

All messages posted from the FAO moderated e-mail conference on "Tailoring rural advisory services to family farms" that took place from 1 to 18 December 2014.

This document contains all of the 113 messages that were posted during the FAO moderated e-mail conference on "Tailoring rural advisory services to family farms ". Background to the conference was that, among its initiatives for the International Year of Family Farming, FAO had worked with the Global Forum on Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) in setting the spotlight on rural advisory services for family farms. This had been done by jointly organizing two side events on the topic – in Buenos Aires on 26 September 2014 during the 5th GFRAS Annual Meeting and in Rome on 27 October 2014 during the Global Dialogue on Family Farming. To continue and expand the dialogue to a global audience, FAO hosted this moderated e-mail conference on “Tailoring rural advisory services to family farms” to allow participants worldwide to share their knowledge, ideas and experiences on this topic. Results of the two side events and the e-mail conference will feed into preparations of a document on policies to enhance rural advisory services for family farms that FAO and GFRAS are planning to publish in 2015.

Before the conference began, a 7-page background document was sent to all participants, available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-at652e.pdf> (70 KB). The document explained why the e-mail conference took place, provided a brief overview of rural advisory services (Section 2) and family farms (Section 3) and presented some specific guidance about the main questions to be discussed in the conference.

The conference ran for 18 days. There were 235 subscribers when the conference began on 1 December when the conference began and the numbers rose to 356 people on 18 December when the conference finished. Of these, 58 people (i.e. 16%) submitted at least one message. Of the 113 messages, 47% came from people living in Asia; 31% from Africa; 7% from Latin America and the Caribbean; 6% from Oceania; and 4% each from North America and Europe. A total of 96 messages (i.e. 85%) were posted by people living in developing countries. The messages came from people living in 34 different countries. The greatest number came from people living in India (35); Cameroon (10); Australia and Uganda (7 each); the United States (5); and Ghana, Iran, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal, Pakistan and Uzbekistan (3 each).

Of the 113 messages, 31% were from people in research organisations (mostly national research centres with 3 messages from international agricultural research centres); 19% from universities; 15% from people working in Government ministries or Government bodies; 12% from non-governmental organizations; 10% from independent consultants; 7% from farmers or people working for farmer organisations; 3% from the private sector and the remaining 4% from people working in the UN, development agencies and agricultural colleges. NB: Participants are assumed to be speaking on their own behalf, unless they state otherwise.

A webpage dedicated to the e-conference was established, at <http://www.fao.org/nr/research-extension-systems/res-home/news/detail/en/c/264776/>. The conference was moderated by John Ruane, from the FAO Research and Extension Unit. (<http://www.fao.org/nr/research-extension-systems/en/>).

The Messages

Messages are numbered in order of their posting during the conference. The few messages without a number are from the Moderator.

Subject of Messages:

: Welcome to the FAO e-mail conference on rural advisory services for family farms

- 1: Focus on crop vs animal husbandry // Weak scientist-extension worker-farmer linkages
- 2: How to address issues of scale when we tailor advisory services?
- 3: Importance of local community participation

- 4: Role of the Producer Company to provide required services of family farms
- 5: Some broad comments
- 6: Farmer producer organizations can help tailor extension services to family farms
- 7: Re: Some broad comments
- 8: Re: Focus on crop vs animal husbandry // Weak scientist-extension worker-farmer linkages
- 9: Call centres giving advice to farmers

- 10: Re: How to address issues of scale when we tailor advisory services?
- 11: Current gaps in rural advisory services for smallholder family farms in Nigeria
- 12: The role of gender towards the success of family farming
- 13: Village elites - Contradictory advice - Putting the last first
- 14: ICTs as a means to provide advisory services to smallholder farmers
- 15: Trend and gaps in agricultural extension services in Vietnam
- 16: Re: Focus on crop vs animal husbandry // Weak scientist-extension worker-farmer linkages
- 17: Who should be the target for agricultural extension services in family farms?
- 18: Rural resources centers can make a difference
- 19: Reasons for the poor agricultural development of Nepal

- 20: Strategies for more effective extension services for family farms
- 21: Extension strategies for subsistence farmers
- 22: Views on questions 4.1 to 4.5
- 23: Re: Rural resources centers can make a difference
- 24: Re: Call centres giving advice to farmers
- 25: Re: Current gaps in rural advisory services for smallholder family farms in Nigeria
- 26: Re: Village elites - Contradictory advice - Putting the last first
- 27: Current gaps in rural advisory services for smallholder farms In Zimbabwe
- 28: Gaps in rural advisory services in Armenia
- 29: What role can producer organizations play?

