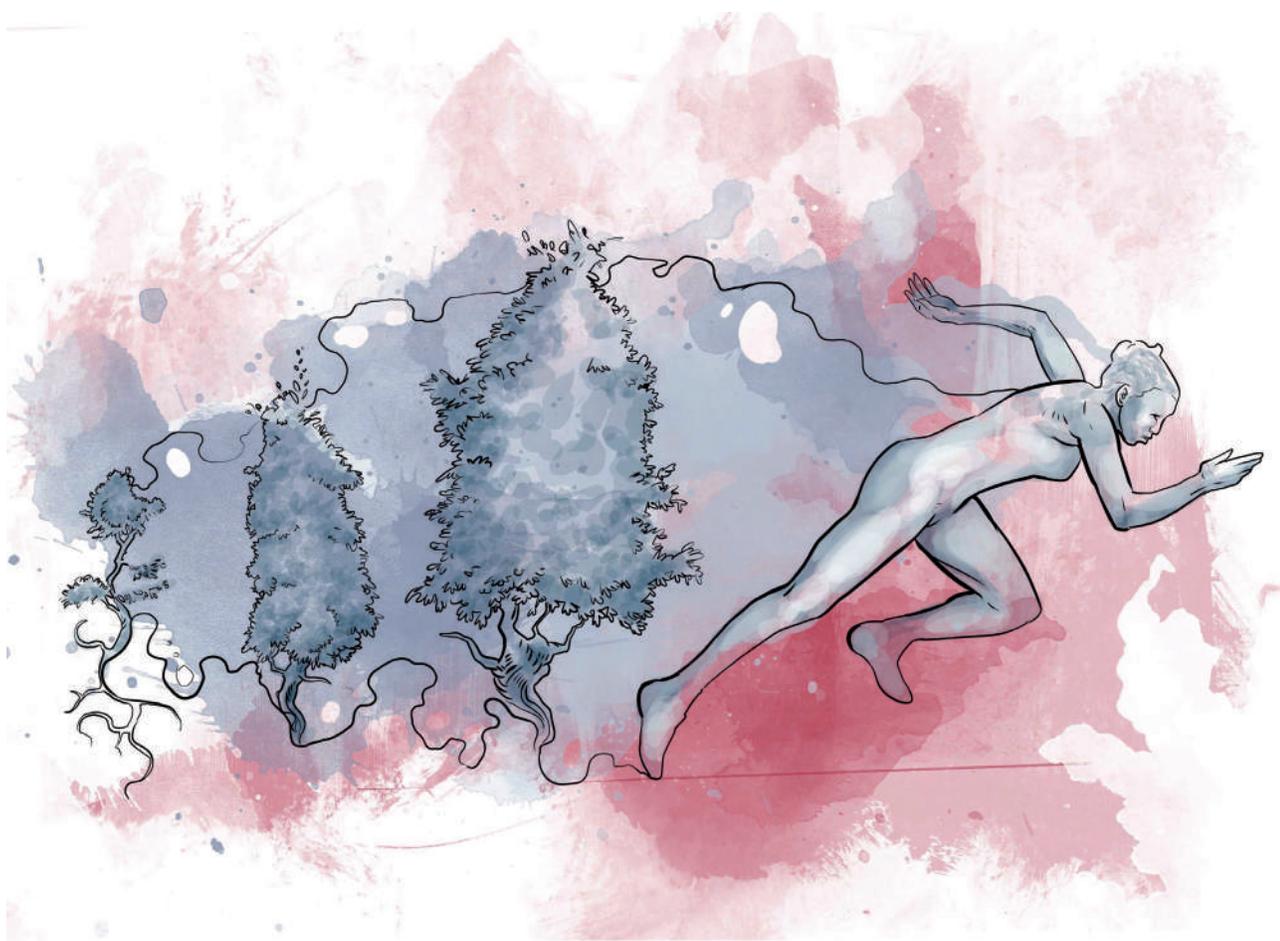
Consider the situation of farmers and their need to change many aspects in order to achieve a better quality of life through agriculture. Initially, it is important to keep in mind that the perception of time and speed of changes are very different from the perspectives of the farmer and the facilitator, as well as the perceived priorities for each group. The farmer lives out agriculture as a complete cycle of developing crops or raising livestock. His experience is continuous and permanent, and is always aware that everything follows a natural sequence, that he normally can not alter or accelerate. In conclusion, the farmer marches to the rhythm of his crop or livestock.

As facilitators, we tend to think that farmers “do not want to change” or “resist change” when we must repeatedly encourage them to adopt a practice or when we notice that a problem detected in their production system has not yet been solved. Yet it is also possible that the facilitator is not noticing changes that the farmer has made, but on a time span longer than a few months. It is very important to consider the pace of events for the farmer and his environment, and to understand how crop cycles affect the farmer’s pace of life. It is one thing to understand the reality of a

### 3. When s t t me to change?

cocoa producer, with long-term cultivation of a crop with specific harvests, and quite another to understand the reality of a corn grower, with short cycles and intensive management.

Two basic attitudes can be identified regarding the time to change. The first is like a reaction to a crisis: if the course of the situation is to be corrected, a timely response is required. The second situation is when change and adaptation become part of the farmer's everyday attitude, and he constantly seeks opportunities for improvement. Below are some examples to help identify these situations.



## Change n t mes of cr s s. The react on!



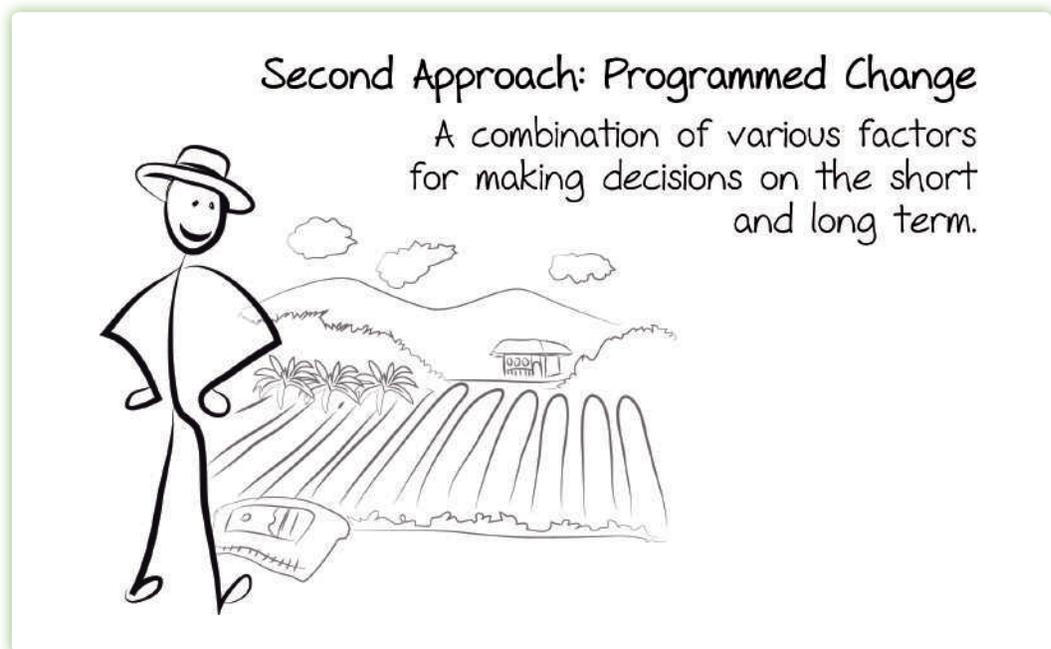
This is the attitude we have in an unexpected situation that requires a rapid and timely reaction. Climate change is arguably the greatest risk factor in agriculture. Since the farmer has a low chance of confronting natural phenomena, he tends to react by adapting to changing conditions. Take for example that you have encouraged the farmer to replace a certain crop with a variety that is resistant to some existing disease in the area. For several years the disease has not been severe, so the farmer decides to ignore the recommendations for prevention. However, last season the environmental conditions favored the development of the disease, and the entire crop was lost, along with the potential for the next flowering season. Faced with this extreme situation, the farmer decides to plant resistant varieties, for otherwise there will be no more future harvests. It is a rapid change that responds to the necessary adaptation in a moment of extreme crisis.

### 3. When s t t me to change?

Another example is the emergence of a pest or disease that the farmer is not familiar with. It is common for new pests to affect crops, not only because of their potential damage, but also because the farmer lacks knowledge about how to manage it or rarely adapts management practices. The consequential effects on production and income lead the farmer to, as a first reaction, seek the most immediate control for the next production cycle and to try to identify which new measures he should take to prevent another loss.

Short-term crops or activities are possibly more suitable for this type of reaction, as the farmer can surely identify the damage, effect or situation and foresee the results of his decisions.

### Permanent change, a way of seek ng how to be better



Small but high-impact improvements possibly have the greatest effect on business outcome in agriculture. Aspects such as product quality, productivity and cost control are not resolved with a single decision or one-time change. An improvement in quality, for example in the case of coffee, is not the result of a single practice, but rather the

sum of many controls and specific improvements that affect the overall result. In this condition, change does not occur due to a crisis but from the motivation to overcome a current condition and seek opportunities for improvement.

Once the farmer is aware that the best results happen through the combination of various factors, the sum of several good choices, in addition to the motivation to identify alternatives for improvement, then the spiral of continuous improvement begins. For example, the steps to increase crop productivity are to identify what criteria make a difference for each crop, define key or vital aspects that can have an effect and begin to work on each issue until the changes manage to affect the expected result.



### 3. When s t t me to change?

In the case of cocoa crops, its productivity will depend on long-term decisions such as planting material, adequate trimming to renew and maintain trees, proportionate spacing of plants per area unit, proper fertilization and timely pest management. Each of these aspects has a greater or lesser impact, with some requiring constant management and others long-term planning, but in general all require attention to detail, continuous control and understanding of the production process.

To follow this path of change (continuous improvement) requires greater support from the facilitator, whom must ensure that the farmer understands and internalizes the reasons to act with discipline and perseverance, and can identify prioritized actions in order to obtain the expected result. Solid support by the facilitator along this path will teach the farmer how to identify his own opportunities for improvement and to have the perseverance to stay motivated to incorporate small but constant adjustments to his production system.

The facilitator's challenge is to:

- ◉ Stimulate the farmer's desire to change.
- ◉ Encourage the farmer's self-confidence in his ability to make decisions that help him reach goals.
- ◉ Help the farmer to wield the tools of knowledge and practice to be able to change the situation.

