



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

# *Reflective Learning in Impact Cluster Projects Senegal*

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# Reflective Learning in Impact Cluster Projects Senegal

## Summary of recommendations for current and future agricultural knowledge transfer projects in West Africa

### Introduction

The following recommendations aim to strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of Impact Cluster projects during their remaining implementation period and beyond. They address how training programmes can be optimised to improve farmers' learning and adoption of climate-smart practices, while also enhancing institutional capacity and stakeholder engagement.

This summary presents findings from a reflective learning study of two Impact Cluster projects in Senegal—Onion Farming for the Future and HortiSenegal—under the HortiCôte initiative. The study assesses how training and demonstration activities support adoption of climate-smart practices and improve farmer livelihoods in the Niayes region. The core of the study was semi-structured interviews conducted by ENSA university students with 58 farmers who participated in the Impact Cluster projects. Delphy used the interview responses, desk research, validation workshops and stakeholder discussions to identify learning processes, adoption barriers and opportunities to improve training design, inclusion and systemic impact across Senegal's horticultural value chain.

The recommendations in this project draw on project findings, farmer feedback and relevant literature, focusing on practical measures to overcome systemic barriers such as resource constraints, market access and gender disparities. They also propose strategies for long-term resilience, including financial mechanisms, inclusive training models and adaptive approaches to demonstration plots.

The following document is a summary with recommendations that can be more universally applied to other relevant programmes and to other regions (inside and outside Senegal). The recommendations are available and relevant for the following audiences:

- Current Impact Cluster project partners
- Beneficiaries of the project
- Relevant stakeholders, such as market parties
- RVO
- The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Senegal
- Implementing parties of other Dutch-funded, combi track-related programmes

## Recommendations

### A. Training methods & learning approaches

1. **Design training materials to address illiteracy and language barriers:** Training should prioritise audiovisual and visual tools in local languages.
2. **Deliver training in modular, short sessions:** Breaking content into shorter modules enables immediate application and correction.
3. **Increase training frequency and repetition:** Revisiting key topics strengthens understanding and practical mastery.
4. **Prioritise hands-on practice:** Training should focus heavily on demonstrations and practical exercises.
5. **Use participatory approaches to select content:** Training topics should be chosen with farmer input to ensure relevance.
6. **Integrate ancestral practices and farmer knowledge:** Acknowledging farmers' existing practices builds trust with farmers.
7. **Recognise that Training of Trainers (ToT) works best with trainers experienced in education:** Trainers with extension or university backgrounds are better suited for ToT roles.
8. **Ensure strong early involvement of consortia partners:** Their presence increases credibility and supports trainer performance.
9. **Budget for farmer transport and meals:** Covering basic participation costs increases training attendance.

### B. Digital tools and communication

9. **Utilise video:** TikTok and YouTube are underutilised video platforms to advertise trainings and provide review resources to farmers.
10. **Institutionalise informal digital communication:** WhatsApp and similar platforms should be integrated to support continuous learning and follow-up.
11. **Manage expectations about project scope:** Clear and repeated communication is needed to clarify project responsibilities and limitations.
12. **Start projects with structured onboarding:** Early alignment on objectives and roles prevents misunderstanding.

### *C. Demonstration fields & inputs*

13. **Use demo plots to show not only production but also profit:** Demonstrations should highlight both technical gains and long-term profitability. Consider incorporating profit back into the demo field.
14. **One demo field managed by the project:** Direct management ensures proper implementation and consistent results.
15. **Adapt demo field management to local conditions:** Techniques should be adjusted throughout the season and in collaboration with the farmers.
16. **Pair input provision with maintenance support:** Inputs must be accompanied by maintenance tools, training and follow-up visits.
17. **Explore direct input discounts:** Consortia partners could offer discounts to help committed farmers invest in inputs.

### *D. Monitoring, support & institutional processes*

18. **Continue strengthened monitoring:** Frequent follow-up ensures quality, tracks adoption and identifies challenges early.
19. **Maintain strong involvement of local project managers:** Close on-the-ground supervision supports farmers and ensures consistency.
20. **Allocate sufficient budget for monitoring:** Adequate resources are needed for robust follow-up and local oversight.
21. **Institutionalise learning within organisations:** Partners should embed feedback loops, internal documentation and adaptive processes.

### *E. Gender inclusion & women's empowerment*

22. **Assess gender impacts in feedback processes:** Workshops should include questions on changes in women's roles and decision-making.
23. **Promote inclusive training spaces:** Mixed-gender environments enhance cooperation and empower women.
24. **Strengthen links with women's groups:** Collaborations with women's associations support training equity and resource sharing.
25. **Address barriers to women's water access:** Shared or collective water solutions should be prioritised to bypass land-ownership constraints.

#### *F. Market access & financial environment*

26. **Storage solutions:** a sense of ownership and clear responsibility are key to properly maintaining existing and new storage facilities.
27. **Share market prices via digital platforms:** Connecting farmers to price-sharing groups improves bargaining power.
28. **Introduce affordable financing options:** Lower-cost credit mechanisms are needed to reduce investment barriers.
29. **Facilitate farmer collaborative structure:** Work with collaborative structures to coordinate crop choice and timing across farmers and provide logistics support to expand market reach.

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