

## Eco-friendly kitchen gardening by Pakistani rural women developed through a farmer field school participatory approach

### Abstract:

A joint venture was made by the Food and Agriculture Organization and the Society of Facilitators and Trainers Pakistan to train rural women of eight districts of Pakistan in kitchen gardening and off-season vegetable cultivation using a farmer field school (FFS) approach. Overall, 42 females were trained as master trainers who in turn established 48 season-long FFS where 1227 rural females were facilitated to establish home gardens and field plots with emphasis on minimizing chemical inputs in crop production and protection. Observatory skills regarding regular plant growth and ecology were enhanced through agroecosystem analysis, which, in turn, improved their crop management decisions. The largest portion of FFS participants (38.2%) was illiterate and with regard to age, the largest category (36.6%) was 21 – 30 years old. The participatory FFS activities not only enhanced the awareness of participating rural women folk but also provided a forum to share their experiences. They gained confidence and improved their social interactions and awareness about their role in improving livelihoods and agriculture. The cost – benefit analysis showed home gardens and field plots of vegetables to be economically beneficial activities