- 30: The equity gap in rural advisory services for smallholders - how should it be addressed?
- 31: Advisory service providers pushing defined agendas
- 32: Support to women as rural producers
- 33: Seasonality - A big challenge
- 34: Observations from Panama
- 35: Advisory services moving along with the farmer
- 36: A model training and services center
- 37: Re: Gaps in rural advisory services in Armenia
- 38: Re: Gaps in rural advisory services in Armenia
- 39: Knowledge and adoption of animal husbandry related aspects

- 40: Re: Seasonality - A big challenge
- 41: Capacities of extension professionals
- 42: Regional specificities: Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus
- 43: Need to revive the advisory service by banks in India
- 44: Rural extension services and family production
- 45: Re: Seasonality - A big challenge
- 46: Re: Rural resources centers can make a difference
- 47: Aquaculture sector: Questions 4.1 to 4.5
- 48: Re: Regional specificities: Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus
- 49: Farmer producer organizations

- 50: Current gaps in rural advisory services – Nigeria
- 51: Re: Farmer producer organizations
- 52: Re: Farmer producer organizations
- 53: Re: Current gaps in rural advisory services – Nigeria

- 54: Agricultural extension policies
- 55: Current gaps in rural advisory services - national extension services
- 56: Reflections from thirty years of experience in extension work in rural communities
- 57: Re: Current gaps in rural advisory services - national extension services
- 58: Re: Farmer producer organizations
- 59: Re: Knowledge and adoption of animal husbandry related aspects

- 60: Private sector approach - Access to markets, food safety certifications & mobile innovation
- 61: Commenting on comments!
- 62: National level strategies to enhance rural advisory services
- 63: Pluralistic extension services
- 64: A business model for rural advisory services
- 65: Up scaling and out scaling
- 66: Some more limitations of existing extension systems
- 67: Re: Some more limitations of existing extension systems
- 68: Scaling down to scale up
- 69: Re: Some more limitations of existing extension systems

- 70: Re: Some more limitations of existing extension systems
- 71: Levels of technology adoption - Value chain approach - Scaling out
- 72: Questions 4.4. and 4.6: Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC) region
- 73: Adoption, scale and the private sector
- 74: Regional specificities regarding rural advisory services for family farms
- 75: Current big gap in Myanmar and importance of INGOs, NGOs and CBOs in rural advisory services
- 76: Questions 4.1 to 4.5 - Rural Kerala in India
- 77: A crop pest rural advisory service
- 78: Family farmers involved in formulating policies relevant to rural advisory services
- 79: Participation and family production

- 80: Re: Regional specificities regarding rural advisory services for family farms
- 81: Current gaps in rural advisory services – Guatemala
- 82: Some gaps in rural advisory services to family farmers - Ashanti Region, Ghana
- 83: Extension and advisory services by producer organizations
- 84: Family farmers are getting older and older
- 85: Re: Some gaps in rural advisory services to family farmers - Ashanti Region, Ghana
- 86: Rural advisory services in Pakistan - Responses to questions 4.1 to 4.7
- 87: Agricultural extension in Cameroon
- 88: Questions 4.1 to 4.5 - Rural Kerala in India
- 89: Re: Some gaps in rural advisory services to family farmers - Ashanti Region, Ghana

- 90: Advisory services for family farmers must focus on multi-functional agriculture
- 91: Adapting to local conditions/aging farmers
- 92: Gender dimension in extension and advisory services
- 93: Mobile phone for advisory service: A successful experience in West Cameroon
- 94: Re: Agricultural extension in Cameroon
- 95: Business intelligence and advisory services
- 96: Towards a science-based approach to extension
- 97: Family farming and extension – Pakistan
- 98: Coordinating extension services supply in response to evolving demands
- 99: Mobile messaging apps to improve outreach and impact of rural advisory services

