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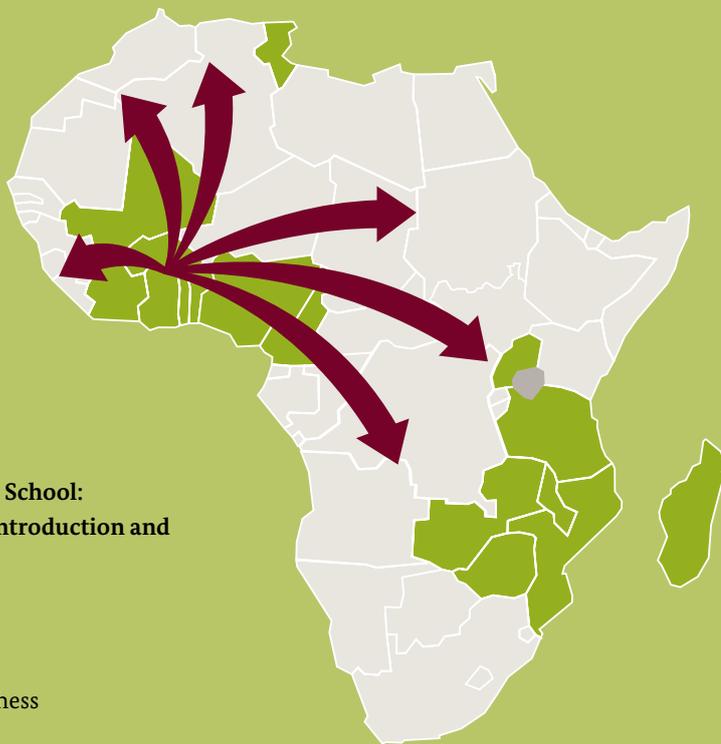
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# Farmer Business School:

## A guideline for introduction and management

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**Farmer Business School:  
A guideline for introduction and  
management**

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## Preface and Acknowledgements

The Farmer Business School (FBS) approach was developed by the Project “Sustainable Cocoa Business (SCB)” of GIZ in 2010 with private and public partners. Building on the successes, other GIZ programmes as well as public and private partners have adapted FBS to other export and food commodities. Together, we have made FBS training possible for over 900,000 smallholders in 16 African countries. FBS has become a unique selling point of GIZ as more and more GIZ projects and partners are interested to adapt the approach to their context and particular needs.

For this reason, the Sustainable Smallholder Agri-Business (SSAB) Programme was commissioned in 2017 by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to establish the FBS Advisory Facility with the mandate to support further dissemination of FBS in Africa.

This handbook is geared to support you in the successful introduction and management of the FBS approach. Building on practical experiences and lessons learnt gathered throughout the years, this handbook provides guidelines, tools and recommendations.

First of all, we would like to thank BMZ, our co-financiers the World Cocoa Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Nigeria Incentive-based Risk-sharing System for Agricultural Lending (NIRSAL) and the European Union for the financial support provided to develop FBS and to bring it to scale in cocoa producing countries of West and Central Africa. This would not have been possible without the enthusiastic commitment of our – more than 30 – implementing partners.

Our special thanks go to our colleagues from the programmes, who decided to adapt FBS to their specific context and countries. They indeed enriched the concept over the past years by keeping the quality standards high. Many thanks to all producers and producer organisations, who took part in the development of FBS and who helped us to adapt FBS to different contexts and countries.

Thanks to the members of SNRD Africa (Sector Network Rural Development) Working Group Agribusiness and Food Security (ABFS). They enhanced the dissemination of FBS by exchange and more particularly by the study on FBS in Africa published in 2015. Together with this handbook, this study serves as a reference for parties interested to learn about FBS and its sustainable implementation.

Many thanks also to all other persons, programmes and institutions for their contributions, valuable time and most relevant information.

Enjoy reading and contact us!

