

FIELD DAYS FOR CASI PROMOTION: Planning, organization and delivery

The case of SIMLESA in Mozambique



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Introduction

Since 2010, SIMLESA has established several on-farm and on-station trials to test conservation agriculture based sustainable intensification (CASI) technologies and practices suitable for

smallholder farming systems with the aim of increase food security. Several strategies are used to scale up CASI technologies and practices.

Field tour or field days are events organized on-farm and or on-station and offer a great opportunity to demonstrate and share CASI technologies with other farmers and stakeholders. During the field tour/day specific CASI practices are demonstrated and the event offers opportunity for a large number of farmers to access demonstration on specific CASI technologies and practices.

During its implementation, SIMLESA program have organized many field days that enabled farmers and other stakeholders to learn more about CASI practices, as well as experience sharing, and networking.

During the field tour/day, participants are able to see CASI options and choose the best options/best performing practices.

On-farm demonstrations are a great learning way for farmers and fields tours/field days leads to learning from others and show the successful practices that can lead to changes and adoption of CASI practices.

Although field tours or days are vital for demonstrating new practices and knowledge sharing between farmers and other agricultural actors, experiences show that they can fail, even with a good topic. To ensure good results, field days must be properly planned and implemented. Key questions need to be raised when planning a field day: 1) what the objective of the field day or tour is, and 2) what audience is the field day or tour designed to reach. The answers to these questions help determine the program content, sites, timing of the field day, number of participants and supporting materials.

Therefore, organizing a field day/tour requires a careful and early planning, development of checklists and establishment of timeline.

This manual/document provides the steps and key aspects in field tour/days planning and implementation. It provides tools for planning, organizing, and deliver a field tour/day.

What is field tour/field day?

What are the objectives of field tour/field day?

The overall objective of the field tour is to promote adoption and diffusion of agricultural technologies that are compatible with local production systems using the demonstration results.

Specifically, field tours intend to:

Introduce to farmers and other agricultural professionals to new technologies and techniques, including their practical applicability to specific environments;

Promote communication among farmers, extension officers, input providers and researchers;

SIMLESA field tours/field days

Field days under SIMLESA program are organized during the vegetative stage of the crops, or during the mid-season time in which there are clear differences between CASI practices and the conventional farmer's practices.

Generally, one field day is organized per each season by district in selected sites/communities.

The dates for the field days are planned in advance and communicated to host farmers, neighboring farmers, and extension services.

Field days are generally attended by farmers, researchers, extension officers, policy makers (government), local leaders/authorities in an interactive process that facilitates access to the demonstrations/trial, and explanation of the CASI options, and questions and answers.

During the field days, farmers are able to make comparisons and select the CASI practice and or crop variety with better performance, as well as ask questions and immediate feedback from researchers and others. Farmers can do a participatory selection of CASI practices.

Activities Planning

SIMLESA program have already established CASI treatments, protocols and objectives. A successful field tour requires the development of checklists, timeline, and starting the planning process as early as possible based on the technologies and techniques promoted in each site.

For a successful implementation of field tour, a team composed of different stakeholders is needed. Clear roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined.

SIMLESA team works with all teams and stakeholders providing support and ensuring the delivery of the objectives of the tour.

- Tour logistics

Organize for funding, transport, meals,

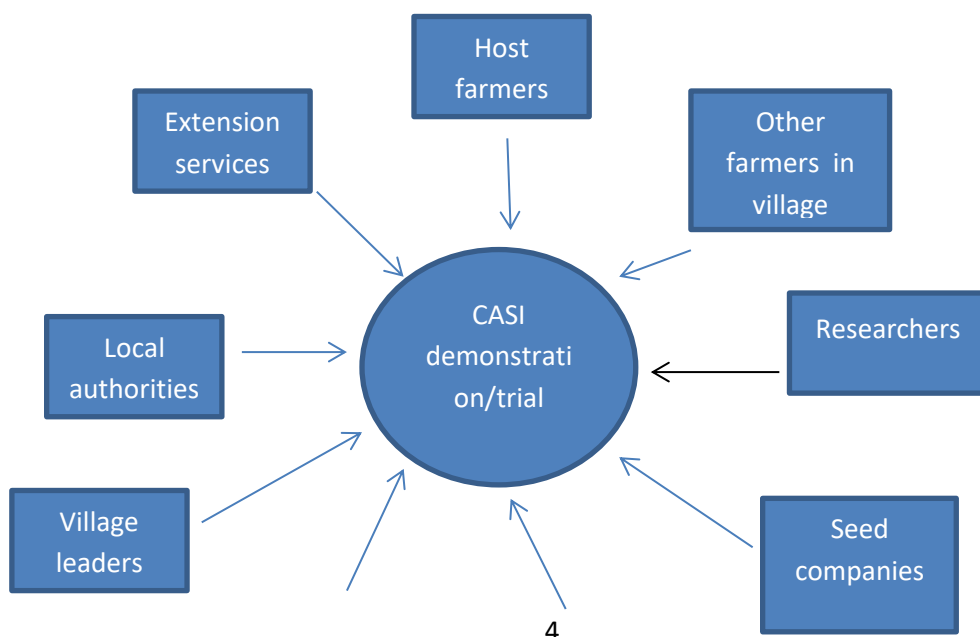
- Selecting the sites

The selected sites should be where large number of people can be easily transported to the field demonstrations.

