

Communicating with smallholder farmers about climate change

Examples and recommendations for rural
advisory services

Summarizing experience from the Community for Agriculture
Sectors and Climate Change, 2017

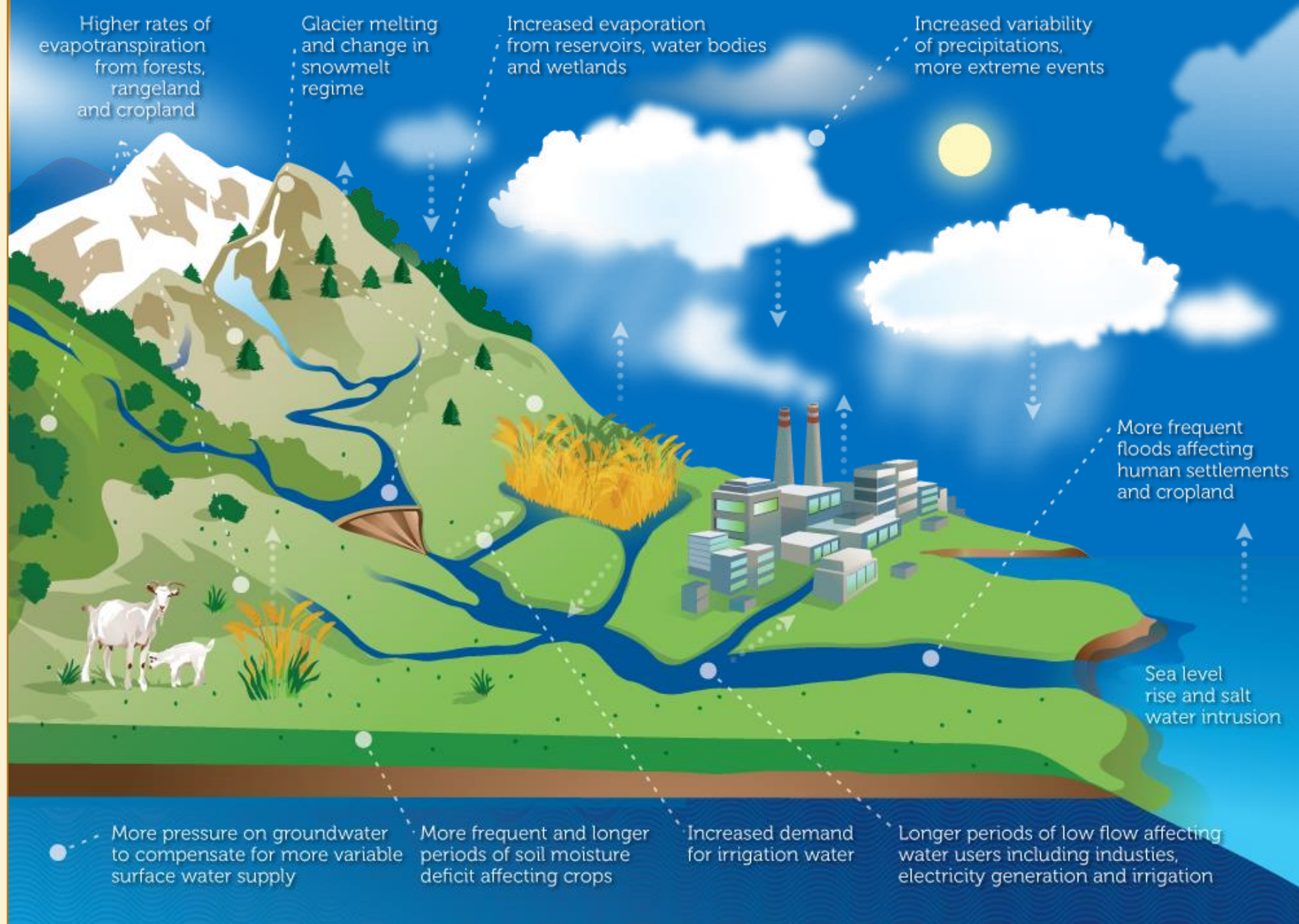


**Community for Agriculture Sectors and Climate Change
with support from FAO, GACSA and partners**

2017

**Maria Nuutinen, Bianca Dendena, Brent Simpson, Simone Sala and Federica
Matteoli, FAO (eds.)**

Photo: ©FAO/Sonia Nguyen / FAO. 2016 Damaturu, Nigeria
– Rural Advisory Service group meeting after drought.



« Water scarcity is expected to intensify as a result of climate change » Example of an image describing climate change impact in water cycles. FAO (2016) <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6344e.pdf>