The authors

## Executive Summary

Farmer Business School (FBS) is an approach developed by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the World Cocoa Foundation with the aim to promote entrepreneurship and business skills of smallholder farmers. The approach builds on experiential learning and targets a mind-set change of farmers to recognise themselves as entrepreneurs and investors. These are crucial prerequisites for adoption of improved techniques, use of market opportunities and investments in agricultural production and consequently improved productivity and quality, diversified family income and nutrition. FBS triggers individual and group demand for services and inputs. Embedded and combined with related measures and services the FBS approach is recognised as an integrated cost-effective intervention.

In 2010, originally initiated by the Sustainable Cocoa Business Programme (SCB) for cocoa smallholders in West and Central Africa, by today 20 GIZ projects implement FBS for 22 different lead products, covered in 40 different curricula. The approach has spread in 16 West, Central, North and East African countries. Across the continent, over 900.000 farmers were trained on FBS. On average 30 percent of trained farmers are women. Not least because of the recognised success of the approach, the interest for FBS remains high. Four more projects intend to start FBS before the end of 2017.



To this effect, the new FBS Advisory Facility of the Sustainable Smallholder Agri-Business (SSAB) Programme team took up the initiative to write this handbook. Its purpose is to support successful introduction, implementation, quality management and sustainable anchoring of the FBS approach by projects, partners and for various value chains. Colleagues of the SSAB Programme from Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria and Europe have developed the maiden version. Most of them were involved in the development of the FBS approach right from its beginnings in 2010.

This handbook combines long-term experience, tools and lessons-learnt for FBS practitioners as well as newcomers along the following areas:

- > The context assessment concerning production systems, value chains, resources and partner structures facilitates decision making on FBS introduction. In addition, an organised exposure to FBS in practice can help to get a better idea of the approach at this stage.
- > The concrete introduction of FBS builds on the selection of lead and complementary products, the definition of target group, target outreach and required FBS trainers.
- > Economics are the backbone of FBS to guarantee value added for smallholders and downstream enterprises. Therefore, cost and benefits of traditional and improved techniques of selected lead and complementary products are analysed. Standardised spreadsheets facilitate the analysis. Results are used to adapt the training materials, which are first tested during a pilot training.



- > Capacity building is an integral and key element for the successful implementation of FBS. Therefore, carefully selected partner staff undergo a thorough qualification led by experienced Master Trainers to become FBS trainers. This comprises classroom Training of Trainers and learning trainings in the field under supervision. Refresher trainings are organised on a regular basis to update knowledge, introduce innovation, adjust work plans and to foster peer learning. To keep the quality of FBS trainings high, certification of FBS trainers builds on their performance and experience.
- > Strong partners as well as a stable financing model are prerequisites to reach sustainability in the end. Sources of finance for FBS can come from bilateral and/or multilateral donors, national and private entities. Types of partnership arrangements and cost-sharing schemes depend on the specific context, partner structures and partners' commitment.
- > Successful implementation and management of FBS depends on several factors:
  - > Roles of partners may vary according to the type of partnership arrangement. In any case, a precise labour division is necessary to make functions and responsibilities between implementing agencies and partners clear.
  - > The impact of FBS depends largely on trainers and supervisors in charge. For this reason, quality criteria need to be considered during the preparation, delivery and follow-up of FBS.
  - > Last but not least, logistics of equipment and training materials need to be organised in an efficient way as FBS is implemented in large scale.
- > Precise planning is the first step towards monitoring. Delivery rates, capacity of trainers and an overview of time help to keep track on the implementation. A digital data collection method is one option for reporting by trainers and supervisors and collection of training related data. It also facilitates the supervision of trainings in regards to challenges and the need of further support.
- > Evaluation of FBS might be specific at outcome level and capture the target group. Improvements may comprise the application of FBS tools, adaptation of good agricultural practices, financial access and savings mentality, organisation in a group to increase negotiation power and diversify production for a healthier diet and a more stable income.
- > Making the African FBS network strong and sustainable will require mutual efforts. One key to it is to satisfy the increasing demand for experienced Master Trainers who are able to qualify new FBS trainers, also in other countries and for different value chains. Furthermore, the ongoing dissemination of FBS across Africa calls for a practitioner platform for producers, donors, policy makers, interested organisations, companies and service providers. There is the vision to establish an international FBS association to promote the uptake of business concepts, development and sustainability of FBS beyond the time of GIZ projects and partnerships.

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