

Interview Guide for Focus Groups in Northern Ghana

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Published by International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
December, 2023

The [Sustainable Intensification of Mixed Farming Systems Initiative](#) aims to provide equitable, transformative pathways for improved livelihoods of actors in mixed farming systems through sustainable intensification within target agroecologies and socio-economic settings.

Through action research and development partnerships, the Initiative will improve smallholder farmers' resilience to weather-induced shocks, provide a more stable income and significant benefits in welfare, and enhance social justice and inclusion for 13 million people by 2030.


Activities will be implemented in six focus countries globally representing diverse mixed farming systems as follows: Ghana (cereal–root crop mixed), Ethiopia (highland mixed), Malawi: (maize mixed), Bangladesh (rice mixed), Nepal (highland mixed), and Lao People's Democratic Republic (upland intensive mixed/ highland extensive mixed).

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Contents

Abbreviations and acronyms	iv
Introduction	1
Food security questions	1
Agriculture	1
Soils issues.....	4
Trees and other natural resources.....	5
Income generation and markets	6
Migration.....	6
Water.....	7

Abbreviations and acronyms

FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IITA	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SI-MFS	Sustainable Intensification of Mixed Farming Systems Initiative
WP	Work Package

Introduction

Explanation about intention of project and our interest in understanding their farming systems and natural resources management and to hear about the challenges/obstacles to their farming systems and livelihoods. This context important for designing solutions and interventions to address these challenges.

Food security questions

- 1) Are people in this community able to meet their food needs for the year from their own farms? If not, for how many months are they food secure? Which months are they usually food insecure and why?

- 2) If people cannot meet their food needs from their farms, how do they get food? Do they sell crops earlier in the year and then use the cash to buy food? Do they sell livestock? Do they trade in other goods? Migration? Etc. Is it different for men and for women?

Agriculture

- 3) Who is considered the owner of the farming land you use?

- 4) How do people get access to agricultural plots? (purchasing; inheritance; renting; sharecropping; borrowing?) (indicate rough % of those at FGDs)

- 5) Are women able to rent land? Borrow land?

- 6) Do people access different plots according to season? Does the access to or ownership of plots shift according to the season? And by year?

- 7) Are households' plots scattered around the landscape? Where are these plots found? Near the compound? In forests, bush, crop land, wetlands, near rivers?
- 8) Which plots do people prefer to invest inputs/labor in? Those near the compounds or farther away? What criteria are used – are they selecting certain areas for certain reasons? Proximity or fertility of the plot? Type of crop grown on plot? Whether irrigation is possible...etc.
- 9) Do people cultivate by hand hoe or by plough or both and where? (categorize – men, women, youth)
- 10) What are the most important food crops grown here? List and have then do a ranking from First to Last.
- 11) What are the most important cash crops? Are these crops different for men and for women and for youth?
- 12) Who does the labor on agricultural fields? Clearing? Planting? Weeding? Harvesting?
- 13) When do people do these activities? (by month) Which requires the most time and effort (from above list)
- 14) Do people apply inorganic fertilizer to their fields? Manure? On which plots and crops? Why? (Proportions that applied fertilizers, manure the previous season)

15) Are there some crops that men are more likely to farm than women? Why?

16) Are there some crops which are considered women's crops? Why?

17) Why are there these differences?

18) Is intercropping grain/legumes common here? Which crops?

19) Is crop rotation common here and which crops are planted in rotation?

20) What are the most important livestock in this area and what are the reasons that they are important or used for?

21) Who owns the livestock? Men? Women? Does it vary according to the animal? Or to who purchased it?

22) Who herds the livestock? Children? Men? Fulani?

23) Are there Fulani that live or come into the community with their livestock? If so, when? What are the local arrangements?

24) Do people loan their livestock to friends/family in the village? What are the terms of these loans? Does it differ according to the animal? Do people loan or borrow livestock from outside the community?

25) Do people use livestock manure for their fields? Is it enough? Is manure sold in the community?

26) What are the 5 most significant problems facing farmers in this community that affect their livelihoods negatively? (Prompt: Consider both crops and livestock). Do these problems differ for men and for women?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

27) What farming activities require purchasing/use of cash? Inputs? Labor? Other?

Soils issues

28) Is soil fertility, etc. declining or increasing, and why? Has this affected crop yields?

29) What do people do to increase soil fertility on their plots?

30) Do people burn the bush or their plots here? If so why? Who does the burning and why?

31) What are the practices farmers carry out to manage soil and water on their plots?

32) For each practice, which ones require the most labor? And the most inputs?

33) Who does most of the labour for these practices? Men, women, youth, hired labour?

34) Do farmers hire labour for work on their farms? What percentage? And for what activities? What time of the year?

Trees and other natural resources

35) Which trees are most highly valued here and why?

36) Are tree products important to livelihoods here? To everyone's livelihoods or does it differ for men and for women?

37) What products are the most important?

38) Which trees bring in the most income for women?

39) How much do these trees/tree products contribute to the household income? Are they essential or not very important to people's livelihoods?

Income generation and markets

40) Are markets easy to access here?

41) Are inputs (for agricultural production) available and affordable?

42) How do most people earn cash here? Men? Women? (Get a list for each gender)

43) Do most women in this community engage in some trading? If so, what are the most common products that are traded?

44) Do you get low prices for your crops and livestock products? What stops you from getting higher prices? (prompt: time of year when sell, selling to middleman, inability to access value-added markets, inability to transport goods to further markets, meet emergencies, etc)

45) What are some other non-farm income generating activities? Mining?

Migration

46) Is migration out of the community during certain times of the year common here? When?

47) Who migrates? Men? Women? For what kind of opportunities?

48)Where do they migrate?

49)Is the migration temporary? When they return, do they bring cash to buy food or to invest in agriculture? What is the cash used for?

Water

50)Is irrigation practiced in this village? How do people access irrigation plots? Rental? Borrowing? Requesting from chief? Etc. Does it change every year/season?

51) Are irrigation users formed into Water User Associations (WUA)?

52) Are men and women part of the WUA?

53) What crops are grown in irrigation plots?

54)Where do livestock access water? During the dry season?

55) In addition to reservoirs, have people tried other ways to harvest water here?



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