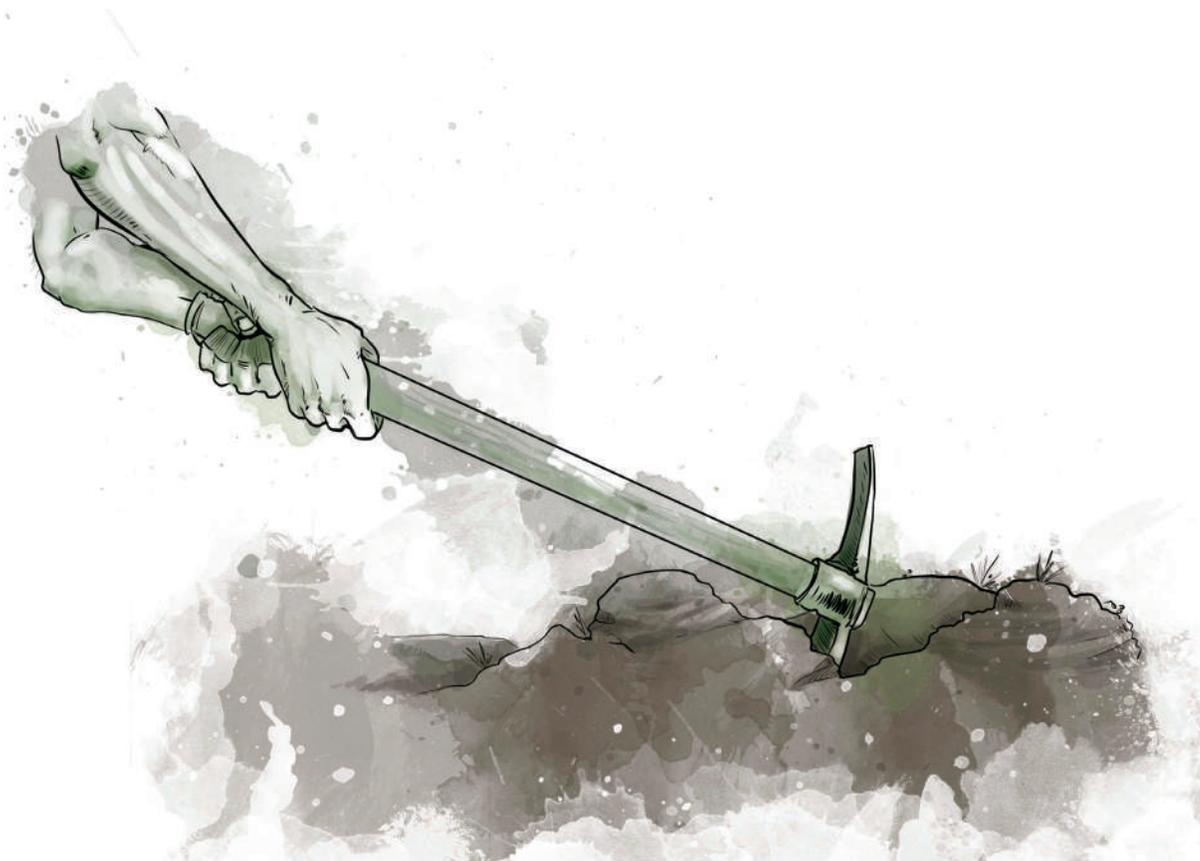
Both approaches to change, in the face of crisis and the result of continuous improvement, are necessary and useful for the farmer's benefit and depend on the situations that arise. The facilitator should have the experience to be able to focus on either approach, in search of a better outcome for the farmer. Similarly, through the process of change, the facilitator should encourage and strengthen the farmer's sense of self-esteem, as the driver of his own well-being.

## Part two:

# Understanding change as a process

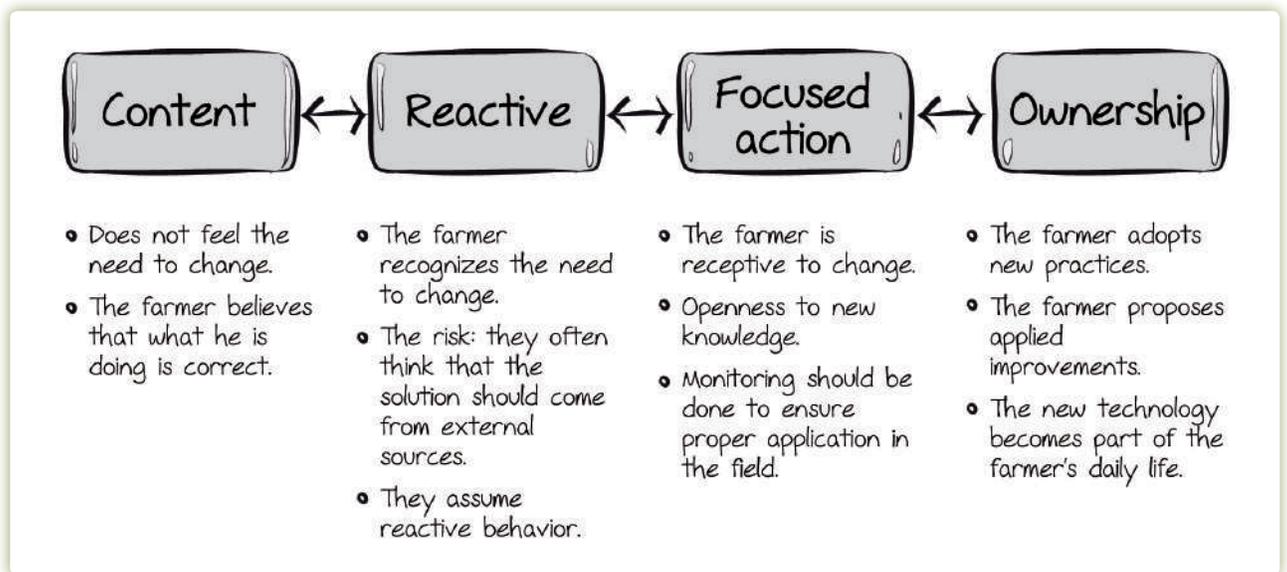
## 4. Stages in the process of change

Depending on their motivations, expectations and perception of needs, each person responds with a different behavior regarding change. The facilitator should understand the characteristics of each person and each group to facilitate activities and experiences that allow the participants in the process to proceed towards achieving their goals.



## 4. Stages in the process of change

The following stages are a guide that combines common characteristics and conditions for a particular group. The facilitator may identify other stages or subdivide those presented in this documenter (the term 'stages' is used for illustrative purposes).



### Content “I’m fine as is”

The person or group in this stage does not feel the need to change. Their attitudes and actions are perceived as adequate. They might also justify their actions with the reality they live, for example using the following expression: “*our farm is like this because we don’t have enough resources to do anything more.*”

Many people in this stage are only interested in maintaining their current condition, and will participate in projects or training solely to receive something in return (supplies, gifts, money, infrastructure). In these cases, the problem is that they are not willing to commit themselves and implement changes on the farm, or if they do, they are temporary changes that last only while they are receiving material benefits from the project.

Other farmers in this content stage may be afraid to risk what they have. This group will make comments like “if I renew this old plot, how will I feed my children?” Conformity is a defense mechanism that farmers might use to protect themselves

or to preserve the success and comfort achieved in the past. It is a defense against change and the potential disruption this could cause.

A content farmer postpones the problem until it reaches a critical and unsustainable state. Conformity frequently masks inner turmoil or an attachment to the past. Another comment might be *“My grandfather and my father did things this way, and I continue the same. If it worked for them, why not for me?”*

**Attitudes that denote conformity:**

- Lack of initiative.
- Acting as if nothing will happen.
- Questioning the information that supports or endorses change.
- The most frequent emotions are indifference and calm.

**React ve “Yes, but...”**

Unlike people in the first stage of the process, this group includes farmers who do admit that they have a problem or situation that they should improve. The difficulty, just as with the previous group, is that they are unwilling to commit to changing their way of doing things or their attitude in certain situations. Many of the farmers in this stage need to feel safe or are looking for someone else to solve their problem (the government, an organization, the facilitator).

**The reaction stage can be shown in different ways:**

**Passive reaction.** These are people who attend the training activities and reconfirm the messages the technical facilitator delivers, underscore the importance of the issue and even emphasize the group’s need for what the technician is explaining and how they should implement it. Nevertheless, when they return to their farms and communities, they continue with previous practices and keep doing things the same way, despite having identified the benefits of the action proposed in the training.

**Active reaction.** In this group are the farmers who are openly opposed to change and directly express their disagreement. Generally, their participation involves a

#### 4. Stages in the process of change

large emotional component (they raise their voices, verbally attack, emphatically gesticulate). Experience shows that few farmers develop active reactive behavior; the vast majority of those in the reactive category show passive behavior. It is valuable to listen to their arguments, because often their viewpoints and suggestions can be valid and usefully incorporated into the change process.

##### **Reactive people use expressions such as:**

“This won’t work because...”, “what you propose to us is interesting, but...”, “we do not have enough resources to...”, “we are willing to do this, but you have to give us...”.



This stage also includes those farmers who tend to blow out of proportion the negative situations that could arise from the proposed changes. It is common to hear them say: “What happens if the variety you are suggesting to us does not work?” Helping this group overcome their fears and worries is crucial to be able to commit them to change.

In some cases, farmers in this stage might end up implementing certain minimal technical recommendations. Some will implement the practices just to reaffirm their standing position, and by not applying the appropriate recommendations they can show that the practice does not work, to reaffirm their initial perception that things were going to fail. An example of this case is a farmer who was given some seeds of an improved varieties to try out, but he planted them in an area with the worst soil conditions on his farm. With this attitude, whether consciously or unconsciously, the farmer is making sure that the new practice does not work.

#### **Attitudes that denote reaction:**

- Anger towards other people and organizations.
- Disdain, disrepute or doubts regarding the decisions made.
- The most common emotions are anger, distrust, depression and frustration.
- They come up with objections and reasons to not do things.
- They applaud and approve the changes, but do not apply them in their farming practice.

#### **Focused act on “Let’s get to work”**

People in this group are enthusiastic and ready to implement the recommendations the technician suggests or to jointly develop them (technician-farmer). This group of farmers is willing to implement pilots and tests on their farms. Without this group, it would be difficult to initiate the change process. They usually trust in the institutions and technicians they work with, which is why showing responsibility and commitment to this group is so important.

