

1st African Conference on Farmer Business School

10-12 October 2017, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire



Farmer Business School (FBS) was designed for large-scale outreach in 2010 by GIZ, with support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and member companies of the World Cocoa Foundation. The objective of FBS trainings is to strengthen business skills of smallholder farmers to increase and to diversify incomes of their business. To this effect, FBS targets knowledge, skills and attitudes. FBS curricula cover one lead crop and two other food products with promising markets and sound technologies.

FBS has been adapted to other export commodities than cocoa and food crops in 16 African countries and implemented for over 900,000 smallholders by 20 different programmes. Over 40 curricula have been developed for 22 different agricultural production systems and value chains.

Eight years after the first introduction of the Farmer Business School (FBS) approach, the first African conference took place from 10 to 12 October 2017 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. The new FBS-Advisory Facility of the Sustainable Smallholder Agri-Business Programme organized the conference.



The conference brought together 160 FBS practitioners and stakeholders from 19 African and 3 European countries. Experts of development programmes, policy makers, delegates of public and private partner institutions, producer organizations, development partners and investors exchanged on

- Achievements and successes
- How to foster sustainability of FBS
- How to scale-up the approach while building on achievements and aligning interventions for inclusive agribusiness models in Africa.

Highlights of the conference

The Head of Cabinet of the Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development of Côte d'Ivoire, Mr. Siaka Minayaha Coulibaly, opened the conference. He confirmed the relevance of the FBS approach and encouraged participants to further integrate smallholders in value chains by strengthening their entrepreneurial skills.



During her keynote address, the Vice-President of African Development Bank, Dr. Jennifer Blanke, emphasized the important roles of Smallholders and of their entrepreneurial empowerment to achieve Sustainable Development Goals and Agricultural Transformation in Africa.



Producer organizations witnessed the positive impacts of FBS on the livelihoods of their members and the evolution of their organizations.

L. to R.: Koffigan, Kpevon, Togo; Frederick Thomas, Nigeria; Jean-Marie Kouadio Koffi, Côte d'Ivoire; Bibiane Ndzana Tona Vve Atouga, Cameroon; Kassim Miliki Mbande, Tanzania



Public and private implementers of FBS confirmed that combined with other services, FBS triggers smallholders' investments in better production techniques and to form organizations. This translates into stronger business relations, better product quality and turnover of companies. On the other side, this contributes to achieve goals of sector strategies.



L. to R.: John Tembo, Alliance Gineries, Zambia; Dr. Karima Ibrahim Babangida, FMARD, Nigeria; Hatem Zitouni, Délice Holding, Tunisia; William Wiafe, Ghana Cocoa Board; Miriam Gnire Outtara, Conseil Coton et Anacarde, Côte d'Ivoire; Andrew Brooks, OLAM Africa

The new *FBS Advisory Facility*, mandated to spread the FBS approach to other value chains, provided an overview on support services to FBS newcomers and on introduction processes in Malawi, Ghana, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire (achieved) and in Ethiopia, Uganda, Madagascar, Philippines, Congo and Zambia (work in progress).

This was also the opportunity to launch the new FBS Guidelines that shall enhance successful introduction and management of FBS.



The information market was the place for exchange among participants. Projects presented innovations introduced to FBS (e.g. ICT), their settings of implementation, sustainable financing and institutionalization. To this effect they shared videos, training materials as well as impact studies.



Concurrent Workshops were organized on the following topics

- Information for FBS newcomers on requirements for conducive introduction and adaptation of FBS to new value chains and countries.
- Creation of an international FBS association: Triggered by strong adherence to the idea, an anglophone and a francophone inception committee have been constituted during the last plenary session of the conference. The committees have started their consultations on the way forward.
- Cooperative Business School (CBS) as a new approach that strengthens provision of business services to members of producer organizations and consequently the position of organized smallholders in the framework of value chains.
- Fostering institutional anchorage and sustainable financing of FBS: Key results comprise the mainstreaming of FBS in national extension and financial inclusion strategies, National Agricultural Investment programmes but also financing of FBS trainings based on fees paid by producers and their organizations.

The Abidjan Declaration **“Entrepreneurship powers Agricultural Development and Transformation”** summarizes key outcomes of the conference and the commitments of participants.



The closing ceremony of the conference was honored by the representative of the *Conseil Café-Cacao*, Mr. Jean-Yves Couloud, and Dr. Sidiki Cissé, the Director General of *Agence Nationale d'Appui au Développement Rural* de la Côte d'Ivoire.

On 12th October, the clerk of the weather was on our side for the field trip. Two cocoa cooperatives in Adzopé informed participants on their achievements after FBS training.