- 100: Re: Gender dimension in extension and advisory services
- 101: Farmer groups strategy – Myanmar
- 102: Improving the outreach and impacts of rural advisory services for small farmers

- 103: Responding to farmers' needs
- 104: Sustainability of the rural advisory service
- 105: Characteristics of rural advisory services for small family farmers – Bulgaria
- 106: The use of radio to engage family farmers in policy making
- 107: A few general points about extension work
- 108: Revitalizing agriculture education and vocational training for strong advisory services
- 109: Agricultural education, training, extension and research services/systems

- 110: Extension processes – Perú
- 111: Re: Sustainability of the rural advisory service
- 112: Current gaps in rural advisory services – Nicaragua
- 113: Rural advisory services and nutrition sensitive agriculture

End of FAO e-conference on Rural advisory services for family farms

-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS

Sent: 28 November 2014 17:10

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: Welcome to the FAO e-mail conference on Rural advisory services for family farms

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to this FAO e-mail conference on “Tailoring rural advisory services to family farms” !!
Thank you for joining.

You can send messages now (send them to AIS@fao.org). Messages will be posted from Monday 1 December onwards while the last day for receiving messages will be Thursday 18 December 2014.

We hope that the conference will be interesting, constructive and beneficial and we encourage you to participate actively. On joining the conference, subscribers received a Welcome Text which also contains the Guidelines for Sending Messages. Here, we would like to briefly remind you of some of the main points about the running of the conference:

1. Participants should introduce themselves briefly (2-3 sentences) when sending their first message to the conference. They should also provide their full work address at the end of the message. When a message is posted, we will replace @ in the e-mail address with (at) to avoid spamming.
2. Messages should not exceed 600 words
3. People posting messages are assumed to be speaking on their own behalf and not on behalf of their employers (unless they indicate otherwise)
4. Messages posted in the conference will also be made available on the web, at: <https://listserv.fao.org/cgi-bin/wa?A0=RAS-L>
5. No messages will be posted with attachments. If you receive a message during the conference with an e-mail attachment, just delete it without opening the attachment.
6. The Background Document to the conference, sent by e-mail to subscribers of this conference on 22 November. The document sets the scene for the conference and we strongly encourage you to read it, especially Section 4 (reproduced below) which provides specific guidance about the questions that participants should address in the conference. The document is available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-at652e.pdf> (70 KB). Contact me (at AIS@fao.org) if you want to receive the document by e-mail.

Finally, we encourage you to tell any potentially interested colleagues or contacts about this conference. A short notice is included below for this purpose.

With our sincere best wishes for a successful conference,

John

John Ruane, PhD
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Tailoring rural advisory services to family farms: FAO hosting an e-mail conference from 1 to 18 December 2014

The UN General Assembly declared 2014 to be the International Year of Family Farming and invited the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to facilitate implementation of the International Year, in collaboration with its partners.

Among its other initiatives for the International Year, FAO has worked with the Global Forum on Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) in setting the spotlight on rural advisory services for family farms. This has been done by jointly organizing two recent side events on the topic – in Buenos Aires on 26 September 2014 during the 5th GFRAS Annual Meeting and in Rome on 27 October 2014 during the Global Dialogue on Family Farming. To continue and expand the dialogue to a global audience, FAO is now hosting an e-mail conference on “Tailoring rural advisory services to family farms” which will allow participants to share their knowledge, ideas and experiences on this topic. The conference runs from 1 to 18 December 2014. Results of the two side events and the e-mail conference will feed into preparations of a document on policies to enhance rural advisory services for family farms that FAO and GFRAS are planning to publish in 2015.

The conference is open to everyone, is free and will be moderated. To subscribe to the conference, send an e-mail to listserv@listserv.fao.org with the following one line in the body of the message (leave the subject line blank):
subscribe RAS-L firstname lastname

Where firstname and lastname refer to the person's first and last name. For example, if the subscriber's name is John Smith, then the line should be:
subscribe RAS-L John Smith

A short background document was published on 22 November and was sent to subscribers. We ask you to kindly spread the word about this conference to others, so that it reaches other people who might be interested in joining.

For more information, please contact AIS@fao.org or see <http://www.fao.org/nr/research-extension-systems/res-home/news/detail/en/c/264776/>

[Section 4 of the Background Document]

4. Main questions to be discussed by participants in the conference

This e-mail conference enables participants from around the world to share and discuss their experiences, lessons learned and perspectives regarding rural advisory services for family farms.