Key messages about communicating with farmers on climate change

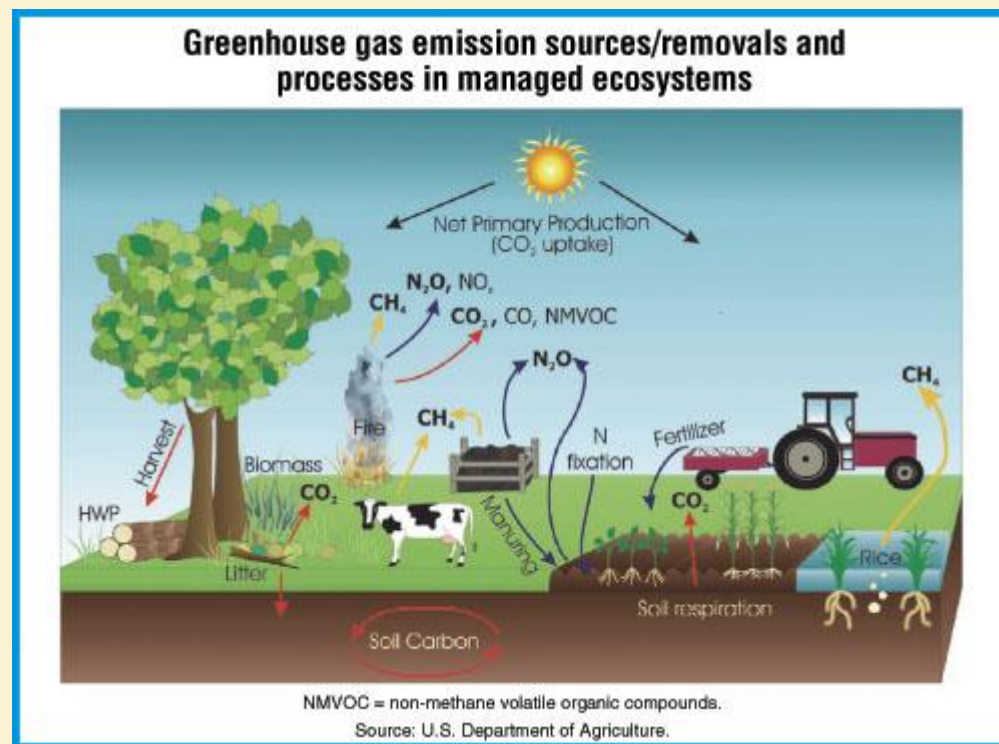
1. Ask smallholder farmers how they see and experience the changes in the long term weather.
2. Clarify together what climate change is.
3. Adapt your means of communicating to different stakeholder groups within the farming community.



Photo: Farmer Field School (FFS) Trainer engages a farmer group at a pilot Food and Nutrition Garden to support the use of a climate-smart technology: water conservation through the use of drip irrigation, November 2016, Swaziland. ©FAO/Believe Nyakudjara / FAO

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https://www.michfb.com/MI/uploadedImages/Images/News/Farm_Business_Resources/ghg_sources.jpg

Introduction: Why these examples for rural advisory service agents?

Are you thinking of how to communicate with farmers and rural communities about climate change? Maybe you work as a Rural Advisory Service (RAS) agent? The online community of practice facilitated by FAO has collected these examples for you.

When it comes to climate change, the RAS agents have often an understanding of the local context, communities' vulnerabilities, adaptive capacities and food security status of their clients. However, it can be challenging to explain what climate change means for the local context: what kind of changes can be expected in the shorter and longer term, and how smallholder farmers could be best prepared to face climate change.

This brief seeks to give tips and examples of how RAS agents can communicate about climate change with smallholder farmers in terms of participatory methods, language as well as examples of used visual materials.

The community of practice on Agriculture sectors and climate change would be happy to receive your feedback on this summary documents via <https://dgroups.org/fao/ag-cc>

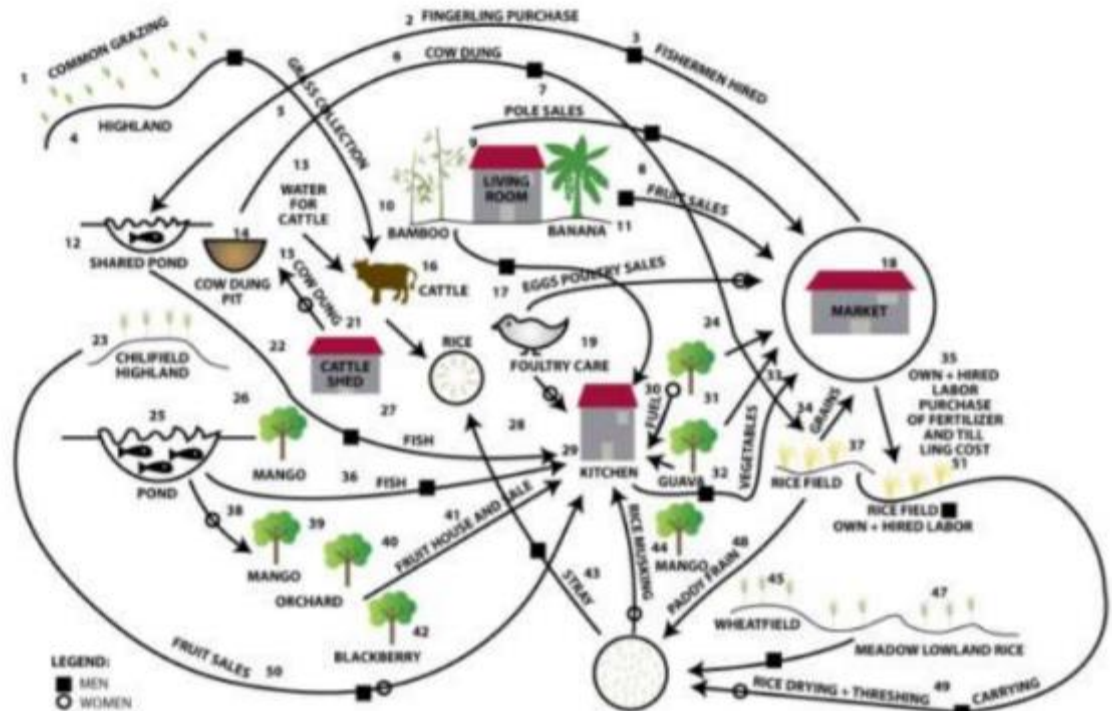
Step 1: Participatory approaches: Ask farmers first

Try capturing information on the local context as responses needs to be matched to the location-specific problems faced by farmers: integrate what farmers say with other sources of information, e.g. research through participatory exercises.

