Overview of field trip sites

1. **Practical Training Centre (PTC) - Thika**

Background

The operations at the Practical Training Centre are co-ordinated by the Flower Producers and Exporters Association of Kenya (FPEAK). The primary aim of the Centre is to enhance the knowledge and skills of farmers in the horticulture subsector by providing practical training on horticulture, pack-house management, standards and other necessary operations in the fresh flower value chain. The Centre also offers training on the maintenance and repair of all horticultural farm equipment and tools, including tractors, soil preparation equipment, irrigation technology, etc.

Key elements

- A successful public-private partnership operation where the private sector works closely with the public sector to build the capacity of local horticultural producers.
- A subsector that funds research and extension needs.
- Farmers can air their views, including policy related issues based on their experience.

Questions or debatable statements

- How effective is the Centre in building the capacity of farmers engaged in horticulture?
- Would this model be applicable for other subsectors and other regions?
- What are the lessons for policy?

2. **Songa Mbele Community Development Initiative – Kiamwangi**

Background

This initiative is modelled on the Rural Community Development by Livelihood Improvement Approach or the *Kaizen* Approach. The initiative uses a group approach and has so far trained 360 groups with a membership of about 9,000 women and men throughout Kenya. The groups are involved in income-generating activities, including production, processing, value addition and marketing. A few of the groups that will be visited are involved in milk processing, tissue culture, rabbit keeping and crafts. The milk-processing group collects milk, which they process, package and market. They also conduct training on milk processing for other farmers in the community. The groups involved in tissue culture bananas, rabbit keeping and crafts are highly specialised and skilled in their various areas and involve youths in their operations. All groups will be visited in one place where they will exhibit and explain their specific activities. The trip will conclude with a visit to the SOMCODI community resource persons training facility located at the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) Thika Centre.

Key elements

- Capacity building using a community group approach.

- Community groups sharing knowledge and generating income using locally available resources.

Questions or debatable statements

- How effective is the approach and what are the policy implications?
- Can developing local capacity contribute to self-reliance and improved livelihoods?
- Can this model be scaled out to other regions?

3. **Kenya Federation of Agricultural Producers (KENFAP) – Nyeri**

Background

The Kenya Federation of Agricultural Producers (KENFAP) is the umbrella farmers' federation representing the interests of 1.8 million farm families and serving as the farmer's voice in Kenya. The organisation is involved in various fora in the agricultural sector and influences policy. In one of its regional information centres (RIC) in Nyeri County, farmer groups are linked with other learners through an internet learning support service. This activity is known as Local Learning Lessons (LLL), where the learners post their questions on any agricultural topic of interest and receive answers from a variety of sources, including other farmers and extension agents both in Kenya and across Africa.

Key elements

- Farmers have a voice in policy development.
- Farmers are able to access all information they require.
- Learners are networked with other learners and stakeholders in the agricultural field beyond Kenya.

Questions or debatable statements

- Can a farming community network effectively influence policy and related issues that affect them? Is the approach replicable?
- Can farmers readily access internet facilities and source information in their areas of interest?
- Does this learning network improve their access to information and knowledge that contribute to improved livelihoods? What are the implications for policy, research and the delivery of extension and advisory services?

4. **Mary Gichuki, farmer trainer, tree seed marketer and networker**

Background

Mary Gichuki was trained by ICRAF in 2006 on growing fodder shrubs to feed her dairy cows. She was later selected as a farmer trainer on fodder legumes and was linked to organisations and farmers that wanted training in this area. Since then, she has continued to train farmers and has greatly expanded her training activities. Mary has also emerged as an important marketer of fodder crop seed and is a member of the Kenya Tree Seed and Nursery Operators

Association. The visit will include a tour of Mary's farm to see her various enterprises (dairy cows, fodder shrubs, Napier grass, nursery, rabbits and beehives), highlighting her use of fodder legumes to feed livestock. She will tell us how she became a trainer and seed vendor and how other farmers have benefitted from her knowledge and expertise to develop their own enterprises. We will also meet members of the Githunguri farmers' cooperative, to which Mary belongs to and where she trains others.

Key elements

- A female farmer trainer who developed a seed enterprise and offers training services
- A model farm that serves as both a demonstration and training facility
- Ability of a female farmer to access information and to train men and women on the latest technologies.

Questions or debatable statements

- Farmer trainers face challenges in keeping abreast of the latest developments (technologies, policies etc) and disseminating information.
- Female farmers can surmount challenges e.g. cultural and gender bias and succeed.
- Farmer-to-farmer transfer of information and knowledge is more effective than any other advisory service delivery system for the rapid adoption of best practices.

5. **Sammy Njenga, tree nursery operator**

Background

Kenyan farmers have a strong interest in planting trees: there are over 1,000 tree nurseries in central Kenya alone. Sammy Njenga started operating a tree nursery in 1998 and attended a short course on tree nursery establishment and management sponsored by ICRAF in 2001. Since then, Sammy has expanded his tree nursery from 2,000 to over 100,000 seedlings. He has also increased the number of employees from 1 to 26 people. There are practically no extension services available on tree nursery and husbandry management in Kenya. Nursery operators like Sammy thus play an important role, providing information to farmers on tree propagation and management. The visit will involve a tour of Sammy Njenga's tree nursery to see the various enterprises (fruit trees seedlings, vegetable seedlings, timber and ornamental trees).