The changes a farmer in the focused action stage is willing to implement should be closely and carefully monitored to ensure success and achievement of goals. When the proposed actions fail, there is a risk that the farmer will regress in the process of change and become reactive or indifferent.

## 4. Stages in the process of change

### **Attitudes that denote focused action:**

- High energy level, from motivation or anxiety.
- Search for information and answers.
- Problem solving and idea generation.
- They take the risk of inventing new things.
- Sometimes they struggle to maintain focus and keep objectives.

### **Ownership “It’s my solution”**

This stage includes farmers who have successfully incorporated new practices and made their own changes on their farms. They place great value on their efforts to achieve goals and can defend the improvement process they have developed with arguments and emotion. The success they have achieved is what motivates them. They feel they have overcome obstacles and are now in a better situation than before taking on the challenge of change. A farmer in the ownership stage has the ability to propose continued improvements. Some of their expressions are: “what we have achieved is a result of our efforts” and “now we’re better than we thought we would be.”

One characteristic that differentiates farmers in the ownership stage from those in focused action is that when problems arise, they are able to propose solutions themselves or look for someone to help them. They have acquired a high sense of self-efficacy and empowerment in what they do.

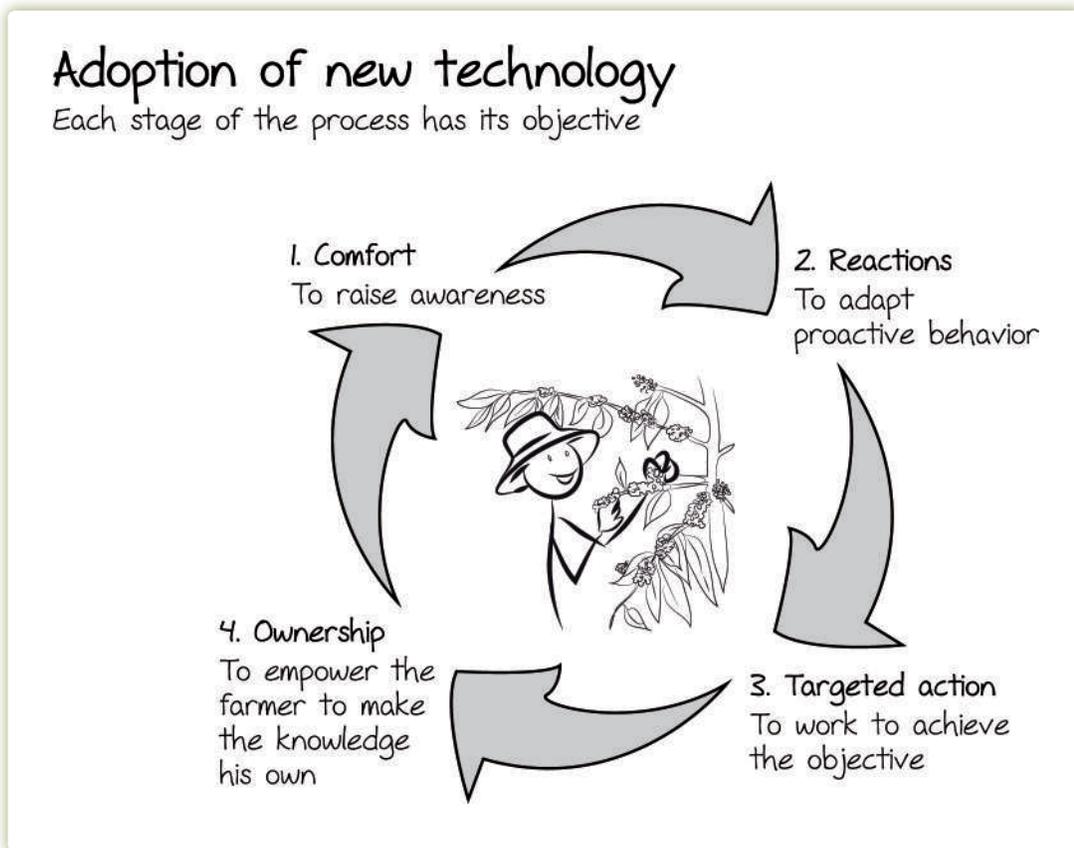
A farmer at this stage of the change process is able to tell other farmers about the success he has achieved with the new practices. Later we will show you how to maximize the potential of this group so that they can serve as promoters and support farmers in other stages.

### **Attitudes that denote ownership:**

- Feel confident in themselves and feel in control of their farms.
- Feel responsible for results.
- In general, able to adapt easily and quickly.
- The most common emotions are a sense of achievement, self-confidence and positivity.

It is important to understand that this is not a linear process, but is shown in this manner to facilitate understanding. The same person can assume different behaviors, and be in a different stage depending on varying situations of change. Similarly, they do not remain indefinitely in one stage. A situation that brings somebody to the stage of ownership, overtime can make the person revert to sticking with what has worked in the past, which then leads back to the compliance stage and the start of the process.

It is also important for the facilitator to understand that each stage of the process must have a specific goal to be achieved with the group of farmers.



## 5. Resistance as a lever for change

**Myth:** People are naturally resistant to change.

**Reality:** There is nothing in the biological system to indicate that humans are resistant to change. It isn't resistance to change, since there are constant changes from the cradle to the grave. So, what changes do people resist? They defend themselves from those things or circumstances that alter their level of control—this is very different. To effectively address the processes of change, you must go beyond the paradigm that “resistance to change is a natural behavior” and focus your efforts on uncovering the causes of resistance.



**Myth:** People are rational and will react logically to rational and logical explanations.

**Reality:** Although human beings are capable of rationally understanding ideas, this rational understanding does not guarantee: a) that they will latch onto the idea or b) change their behavior. The only way to move somebody is promoting an idea or proposal that the person deems significant enough to want to change their behavior.

**Myth:** Skeptical people must be controlled so that they do not affect others.

**Reality:** A person who expresses their differences and fears, and who dares to argue their point of view on any subject that is being addressed in a group is great news. The challenge posed by individuals who express their disagreement is in knowing how to listen to them to understand their reasons, and use them as a basis to implement work strategies that will achieve behavior change. When you manage to get a skeptic to adhere to the idea, you will gain even more followers, because: a) his “conversion” can become an imitable trend and b) the “conversion” in itself is proof of social legitimization.

**Myth:** People must be convinced to change.

**Reality:** Nobody can convince another person of a need. Change management is not done in the style of politics in election time, and it is not a matter of faith. When the person feels the need in his life, he will want to change his work style. Likewise, people are motivated to change when, in addition to the perceived need for change, they also have the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in incorporating the new ideas.

Resistance is an obstacle in the middle of the road that few technicians are able to overcome with their groups of farmers. Many technicians and organizations believe that by simply conducting training activities and giving incentives, change is going to happen. But these are only half measures, like putting on a clean shirt when what you really need is a bath. Some of these solutions work, but only for a short time. If the real cause of the resistance is not overcome, the resistance, which is persistent, will return. Although most technicians have received adequate instruction on training processes, they have little training in human process management, especially in managing change.

## 5. Resistance as a lever for change

The next step in training individuals and teams that are willing to change is to convert their resistance into willingness. If the resistance of the farmers and their families is not overcome, in the end there will be volumes of ideas but none of them put into practice.

As you have seen, in the vast majority of cases there are deep and personal motivations that propel resistance to change. Most of the resistance is not related to technical issues, but are rather aspects of human nature.

### **Fear as a driving force for resistance**

**Fears:** “What happens if...my income drops, the new crop fails, I have to invest a lot of resources” and so on.

Fear is something that is easy to feel but hard to confess. Fear is the most frequent cause of resistance to change, and the most powerful. In such a rapidly changing world where nothing is predictable in the long term, fear is natural and normal.

#### **Vicious cycle of fear:**

What gives fear so much force is that, in addition to reinforcing itself, what was feared becomes reality; fear causes the very thing you fear.

For farmers to be able to embrace change, the facilitator should understand their fears and implement tools to overcome them (part three of this document presents some pertaining ideas). The secret to neutralize the cycle of fear is to understand how to act and to do so at the right moment. Fear, like cancer, can be stopped with timely intervention. However, if it is given time, the resistance, driven by fear, will eventually take root.

The following example helps to explain each step in the cycle of fear.

#### **Link one:** imagined consequences.

When an individual begins to feel fear, it starts a cycle that goes on forever. First there are negative thoughts. Suddenly, a difficult situation becomes catastrophic, a challenge becomes a calamity. In other words, the person imagines the worst possible consequences. Once these negative thoughts begin

to flow, everything tends to get exaggerated. Fear takes a simple situation and turns it into something serious. “What is at stake is the farm, our family’s survival, the entire harvest...”

**Link two:** panic or procrastination.

Procrastination is one of the most common reactions to fear. People prefer to do a different activity—anything, to evade the task at hand, even though they know that sooner or later they will have to do it. An example is starting a program of pruning plant growth and renewal management on the farm. We have seen how many farmers continue working in old coffee plots that they know they will no longer have a good production. Perhaps deep down they hope that, by putting off what seems too difficult or fearsome, it will simply disappear or become more tolerable.

**Link three:** fears realized.

Panic or postponement makes people act below their level of capacity, so that their original fears become reality, only now with concrete evidence to support it.

How to stop the cycle of fear? There are two ways:

**Reduce the fear to its proper proportions “back to reality”**

As almost all fears are exaggerated, they can be countered with a strong dose of realism. It is advisable for the facilitator to engage in constructive dialogue, asking questions that lead the group to visualize and analyze possible future scenarios. Some questions to facilitate this dialogue are: What is the truth about the situation, in terms of our capacity to handle it and the consequences of not being able to manage it? What is most likely to happen? What’s the worst that could happen if the action does not work?

A look at reality suffocates the catastrophic reasoning, frightening fantasies and exaggerated consequences. People realize that the imagined odds of catastrophe are often lower than what they thought.

### **Build trust**

Seeing reality objectively reduces the fear to more manageable proportions, but that is only part of the solution. The other part is building trust, helping the person to believe that he is capable of handling the change without failure. Although farmers believe that change is good for them and for their farms, they will resist if they do not feel capable or do not have the resources to do it. If they perceive that their skill and ability are lower than necessary to implement the change, their fears will soar and confidence will plummet. To neutralize the resistance to change driven by fear, the technicians have to help farmers to believe in themselves. Trust kills the fear (some additional ideas are discussed in the chapter with suggestions for implementing change).

