



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Making extension and advisory services demand-driven

Why do we need demand-driven extension and advisory services?

Faced with changing environmental and socio-economic conditions, rural producers must continuously innovate and adapt, calling on improved technical, marketing, or managerial skills and strategies. Effective extension and advisory services (EAS), designed to address the varied and complex needs of actors – especially producers – throughout the agri-food system, are critical to facilitating that change. They also play a key role in helping producers formulate their demands, communicate them to other actors, and respond as required. However, our view of producers' needs may not always reflect their actual demand.

Making EAS demand-driven is not an end in itself but a means to improving their relevance and impact.

Demand is defined as what people ask for and value so much that they are willing to invest their resources, such as time and money, in order to receive the service (Neuchâtel Initiative, 2007:2).

What does this mean in practice?

Creating demand-driven EAS ensures that:

- rural producers are empowered to identify and prioritize their demands for services, and to articulate and negotiate these with service providers;
- other actors in the agri-food system communicate their needs and demands in relation to EAS;
- EAS providers are able to respond by offering timely and adequate services and are accountable to the producers in terms of quality and value for money; and
- they gain the support of enabling policies and institutions.

This leads to more efficient and relevant EAS services, a sustainable increase in agricultural production and improved rural livelihoods.

Pre-conditions for success:

While the strengthening of EAS depends on the specific contexts involved, a number of basic pre-conditions must be in place for a successful transition toward demand-driven EAS.

Mind-set change

Government's commitment

Making it happen

The actions recommended below are often interdependent and may occur simultaneously, with no prescribed order. The priority of the various actions will vary dependent on the local context, reflecting existing challenges and opportunities within each situation.

Enabling and promoting demand-driven services through policies

- Assure policies and regulatory mechanisms are in place and promote demand-driven EAS: this can be done through setting clear standards for service provision, the introduction of certification schemes and incentives and the application of professional ethics.
- Recognize and foster pluralism in service provision through policies and innovative financing mechanisms that incentivize engagement. Coordinate the diverse actors in order to widen the range and coverage of services.
- Promote demand-side financing of EAS: this changes producers' relationship with the EAS actors, facilitating equal partnerships. Providers thus become accountable to producers for the quality of their services. However, accountability schemes should also be set up even for cases where EAS are subsidized.
- Promote participatory decision-making involving rural producers at local level: this favours participation of local stakeholders and increases EAS responsiveness to local conditions and demands. Producers should also be considered as a part of the governance mechanism of EAS schemes.



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Remember!

- > Decentralisation does not foster demand-driven EAS unless it is accompanied by capacity development for staff at all levels, provided by adequate local funding and a regulatory framework.
- > It is essential to ensure that the poorest and most remote producers can still access the services they need! This can be done through public funds channelled through producers or their organizations, such as vouchers and other subsidies.



Example

The New Agricultural Extension Policy (NAEP) in Bangladesh set out to promote demand-led extension and advisory services. Its underlying principles include targeting and mobilizing farmer groups and their federations, as well as bottom-up planning and implementation. According to the implementation study, the NAEP had a positively impact on the relationships between the various departments responsible for sub-sectors and the district and sub-district levels they cover. It also introduced and promoted tools such as participatory rural appraisal for joint planning.



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Mobilizing demand through strengthening producers and their organizations

Strengthening the capacities of producers and their organizations to identify, express and negotiate their demands is critical. Role of EAS providers go beyond purely technical agricultural training and be able to assist producers in the process of organizing themselves, articulating their demand, and bridging it with relevant services.

- Promote participatory decision making processes involving producers for EAS (national policy development, steering committees, boards of agencies, development of programs etc.).
- Support the creation of or strengthen existing producers' organizations (PO), including associations, cooperatives, self-help groups. Most rural producers, especially small-scale family farmers, are not organized or their organizations are weak. Well-organized groups with common interests and goals enable producers to increase their bargaining power and make themselves heard, and interact better with other actors, including EAS providers.
- Make EAS available and inclusive to help organize producers and enhance their functional skills such as leadership and decision making, facilitation, negotiation, conflict solving and marketing.
- Promote participatory methods that empower and build social capital of rural producers, such as farmer field schools, farmer to farmer exchange, innovation platforms, and community discussions.