Example questions:

- 1) What has changed in the weather and the climate in the recent years?
- 2) What has been the impact of these changes on different members of the community and their environment?

Figure 3.3: Example of a household agro-ecosystems and rural resource management, Bangladesh



(Adapted from FAO, 2001a)

Result of participatory mapping exercise of community's integrated food systems. Gender and climate change research in agriculture and food security for rural development. Training guide. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3385e.pdf>

Why participatory exercises?

Using guiding questions

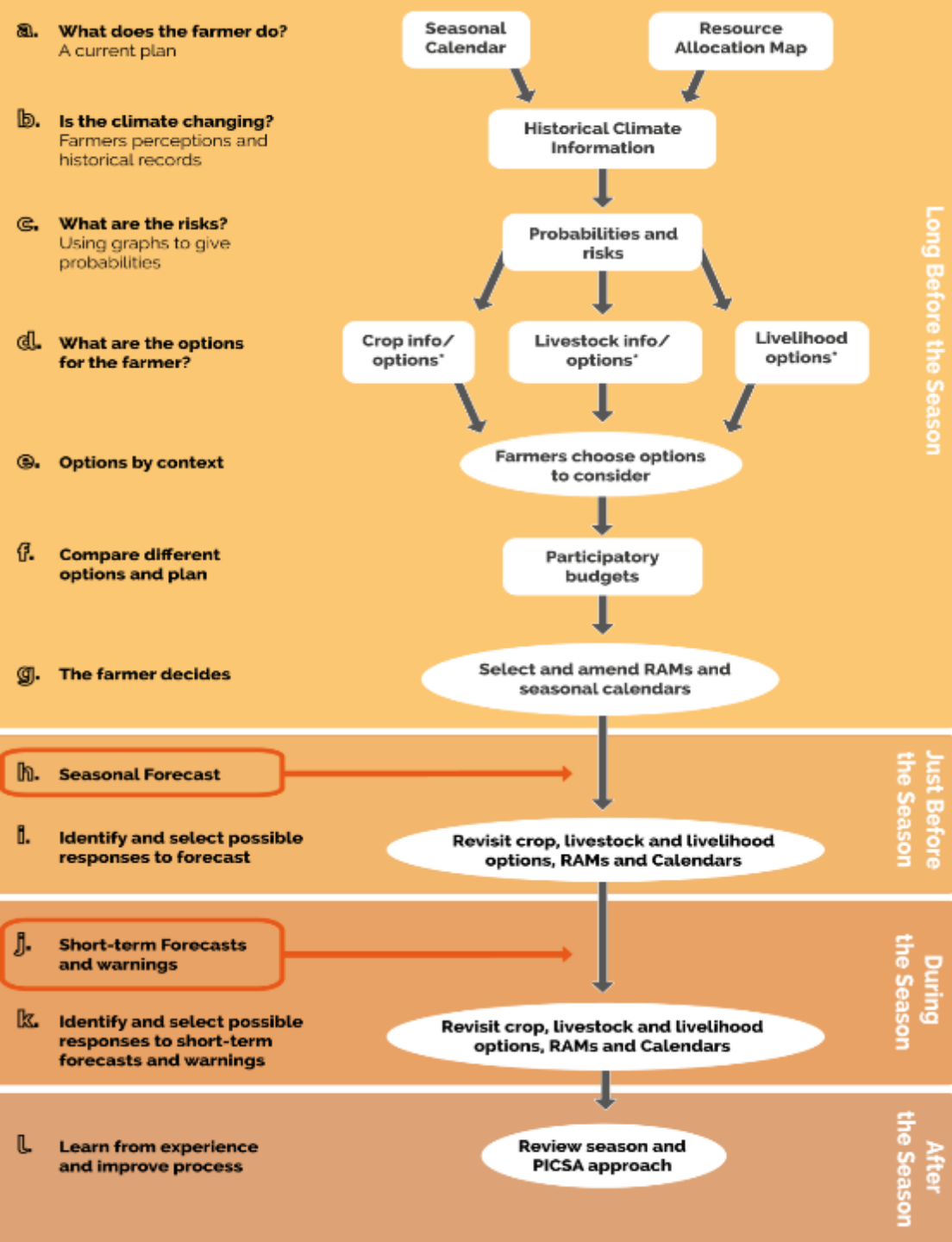
Why to do this? When communicating about climate change with smallholders it is paramount to adopt a **participatory approach** that takes into account different groups of stakeholders (for example female and family farmers, youth).

« Farmers are the experts in what works in practice, and so if we get the producers involved in the exchanges (rather than telling them what works) then the RAS agent will be more likely to achieve engagement and behavioural change. »

- Member of the community of practice

Ask producers for their thoughts on:

- What changes have you noticed in the weather, water, plants, animals in the recent years?
- What starts to be different than it was e.g. 10 years ago?
- How does climate change impact the way how you make your living?
- How is your family affected by these changes? How about neighbours, family in other regions? Are there some people or groups that are more affected? Why?
 - Consider for example: gender, ethnicity, age, tenure issues
- How do the different groups cope with the changes and impacts? Does it seem that the ways of coping are adequate and bring benefits?