### **Self-perceived ability to undergo change**

The implementation of a new practice is also affected by the perception that the farmer and his family have of their ability to achieve it.

Self-competence can be approached from three dimensions:

#### ○ Perceived ability to mobilize resources.

To apply a specific cultural practice usually requires a mix of resources in terms of labor, capital, land, etc. If farmers do not believe that they already have or can access the necessary resources, the practice, no matter how positive, will be difficult to implement. For example, if the farmer feels he can not get enough money to buy fertilizer for the new crop.

#### ○ Perceived degree of skills and competencies.

If farmers feel that they are not skilled enough or lack the ability to perform proper management of biological control or assess the level of damage of a pest, for example.

#### ○ Perceived ability to manage risk.

If the farmer believes or perceives that the risk is high, he will be more reluctant to adopt new technology.

The options the farmer feels he has to avoid or reduce the risk can also cause resistance. For many farmers, the problem stems not from the implied risk for implementing the new practice, but from alternatives to manage risk in a way that minimizes it.

## Some situations that the facilitator should avoid

Communication between the facilitator and farmers is the key to promoting directed processes of change. This communication should foster a relationship of empathy and connection with others. But, as in any interpersonal relationship, it is possible that situations will arise that affect the creation of this connection or that generate difficulties in the process. Since we are not always aware of these behaviors, the next section covers some situations that should be avoided during the process of assisting the farmers.

### **In the design of development and support programs:**

Development organizations formulate consulting or support programs for farmers, but often with a very limited time frame to achieve the proposed results. A condition that occurs is that the program design and formulation of goals and results are solely from the perspective of the organization. They do not always take into consideration the expectations nor opinions of farmers, those benefiting from the programs.

The facilitator should seek the highest level of farmer participation in the definition of support programs, creating a sense of belonging and recognition of the importance of consulting and support work.

### **Seek the commitment of farmers:**

The facilitator's job of accompaniment and support for change is orientated towards working with groups of farmers, as the best assistance strategy to maintain balance between quality and coverage. In this relationship established with the groups, the facilitator should promote group integration and a commitment to participate in support activities and the achievement of proposed improvements or changes.

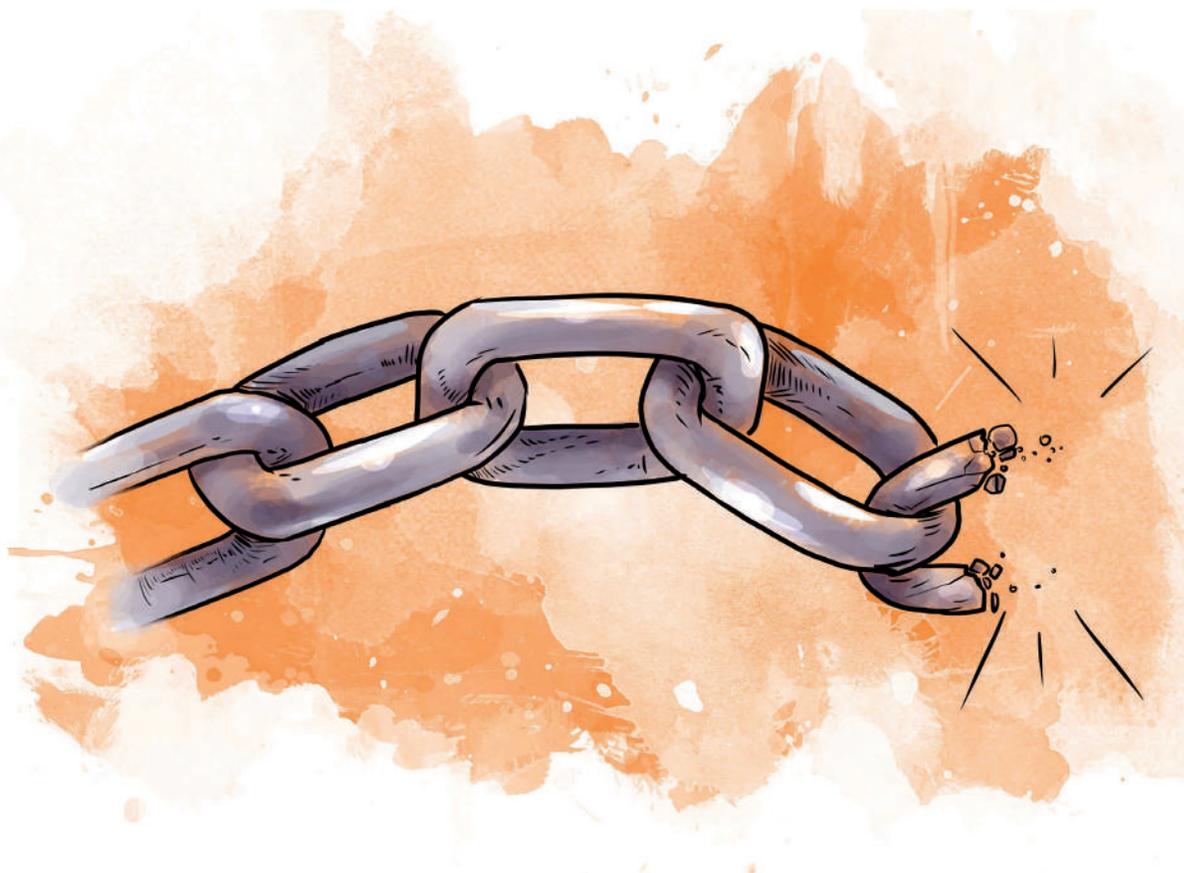
Avoid situations where the pressure to develop training content limits group cohesion and farmer commitment. It is necessary to create the conditions of organization and interest that will allow farmers to participate in the groups, and so that they are willing to reach the action in the process of change.

## 5. Resistance as a lever for change

### **In the program content and messages:**

The degree of convincing of farmers on the need to change and implement the proposed solutions is defined, among other factors, by the farmer's confidence in the effectiveness of the innovations. The solution should be identified as the most suitable alternative to overcome the situation that the farmer wants to change. The facilitator should thoroughly understand the proposed technology, how to operate it, any necessary resources to implement it and the real results of its application. Also keep in mind that research results are not always fully applicable on farmers' fields, and may require adapting them to local conditions.

Farmers expect to see a change from the technical improvement and will make their own assessments of the costs and benefits of proposed technology. This is almost always done in marginal terms, to avoid uncertainty and the risk of investing in something that might not have the same results when what was learned is put into practice on their own farm.



It is the facilitator's responsibility to know enough about the technology, its limitations and real possibilities for application, so that they can select the best alternative according to local production conditions.

**The relationship with the farmers:**

The facilitator should seek to build a relationship of trust and credibility with the farmer, and should avoid criticizing him and his way of working, as the farmer's natural reaction would be to reject the facilitator.

As an external agent, the facilitator should be interested in understanding the local culture, attending to aspects such as customs, the role of tradition in the farmer's way of acting and the influence of religion, politics or economic power on the way that relationships are developed amongst farmers and between them and the facilitator. The ability to empathize with farmers is a critical factor for success in any learning process.

**Communication:**

In change management, one can not assume that with just training farmers will acquire the necessary knowledge and motivation to begin the process of change or to understand and implement the proposed solutions. The facilitator should be sure to verify that the messages or content is understood and that they are significant to farmers in their daily work.

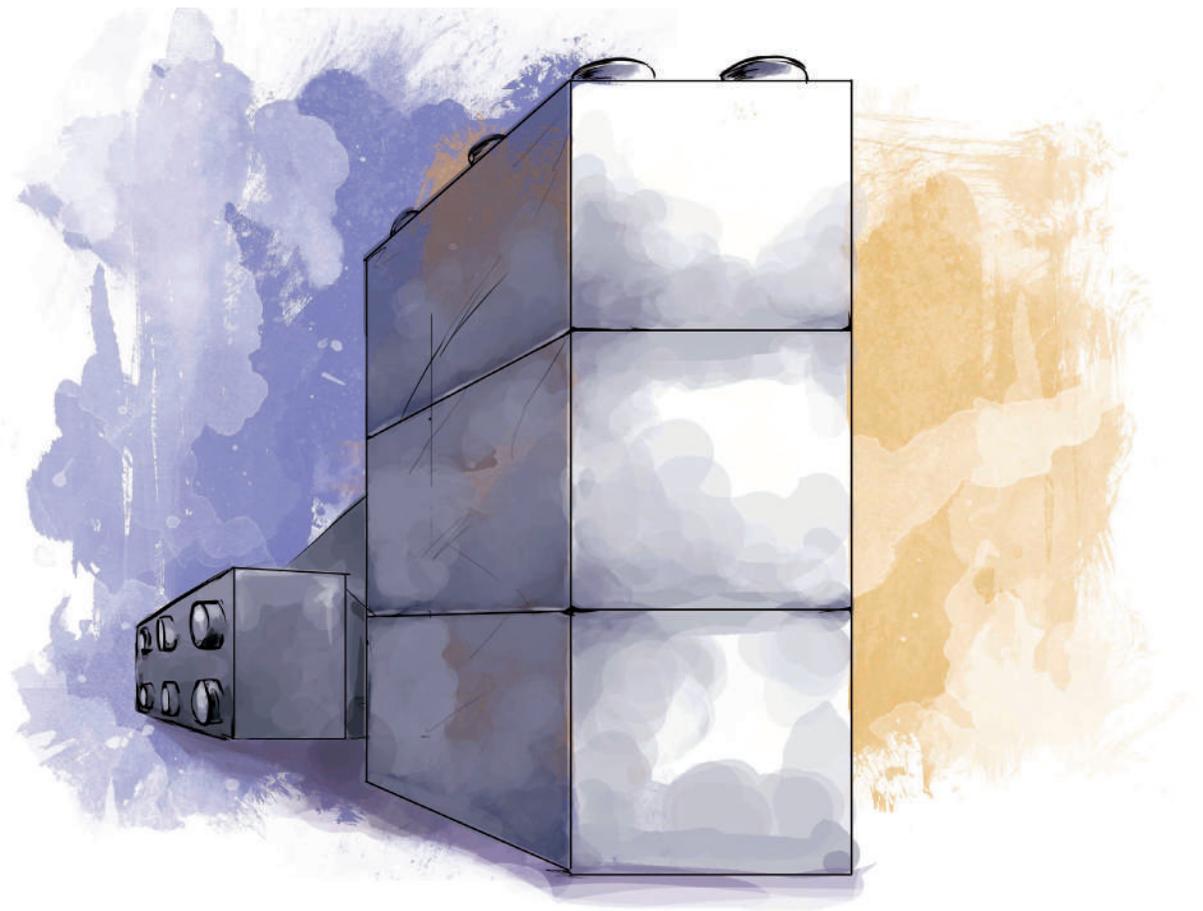
You can not expect that merely attending a training or support activity will generate the expected level of understanding in the farmers. The facilitator should generate a two-way style of communication with farmer groups.

