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Farmer Learning in Rotational Farmer Groups: Case Studies from the Rwenzori Region, Western Uganda

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Abstract

The present abstract sums up the work from a MSc thesis written at the Institute of Food and Resource Economics under the Agricultural Development programme at the Faculty of Life Sciences, University of Copenhagen, Denmark. It deals with farmer learning in farmer field schools focusing on agroecological methods, in which members rotate between each other's farms.

Using members farm's as a field of interaction and source of experience supporting member's learning processes is a rethinking of the traditional Farmer Field School concept. Taking departure in learning about agroecological methods in the so-called Farmer Family Learning Groups in the Rwenzori Region, Western Uganda, this study examines the social dynamics of learning and individual members learning processes. The methods are qualitative interviews on individual and group level, using the tool 'learning history' as a tool for capturing farmer learning processes. The framework for analysis primarily base on Kolb's experiential learning process and Nonaka & Takeuchi classification of knowledge. The (tentative) findings are that: in order for farmers to benefit from rotation between members, social capital determining the social dynamics of rotation has to develop in the group; farmers have different learning styles and thus benefit differently from different learning situations; farmer's learning styles appear to be influenced by factors such as social status, pride and educational opportunities. The recommendations are for rotation to go hand in hand with efforts to build social capital.

Keywords: Adoption, agroecological practices, farmer field schools, farmer groups, group interactions, learning processes