The diagram clarifies the flow and linkages of participatory approaches within the process of working with the community.

Source: Peter Dorward, Graham Clarkson, Roger Stern, Participatory Integrated Climate Services for Agriculture - PICSA, CCAFS, 2016

Sources for participatory approaches

Community-based adaptation approaches:

<http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/14573IIED.pdf>

Participatory approaches for gender in the agriculture sectors under climate change

- Training guide:

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/015/md280e/md280e.pdf>

- Toolbox:

https://ccaafs.cgiar.org/publications/gender-and-inclusion-toolbox-participatory-research-climate-change-and-agriculture#.WV-I_YSGNyw

Participatory approach to assessing vulnerability with a case studies

<https://www.die-gdi.de/en/studies/article/assessing-vulnerability-to-climate-variability-and-change-participatory-assessment-approach-and-kenyan-case-study>

http://lib.icimod.org/record/26933/files/c_attachment_747_5971.pdf

Inform about increased risks and longer term impacts of climate change

Support male and female farmers in estimating the risks of using specific species and in taking informed decisions.



Step 2: Connect the experience with climate change

Why? The step of creating a shared understanding of the issue at hand, its causes and expected impacts, forms the basis for informed decision-making and further action.

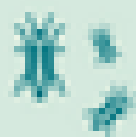
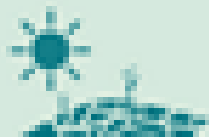
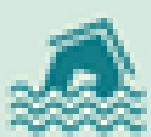
Main questions for discussion:

- How is the impacts that we notice here linked to more wider changes in the region, in the country, globally?
- What is climate change? What causes the global climate to change?
- What are its expected impacts on agriculture sectors, including crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, and on food security? What kind of changes in variability of the weather we have already seen? What could be expected in the longer run?

What's at risk:

- What are specific impacts of climate change in the local context? (Give examples of more frequent droughts, heat waves, more intense or belated rains etc.)
- What are specific impacts on communities livelihoods and food security?

Changing climatic conditions and more frequent extreme weather events will negatively affect the livelihoods of rural people and food and nutrition security.



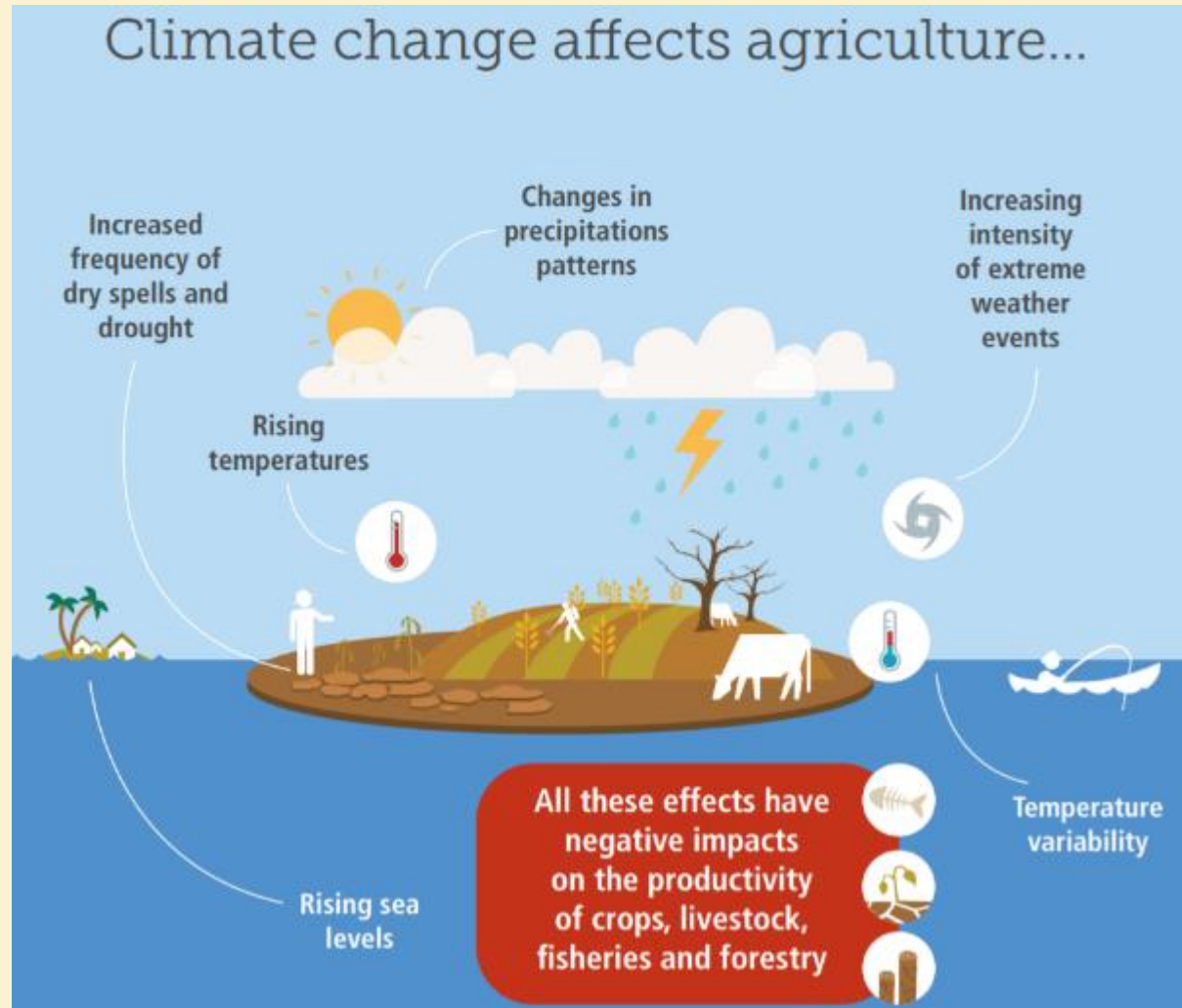
FAO infographic: Prioritizing Agriculture Sectors in Climate Change Adaptation, 2016,
<http://www.fao.org/resources/info-graphics/infographics-details/en/c/445014/>

