



Focus on Ethiopia

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“Schools without Walls”: Popular Farmer Field School Adapted for Herders



“The pastoralists need to learn that they must plan ahead and store hay and straw for times of drought, for their key breeding stock,” says project manager Tarekegn Tola



YABELLO, Oromiya, Ethiopia – A self-discovery learning method popular with farmers worldwide has been adapted to livestock keepers and is now being introduced in Ethiopia.

Called the Pastoralist Field School, the approach builds self confidence and community spirit among the herders so they find locally appropriate solutions to their animal problems.

“Even an illiterate herder can learn from the pastoralist field school because they learn using pictorial guides. They participate in practical demonstrations. They learn by discovery,” explains Francis Anno, a Kenyan trainer who helped adapt the method to pastoralists in East Africa in 2006, where there are now 160 schools.

Project manager Tarekegn Tola believes one of the first problems

herders will want to solve is how to better prepare themselves for drought. “The pastoralists need to learn that they must plan ahead and store hay and straw for times of drought, for their key breeding stock.”

Herder Jaldesa Golicha, with 30 cattle, seems ready for school: “I use modern medicine, not traditional anymore. I learn about these things from NGOs or the government. And I want to learn a lot more.”



A Farmer Field School is a “school without walls” that uses a group-based, practical learning process to improve farmers’ agro-ecology and management skills that build on their traditional and indigenous knowledge.



Photos from Giulio Napolitano /FAO