The main kinds of topics to be discussed by participants in the conference are described below:

4.1 What are the unique characteristics or features of rural advisory services for different types of family farms?

As described above, three broad categories of family farms can be described i.e.

- large family farms which are essentially large business ventures;
- small or medium-sized family farms which are, or may become, market-oriented and commercial;
- subsistence or near-subsistence smallholders.

Given that the focus of this e-mail conference is on the second and third categories of family farms, what are the unique characteristics or features of rural advisory services for each of these two categories of family farms? Also, how do the characteristics differ between the two categories? Furthermore, how do they differ from the characteristics of rural advisory services needed by family farms in the first category?

4.2 What are the current gaps in rural advisory services for smallholder family farms?

Based on your experiences, what are the kinds of rural advisory services that different types of family farms require but which are currently missing? If possible, provide specific examples of these kinds of gaps in your country or region.

4.3 What role can producer organizations play in tailoring rural advisory services for family farms?

Both FAO (2014) and GFRAS (2013) recognize the importance of effective and inclusive producer organizations in strengthening both the demand and the supply side of rural advisory services. Are there concrete examples from your country or region where producers' organizations are playing or have played a central role in providing rural advisory services to family farms and are helping or have helped them voice their requirements? If so, how are they doing this?

4.4 Are there regional specificities regarding rural advisory services for family farms?

When considering the above questions (regarding the unique characteristics, current gaps and role of producer organizations concerning rural advisory services for family farms), are there any region-specific characteristics, conditions, problems or issues that need to be considered? If so describe them?

4.5 How to improve the outreach and impact of rural advisory services?

As described in Section 2, evidence from low- and middle-income countries suggests that only a small share of family farms may access rural advisory services and that access is lower for smaller family farms and for women farmers. What different approaches may be used to improve outreach of rural advisory services to family farms? Also, what particular approaches may be used to improve outreach for smaller family farms and for women farmers? In addition, how can the quality of rural advisory services be improved so that their impact can be increased?

4.6 What strategies are needed at the national/state level to enhance rural advisory services for family farms?

As described in Section 1, results of the e-mail conference will feed into a document for policy-makers that FAO and GFRAS are planning to publish in 2015 on strategies to enhance rural advisory services for family farms. What kind of state or national level strategies would you recommend to include in

this document? Are some of these recommendations region-specific? Also, do good examples of such state or national level strategies already exist?

4.7 How can family farmers be best involved in formulating policies relevant to rural advisory services for family farms?

As seen in Section 3, the vast majority of family farms are small, mostly under one hectare. In rural areas of developing countries, the possibility of family farmers to participate in many decision-making processes may be limited. For example, their access to information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as the telephone, radio, video and Internet, can be low (and is lower for women than men). When developing strategies to tailor rural advisory services relevant to their needs, how do we ensure that the voices of small men and women farmers, particularly in lower-income developing countries, are heard and considered? How important can producer organizations and other institutions be in this regard, how can they best intervene for this purpose and what support do they need in this respect?

-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS

Sent: 01 December 2014 18:19

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 1: Focus on crop vs animal husbandry // Weak scientist-extension worker-farmer linkages

I am Mahesh Chander, Principal Scientist (Agricultural Extension), Indian Council of Agricultural Research, currently posted at the Indian Veterinary Research Institute as Head, Division of Extension Education.

The theme "Tailoring rural advisory services to family farms" is very timely, relevant-demand driven! Thanks to the organizers for the opportunity to be able to participate!

A Situation Assessment Survey of Farmers in India by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) on Access to Modern Technology for Farming indicated that only 5.1 percent of the households access information on animal husbandry (NSSO 2005), while 41% of households access information on modern technology on crops. This Survey also revealed that the main sources of information on animal husbandry in India are the progressive farmers (29%), followed by the input dealers. Most of the public and private sector extension initiatives are focusing on crop husbandry and largely neglect the information delivery on animal husbandry. However, successful information and extension delivery models for strengthening livestock sector growth need constructive feedback from different categories of livestock keepers including landless livestock owners.