Be clear on the basis of climate change

- Climate change is real. There is a scientific consensus.
- Climate change is already happening.
- Climate change is so long-lasting that it is essentially permanent, in terms of human lifetimes.
- Climate change includes both changes that are slow in appearing (slow-onset) and changes in the frequency and intensity of rapidly occurring extreme events. Individually and in combination, they will affect different locations at different times.
- Multiple changes are occurring at the same time.

Sources: Brent Simpson, [Guardian \(2015\)](#)

Visualize climate change in the farmers' landscape



HOW TO DO IT?

Use visual materials and iconography with reference to the local context, in order to make the message clear.

Ideas:
Use felt board, draw on a large paper or in the sand.

Example of an image giving an overview of climate impacts on agriculture sectors. Source: FAO: The State of Food and Agriculture. Climate change, agriculture and food security, 2016: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6372e.pdf>

Mind your language

HOW TO DO IT?

"Language is key: get it right and you improve your chances of generating interest. Get the language wrong and you can end up reinforcing barriers and turning people off. »

- Participant to the learning event

- Exchange on the local language, using local terminology.
- Illustrate with practical examples and case studies.
- Use stories and examples that the target audience can understand and relate to.



Reviewers: Would you have a suitable image or photo to be used here?

Current image: Seppo Leinonen.

Figure 3.0: Example of a village resource map of Khajret – Uperli Guanguri, India



(Adapted from FAO, 2001a)

Where to get support for climate work?

Seek training opportunities on climate change and communication aspects from local and national institutions or from online sources, for example:

- Example: E-learning course Community-based adaptation to climate change
www.fao.org/climatechange/67624/
- Listen recorded presentations on climate change and agriculture sectors: www.fao.org/in-action/micca/resources/learning
- [Adaptation Learning Mechanism \(ALM\)](#)
- [UN CC: Learn](#)

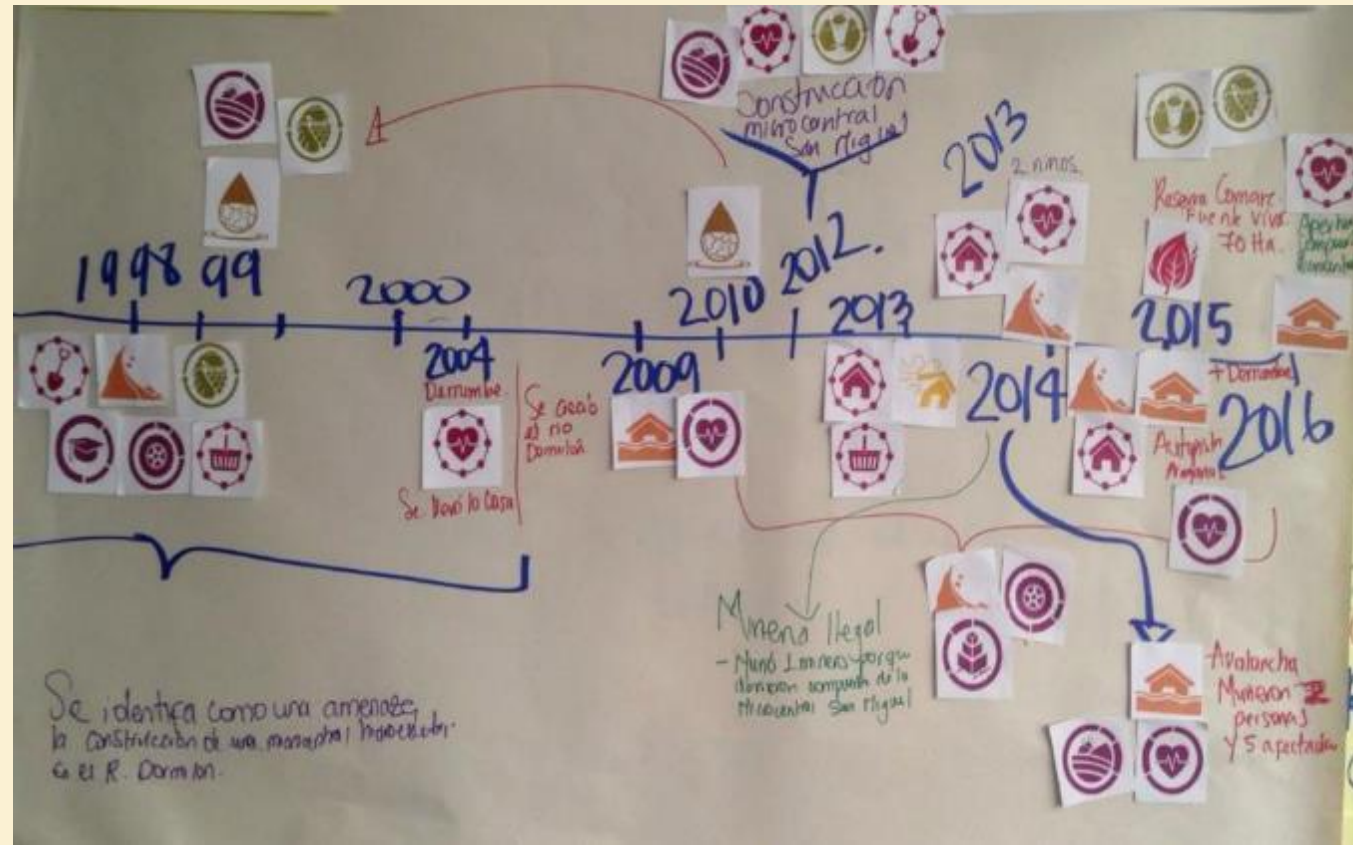
Local and regional institutions, especially climate-related project staff can also be good focal points to support in climate communication.

