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Participatory agroforestry design – a flexible approach for locally adapted systems

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Introduction

We present our methodology of **participatory agroforestry design** used in Peru, Alto Huayabamba with cocoa farmers and during the agroforestry workshop in our research and training centre of Sara Ana in Bolivia with extensionists and trainers.

Farmers, **selecting** their **species themselves**, are provided with examples, advice on markets, crop needs, tips on soil and water fertility management, climate change resilience etc.

Methodology

The chart below reflects the flow of information between the farmers (green), extensionists and other experts (blue). The steps may vary and **can be adjusted to local conditions, needs and resources.** The exercise may be complemented by farmers' group work about species identification, characteristics and prioritization in the early stage of the process.

- Understanding/presentation of local conditions (farmers present to experts)
- Presentation of different AF systems (experts, experienced farmers, extensionists to farmers)
- Setting and prioritization of own goals, dream AF plot - includes species and numbers, possible design (farmers)
- First feedback, discussing the goals and resources - evaluation of the dream AF plot (with experts and peers)
- Second thought - redesign of the plot based on suggestions, feedback, new ideas, markets, prices, resources (farmer)
- Second round of feedback (experts and peers to farmers)
- Final design with concrete species, pattern etc. (farmer)
- Implementation plan, implementation, adjustments, follow up (farmer with support of extensionists)

Concluding remarks

Successful adoption of agroforestry systems can only be ensured when **farmers are fully involved** in the process of designing their own plots. Inspiration by existing systems, peers' experience sharing and visual tools play a critical part.

While all elements need to be considered in planning - **social, economical and environmental**, a regular **follow-up** by extensionists must be ensured to tackle challenges arising from the farm implementation. Some adjustments to the design are likely, especially during the first year of implementation.

To enhance the knowledge transfer, regular **monitoring and evaluation** of the plots is recommended - data should be collected especially on labour and input costs, income, productivity, pests and disease incidence, soil quality etc.

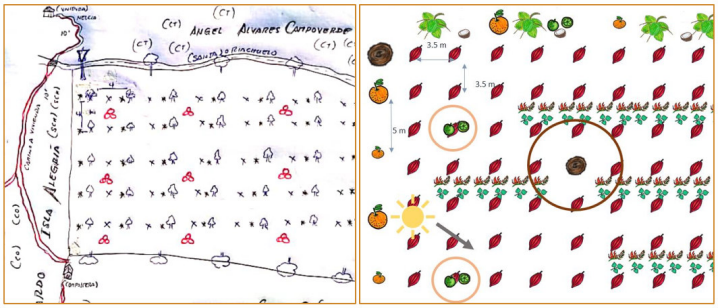

Fig 1: Farmers used paper to draw their designs. We transferred their drawings to Powerpoint to be able to change the design quickly with the farmers (no travel was possible during covid-period). Peru, September 2021

Fig 2: Another way of designing the agroforestry farm, used during the agroforestry workshop with extensionists in Bolivia, November 2021

Fig 3: One of the proud Choba Choba farmers during the implementation of his zero-burning agroforestry plot. Peru, Alto Huayabamba, April 2022

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