- Identification of field tour/day participants

Field days are generally attended by host farmers, other farmers in the communities, extension services, local authorities, village leaders, other organizations promoting conservation agriculture, media, and researchers.

Figure 1: Participants of field tour



Other
organizations

Media

- Send invitation to field tour/days participants
- Communicate local authorities and farmers about the field days

Formal communication and invitations for a field day are sent to farmers in the hosting village, as well as to farmers in neighboring villages. These farmers will contribute for the expansion of the CASI options.

- Develop field tour/day agenda
- Make arrangements for food and refreshments
- Visit the demonstration plots/trials to ensure that the demonstration is accessible to participants and verify clear impact of the demonstration.
 - ✓ Verify if the demonstration plots accurately represent CASI technology performance
 - ✓ Verify if the demo plots meet the protocol/learning objective
 - ✓ determine and select the demonstration plots for the field tour/day
- Decide on the number of demonstration plots/trials and time allowed for each demo/trial
- Prepare and ensure that the host farmers can explain the CASI demonstrations to participants. Host farmers should be able to explain the demonstration plots and the key messages
- Necessary materials

Materials such as booklets with the field tour agenda are important. They should introduce the objective of the field tour and briefly describe all the demonstration sites to be visited.

Other important audio-visual materials are flip-charts and data show for video projection, name tags.

- **Transport:**

It should be arranged based on number of participants and conditions of the sites to be visited. This will allow to select appropriate vehicles with capacity for reaching the demonstration sites even on the rainy days.

The field tour/day

After participant's arrival at the field day site, several activities take place during the tour day and the tour can be divided into several parts:

Introduction

- The tour begins with the introduction of all tour participants
- Followed by the explanation of the objectives of the tour and time schedule
- Presentation of the agenda of the day
- Participants registration
- Divide the big group in small ones to facilitate interaction and stimulate discussion

The field days start with welcome remarks followed by an introduction and explanation of the objectives of the field day. Explanation on the CASI practices is also provided (Fig. 1).



Figure 1: Participants introduction and explanation

Explanation

- Host farmer and extension officers explain how the plot/trial was established, the treatments, and CASI technologies
- Participants walk around the plot, make observation and raise questions

Extension officers and host farmers take the lead explaining all the treatments in each plot and walking participants through the plots. Extension officers and host farmers explain to participants the treatments, technologies, and CASI practices used in the trials while walking around and providing explanations and answers to raised questions.

Participants of the field day have the opportunity to learn, share experiences, ask questions, and discuss about the technologies promoted by SIMLESA.

Host farmers also explain the benefits of using CASI practices and improved crop varieties. They explained to participants the benefits of the use of improved varieties and CA practices in their trials, and how they are expanding the CASI to their other plots.

While the field day is rolling, more questions related to the trials and treatments are raised and the discussions in the plots continue. Figure 2 shows Mr Regi, a farmer in Manica district explaining the CASI treatments and benefits on his plot.



Figure 2. Mr. Regi explaining the performance of maize varieties on his trial



Figure 3: Participants walking through the demonstration plot

Discussion of key messages

- Discussion of the observation and impressions, suggestions of participants after visiting each plot
- Experiences sharing
- During the field day/tour, farmers are able to make comparisons and select the CASI options and crop varieties with better performance.

Plenary session

After visiting and walking in all selected demonstration plots/trials, a plenary session at meeting locations for each community with all participants seated is set. During the session more questions, discussions, explanations, and answers regarding the CASI practices are provided. Also farmers discuss and agree on the selection of most preferred practices.

Researchers and all other participants can discuss with farmers regarding their understanding of CASI options demonstrated and the possibility of expansion to farmer's other and larger areas.

Field tour/day close and wrap-up

- In plenary session summarize tour observations and suggestions.
- Identify follow-up actions
- Thank participants for their time
- Evaluation of the field tour/day
- Concluding remarks followed by lunch (if organized)

Lunch/and or refreshments

Refreshments should be served during the field day and the lunch after the plenary session

REFERENCES

Heiniger, R. Crouse, J. Krien, C. and Knowless, T. 2002. Seeing is Believing: The Role of Field Days and Tours in Precising Agriculture. *Precision Agriculture* 3, 309-318