Different online exchange communities can be helpful for peer-to-peer learning and sharing. You can join some of the FAO-facilitated communities through:

www.fao.org/in-action/micca/international-fora/join-online-discussions

<https://dgroups.org/fao/ag-cc/join>

Example of a timeline and mapping of important events related to natural resource management, weather. Objective in the use of the participatory method was to connect past and present events.



A timeline constructed with a community in the Amazon. Use of icons and color codes can be considered to structure the exchanges. Source: Oscar Guevara, WWF Colombia, 2016

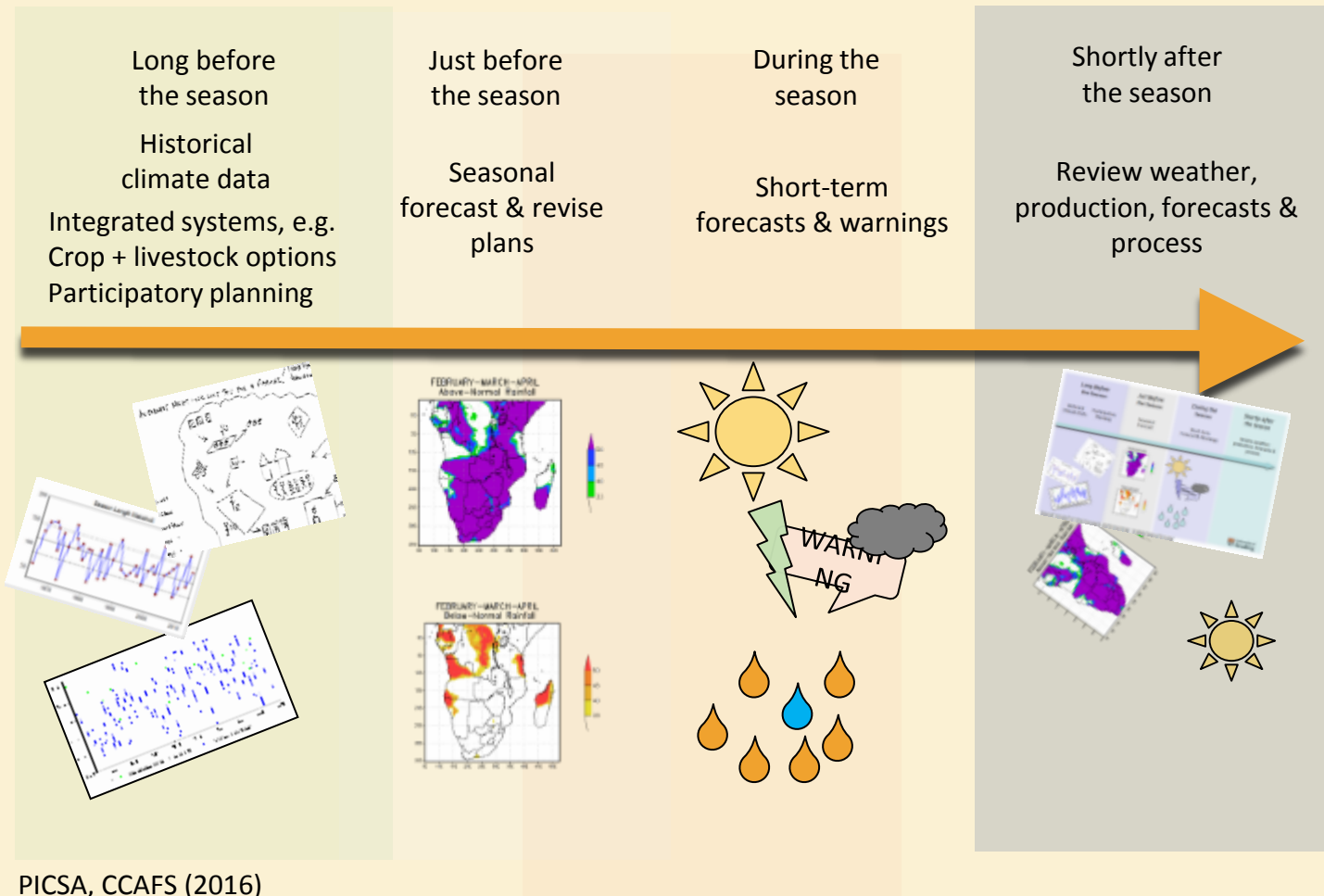
Raise interest and willingness to adopt new approaches

HOW TO DO IT?