Many studies have also indicated weak scientist-extension worker-farmer linkages adversely affecting agricultural productivity. There is little interaction between extension workers and scientists regarding farmers' needs and their feedback on the technologies. There is very little opportunity for farmers to interact with the scientists. In many situations, the extension agents are also aloof to the farmers' needs. This poor feedback or weak linkages leads to development and promotion of technologies which are inappropriate to the farmers' situations resulting in wastage of resources. When we are talking of "Tailoring rural advisory services to family farms", we must keep in mind the findings of all these reports particularly the micro-level studies done, including by student researchers in agricultural extension. Effective extension services can help develop appropriate technologies and their speedy transfer to the target group farmers only when micro-level situations are correctly assessed before making interventions.

Dr Mahesh Chander

Head

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[Some background to the Situation Assessment Survey of Farmers mentioned in the message is available

at http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/ess/documents/meetings_and_workshops/RAP2009/STAT-EMPOWER-6.pdf (400 KB). Also, the report referenced near the top of the message is: NSSO, 2005. Situation assessment survey of farmers: Access to modern technology for farming. National sample survey, 59th round (January–December 2003). Report 499(59/33/2). New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. http://planningcommission.gov.in/sectors/agri_html/access%20to%20modern%20technology%20for%20farming%2059%20round%202003.pdf (6.4 MB)...Moderator].

[To contribute to this conference, send your message to AIS@fao.org. For further information, see <http://www.fao.org/nr/research-extension-systems/res-home/news/detail/en/c/264776/>

-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 01 December 2014 18:20
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 2: How to address issues of scale when we tailor advisory services?

My name is Jerod Myers. I graduated in May 2013 and recently entered the field of agricultural development. I work for the USAID Knowledge-Driven Agricultural Development project in Washington, D.C.

My question pertains to scalability. How do we tailor advisory services, keeping in mind the regional specificities (Q 4.4) while addressing issues of scale? Can interventions be scaled-up efficiently without overlooking local context?

Jerod Myers
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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 02 December 2014 14:38
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 3: Importance of local community participation

My name is Syed Hassan Raza and I have been working as a teacher, research worker and extension worker since 1983. I have executed national and international projects for farmers (both genders) training and extension services set up through farmers association dealing in livestock production. My last assignment was worth 1.6 billion rupees project.

Coming to the topic, I strongly feel that for any problem the local community participation is the most important. If they are facing a problem they know a better solution for it as they are more aware of the local situation than outsiders. We can only guide and streamline their efforts with our professional knowledge. During a project funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID),

executed through the British Council in Pakistan, I prepared a small report (Feedback Gender Field Training) that deals with such issues and advises to make tailored training courses for the farmers. If someone wants to have a copy of the report I can provide it to them.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS

Sent: 02 December 2014 14:41

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 4: Role of the Producer Company to provide required services of family farms

This is Subhash Mehta, from India. I am a trustee of the Devarao Shivaram Trust (DST). I started with organic agriculture during my stay in Rome 1997-2000 and association with FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) since those years. To get down to the bottom of the high cost conventional agriculture, I did a course in organic agriculture, inspection, certification and accreditation at the Centre International de Hautes Etudes Agronomiques Méditerranéennes (CIHEAM), Bari. I soon realised that organic was less than 1% and too small for governments, national agricultural research and extension systems (NARES), Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and multilateral agencies to scale up. Thus my shift to focus on the rural poor smallholder producer communities (84%) needs, starting with them setting up producer company (PC), staffed with professionals (general practitioners [GPs]/ MBAs in agriculture to take over all risks and responsibilities), if they are to roll back high cost/risk conventional green revolution technologies and follow their low risk/cost agro ecology, have access to own requirements of nutritious food and cash, also feed the growing world population in the long term.

The Government of India, realising the problems faced by the members of cooperatives and societies, being a department of the State Governments, legislated the Producer Company (PC), amendment IX-A of the Indian Companies Act 1956, as a sustainable local community enterprise institution of, for and by the rural poor producer communities. The PC has the features of an enterprise and will be driven by the cooperative and societal spirit of the community. The local PC intervention, staffed by professionals, will serve as a single window through which their members will transact with various external forces by taking over the risks and responsibilities, viz., management, finance, banking, imparting knowledge/training and capacity building, product development, factor market, capital market, research-extension services, value addition, delivery of government programmes, logistics, etc. It will also be responsible for all internal management of the smallholder producer viz., follow the low cost/risk agro ecology production systems of their area, to access own requirement of nutritious food and at farm gate prices, planning, budgeting, value addition, women empowerment, nutrition, health, education, increasing purchasing power and net incomes, ensuring safety, quality, livelihood improvement of their communities and a positive 'cash to cash cycle'.

