

HANDOUT

“Community Extension: a training and innovation system for farmers”

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KNOW-HOW
3000

The knowledge network of HORIZONT3000 and its partners

Community Extension is a training / educating process given by farmers during which academic knowledge of the farmer is coordinated with the agro ecological and socioeconomic environment, allowing the development of a process of permanent local innovation which improves the farming systems and quality of life within the families and the areas they live in (figure 2). One of the key figures of this extension system are the "Community Extensionists - CE" (Extensionistas Comunitarios, EC). They are innovative men or women who are solidary with their work group (consisting of 10 farmers in average) and with the community in which the necessary changes are promoted in order to achieve economic, social and environmental development of farming systems, families, local organisations and their area in general (figure 1).

Main features of the Community Extension training program:

Reinforce communication and exchange networks, focus on training the people, focus on education, individual or collective commitment of participants, be an intermediary for the supporting organisation, courses of action within efforts for the area.

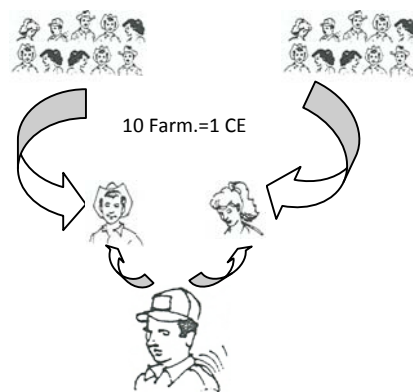
Development of Community Extensionists.

-127 male CEs (55%) and 103 female CEs take part in the program.

-18% of male CEs are uneducated, 59% received up to six years of education and 23% received more than six years of education. In comparison, all of the female CEs can read and write, 37% of them have received less than six years of education and 63% have received more six years of education.

-Male CEs main sources of knowledge are farmers (65%), technicians (25%) and for the other 10%, their main is media such as radio and pamphlets, while the women's source of knowledge are to 100% technicians.

-Development stages of the Community Extension system



1 Techn. = 10-15 CEs than

Figure 1. BASIC COMMUNITY OUTREACHERS NETWORK

Food security and organisation, 2000-2003	Economic development and involvement, 2004-2006	Agroecology and entrepreneurship, 2007-2010	Ecocommunities and service networks, from 2011 on
<p>-Training general Community Extensionists who promote community development.</p> <p>-Responsible for a group of 10 members of the community.</p>	<p>-Consolidation of the Community Extension network and their involvement in community development.</p> <p>-Responsible for their groups and for organising exchanges among Community Extensionists.</p>	<p>-Reinforce agricultural knowledge of Community Extensionists and specialize them in a sector and in community leadership.</p> <p>-Responsible for their group and for organising regional exchanges.</p> <p>-Be agricultural and technical trainers for organic agriculture courses on a national level.</p>	<p>Community Extensionists, leaders specialized in subject areas and organic agriculture working in networks.</p> <p>-Responsible for their group and for organising regional exchanges.</p> <p>-Be agricultural and technical trainers for organic agriculture and appropriate technology courses on a national and Mesoamerican level.</p>

From the CEs' own perception, the main changes male CEs have achieved are improvements in community organisation, in the involvement of young people, women and men in the community and in commercialization. Female CEs feel they have contributed to community development, to the improvement of family income and organisation.

Figure 2. COMMUNITY EXTENSION SYSTEM BASED ON INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FARM, COMMUNITY AND TERRITORY.