- Focus on solutions, not on fear.
 - Suggest building resilience by creating alternative sources of income and strengthening existing ones.
 - Innovation: Farmers are often innovators. Encourage trial and testing of new ways, new, endemic species.
 - Raise smallholders' and communities' awareness on the importance of anticipating climate change.
- "Extensive anecdotal evidence from CRED's work with farmers in Africa and its laboratory studies suggest that people may understand probabilistic information better when it is presented to a group, where members have a chance to discuss it, rather than as individuals who have to try to understand it alone."

- Center for Research and Environmental Decisions (CRED): [The psychology of climate change communication](#). (2009)
- Underline the need to be prepared to address both short-changes in weather variability and slow-onset longer-term climate changes: some responses and practices can be different. It is likely that farmers need to adopt still new practices and species in the future.

Take into account seasonality in communication: what farmers need to know, when?



Holistic approach

Why to consider this?

Sustainable practices can help in adapting, but it is important to read the trends in weather, combine information from climate models, and then design context-specific adaptation options. Until then, there is a high chance of maladaptation and loss of resources on the way.

HOW TO DO IT?

- Consider **climate-smart approach**: context-specific, sustainable, increasing productivity and livelihoods, adaptive capacity and reducing and removing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Develop tailored How-to guidance for farmers.



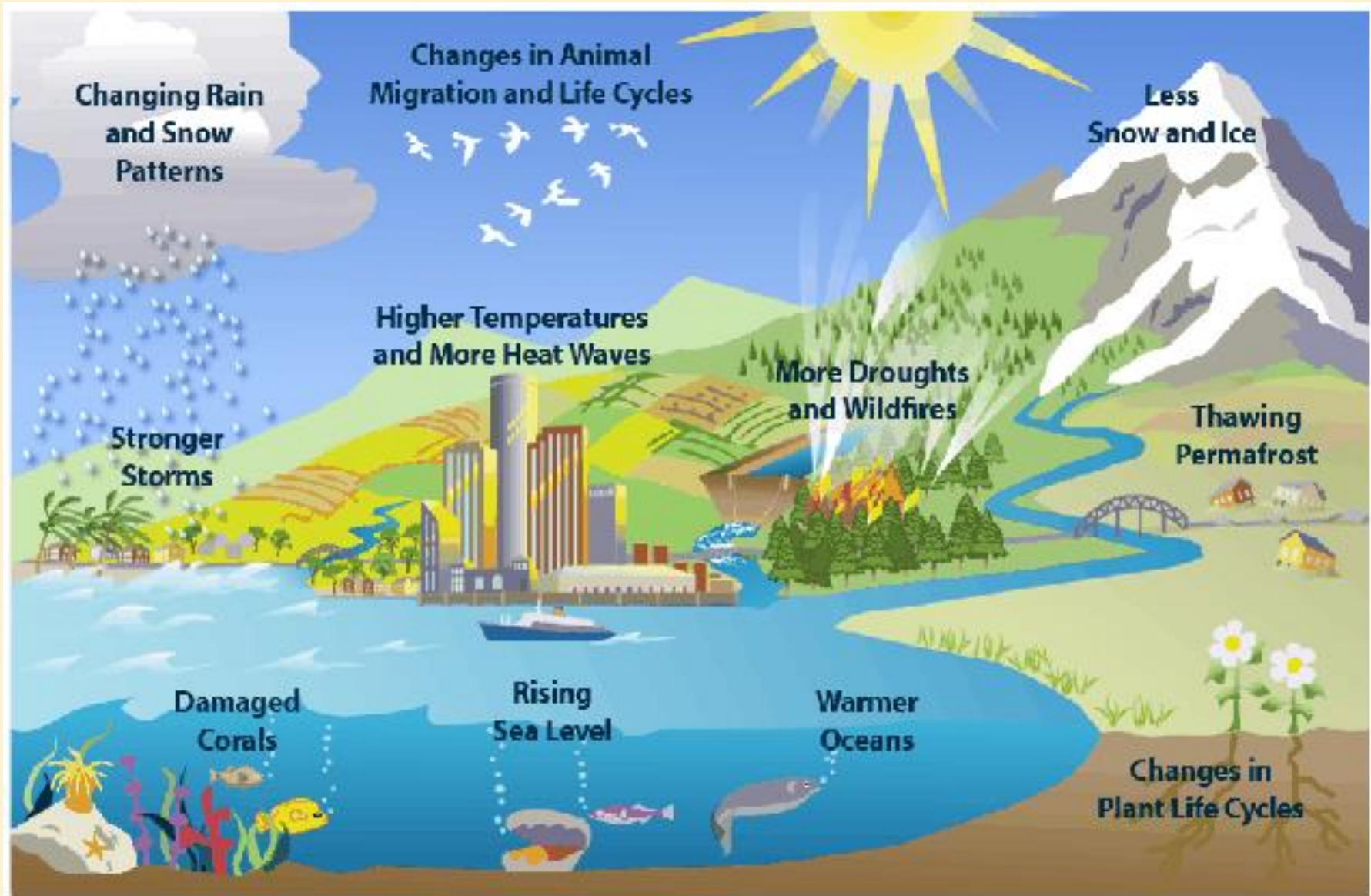
Copyright: WWF, ARCA: Develop a Framework Methodology for Rapid Assessment of Climate risks & Adaptive capacity (ARCA)

Repeat and clarify for deeper learning

- Adjust your communication and messages to the new information collected from farmers about the local climate impacts.
- Help farmers to continue to exchange information on what works and what does not, on new ideas.
- Collect good practices, and share them also with a wider community to speed up the spreading of good ideas.

