

## Bridging training and extension activities <Part 3>

### Implementing training courses that are useful for extension activities

The field day of group training course on vegetable cultivation technology for small scale farmers is a program to present the main findings of technique application for particular vegetables and the results of experiments at the cultivation field. It aims to enhance accurate understanding of Japan's vegetable cultivation techniques. Another aim of this program is for participants to become used to communicating about experiment objectives and other necessary points to explain what they have done in an accurate, effective and easily understandable manner. However, individual participants' presentations are limited to simply reading their original cultivation plans and experiment results. We as the instructors feel that the program needs much improvement. Therefore, we decided to position the field day as an exercise for extension activities, trying to ensure meaningful training.

We set the following imaginary scene: "A cultivation technique was developed at a central experiment station in a region which is ready for extension. A technique extension conference is being held in order to promote this technique widely through the local extension centers." At the conference, the experiment station's subject matter specialist explained to local extension officers the significance of this new technique, and detailed important points to remember during extension activities to the beneficiary farmers. The participants were invited to jointly examine concrete extension methods. Using a watermelon training technique and a method to determine planting density of potato as examples, participants debated what would be the best communication method for the subject matter specialist and how they should prepare what they will use for presentation including rehearsals, and then put the results into concrete action. In this exercise, instructors first explained the imaginary scene and divided the participants into two groups. Facilitated by the instructors, each group looked at concrete plans and made a presentation.

As part of the program support, in the lecture on irrigation techniques for vegetable cultivation during the first part of the training in April, we introduced the



Preparatory meeting

Preparing documents and  
Presentation materials for  
the meeting

results-oriented training and extension method used in Syria. In this methodology, targets are set based on farmers' needs and plans are thus formulated. We explained that implementation of the plans is carried out through careful discussions and preparation, and stressed the importance of the process flow and feedback including the evaluation of the level of understanding of farmers. Moreover, during the cultivation practice, we explained the features of the employed techniques following the growth of watermelon and potato, and examined the results of the various investigations conducted up to the harvest. Furthermore, after explaining the program's challenges, a lecture on presentation methods was provided, introducing different ways to communicate information accurately and effectively.

A discussion was held with the participation of all the participants, where a plan was devised to hold a virtual technique extension meeting exercise. Individual countries' current situations in the corresponding events were introduced and clues for preparatory activities were sought. The participants from St Vincent reported that he developed an evaluation sheet for demonstration projects to be used to inform future activities. He also reported that he prepared for the field days to extend useful cultivation techniques, through integrating the needed preparatory activities in his work plan and using a check list to avoid omitting some activities in the process. Participants from Myanmar and Laos reported on the use of information materials and photos summarizing the features of different techniques. The participant from Fiji said that to enhance farmers' understanding, he first explained the extended techniques using diagrams indoors or under shade. He then took the farmers to the field to show the techniques actually being applied. The Nepali participant reported on the implementation of farmer's field school method. Therefore we asked the participant to explain the details to share with all the participants.

The second meeting was held in groups to examine the contents of the presentation at the virtual technique extension meeting, presentation order and materials to be prepared, and the participants started presentation material development. The material preparation included poster development with easy-to-understand diagrams and photographs, harvesting of sample vegetables to show the results of the techniques, and an evaluation sheet to be used after the presentation. At the third group meeting, more preparation was done for the virtual technique extension meeting day. Through conducting the training to date, we felt it was effective to hold this type of session whereby one another's knowledge and wisdom are presented, in order to ensure that field days will be truly useful for extension activities.