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

Practice Abstract #62: Facilitation as core competency for Agroecologists

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In NEXTFOOD, facilitators at the University of Calcutta – NextFood Case 9 Improving sustainability in farming and food systems by bringing in agroecological approach through action learning - focus on developing 'Agroecologists' rather than teaching agroecology. As facilitators, we want learners to come out as change makers who can analyse, develop and support agroecological models in farm, farm-clusters, villages and in a wide range of related situations. As the learners need to deal with multi-actor partnerships, facilitation plays a major role in their future.

Facilitation by students in the course curriculum has been planned very carefully where it is engraved in many sessions as a subsidiary outcome. Various tools like group work, interaction with the stakeholders, surveys, debates, presentations etc were used to bring in the action-reflection based learning situations throughout the course. All these have helped the students to address various components of facilitation skills like active listening, asking questions, timekeeping, establishing a psychologically safe environment for sharing, creating focus amongst the group, unbiased objectivity and guiding the group decision process. However, communication has been given special importance where special sessions were organised for audio-visual communication and storytelling.