Public investment/funding towards overheads, working capital, basic infrastructure, technical and managerial support needs to be provided for the first 5-8 years, depending on the nature and type of agricultural communities. An example of such a PC is the Nava Jyoti PC Community Enterprise System in the Rayagada district, one of the poorest in Orissa (www.navajyoti.org).

The funding and loan proposals considered by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and/or other financial institutions must directly release funds to the PC, being the project executing agency (PEA), on behalf of its members, also make such an intervention compulsory, when considering/sanctioning proposals, as it takes over all risks and responsibilities from its mostly illiterate, resource-poor members, leaving them to on-farm activities. Governments now need to make huge investment in agriculture for rolling back the high risk/cost conventional green revolution technologies, correcting the mistakes made in the past by now supporting and funding the low risk/cost agro ecology of each area also ensuring access own requirements of nutritious food and cash, if they are to be responsible for feeding the growing population, economic development and growth, getting back the poor rural producer communities at the centre of sustainable farming activities and in the long term.

Briefly, the functions of the PC will be:

- PCs will be set up by competence and capabilities of the rural producers, but mostly staffed by the local unemployed educated, trained as general practitioners [GPs]/ MBAs in agriculture / professionals, to take over all risks and responsibilities other than on farm activities, requiring handholding by the village elders, CSO/NGO working with the community, till breakeven (about 5 years)
- Increase net incomes and purchasing power of members by contracting the local successful farmers following agro ecology of the area for own requirements of nutritious food, health and cash needs, surplus sold locally/in the vicinity, achieving long term sustainability
- Impart training of the successful farm models in the area, especially on farm production of quality inputs and water harvesting/conservation
- Contracting farmers for training on farm their successful models and wide replication of their low cost/risk agro ecology system
- Arrange with financial institutions (International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), NABARD, etc.) the annual limits for capital, seed capital and working capital needs
- Primary and secondary value addition to increase shelf life of produce/products, minimizing post-harvest losses and increasing net income/purchasing power
- Plan, budget and market produce/products at farm gate price to members/communities, for meeting their nutrition, food and health needs, surplus as reserves for emergencies, stored in PC and balance converted to cash in the vicinity (following the principles of food miles)
- Empowerment of women producers by fully involving them in the planning, budgeting, decision making and governance of the PC
- Convergence of government programmes and schemes for delivery through PC
- Etc.

Prior to setting up the PC by the rural producer communities, they need to be given all the information about the features of the PCs and the benefits that would accrue to them as members, preferably by the NGOs and the local government bodies they trust, as they have lost faith in the mainstream agriculture systems, having been driven to hunger, malnutrition, suicide and poverty (deep debt and distress) if we are to succeed in the execution of the project during its formative period. It is understood that their role would be confined to organizing communities, creating cadres, building trust, developing skills and overseeing the professionals staffing the PC, etc., thereafter 'hand-holding' until the business breaks even, they and the staff have the confidence to manage the 'cash to cash cycle', thereafter keeping an eye on the professionals and thus ensuring that the interests of the resource poor illiterate members are protected.

Subhash Mehta, Trustee,
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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 02 December 2014 14:42
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 5: Some broad comments

I am Archie Cameron, a long time farmer, now semi-retired in Australia and an active member of my local State farmer organisation.

This is a very important topic and in this submission I will make some broad comments:

The general thrust of this exercise is similar, whether, smaller farms in terms of the Asian and African areas mainly or the smaller farms in “western/European” terms. Even in the better developed agricultural communities of the “west”, there is still a big gap between participators and those who go their own way some successfully with good acumen and knowledge and some who don't. If we get up to 40% of farmers attending information sessions/field days etc. and being active in seeking more information/advice, we think we are doing well. Just because some aren't obviously actively involved, doesn't mean they aren't actively seeking and acting on available information. There are those who attend and glean information however they can, those who see what their neighbours do and do similar things if the neighbours' practices are successful.

