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Dr Martin Melin, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Alnarp, Sweden

WEBSITE:

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

Practice Abstract #27 - Requirements to interact with farmers and non-university actors in a field-based course

Authors: Dr. Manju S. Nair, Anupama Augustine, Kerala University, India

University of Kerala hosts a One-month Certificate Course on Agroecology and Action Research for students from multidisciplinary backgrounds which employs flexible curricula, field action and peer learning. This includes farmers and non-university actors as facilitators. Students spend about two weeks at a farm, and farmers guide their learning. Agroecology course 2019 had support from farmers and local self-government officials. This experience produced major recommendations:

- Plan the process of inclusion: The action plan developed to include non-university actors in Course contained;
 - ✓ Visiting prospective fields/institutions as an extension activity and understanding the nature (of farms), structure (of institutions) and meeting major stakeholders.
 - ✓ Conducting workshop with selected stakeholders and explaining the nuances of the course and expected role of each participant.
 - ✓ Listening to apprehensions and communicating benefits to stakeholders.
- Make instruction/communication multi-lingual: The norm regarding medium of instruction as English at the University was made flexible and the farmers were given freedom to choose their language during discussions. This boosted confidence of illiterate farmers.
- Familiarizing farmers and other stakeholders with University systems: Organizing seminars/symposiums prior to conduction of course and honoring of farmers. This made attitudinal change in both students and teachers and earned recognition for farmers.