A Farm Business Advisor is the personal link between farmers and their suppliers and buyers. An FBA travels to the farmer’s field to learn directly what challenges the farmer faces—problems like water control, poor soils, damaging pests, or difficulty getting crops to buyers. As a team, the FBA and the farmer work out a strategy, which might include investing in new equipment like drip irrigation or introducing higher-value crops into their annual agricultural cycle. FBAs keeps in regular contact with their farmer clients to answer questions, solve problems, and ensure that investments are yielding the expected results.

Different Titles in Different Countries

Although they may go by different names, one thing remains true: when FBAs succeed, farmers succeed.

Bangladesh: Char’s Input Dealer (CID), Lead Facilitator (LF)
Burkina Faso: Conseiller de Business Agricole (CBA)
Cambodia: Farm Business Advisor (FBA)
Ethiopia: Farm Business Advisor (FBA)
Ghana: Market Development Officer (MDO)
Nepal: Community Based Facilitator (CBF)
Nicaragua: Retailer
Mozambique: Agente de Desenvolvimento de Agronegocios (ADA)
Zambia: Farm Business Advisor (FBA)

Going the Distance

FBA clients often live and farm in areas with poor or nonexistent infrastructure. To reach their clients, an FBA typically walks, bikes, or uses a motorcycle, for distances of 5 - 20 km.

How do FBAs make money?

FBAs are independent agents, either individual entrepreneurs or family businesses, who earn income from various sources:

- Margins and commission on sales of inputs
- Percentage of profit from aggregation of farm outputs
- Fees for services like soil testing and equipment installation and maintenance
- Salaries or stipends (in some locations)

Additionally, many FBAs earn a substantial amount from their own farms, which double as demonstration plots for the products and services they sell.

Making Markets Work: The Power of Farm Business Advisors

Because FBAs’ earnings are paid for by users, their long-term success does not rely on subsidies or a steady flow of donor funds.

The FBA approach introduces market incentives, integrated service delivery, a strong client focus, and a mechanism for financial sustainability.

Compared to other agriculture interventions, the FBA approach requires fewer resources to reach more farmers.

Economic impact of FBAs

Since IDE began the FBA program, more than 339,000 farmers have benefited from contact with a FBA, generating an average of $423 of increased income annually. The impacts for the FBAs are substantial as well, with estimated total average yearly incomes per FBA of $803.

90% of farmers use mobile phones to collect data or organize groups.