# How to design a climate demo for sceptical audiences?

'Climate' is not the easiest topic to talk about. The topic of climate and climate change can feel abstract and politically loaded or secondary to urgent farm problems. In a previous inspiration sheet we presented ways to make 'climate' an attractive topic for farmers. **But how to deal with a sceptical audience during a climate smart farming demo?**

In this inspiration sheet we translate **six IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) guiding principles** for climate communication[1] specifically to talking about climate during farm demos. The principles are originally aimed at scientists, to help them communicate better about their work, but the six principles are inspirational for climate demo events as well. We outline how to use these climate communication principles when designing a climate demo for a potentially sceptical audience.

> A Polish advisors organised a demo event about mitigating the effects of water erosion in hilly terrains. The demo focused on covering the soil year-round with various crops, including the use of intercrops. She mentions: "Farmers were sceptical, they listened but found it hard to believe about the benefits of these changes.
> **Justyna Fila, Poland**

## 1. Find or be a confident communicator

A confident communicator brings two things: **1) expertise** and **2) an authentic voice**, which just means: being yourself! In demo events, the confident communicator can be the farmer, who is knowledgeable about their own farm, but it could also be another expert, for example an advisor or researcher, sharing their expertise on a climate topic.



*An engaging conversation between a farmer and demo participants during a demo event in Germany about cover crops to build humus, sequester $CO_2$, and retain water in the soil. Picture: Thomas Alföldi*



1 IPCC (2018). Principles for effective communication and public engagement on climate change.

## 2. Talk about the real world

Climate change can feel abstract because it is often about 'big numbers' that do not relate to people's day-to-day life. It helps to use clear language and examples that the audience is familiar with. Farm demos are a perfect way to connect to farmers' day-to-day life.

**TIP**

Do make sure to go outside and actually see, feel, and experience the farm instead of presenting in a room. This way, chances are farmers will be more likely to relate and be able to apply what they see, hear and experience to their own life.

> [The] farmers took the stage as protagonists, opening their fields and greenhouses as learning spaces. They narrated their experiences in implementing biocontrol agents and adjusting climatic parameters to withstand extreme weather events. Their testimony was essential in bridging theory with reality, offering a grounded view of how these strategies are reshaping daily farm operations.
> **Eduardo Crisol-Martínez, Spain**

## 3.Connect with what matters to your audience

**Of course, accurate and factual messages are important, but it is equally important to connect to what people find important.** It helps to find 'common ground'; values that are shared among the demo participants, as well as connecting to what is important to visiting farmers.

**TIP**

For example, in a region struggling with drought, talk about economically viable ways of dealing with the effects of droughts.

## 4.Tell a human story

Most people relate to **anecdotes** and **personal stories** and farm demos are a perfect platform for the demo farmer to tell theirs. Encourage the farmer to tell their personal story, including their struggles. Stories do not have to be only about successes. Farmers usually appreciate when their colleague also talks about any struggles and failures in implementing climate smart farming practices.

> The combination of real field examples and farmer testimony proved highly effective. Keep it practical and interactive, allow time for informal discussion, and make sure to include the host farmer's honest experiences, even failures, as these make the learning richer and more relatable.
>
> **Emeline Clotuche, Belgium**

## 5.Lead with what you know

Many things are still unknown about climate and the effects of climate change on agriculture. During demos, **start with what we do know rather than all the things we might not know yet.** Extreme weather events provide tangible evidence of climate change and provide an opportunity to discuss climate risks and climate smart farming measures.

## 6.Use effective visuals

**Show, don't just tell!** Farm demos provide a great opportunity to show the effects of climate change and effective climate smart farming measures in real life. This should also be the core of a climate farm demo. Using farm data in a demo is also an effective way to talk and discuss about climate smart farming. Showing and discussing farm data can make climate smart farming more tangible to other farmers. **Curious how to use climate farm data in a demo?** Read the inspiration sheet 3 - "Ways to demonstrate 'invisible' climate smart practices."




*Farm data is presented during a demo event on a French beef cattle farm. Picture: Thomas Alföldi*

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