

AQUA-BASED BUSINESS SCHOOL

with Gender and Climate Change Perspective



The Aqua-based Business School (ABS) is a participatory action learning approach supporting fisherfolk participation in dynamic agriculture/fishery values and benefit from it. As part of capacity strengthening, ABS comprises a series of group-based experiential learning activities over a production-marketing cycle while interacting with other chain actors and stakeholders.



Packaged and labeled crab crackers showcased during the Mid-Term Mission of IFAD in Region 8 last March 2018. (Photos from FishCORAL Project)

Adaptation of Aqua-based Business School from Farmer Business School

The ABS builds on and expands the scope of the Farmer Business School (FBS) approach. FBS was developed by the International Potato Center (CIP) in 2008 in the framework of a project funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) aiming to link vegetable farmers with key markets in West and Central Java, Indonesia.

Initially, the project used the Participatory Market Chain Approach (PMCA) to address the marketing problems of the farmers that impeded the advancement of the potato sector and limited the benefits of smallholder farmers.

PMCA facilitates participatory processes among different market chain actors to stimulate joint innovations (commercial,

technological, institutional) based on shared ideas and trust. During 2010 mid-project review, PMCA practitioners identified limited business skills and ineffective farmer organizations as key constraints to effective market linkages. Farmers also had little understanding of market opportunities and inadequate access to market information such as trends, prices, and demand.

Drawing from the features of Farmer Field School (FFS), a group-based learning process focused on promoting enhanced agricultural practices in farmers' field, the FBS was developed to complement PMCA. The result is an action learning approach that aims to build farmers' capacity to respond, individually or jointly, to emerging market opportunities.



In 2012, the CIP-led project 'Food Security Through Asian Roots and Tubers' (FoodSTART), and the Second Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project (CHARMP2), both funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), partnered to field-test and scale out FBS to farmer groups in the northern Cordillera, Philippines. As of December 2016, there were around 80 FBS farmer groups with 1,387 graduates (83% women). CHARMP2 is currently further scaling out this approach in 18 new villages.

The second phase of FoodSTART (FoodSTART+, IFAD/EU grant, 2015-2018) is presently piloting the FBS approach in partnership with a number of IFAD investments in the Asia-Pacific: INREMP and FishCORAL (Philippines), Megha-LAMP (India), and SOLID (Indonesia). The FBS approach has evolved over time to make it more comprehensive and more responsive to important cross-cutting issues, such as gender and climate change. Another important feature of FBS is its flexibility and ability to be adapted to the specific context and needs of the partner investment.

Thus in 2017, FishCORAL adapted the FBS approach into ABS for fisherfolk in coastal communities, and for piloting in three regions /project sites.

