

Mobilizing the Potential of Rural and Agricultural Extension



– a FAO and GFRAS study

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FAO and GFRAS:

Towards a new vision for extension

- ❑ Consensus achieved by FAO, the Neuchâtel Initiative and the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) and its affiliates
- ❑ Intention ~ to outline challenges and a new vision on extension
- ❑ Views ~ on Demand-drive, market orientation and poverty focus
- ❑ *Links with research currently very weak:
Can GCARD start to rebuild these relations?*



What is extension?

Not what you might expect

- Information and advisory services needed and demanded by farmers *and other actors* in agrifood systems and rural development, such as...
 - Dissemination of information about technologies, new research, markets, input and financial services, and climate
 - Development of business skills and market linkages
 - Linkages between farmer organizations and market actors
 - Support to institutional and organizational development
 - Facilitating access and collaboration with non-extension programmes
 - Mediating in conflicts over natural resources, land tenure, ...



Core challenges to extension – *Institutional change and strengthening*

- ❑ Normative reforms without grand models
- ❑ Change ~ from project support to systematic, institutional development
- ❑ Country-specific institutional and organizational solutions
- ❑ Processes involving all stakeholders concerned
- ❑ *New institutional arrangements needed*
 - flexible ⇒ lean/flat
 - continuous changes ⇒ learn & adapt
 - increased complexity ⇒ collaboration, multi-disciplinarity



Core challenges to extension – *Tailored advice, not a method or technology 'fix'*

- ❑ False assumption that extension can be 'fixed' with the 'right' formula
- ❑ Diversity of clients and situations require tailored advice and a menu of options
- ❑ Innovative methods and communication tools have emerged
- ❑ *Challenges remain in*
 - anchoring these innovations in existing institutional structures
 - addressing the financial and human resource constraints in scaling up their use



Core challenges to extension – *Increasing equity and accountability*

- ❑ Extension has a bad reputation regarding equitable and inclusive rural development
 - Breaking with gender and wealth biases
- ❑ *Pluralism and subsidiarity* required to best serve different client groups
- ❑ Extension is central to addressing equity and accountability challenges through *stakeholders involvement and empowerment*
 - Willingness of farmers and their organizations to cost sharing
 - Enabling farmers to pay for their services



Core challenges to extension – *Addressing human resource constraints*

- ❑ Human resource capacities are a major constraint
- ❑ New skills (facilitation, coordination, coaching, mediation, ...) are needed
- ❑ Enabling to deal with complexity which demands critical, systemic thinking and problem solving
- ❑ Educational levels are also dropping and agricultural education institutions are in a serious state of decline
- ❑ *This HR crisis demands sustainable long-term investment strategies*



Core challenges to extension – *Investments and new financing mechanisms*

- ❑ Not a question of simply increasing investments, but of where and how investments are done
- ❑ *Public commitment* needed to reach the poor, even where services are carried out by non-state actors
- ❑ Need for *sustainable financing mechanisms* with
 - a supply and demand side balance
 - small producers and their organizations are enabled to pay for the services they receive ⇨ accountability
 - a competitive market for service provision is created
 - performance criteria for support to service providers
 - learning from the private sector and how they contract extension services to ensure quality agricultural products



Can a new relationship between research and extension address these challenges?

- ❑ The one way technology transfer role of extension is no longer viable
 - Dynamic and flexibility required in today's innovation systems
- ❑ Extension cannot make research developed for better off farmers accessible to the poor farmers
- ❑ Multiple innovations are needed (technological, financial, methodological, institutional, organizational, ...)
- ❑ More attention to farmers' own innovations
- ❑ Uncertainty (climate, markets, technological change) requires dealing with risks ~ research and extension
- ❑ Extension agencies must transcend their image / roles
 - 'Expert' providers of knowledge from research ⇒ facilitation and advisory roles increasingly important



Can a new relationship between research and extension address these challenges?

- ❑ New research – extension agenda
 - more than linking research and extension
- ❑ New respectful relationship and institutionalized collaboration
 - learning from extension
 - strengthening of extension and research institutions, and FOs
- ❑ Pluralistic extension 'systems' are highly unsystematic and extension providers act locally ⇔ few research institutes
 - increasingly producer-owned extension networks
- ❑ A common approach ~ producers needs and demands
 - supply side pressure likely to be counter productive
- ❑ *Farmer representation and influence where decisions about research and extension priorities are being made*



Thank you for your attention