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Remember!

- > Building on existing formal and informal groups or mechanisms creates a greater sense of ownership and continuity among members.
- > Ensure exchanges among POs and EAS providers to facilitate co-learning and foster collective capacity.
- > Some demands may be oriented toward short-term economic benefits rather than long-term public interests (e.g. preservation of natural resources). To bring positive change to entire communities, it is important to raise awareness among rural people about benefits deriving from use of sustainable practices and create appropriate incentives for environmental, social and economic sustainability.



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Example

The POs in Senegal played a very important role in advocating for and designing an extension reform. The reform programme, The Agricultural Services and Farmer Organizations Support Programme (PSOAP, WB-funded), helped strengthen the capacity of POs. This was implemented by the Senegalese Association for the Promotion of Small Development Projects (ASPRODEP), a PO-owned non-profit organization, which manages PSAOP funds for small projects and services identified by POs. At local level, implementation is based on The Local Consultation Framework of Producer Organizations (CLCOP), where PO representatives select the projects to be funded. The project enabled POs to be represented on the board of the parastatal National Rural and Agricultural Advisory Agency (ANCAR); thus contribute to priority setting and decision making process for EAS program and budget in Senegal.

(Blum, ML. 2020)

Making advisory service providers more responsive and accountable

The entire EAS system, including service providers, needs to develop new capacities to listen to and respond to the needs and requirements of different categories of producers. Traditional top-down technology transfer approach and the pursuit of profit or donors' priorities must make way for bottom-up joint planning that takes into account differentiated demands and effectively supports producers.

- Raise awareness and develop capacities of EAS providers on the importance of demand mobilization and response, and work closely with other actors in the agri-food system.
- Institutionalize demand-based service provision and integrate incentives and principles for result-focused and accountable performance.
- Introduce innovative performance evaluation of EAS providers linked with incentives and rewards link to their response to their client demand (e.g. a participatory monitoring, evaluation and learning mechanism for a better accountability).
- Ensure availability of pre- and in-service capacity development opportunities for service providers including public, private and POs to strengthen both functional and technical skills, including facilitation, coaching, group development, effective communication and listening and various technical skills.
- Promote mind-set change towards inclusive and bottom-up approaches to foster dialogue and facilitate equal partnership between producers and other actors in the agri-food system, including EAS providers.
- Promote sensitive and inclusive approaches towards groups such as women, youth, elderly, disabled and people with different levels of education, ethnicities etc. Promote the recruitment of female advisers for EAS at all levels and raise awareness of gender and social inclusion among male advisers.



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Remember!

Relevant match-making between demand and supply is critical. A roster of certified or qualified advisory service providers may be created and made accessible to producers and their organizations. In systems where EAS are subsidized, producers should choose service providers based on demand. This means “vouchers” should be distributed to producers.

Example

Fikambanana Fampivoarana ny TAntsaha (FIFATA) is a national farmers' association in Madagascar. It works to empower farmer leaders and trains them in leadership, communication, advocacy, and conflict management, ability to change, operational management, legal elements and the construction of a common vision.

www.fifata.org/formation-leader-paysans

Useful resources

Blum, M.L., Cofini, F., Sulaiman, R.V. 2019. *Agricultural extension in transition worldwide: Policies and strategies for reform*. Rome. (forthcoming)

FAO. 2015. *New directions for inclusive pluralistic services systems*. Rome.

GFRAS. 2017. *New Extensionist Learning Kit*.

Global Farmer Field School platform.

<http://www.fao.org/farmer-field-schools/overview/en>

Neuchâtel Group. 2016. *Demand-driven Agricultural Advisory Services*.

Qamar Kalim M. 2012. *Introducing demand-driven extension approach in a traditional region: a case study from Pakistan*.

Sulaiman R. V, Blum M. L. 2016. *Tailoring rural advisory services for family farms*. Rome.

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