These are some of the behaviors that should be avoided when facilitating change. It is important to be open to consider other aspects, such as social structure, farmers' perceptions, attitude toward innovation, communication and learning. In all these respects, the facilitator must be very analytical and seek to identify the issues that could slow down or speed up the efforts to assist the farmers. Discussing issues with colleagues, reading about related topics, sharing experiences and working as a team will be very helpful in achieving success with support for farmers and change management in general.

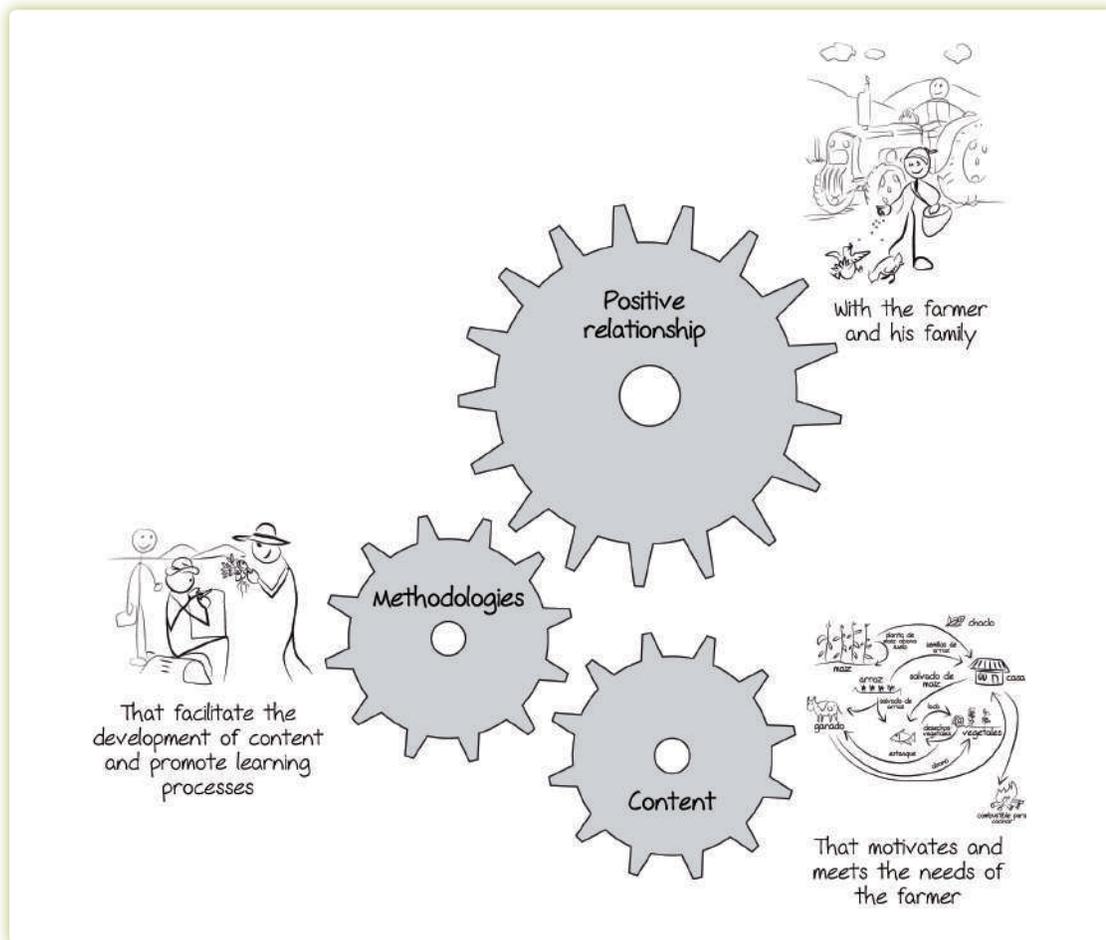
# Part three:

## The role of the facilitator in the process of change

When the challenges and context of the farmers change, the organizations and technicians who support them must also change how they work. Everyone must work to reinvent themselves.



## 6. The role in three important components of the process



The meetings that the facilitator has with the group must be intended to encourage farmers to act differently and achieve the proposed objectives for a project or a specific activity, such as a training session. Many projects that seek to improve the conditions of a community place great importance on training, with its contents as the fundamental basis for work. However, it is necessary to understand that the role of the facilitator extends beyond developing some content, for example technical

## 6. The role in three important components of the process

issues related to crop management. This chapter describes the role of the facilitator within three important components:

- Initially, the facilitator should work on building a positive relationship with the farmer and his family.
- For work sessions, the facilitator should develop content that motivates and meets the needs of the farmer.
- The facilitator should propose methodologies that facilitate the development of content and promote learning processes that develop new capabilities in the group of farmers.

### 1. In the relationship with the farmer and his family

A wide variety of cultural, technical, economic and social differences occur within the groups of farmers we work with. These differences affect the way each farmer incorporates on his farm the practices and recommendations given in the training or in a program on adoption of new technology. This suggests that, in family farming, there is no magic formula or the best model for doing things. When working with farmers, facilitators must understand that their role extends beyond sharing knowledge; it is about creating a dialogue of knowledge and technician- group construction where the starting point is building a good relationship with the farmer and his family. When the facilitator ignores this aspect and limits himself only to addressing the technical content, it is difficult for change to happen, or along the way it will be hindered with much resistance, often insurmountable. Numerous studies show how the success of many professionals is based more on their interpersonal relationships and ability to deal with people than on their technical skills and knowledge. Below you will find some recommendations on promoting a constructive relationship that facilitates change.

Good gardeners always prepare the soil before planting. They hoe, fertilize and water it. Once the ground is ready, they begin to sow. The same thing happens when you sow the seeds of change in groups of farmers. The soil must be prepared if you want the change to take root. Unfortunately, many organizations and technical assistants do not perform the preliminary work. They want to implement a cultural practice, procedure or, in the case of certifications, the incorporation of a standard,

without doing the lead-up work of motivating and convincing the farmer, and most importantly, making the farmer a participant in the process. “Starting with the left foot” like that can have disastrous results. We invite you to ask yourself as a facilitator: What activities do I do to predispose a farmer to be open to trying and implementing new practices on his farm? Do I limit myself to only transmitting knowledge taken from books or my experience? When I interact with a group do I feel that I am right and ‘own the knowledge’?

When you start by creating an environment open to change, resistance is reduced and farmers are more receptive to innovation and more willing to take risks.

Many facilitators focus their work only on technical topics, placing strong emphasis on content (crop management, fertilization, pest management) but paying little attention to social aspects and the relationship with the farmer and his family. When a facilitator assumes this type of attitude, progress and project results are often minimum and the blame tends to be placed on the farmer, “its because he doesn’t want to change”, “he is resistant to change despite me having showed him the benefits.” Remember that, more than just working with a crop, we are working with people. Before incorporating farming practices and changes in farm management, the facilitator should encourage farmers and their families to make them excited about change and in so doing create a culture of innovation and continuous improvement.

There are two features essential in promoting an environment receptive to change: trust and appreciation or recognition. It is necessary that people initially trust the facilitator and feel that they are appreciated and recognized for their work and effort. Resistance to change is deepened if trust is lost in organizations and technicians. The facilitator should keep in mind that trust is built over time. The facilitator creates trust when his actions demonstrate:

- Honesty: what he says is believable
- Integrity: he follows through with commitments and agreements
- Openness: he shares what he knows

In a relationship with farmers, trust is a delicate feeling. It takes a long time to build it, but can be lost in an instant; once lost, it is very difficult to gain back.

## 6. The role in three important components of the process

Some examples of behaviors or attitudes that can destroy trust are:

**Preaching but not practicing:** facilitators should use their actions to be an example of what they are saying. Unfortunately, in many cases the opposite occurs. For example, although most facilitators know that participatory processes and knowledge building are more effective than lectures, the reality is that a high percentage of facilitators give lectures or use methodologies that transmit information in only one direction. Another example is the facilitator who tells farmers that timeliness is a very important aspect to keep in mind when performing crop management practices, and that they should do things on time and be productive with the time spent; however, when the facilitator schedules a training activity, he arrives late or wastes the farmer's time.

**Failing to respect the confidentiality of farmer's information:** often when working with farmers, they tend to share private details about their lives, families or properties. The technician must have enough tact and respect to handle this information with a degree of confidentiality. Those who are not careful with this information, in addition to making the mistake of promoting gossip and rumors, can generate distrust.

Some suggestions to earn and build trust are:

**Empathy, put yourself in their shoes.** Empathy is the ability to think and feel as if you were living another person's experience. When the first reaction is to understand the other person's point of view, instead of to dismiss or criticize them, extraordinary things begin to happen. People feel like you are on their side, that you understand and appreciate their concerns and knowledge. Even though later on you may present them with another point of view, the fact that you initiated the relationship with empathy creates a mood wherein you are more likely to receive their contributions.

**Recognize the farmer's efforts and progress.** If you want the farmers to make an effort, they must be appreciated. Nothing distorts appreciation more than ignoring the effort. As a technician, there is a common tendency to criticize what is wrong more than to praise success.

**Demonstrate by your actions that the farmer is important to you.** People need appreciation and recognition from others. When the farmer or a member of his family wants to talk with you, give your full attention. Show that you place importance on

your time with him. If for example you are in your office working on the computer, pause that activity to focus only on listening and attending to the farmer. Avoid the bad habit of answering phone calls while you are assisting the farmer. Additionally, take care to call the farmers by name, which is a good show of the respect and importance that person deserves.

**Avoid criticizing the farmer and what he does.** Ask yourself as a facilitator: How many times have I spent the first visit to a farm telling the farmer everything that, in my view, he is doing wrong?