Key elements

- A farmer can diversify his sources of income with new knowledge.
- Farmers armed with new knowledge can train other farmers.
- Farmers can sustainably manage their environment and reclaim non-productive land for a more profitable use.

Questions or debatable statements

- Tree nurseries are an important alternative source of livelihoods for farmers.

- A farmer can keep abreast of the latest developments (technologies, policies, etc) to sustain his enterprise, even without the support of extension agents.
- Tree planting should be encouraged as an additional source of income and to mitigate global warming.

6. **Maarifa Centres - empowering communities with access to agricultural information**

Background

The Maarifa Centre is a place for communities to access information products. The Centre is equipped with computers and has internet access. It is an information hub where local knowledge is documented by communities with the support of field officers and shared widely. The field officers are employed by the Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN). The project operates in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

Key Elements

- Capacity to develop local knowledge databases to provide ready access to information.
- Engagement of youth in productive activities.
- Enables communities to trade globally.

Questions or debatable statements

- Is this model more effective for increasing access to information than conventional extension services?
- Can the model be scaled up to other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and how?
- Who owns the data gathered for the Centre? Is it sustainable when project support ends?

7. **KARI-Katoloni-Infonet-Biovision Farmer Resource Centre**

Background

The Resource Centre started in May 2010 under the management of a local community- based organisation; it is run by volunteers. The facility uses the Infonet web-based platform, which offers trainers, extension workers and farmers quick access to up-to-date and locally relevant information on sustainable farming practices and technologies that allows them to improve production, generate income and improve rural livelihoods. The facility serves as a resource for all of Machakos County. The beneficiaries are farmers organised into 100 groups based on their agricultural interests, e.g. managing tree nurseries, dairy cow rearing, crop cultivation and agribusiness.

Key Elements

- Community ownership.
- Linking a research centre to an information dissemination facility managed by a local grass-root based organisation expands outreach.

Questions or debatable statements

- Such localized experiences are sustainable and should be scaled up to promote innovation
- Grassroots organisations can catalyse learning without support from extension services
- Local institutions empower rural communities and contribute to enhanced agricultural performance and improved livelihoods.

8. **ICIPE's Bioprospecting Programme and Commercial Insect Project**

Background

The International Centre of Insect Physiology & Ecology (ICIPE) is a unique advanced research and training organisation working to improve the lives and livelihoods of people in Africa. Bioprospecting is the systematic search, development and commercialisation of useful chemical products from natural sources. An ICIPE programme undertakes research and capacity building on bioprospecting and promotes the conservation of biodiversity. The Commercial Insects project (CIP) seeks to improve the conservation of the environment by mainstreaming and promoting natural commercial insect products. The project has developed an income-generating activity based on commercial insects (bees and silk moths). It trains rural communities and encourages ownership and operation of marketplaces, in which value is added through quality control, processing and packaging to national and international standards.

Key Elements

- Silk production technologies are transferred to local communities.
- Local communities are empowered to produce new products from their rich biodiversity.

Questions or debatable statements

- Harnessing biodiversity can be a source of livelihood improvement.
- Developing rural capacity can contribute to self-reliance and sustainability post intervention support.
- Knowledge can be easily transferred from international research centres to local communities.

9. **Seed Production and Agro-dealer Project in Machakos, Kenya**

Background

The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) has four main programmes that address issues of soils, seeds, markets and policy along the agricultural value chain. The Dryland Seed Company, Nduki Agrovet and Makamithi Agrovet are funded under AGRA's seed systems programme. The Dryland Seed Company (run by a local private smallholder farmer) actively engages in the production of maize, bean, cowpea, sorghum and green gram seeds. It also

carries out farmer education and awareness activities through a series of demonstrations during farmer field days and agricultural shows. Nduki Agrovet and Makamithi Agrovet are among the numerous agro-dealers in the district that have been trained to advise farmers on inputs, best agricultural practices, how to conduct demonstrations, farmer field days and exhibitions. This approach of equipping agro-dealers with new knowledge and skills has proven successful and useful in meeting the routine needs of farmers, as the nearest extension worker may be miles away.

Key Elements

- A start-up smallholder seed company producing quality seed varieties that address farmers' needs.
- Public-private research collaboration.
- The role of the agro-dealers in providing inputs and advisory services to farmers, particularly in areas where there are few extension workers.

Questions or debatable statements

- Is the private sector an honest broker in the provision of advisory services – does it need to be?
- Is seed production sustainable in a drought prone area? Are additional investments needed, e.g. in irrigation?
- Can a small seed company be competitive?

10. **Peri-urban agriculture - Evanson Chege Nganga's farm in Nairobi County**

Background

A peri-urban farmer has adopted greenhouse technology, practices irrigated agriculture and is able to farm both in and out of season. He produces several crops and also keeps livestock. He uses family labour effectively and hires casual labour when necessary on his 2-acre (0.81ha) farm. He accesses information from the Ministries of Agriculture and Livestock and from a private company, Amiran Ltd. He sells his crops and livestock produce directly to consumers from the farm, which is located close to the city, and to markets on the outskirts of the city.

Key Elements

- The farmer's success is based on improved access to water, elaborate marketing avenues and innovation.
- Strong links with public and the private sector extension providers.

Questions or debatable statements

- Government policies and extension and advisory services had little or no role in the success of this farming enterprise.
- The shift from rural to urban/peri-urban areas can be costly for smallholder farmers.