

Checklist for planning your Needs and Opportunity Assessment. Use the "ASK ME" [checklist](#)

1. Consult

1. Identify and talk with key local leaders and experts.
2. Note findings of any existing reports.
3. **Clearly identify your target audience:** Pay attention to **gender** to ensure that all parties are considered and will benefit.

2. Secondary data

1. Analyze secondary data [Fact sheet](#) ; [Activity sheet](#)
2. Plot Max and Min temperature and rainfall - overlay with crop calendar. If information is not available locally, then possible weather information sources:* Average rainfall, temperatures <http://www.worldclimate.com/> ; * Global climate maps: [Link](#) (FAO)
3. Collect soil or land use maps, if available
* Field and farmer survey ; * Use Google Earth ; * Identify key soil characteristics: pH, EC, texture, (soil depth, if available)
4. Note topography and infrastructure
5. If irrigation water used: Identify source (rainfall? ground water? river/lake);



3. Cropping and Livestock potential. Meet with farmers and visit fields, considering:

Crops

- Determine what is presently growing in the region.
- Assess the "health" of surrounding vegetation - it gives an indication of soils, weather and potential productivity,
- Develop a cropping calendar (planting and harvest times) for existing crops.
- Crop Variety and seed/seedling source
- Crop rotation and field conditions (e.g., residue)
- Land preparation and crop establishment
- Fertilizer/nutrient management
- Pests and pest control (weeds, insects, diseases, other)
- Water management (measure EC, if salinity suspected).
- Postharvest practices (harvest, drying, storage, transport, processing)
- Markets
- Input, credit and labor needs and availability
- Sources of knowledge

Livestock

- Note also livestock - grazing and those kept near the house
- Breeds, feed and nutrition, watering, disease, hygiene

When asking about practices, identify who (male, female adults, children) does what and who makes the decisions.

Ask what the farmers are interested in - in terms of change.

Validate interview responses with field observations and vice versa.

4. Conclusions - fitting on-farm needs in a wider context.

- **Priorities.** Identify priority needs and opportunities; ensuring you are addressing the true cause of the major problems.
- **System context.** What are the broader elements needed for success - [Fact sheet](#) ; **Evaluate those elements** [Activity sheet](#)
- **Skills needed.** Recognize and as needed build the broad range of skills required for successful applied research and extension - [Fact sheet](#)
- **The three big elements.** As you plan, remember successful extension requires extension workers to have 1) sound technical knowledge, 2) good communication skills and 3) effective institutional support with market linkages.