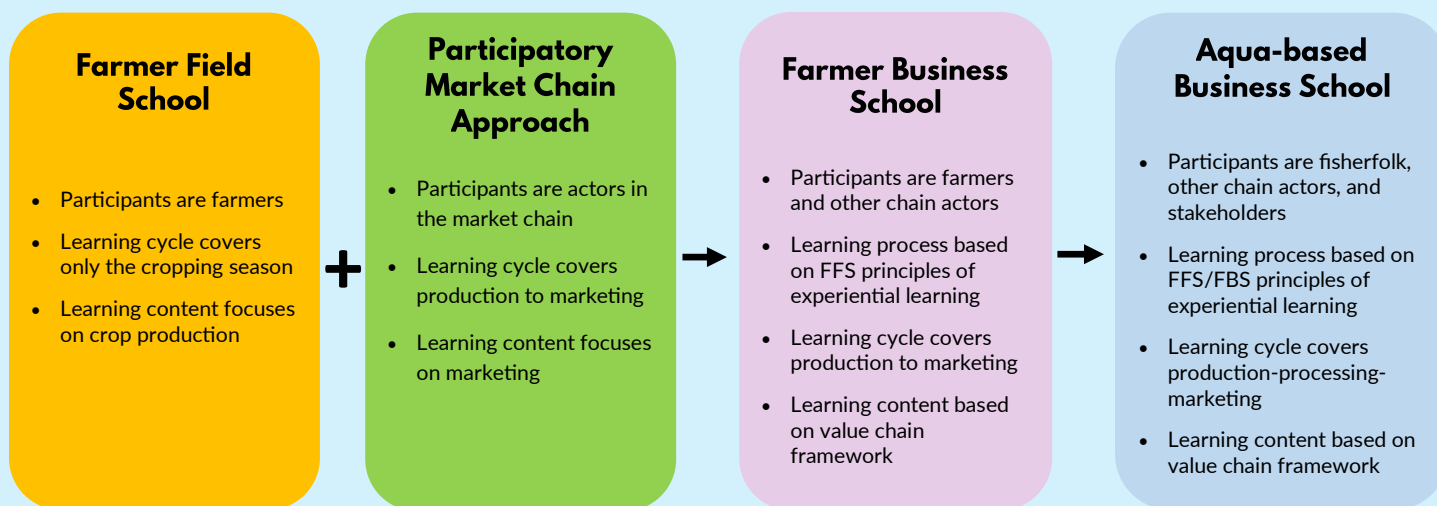


Figure 1. The Evolution of the FBS approach to ABS

What is Aqua-based Business School?

ABS is a participatory action learning approach to support fisherfolk groups' participation to and benefit from agriculture value chains guided by a market-chain curricular framework, through a series of learning activities over a production-marketing cycle, including interaction with other chain actors and stakeholders.

ABS participants are individual fisherfolk in a learning group. The approach facilitates experiential, field-based and joint learning over a four to six month crop production-marketing cycle. The ABS curriculum is flexible and driven by market needs and opportunities.

Through ABS, fisherfolk are able to (1) develop market-driven product innovations; (2) establish and expand linkages with markets - local and regional; and (3) generate new and additional profits through increased volume and value of their products. As a tangible outcome of ABS,

fisherfolk-participants are expected to have actual business initiated or strengthened upon completing the ABS learning process.

The ABS learning objectives are:

- To form men and women fisherfolk groups for marketing-oriented learning and actions.
- To strengthen fisherfolk groups by understanding gender-linked opportunities and constraints for collaboration and engagement with the market.
- To identify, understand, and engage with key actors in agricultural market chains.
- To analyze and prioritize market opportunities for women and men using appropriate tools, so as to increase business profitability for all types of fisherfolk groups and individuals.
- To consider climate-related changes to production systems, which may influence prioritization of market opportunities.
- To introduce technological, commercial, and institutional innovations in collaboration with other chain actors and stakeholders to respond to market opportunities.
- To develop a business plan to exploit new market opportunity by building on innovations.
- To develop strategies for enhancing fisherfolk's access to – and use of – business development support services.



Figure 2. ABS Curriculum with Gender and Climate Change Dimensions

Adapting ABS: FishCORAL and FoodSTART+ collaboration

FishCORAL is scaling out the Aqua-based Business School (ABS) in three of its project sites in regions of Eastern Visayas, Caraga, and BARMM. More than 50 new ABS facilitators participated in the training of facilitators conducted in 2017 and 2018. There will be 17 pilot sites in Eastern Visayas spread out in four provinces with fishery (milkfish, grouper, rabbitfish—locally called danggit, sardinella, seaweeds, mudcrab, squid, mussel), and

root crop (sweet potato and cassava) commodities. In Caraga, there is a total of five pilot sites in two provinces with lobster, mudcrab, sardines, seaweeds, and cassava/sweet potato as main commodities. While in BARMM, there are six sites in four provinces with mudcrab, seaweeds, and cassava commodities. At the same time, the FBS manual has been adapted into ABS manual and ABS learning guide to be used by the facilitators.

Trainings for Additional ABS Facilitators



FoodSTART+ and FishCORAL Project scaling out the Aqua-based Business School (ABS) through trainings of 30 FishCORAL community facilitators from Eastern Visayas last 8-11 May 2018 in Tacloban City.

FBS with IFAD investment projects partnering with FoodSTART/+

Presently the FBS approach is supported, adopted, and adapted by several IFAD investments to capacitate farmers to develop their micro/small enterprises and businesses. Implementation and funding of the activities is joint responsibility of the grant and the partner IFAD investment:

CHARMP2: More than 80 groups conducted FBS. In 2017–2018, the scaling up project is continuing to implement FBS with 18 new villages. Over 100 FBS facilitators have been trained. Each FBS group has received the Livelihood Assistant Fund (US\$ 2,000) for developing the new agri-enterprises. CHARMP2 benefitted of

higher repayment rates by FBS graduates.

INREMP: FBS currently piloted with six groups working with sweet potato, cassava, and cacao commodities. 10 FBS facilitators have been trained.

Megha-LAMP: 18 FBS facilitators trained. FBS currently piloted with six groups focusing on cassava and potato.

SOLID: 20 FBS have been trained. 10 FBS are currently implemented with sweet potato, cassava and fishery products.