PRACTICE	WHO DOES IT?	BENEFITS AND WHO BENEFITS	PERFORMANCE			INVESTMENT	TIME TO START OF BENEFITS (MONTHS)	RISKS/ DISADVANTAGE
	♀/♂		Low Rf	Med Rf	High Rf	H/M/L		
	♀/♂	♀♂	OK	✓	✓	⊙ H # M	0	♀⊙
	♀/♂	♀♂	✓	✓	✓	⊙ M # L	5	-
	♀/♂	♀♂	✓	✓	✓	⊙ M # L	0	-
	♂	♂♀	OK	✓	✓	⊙ M # H	1	-
	♀	♀	OK	✓	✓	⊙ L # M	1	✗✗

Photo: Farmers' options for livelihoods. Stakeholder exercise. Note the gender roles. Source: Walker Institute, 2016



Example of visual image of climate impacts at a landscape scale that can be adapted to local conditions and livelihood sources. http://jonjayray.com/greapr11_files/screenhunter_203-apr-28-19-50.gif

Further suggestions for rural advisory service agents on community processes

- Guide farmers to observe weather patterns and changes. Help in documenting the results.
- Climate information systems: Try to help farmers to access regular weather information. Observe if climate information systems are used and how they could be improved, and communicate this to the service providers.
- Ensure access to new information and training for all stakeholders, including women and youth.
- Support testing and evaluating new options for climate change adaptation and mitigation by drawing from traditional knowledge and innovation, and
- Organize and facilitate community- or landscape-level planning and knowledge exchange.



Example of a figure communicating with humour sources of greenhouse gas emissions from farming landscape from a Finnish leaflet for farmers http://www.jaraki.fi/sites/default/files/isku5/jarki_isku_5_rgb_low.pdf

Steps to consider in the communication

1. Collect information on the local context. Responses need to be matched to the location-specific problems faced by farmers. Integrate information from different sources, including research results to what farmers and communities express.
2. Support farmers in the transition from current to the expected future conditions by helping them find a balance between productivity maximization, vulnerability reduction and resilience. Remember to explain clearly the potential trade-offs.
3. Ensure farmers understand what a seasonal forecast is for and guide them in reconsidering their plans and making adjustments, as needed.
4. Help farmers to help themselves: guide and encourage farmers to identify appropriate solutions and the steps they can take to adapt these solutions to their needs.
5. Consider what actions you (for example as a RAS agent) can take that will lead to long-term solutions identified by farmers: they are the ones taking informed decisions, you are the facilitator building the environment for these decisions to be taken.

Source: The online community's discussions, Brent Simpsons, Simone Sala, Bianca Dendena, 2016

Support for climate change communication

- *Communication for rural development sourcebook* (2014): www.fao.org/3/a-i3492e.pdf
- *Collaborative change: A Communication framework for climate change adaptation and food security* (2010): www.fao.org/docrep/012/i1533e/i1533e00.pdf
- Advancing adaptation through communication for development. Workshop report. (2009): www.fao.org/docrep/012/i1553e/i1553e00.pdf
- Guardian: 12 tools for communicating climate change more effectively (2015): Talk about risk rather than uncertainty, use visuals and tell human stories <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2015/jul/06/12-tools-for-communicating-climate-change-more-effectively>
- Center for Research and Environmental Decisions: *The psychology of climate change communication. A guide for scientists, journalists, educators, political aides and the interested public.* http://guide.cred.columbia.edu/pdfs/CREDguide_full-res.pdf



Take advantage of existing materials

Audio-visuals:

Infographics and other visual representation of the topic

www.fao.org/climate-change/resources/infographics/infographic-booklets



Videos: FAO Playlist for Climate-Smart Agriculture:

<http://bit.ly/FAO-videos-climate-smart-agriculture>

For rural advisory agents on climate change:

Preparing smallholder farm families to adapt to climate change series

www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/research-publications/pocket-guide-1-extension-practice-agricultural-adaptation

www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/research-publications/pocket-guide-3-managing-water-resources

Adaptation under the “new normal” of climate change: The future of agricultural extension and advisory services.

Brief: <http://meas.illinois.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Simpson-Burpee-2014-Climate-Change-and-EAS.-MEAS-Brief.pdf>

Full discussion paper: <http://meas.illinois.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Simpson-Burpee-2014-Climate-Change-and-EAS-MEAS-Discussion-Paper.pdf>

How to communicate about climate change with smallholder farmers?

The recommendations for rural advisory services on communicating about climate change are based on an online learning event that took place in December 2017 with participation of over 3 400 practitioners from civil society, academia, private sector, international organizations – people interested in agriculture sectors and climate change and located in 129 countries.



More information

Join exchanges:

<https://dgroups.org/fao/ag-cc/join>

Watch recorded presentations on the topic:
www.fao.org/in-action/micca/resources/learning/rural-advisory-services-and-climate

About FAO's work on agriculture sectors, food security and climate change:

www.fao.org/climate-smart-agriculture

Reviewers: Would you have a photo that could fit here?