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A training programme was implemented throughout Indonesia via a partnership between PT East West Seed Indonesia, one of the foundations attached to it, and the Indonesian Vegetable Research Institute. Over 10,000 smallholder farmers were trained between 2013 and 2017. An evaluation of the training activities was carried out in order to deliver solid proof of the effectiveness of the programme. Questions included: has the behaviour of trained farmers changed regarding good agricultural practices (GAP), and what was the effect of the trainings on a number of performance indicators?

Approach

A mixed approach was applied based on a sound Theory of Change (ToC) (Figure 1) framework and a number of performance indicators (i.e. knowledge on GAP, increased vegetable area, reduced production costs, reduced pesticide use). Surveys on farm(er) characteristics, agricultural practices and production before and after the intervention were combined with focus group discussions (FGDs) with farmers and interviews with relevant stakeholders. The FGDs were structured alongside the topics of relevance of the trainings, appreciation and satisfaction, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the intervention and training results. The results were analysed per season (i.e. wet and dry) and per crop, i.e. tomato, hot pepper and cucumber, which were the focal crops in the training courses. Of the 1,858 farmers who participated in the baseline survey, a random sample of 656 farmers was approached for the evaluation survey. Sixteen FGDs in six regions were organised with a total of 143 participants. In addition, ten in-depth interviews were conducted with the main stakeholders.

Challenges of the methodology applied

The evaluation had its' challenges considering i) that the trainings were given across entire Indonesia, ii) the uniqueness of each individual island in terms of climate, governance, agricultural practices, culture and socio-economic circumstances, iii) the climatological differences in one year, iv) the variety of crops produced by farmers and v) the fact that the majority of farmers do not keep records on farm activities hampers checking for accuracy. Taking into account these challenges, it turned out that the evaluation methodology has been effective and meaningful but leaves room for improvement.

- The pipeline approach is a possibility in order to create an internal counterfactual but a concrete planning of out roll of the intervention before the start is prerequisite.
- There was no clear selection strategy or definition of farmers to be trained. Data on personal and farm characteristics for each respondent should be included in future research endeavours to conclude on representability.
- Make use of the existing structures and communication structures of the company/foundation involved to collect data. Field staff could keep records and communicate closely with the evaluation team. Especially a track record of seed sales of the three crops in the areas of the intervention will give important information.
- Focus less on ultimate outcomes (e.g. yield, costs) and more on agricultural practices itself, on satisfaction with training and results of farmers' perception on changing yields and profit because farmers are not used to monitor and record such data.

Figure 1 Theory of Change KT

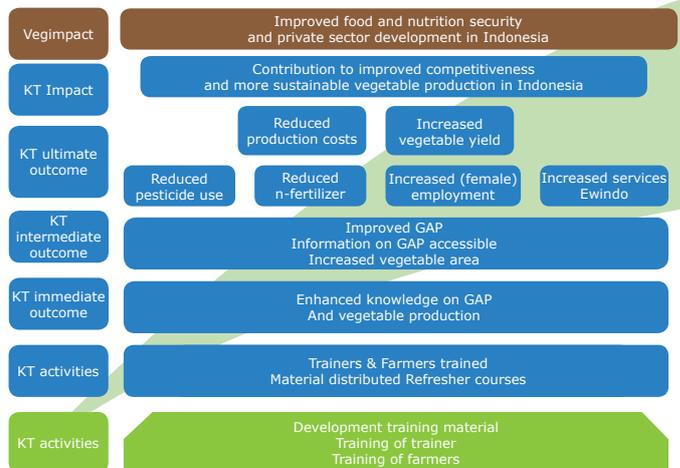


Photo 1 Focus group discussion alongside H-diagram



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Improved vegetable production and marketing for small farmers to increase food security and to promote private sector development in Indonesia | www.vegimpact.com
 Information | Christine Plaisier | christine.plaisier@wur.nl
 Youri Dijkxhoorn | youri.dijkxhoorn@wur.nl



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