## 6. The role of three important components of the process

Criticism is dangerous because it hurts the pride, spurs resentment and the changes it provokes are usually not lasting. Keep in mind that the person you want to correct and criticize will frequently try to justify himself, and in other cases, could attack you in turn, correcting or criticizing you as a technician. When dealing with farmers, you should remember that, besides being logical, they are also emotional. In fact, many times the emotion is stronger than rationality (consider for a moment all the effort and the feelings that can surround a farm for a small farmer). Instead of criticizing the farmers, try to understand them. Try to understand their reasons, as a starting point for there to be sympathy and receptivity.

**Learn to listen to the farmers.** In your job as a facilitator, it is very important to know how to listen. This attitude shows respect and gives importance to the farmer, and it additionally allows you to understand their way of thinking and true motivations and needs. Facilitators who do not know how or do not want to listen tend to be considered indifferent or disrespectful, which, in turn, causes the farmers to have a poor predisposition to communication. It is important to learn to listen actively, which means more than just hearing what was said, but repeating what you just heard to be sure you understood. A confirmation that you listened well is that the speaker responds appropriately, even if this means making a change in what he was doing. It is important that what the farmer says is taken into account in the process of change management and improvements proposed by the facilitator.

We hope that you understand the importance of this function in your role as a facilitator and that you take it into account in your daily work and dedicate yourself to strengthening it.

### 2. In the facilitation of content

In relation to the content or topics that will be facilitated, from the beginning it is important to ask: Do this content and new knowledge respond to the farmers' needs? Adult learning is more selective and depends largely on their interest in the new knowledge, the possibility of its application and how it responds to the problems or needs already perceived by the farmers.

Another crucial aspect is the way in which new knowledge is assimilated and how farmers relate it to their own experience or prior knowledge. Farmers not only learn the new material, but they can also modify and adapt it according to their skills.

On the other hand, they might not assimilate it if you do not generate sufficient understanding or confidence about the new content. Therefore, the most effective learning is based on problems perceived by the farmers with solutions within their reach, rather than based on theoretical content defined unilaterally by the facilitator.

Likewise, learning will be more significant if the new knowledge is communicated in an applied and practical manner that relates to the farmers' background. Valuing their past experience will provide a base to build new knowledge that is more appropriate for farmers and will give them a sense of accomplishment along with learning. The new knowledge, appropriate for farmers and recognizing their prior experience, allows them to continue broadening and sharing their knowledge by themselves.

We recommend that the facilitator take into account the following aspects in preparing the training session:

- Understand sufficiently the new practices or technology that will be shared.
- Ensure that it is feasible for farmers to implement the new practices or technology.
- Direct it towards achievement of a clear objective.
- Consider local experience and knowledge.
- Clearly structure the communication of the training contents.

As for the facilitator's responsibility for technical knowledge and understanding the knowledge or practices that he wants to promote to the farmers, the facilitator must understand the application domain of the technologies being promoted, the expected potential benefits and the application limitations. The farmer expects the facilitator to be knowledgeable and confident of the information he provides.

While it holds true that agriculture is an activity influenced by many uncontrollable factors and that successful implementation of technology can not always be guaranteed (due to, for example, changes in climatic conditions, unexpected arrival of pests and diseases or deficiencies in how labors are carried out), it is essential that the new technologies have been backed by research and trial-tested under the conditions the farmers face. Remember that making decisions about an adequate practice or technology will have a long term effect on the farmer's economic outcome and well-being, as well as aspects such as the ecosystem.

## 6. The role in three important components of the process

A facilitator should not limit his knowledge of technologies to the contents to be included in the training, but rather broaden the knowledge associated with its implementation, especially regarding economic aspects.

Another note-worthy aspect is the importance of message clarity and clear and effective communication. We view the facilitator as a master winemaker, who selects the best grapes, thinking about the expected result in the final product, then processes them and achieves the production of a high-quality wine. Likewise, in the training of farmers, content must go through a process that condenses the information to achieve clear and concise messages that are packed with the power to generate the expected change in farmers.

This process be divided into three steps: analyze, organize and communicate. In the first step, the facilitator should have the discretion to locate the appropriate technology or best recommendations that can address the farmers' needs, document and carefully analyze them, evaluate their potential uses and define the key messages that can be taken from these alternatives. Next, you must organize this wide collection of information, analyzing how to best help the farmer understand and aiming for consistency amongst the key messages you plan to communicate by developing a common theme. Finally, with the support of information and message clarity, it's time to think about effective and clear communication of the content, media and resources that will be used to transmit the messages and generate complete understanding amongst the users of the new technology.

In conclusion, remember that the farmers expect from you the best orientation, management of training content and responsibility, based on your knowledge of the topics. The confidence projected in communication is essential to earning the farmer's conviction and trust. Therefore, the time that you dedicate to reviewing the content and preparing the communication messages will make a difference.

### 3. In fact analyzing the methodology

An analysis of a training session demonstrates that farmers need more than facts and concepts to be motivated to act effectively, identify what needs to be done and develop the required skills.

We suggest that, before proposing the methodology, you take into account the following basic criteria:

- People do not pay attention when the presentation does not relate to their interests. Involving emotional elements in the training session helps to facilitate the learning process.
- Everyone learns in a different way. The senses are the gateway to learning (hearing, seeing, practicing), which is why some people prefer to listen while others learn by viewing images and others by doing things.
- The methodology, in addition to keeping participants motivated and connected with the subject, helps participants to discover meaning and facilitates the construction of the proposed content.

Personal experience is one of the best ways to learn something. A training session should encourage the farmer to have meaningful experiences. For many people, it is easy to forget a good presentation, but more difficult to forget an experience. It is necessary to understand that the experience must be accompanied by a process to think and analyze with the group of farmers, so that the experience is meaningful for them and has the relevance that you want.

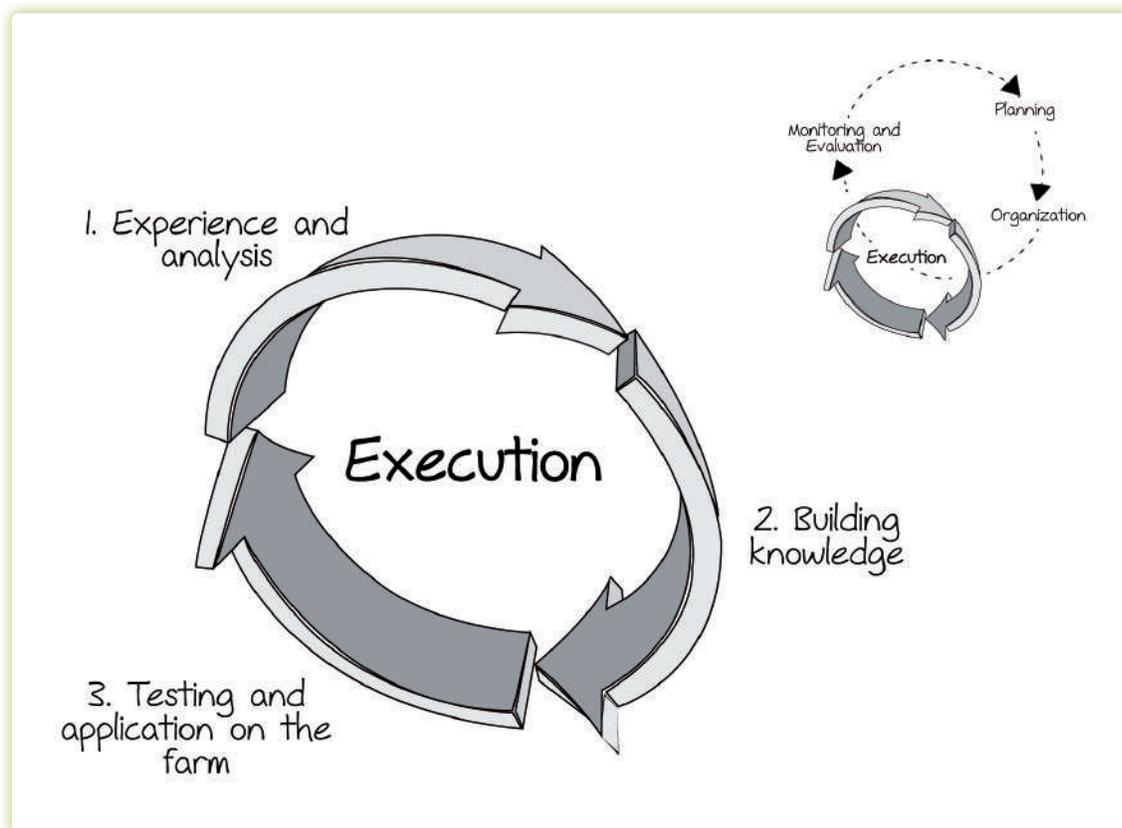
Challenge the participants with provocative questions that make them think. In many activities, the technician limits himself to only transferring information, a situation where the facilitator assumes an active role and the farmer is passive. In the ideal situation, the participant engages in concrete activities that let him experience the topic he is learning about.

Reflection and discussion about the experience and the topic should be encouraged to fortify learning. The activity that is done can be a realistic and applied experience (calibration of a fumigator, a cultural practice) or a structured activity that imitates reality (a simulation exercise, role play).

It is suggested that the training session have three parts:

- Experience and analysis
- Building knowledge
- Testing and application on the farm.

## 6. The role in three important components of the process



For each part, the facilitator develops a series of sequential activities that facilitate achievement of the established objectives:

### 1. Experience and analysis

The first activity can be an experience or memory of an experience that allows the group to:

- Create awareness of the importance of the issue that will be discussed.
- Specify the problem and identify the need to implement actions to overcome it or for improvement.
- Provide a framework that encourages the group to go into depth with problem management alternatives.

For the experience or memory of an experience, a process of reflection and analysis should be generated in the group. The facilitator of the activity is responsible for creating an environment that encourages attendees to participate.

Some suggested activities that can be developed during this first part are:

- Start with a group integration ice-breaker activity that is fun and culturally appropriate.
- Develop experiential exercises that allow participants to have real-life experiences, which are necessary in order to derive a theory that provides them with new options.
- Build a case study for the group to analyze.
- Visit a farm plot that has a problem for the group to assess and analyze.
- Show statistical information or results of the loss caused by the situation shown in a region or on a farm.
- Facilitate a discussion of the experience for participants to share their perceptions, beliefs and feelings.
- Ask discussion questions that encourage reflection and analysis of the experience.
- Facilitate a positive perception of the diversity of experiences and opinions, and the opportunity to learn from other people and experiences.
- Draw conclusions that motivate the group to build new knowledge and to seek new alternatives for solving problems.

