



CARINATA FACTS

Social Science Initiative

Expanding Knowledge Exchange at Carinata Field Days

Field days offer an opportunity to provide hands-on demonstration and training for producers, policymakers, and industry partners alike. Stakeholders engage in meaningful conversation over generative themes, coffee, and robust field studies. However, theory surrounding adult learning and engagement suggests traditional approaches to field days could be re-imagined to make them more impactful. This fact sheet aims to outline considerations for a knowledge exchange approach to field days.

In Review (2016-19)

The SPARC project held a number of field days during the first three years of programming. These locations spanned the tri-state area, including: Jay, FL, Quincy, FL, Milstead, AL, and Tifton, GA; with attendance ranging from 25 to 70 participants. Following exit surveys, participants indicated that they were satisfied with the events. However, participants and organizers both recognized there was room for improvement in the field day format. *Could Extension systems reevaluate their approach to field days in order to enhance learning and knowledge exchange?*

Building a Dialogue

A key component of enhancing the learning and knowledge exchange during field days is creating space for dialogue and reflection. While the presentation format



Figure 1: Field day participants examining a carinata study.

allows for opportunities to highlight information, and Q&A sessions provide feedback and clarification, neither allow stakeholders to guide the conversation to support their own decision making processes and highlight their specific concerns.

To create such an approach, we can borrow from the Kolb's Learning Cycle. Kolb's framing orients learning in a cyclical process of discovery. Learners move from *concrete experience* with a subject to *reflective observation*, reflecting on their own experiences, challenges, and successes. Next, learners use *abstract conceptualization* to identify knowledge and relevant take-aways they can utilize in their own lives. Finally, participants engage in *active experimentation* when they discuss which aspects they could put into practice within the particularities of

