



NextFood has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 771738.



**Funding:** Horizon 2020, European Union

**Call:** Rural Renaissance – Fostering Innovation and Business Opportunities

**Topic:** RUR-13-2017 Building a future science and education system fit to deliver to practice

**Grant agreement:** No 771738

**Duration:** May 2018 to April 2022

**Coordinator:**

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**WEBSITE:**

<https://www.nextfood-project.eu/>



## Nextfood - Educating the next generation of professionals in the agrifood system

### Practice Abstract #22: Farmers as teachers of Agroecology

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During the 3-month certificate course in Agroecology at the University of Calcutta, target students act as farmer trainers and extension workers. The backbone of the course is for students to understand the social, economic, and ecological challenges faced by smallholder farmers and looking for options to address those challenges.

The students engage in multiple forms of interaction with the farmers. At the beginning, students are staying at farms which are well-established zero external input integrated farms to learn from farmers about planning, techniques, practices, interaction with the market etc.

Interaction is free flowing but also structured in the sense that farmers are already oriented to making the students work on the farm, explain about farm planning, resource flow etc.

A few weeks into the course, students are again staying with the farmers to assess the challenges through various Participatory Resource Appraisal (PRA) tools.

And at the end, students are again sent to the same farmers to test some solutions together. Farmers give their feedback about students' performance as to their eagerness to learn, inhibitions in staying and working on the farms, and as regards engagement.

Acting as farmer trainers and extension workers, students learn that:

- farmers communicate and express themselves differently than the way in which they may be used to;
- observation is key to ask questions to farmers.
- it is good to plan the day together with the farmers.
- it is important to stay and have food with the farmer's family.
- keeping a student's diary about the farm work is helpful.

it is important for each of the students to summarize the everyday learning and present it to the larger group of students.