## **2. Building knowledge**

This stage facilitates new learning within the group of participants, develops activities that permit farmers to study the topic in depth and builds knowledge through the active participation of the group.

This phase in content development seeks to:

- Facilitate the acquisition and definition of relevant information. The new content enriches and expands on their knowledge of the subject.

## 6. The role in three important components of the process

- Develop the necessary skills and abilities of the group members for them to implement alternatives for improvement. For example, they might learn how to properly calibrate a pulping machine.
- Promote a vision that integrates personal experiences, the learning session and what was discovered to form a new learning experience.

Some recommendations for this stage are:

- Offer practical activities such as demonstrations of methods and results or guided tours of farms where they can observe new farming practices and acquire new knowledge.
- Carefully and thoroughly select the information that will be shared with the group. This information should be presented in a sequential and articulated manner.
- Promote discussion activities for participants to compare their prior knowledge of the topic with the new information provided.
- Utilize different media and materials that stimulate the farmers' learning.
- Perform activities that stimulate the different senses (auditory, visual and kinetic) and lead them to draw conclusions related to the topic or the improvement activity that they hope to apply on their farms. For example, suggest that they develop concept maps, drawings, poems, plays, musical compositions, etc.

### 3. Testing and application on the farm

In this stage, farmers should be encouraged to test or practice what they have learned. Knowledge that is not translated into action tends to not be assimilated, and eventually fails to become a part of their everyday life. Furthermore, what is not practiced, tends to be forgotten. The ability to do something is achieved through constant practice. It is suggested that an initial practice be supervised by the facilitator to provide feedback to the participant and verify that the improvement activities or new practices have been well understood. It also provides an opportunity to correct errors, perfect the actions and feel confident before applying the lessons learned on their own farm.

The application phase seeks to:

- Do a preliminary test of an application of what was learned and its related skills, in order to individually and collectively evaluate the results and make modifications.
- Facilitate applying the trial run to the reality of the farm.

Some recommendations in this stage are:

- Hold a guided practice for you to check for understanding of the content and use of new skills and abilities.
- Recognize the group progress and the positive results obtained. The participants' successes and achievements help them to gain confidence and strengthen their self-esteem.
- Encourage participants to compare and contrast their results.
- Facilitate processes of self and group evaluation.
- Ask participants to prepare action plans that describe the activities they will implement on their farms.
- Facilitate monitoring and follow-up activities of what were implemented on the farms.

## 7- Suggest ons to mplement change

A fundamental condition to start the process of change is that the group of farmers has the motivation and willingness to implement new practices on their farms or participate in the process.

To guarantee their commitment and to facilitate the process, the facilitator should first answer the following questions:



What motivates a group of farmers to adopt a new technology or test new crop management practices on their farms?

Which people influence their decision to adopt new technology? Does it involve the family, a friend, a leader farmer in the area, the agribusiness store salesperson? You may find some unexpected people in your answer to this question. It is essential to keep in mind these actors in the process of change, and so you should understand their interests and what could be their potential contributions to the change process.

What motivates farmers to persist and invest their time and resources during the required period of time before they begin to perceive the benefits of change?

In general terms, we propose that people are motivated or can be involved in the process of change when you can respond positively to the following three questions:

**Effort:** Is it worth the farmer's effort in comparison with the resulting benefits? Do the benefits the farmer receives outweigh the costs he has to incur?

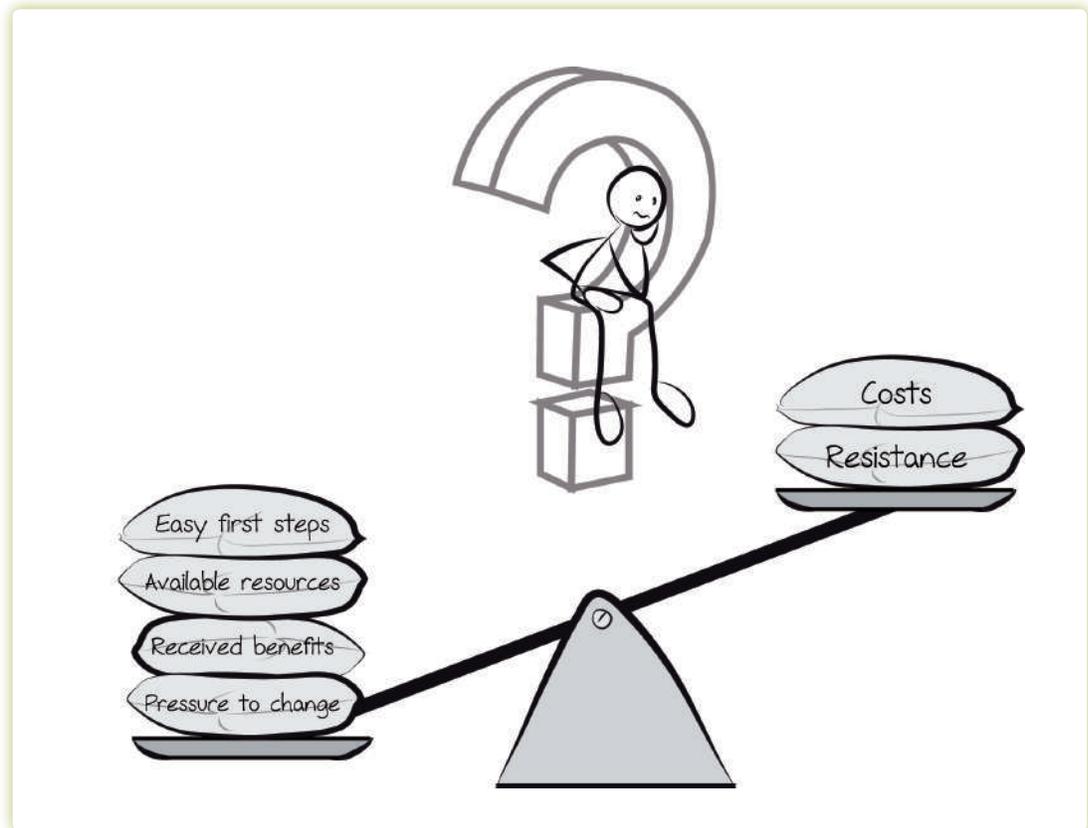
**Performance:** Does the farmer feel he has the skills, knowledge and resources needed to implement changes on his farm?

**Satisfaction:** Can the farmer find satisfaction in the process, as he implements the new practices? This question refers to the adequacy of external rewards (increased productivity, ease or convenience of doing a task, higher income) and internal rewards (enjoying what he does, improved self-esteem, recognition by the family and community).

Be aware that the answers to these questions are not in your perception, but are of the farmers. To find the answers, the facilitator should contact the group and make use of discussion questions.

In the following graphic you can see some factors that favor change and, to a certain degree, offset the farmers' costs and resistance to change.

## 7. Suggestions to implement change



If there is no pressure for change or a need for it, the farmer will not be willing to invest his time and resources, as the proposed change will not be enough of a priority for him. The pressure for change is essential for the process to begin. Establishing a compelling reason is the starting point to counter resistance. To achieve this initial condition, an effective strategy is to analyze with the farmers the possible consequences of not adopting the new practice or not implementing the required changes (lower income, loss of property, impact on children and family).

The received benefits pertain to the improvements, with what the farmer will accomplish and achieve by adopting the new technology or implementing the change. It is very important that the farmer have a clear idea of where he is going and what he can manage to get or do once he implements the required changes. In working with farmers, you should clarify what will be different after the changes are implemented. Just as the pressure for change is the driving force, the potential benefits provide fuel that propel the farmer to persist and overcome any obstacles that may surface.

The available resources depend on the farmer's perception and appraisal of which resources he has to implement the necessary steps on the path of change. If the farmer determines that he does not have sufficient resources, he will feel stress and frustration, or will demand that the organization developing the project or the training should supply the resources. The facilitator must understand that, in addition to economic and material resources, an evaluation of resources must also include the farmer's talents, knowledge and skills.

The first steps are key in providing motivation for change. As you will see later, partitioning the change into small steps helps the farmer to be able to envision the closest and most achievable goals, and feel that the process is not as complicated as it may sometimes seem to him.

Suggestions to implement the change with a group of farmers are as follows:

**1. With the group, identify opportunities for improvement and problems**

It is important to keep in mind that the majority of the success of programs for change is based on involving farmers in the various activities and stages. The facilitator should place particular emphasis on using participatory methods where the farmers themselves identify problems, opportunities and possible solutions. When the group is involved in the analysis of problems, farmers can openly express their points of views on the factors that are obstacles for their adoption of technology, increased productivity or the particular problem that is being analyzed. Group participation also allows the facilitator and the farmers to recognize the positive aspects, best practices and examples of innovations that have worked well, along with the measures to be eliminated and how to avoid difficulties.

By using a participatory methodology, farmers can decide which changes, innovations or interventions would be most appropriate to improve their conditions. Remember that in change management, a group analysis and consensus on a decision is better than a decision imposed by an external agent.

When the facilitator uses the proper tools for participation and construction with the group, the solutions tend to be more appropriate and effective. In the process of participatory analysis, the community members participate in the characterization of their production situation and use their intuition to identify the causes of the associated problems, according to their way of conceiving their reality.

### **The participatory process is useful to:**

- Build farmers' awareness of the problems and make them feel empowered in the situation, in initial stages.
- Promote the participation of different groups or actors (in particular, women and youth; in general, the farmer's family).
- Contribute to greater community empowerment.
- Help farmers feel that they are taken into account in project development or change management.