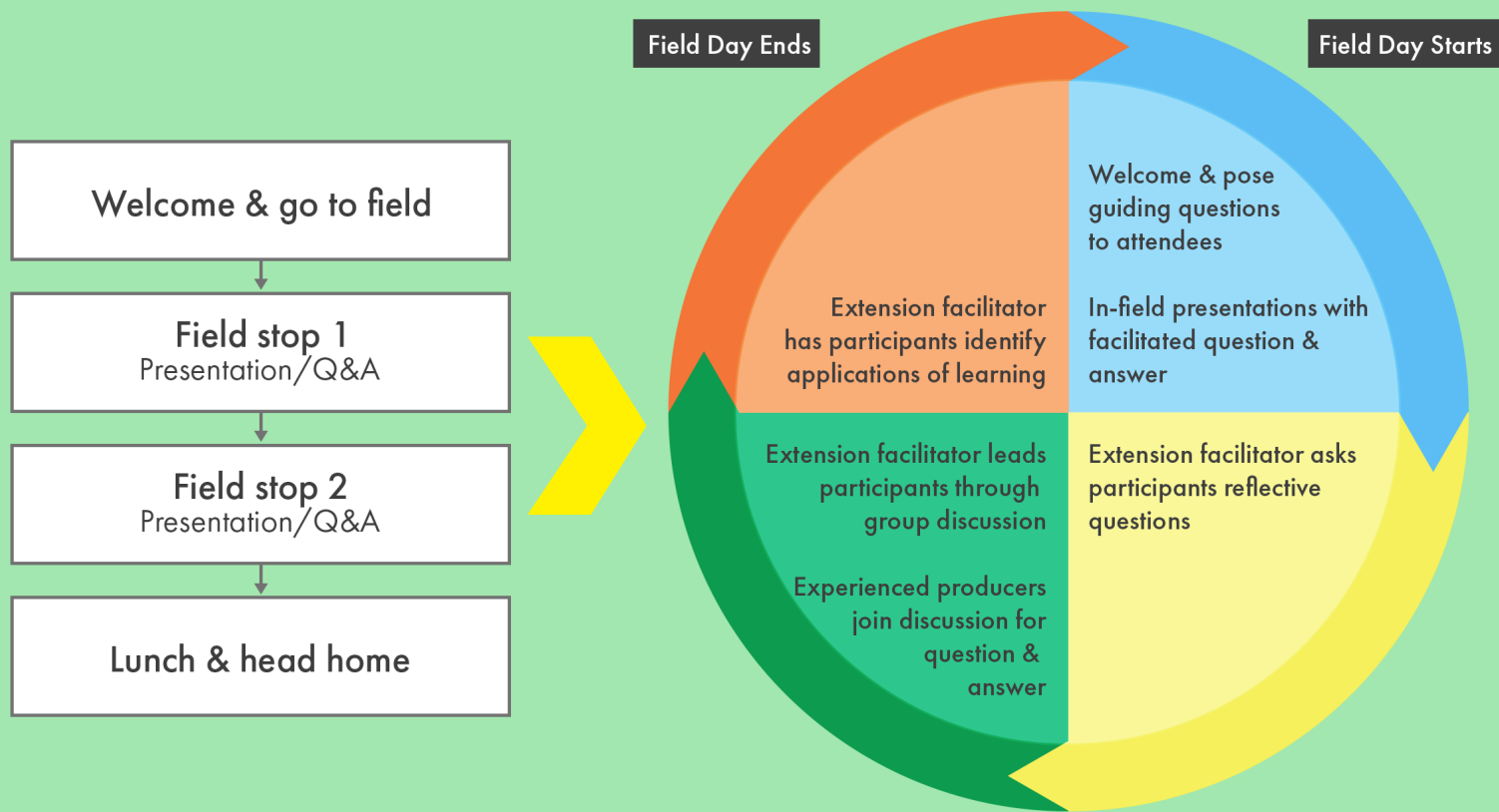


Figure 2: Illustrates two approaches to field day. The left is a conventional approach while the right diagram applies Kolb's Learning Cycle to the engage and enhance knowledge sharing among participants.

their own production systems¹. In closure, group members reiterate the specific lessons that they hope will enhance future experiences. Figure 2 illustrates the proposed application of the experiential learning cycle to enhance engagement at agricultural field days.

Creating space for experienced producers to share their experience, knowledge, successes, and challenges is a key strategy. Communication between farmers can ease the primary adoption barrier: unfamiliarity. While Extension and academic knowledge can inform producers, the dialogue between producers provides place-based knowledge to aid producer's decision making. Furthermore, by highlighting farmers, extension

professionals can celebrate farmer successes and build trust and community among participants.

The experiential learning cycle does favor past experiences over present ones and assumes all participants feel comfortable enough to speak freely about their experiences². It is imperative that facilitators make space for less vocal actors and seat the conversations of past experiences within the context of the field day topic. Guiding questions can assist in framing the conversation, such as those included in Table 1. Likewise, the use of small team exercises, breakout discussions, and agenda planning can create a comfortable environment where expression of thoughts and ideas can happen equitably.

We need to have some kind of community where our producers can interact. This generally happens at field days [...] so, a producer who is thinking about growing can hear what another grower's challenges were. That type of community is important when it comes to producers making decisions.

~ Key informant, October 2017

Towards New Approaches

Field days are an important tool in knowledge sharing and professional development of participants. Thoughtfully integrating learning models, such as Kolb’s, is a novel way of re-framing the format to meet project goals, diminish adoption barriers, and sensitize producers via knowledge exchange³.

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| Terms | Examples |
|----------------------|--|
| Guiding questions | <p>What has your experience with cover crops been?</p> <p>How are you utilizing carinata in your field rotations?</p> <p>What successes have you had with mycorrhizal amendments?</p> |
| Reflective questions | <p>How does this information align with your field experience?</p> <p>What ideas or questions stuck with you?</p> <p>What have you learned from this discussion?</p> <p>What could you apply to your production systems?</p> |

References

- ¹Kolb, David A., Richard E. Boyatzis, and Charalampos Mainemelis. “Experiential learning theory: Previous research and new directions.” *Perspectives on thinking, learning, and cognitive styles* 1, no. 8 (2001): 227-247.
- ²Vince, Russ. “Behind and Beyond Kolb’s Learning Cycle.” *Journal of Management Education* 22, no. 3 (June 1998): 304–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105256299802200304>.
- ³Kaner, Sam. *Facilitator’s guide to participatory decision-making*. John Wiley & Sons, 2014.

Table 1: Examples of guiding and reflective questions.

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