

Improving soil health information for farmers and extensionists in Ghana

Soil health messages that encourage farmers to change their practice

AGRA is working in partnership with the African Soil Health Consortium (ASHC) to improve the quality of integrated soil fertility management information (ISFM) available to farmers, extension services, agrodealers and other stakeholders.

In Ghana AGRA is funding organisations to make innovative soil research of practical relevance to farmers. AGRA is partnering with the ASHC to make sure that research findings are translated into high quality and effective extension materials. ASHC is happy to work with other organizations that want to improve the quality of soil health materials – regardless of their funding and including private sector organizations.

At the heart of any information produced for farmers must be sound scientific research. But the best science alone, even when adapted to local practice does not change either policy or practice. So ASHC and AGRA are working with grantees to find new ways of helping to create messages that bring about changes in farming practices relating to soil health.

An opportunity to attend write shops

In July 2012 ASHC and AGRA will be hosting intensive write-shops in Ghana with grantees and their partners in MoFA and elsewhere that want help designing dissemination materials. These write-shops involving around 5 project partners including the lead grantee will explore practical solutions for creating information messages that stick. The write-shops will aim to structure ISFM information in ways which will make it easier to understand and easier to implement. As well as write-shops there will be extensive field-testing and peer review of the planned extension materials. This approach should increase the up-take of soil health improvement techniques by farmers in Ghana.

The first write-shops will be held in the Northern, Ashanti or Volta regions. Lead participants will be visited before the write-shops to ensure effective planning for the event and gather useful background information



The recent ASHC/ AGRA write-shop in Mali Left to Right:

Camara Rokiatou Kouyate, Association des Organisation Professionnelle Paysane,
Seydou Keita, directeur regional de agriculture,
Amara Diakite Union Nationale des Agrodealers (UNRIA),
Dalla Diarisso, direction nationale de l'agriculture – DNA

Africa Soil Health Consortium

improving soil fertility, improving food production, improving livelihoods

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Participants in the write-shops are asked to:

- commit to attending the entire duration of the write-shop (1-3 days)
- come with a specific information challenge relating to a soil health approach
- bring details of the research/science underpinning the information to be created
- be prepared to explain the planned dissemination approach
- bring copies of good promotional materials– either from their organization or from others
- commit resources (for example from their AGRA grant) to produce the materials and implement the promotional campaign – if they are happy with the materials produced in the workshop

In the write-shop we will help to guide them through process of writing and designing world-class information materials e.g. leaflets. Participants will have:

- access to graphic designers and technical illustrators to help to create diagrams and layouts that explain processes and techniques
- support to think about the impact of the materials in terms of soil health and as part of a wider set of objectives including gender and economic impact
- ideas for using the media to enhance dissemination of your message
- the support of a peer group, trainers and farmer’s representatives, to help critique and refine their approach

At the end of the write-shop participants will have:

- clear message(s) based on the technology you are promoting suited to and tested on your target audiences
- all the elements in place to complete their information materials/campaign
- a new methodology for developing future information resources
- a plan for dissemination of the message(s)
- new contacts in the wider communications industry that might be useful in future
- the offer of support from ASHC to help them evaluate the effectiveness of their new information - in a way that is consistent with the needs and expectations of AGRA or other partners

Who should attend? The write-shop process is highly dependent on getting the right attendance from the participating organizations. This may include a member of the research team, communications specialists or post docs or trainees within the participating organization.

ASHC does not offer grants to support the production of information materials.

What they said about the Mali workshop:

“The process has been well managed and with the help of Oman (the graphic designer), I am well equipped with knowledge on how to develop materials that can communicate effectively to farmers.

I still lack some materials, such as photos for the posters that we have been working on. So I also need a camera to help me take good photos on the technologies I am working on”

Idrissa Diawara, regional director of agriculture
Ségou Region, Mali

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