### **2. Focus your work by starting with the most motivated and first to adapt, and guide them towards becoming promoters**

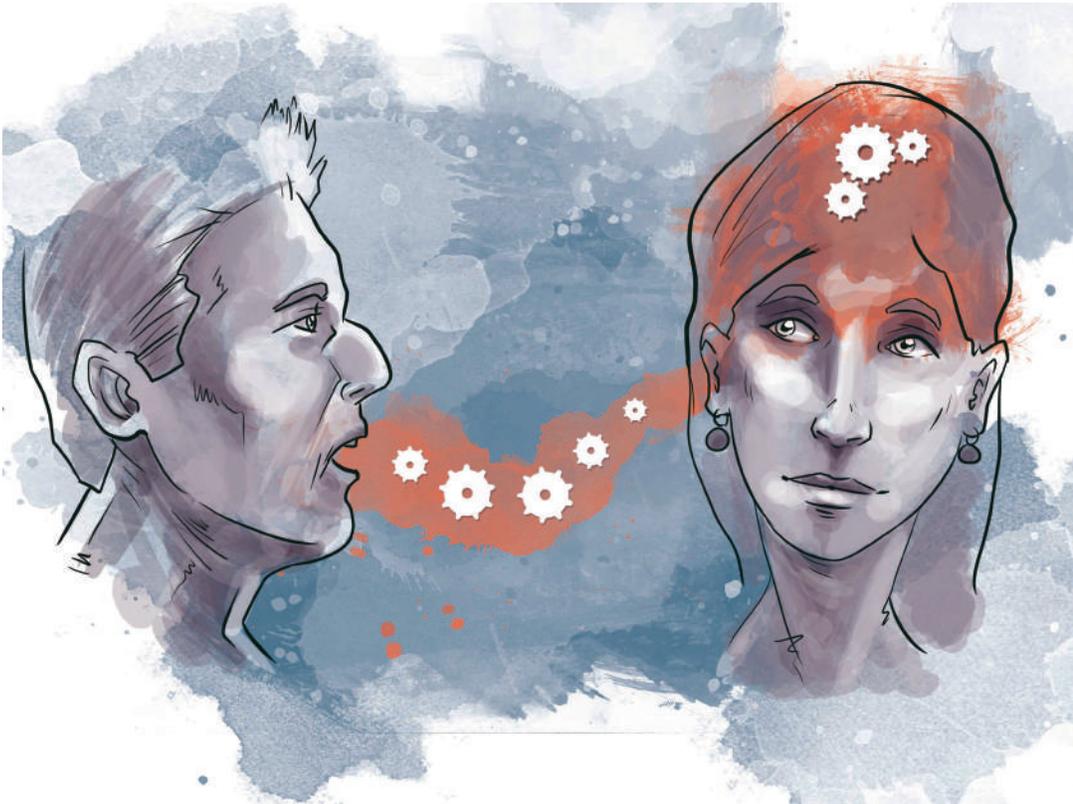
When you are working with a group of farmers in various stages of the change process, which group should you work with? With which group should you begin the process?

Experience shows that the simplest and most useful recommendation is to target your actions. Begin your work by focusing 80% of your effort and dedication on the group that is willing to change, in this case those who are in the stages of focused action and ownership. Although this is generally a small group, starting with them will help you to later include participants from other stages in the process towards the desired change.

Following the principles of targeting, you must also be focused with the activities and changes that will be implemented with this group. Do not try to develop a program for improvement with the intention of covering every aspect, as this can lead to overwhelming the group with activities and causing farmers to view the process as too difficult. Focus on activities that are critical or will demonstrate benefits in the short term, as this is fundamental to provide motivation. This motivated group can then begin to encourage other farmers who are still reluctant to participate in the improvement activities.

### **3. Break up the change into small steps**

If a facilitator begins his job with the idea that it has to be something brilliant, dramatic or extraordinary, the change will not be seen as positive because he is implicitly confirming that what they had been doing before was so wrong that it requires an extreme change in order to obtain results. This work strategy almost always generates a resistance to change.



Even if a group has serious problems on their farms that require major changes and a lot of resources, such as aging farms that need to be renovated, changes in population density or switching varieties, it is best to split the change up into small steps, since they are easier to follow and do not involve as big of an investment in resources and time. When major transformations are divided into small steps, farmers can see that it is possible to change and this minimizes their fear and the feeling of incapability of achieving goals.

**4. Start with the easiest actions which will begin to produce early results and benefits**

A small change can have big results (analogously, a small landslide can convert into a huge avalanche).

## 7. Suggestions to implement change

Small changes that produce positive results predispose the participants to try new and greater changes. A farmer sows, seed by seed, knowing that sooner or later the harvest will arrive. Additionally, any type of change, although it may seem “insignificant,” sparks hope and expectation in those who are participating in the process. Contrary to popular belief, the majority of large problems have solutions that start with very small actions.

Start with “early improvement” actions that show results on the short and medium term. For example, programs to control losses in harvest and post harvest. As mentioned earlier, when people begin to quickly receive benefits, no matter how small, it drives them to continue and remain in the improvement process.

### **5. Establish a commitment to action with the group**

As the facilitator, you can rely on the dynamics of group work to achieve better coverage and leverage the relationships generated within the group to create more motivation to work, with a focus on results.

Assure that every training activity generates a commitment to action, implementation or monitoring for each farmer and his farm. Farmers should develop their individual commitments and consolidate it with the group’s commitment. When the group members maintain their competitive spirit and commitment, it generates social control within the group and the farmer feels motivated to contribute to the joint result.

For the reasons already mentioned, these commitments should be achievable. The facilitator must monitor the achievement of these objectives, to make the farmers feel that their achievements are valued and recognized.

According to the objectives established with the group, there may be several existing commitments in the group that will be met and monitored at different times.

### **6. Develop significant training and mentoring on the farm**

Providing on-going support on the farm is essential to:

- Congratulate the farmer for the actions he is performing and highlight his achievements.
- Correct errors and deficiencies opportunistically.

## 7. Understand and manage the group's objections and fears

During the initial stages of the process of change, you may hear expressions like, “This is too difficult...”, “we do not have the necessary resources to implement these recommendations”, “for those with money it is very easy to implement, but for us...”, “wouldn't it be better to just continue doing things like before without running any risks?”

Some facilitators might react negatively to the group's objections and fears, and in many cases not take them into account. They may react defensively and conclude that farmers do not want change, that even though the project is providing them with resources the farmers are not committed. The facilitator could even try to convince the farmers that what they are saying is not true. Remember that during the change process, the strategy of persuasion (trying to convince the other person that he is wrong and you are right) is one of the least effective. When these objections and fears are not handled properly, they often become barriers to change that tend to increase over time. Remember that having objections and fears is natural in any process of change and should not be interpreted as a farmer's lack of commitment. To define how you handle it, first answer:

Have the farmers participated in the process of analyzing their problems and generating possible solutions?

Have they been sufficiently clear on what they want to do?

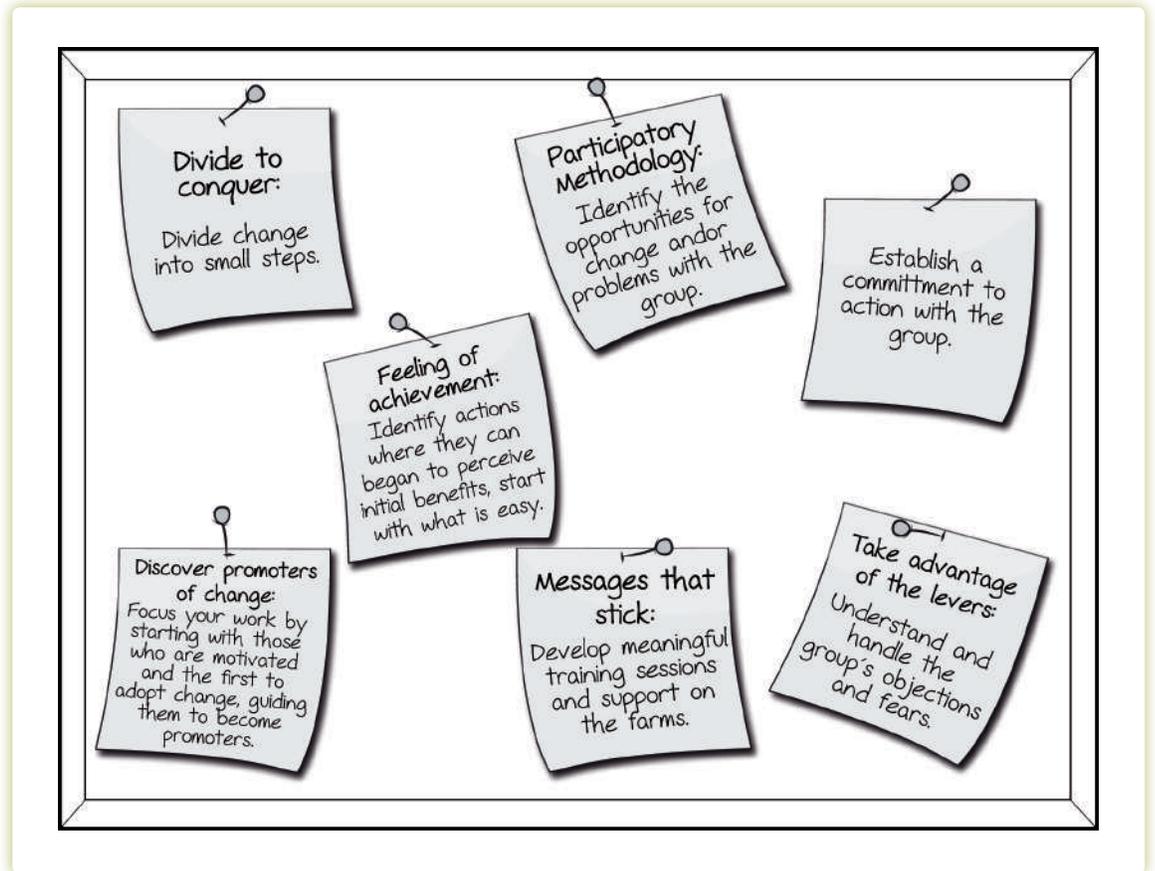
Has the path been clearly defined for how to achieve the proposed objectives (the steps to follow)?

Do the proposed solutions represent any risks or chance of failure that have not been taken into account?

Do the farmers have the necessary resources (psychological, knowledge and physical) to initiate change?

## 7. Suggestions to implement change

When you objectively respond to these questions and view the group's fears and objections as an opportunity to better structure the project or improvement program, the objections and fears that were seen as apparent barriers become converted into drivers of the change process, making the actions they seek to implement seem stronger and more viable.



## Some additional ideas:

**Remember past successes:** When farmers are afraid of change, they tend to forget how well they responded to changes in the past. In situations of change, recalling success in previous and similar circumstances is a way to build trust. Even when confronting a new situation for the first time, there will always be familiar aspects and transferable skills. There is nothing entirely new.

**Remember past successes:** Focusing on people's weaknesses, even if the intention is to help, undermines their confidence. By emphasizing their strong points, you can build up their self-esteem and motivate the farmers to try harder, even with issues they find difficult.

When you work on changes, remind people of their strengths and resources and show them how the skills they already have will help them to excel in their new tasks.

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# Change management **with farmers**

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