In dealing with farmers and seeking to get to them the latest information and advice, it is really the small and medium sized farmers/farms that are the main (should be) the main area of activity (the larger ones wherever they are, go their own way, if successful they stay in business, if not someone else steps in, that's not to say they aren't actively seeking information and advice).

There are various ways of getting the message over and this is the field of challenge. The marrying up of Research and Extension and presenting it in a timely manner and assisting farmers to avail themselves of what is on offer and successfully use it:- field days, get togethers in the local community, independent advice from government agricultural agencies, advice from suppliers of farm inputs, radio and TV where available. In the case of places like India, much of Asia and Africa, especially, community-based activities and assistance in the towns/villages to gather farmers together and produce information, is probably the top priority and will have been an ongoing activity in many places over time.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 02 December 2014 14:43
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 6: Farmer producer organizations can help tailor extension services to family farms

This is Mahesh Chander, again.

Producer organizations (POs)/Farmer associations can be handy in tailoring rural advisory services to family farms, since the members can better articulate their needs which POs can effectively meet. The dairy cooperatives in India are a wonderful example of the POs having their own livestock services

delivery system. By March 2013, the milk unions in India had covered about 0.16 million village dairy cooperative societies with 15.1 million milk producer members. Extension activities are undertaken at Dairy Cooperative Society (DCS) and at milk unions to enhance active participation of the producer members and to create awareness about improved animal husbandry practices viz feeding, crossbreeding, animal management and encourage fodder production. The member farmers are able to expose themselves to various sources of awareness and skill acquisition. For instance, under farmers' induction and orientation programme, visits to the dairy plants are arranged to demonstrate the process and disposal of the milk collected from the producers. Producers are also taken to visit the model Indian dairy cooperative units like the Anand Milk Cooperative Union (AMUL) in Gujarat and they in turn educate other dairy animal owners in their area about the practices and benefits of cooperatives. Audio-visual aids, field demonstrations, extension camps are used to explain feeding, breeding, fodder development and clean milk production practices.

Orientation of newly elected board members and capacity building of union personnel and milk producer members is a regular feature of milk unions under the overall leadership of the National Dairy Development Board, which orients and trains the board members from milk unions from across the country. Sessions on farmers' training focuses on fair and transparent methods of milk procurement, principles of cooperation, animal management and adoption of best practices in dairying. Besides, union personnel are sensitized to the increasingly competitive environment, challenges faced by dairy cooperatives and the importance of functioning as professionally managed business enterprises. Milk unions encourage the involvement of women in leadership roles in the dairy cooperatives. Women members are encouraged to participate actively not only as members of village dairy cooperatives but also as members of the management committees and on boards of milk unions and state federations. There are all women dairy cooperatives too, which have played significant role in empowerment of women.

The experience gained in dairy cooperatives is being extended to other agricultural commodities wherein many associations/producer groups are being formed. It is, however, required that under changing scenario, these POs need to be more entrepreneurial and commercially oriented in their approach maybe in the form of Producer companies owned and managed by farmers with high level of professionalism.

For more information, see:

1. <http://www.aesa-gfras.net/newsandevents.aspx?id=112> (An e-discussion on the "Role of producer organisations in strengthening extension and advisory provision in the dairy/livestock sector in India", organized by the Agricultural Extension in South Asia (AESAs) in collaboration with the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) and Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS), 18th August, 2014 to 5th September, 2014).
2. <http://aesa-gfras.net/blog.aspx?id=49&title=Producer%20Organizations%20%28POs%29%20and%20extension:%20%20The%20road%20ahead> (Chander, M. 2013. Producer organizations (POs) and extension: The road ahead. 6 pp.)

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 02 December 2014 17:38

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 7: Re: Some broad comments

This is Mahesh Chander again, supplementing the views of Mr Cameron (Message 5).

The different categories of farmers respond to information and technologies in different ways considering their resource domains. A small-scale farmer may hesitate to grab the new technology like large sized high yielding exotic cattle breeds like Holstein Friesian compared to a wealthier farmer due to differences in their risk-bearing abilities. When designing extension interventions, it is important to keep in mind that technology should not be thrust upon farmers. They need time in persuading themselves and getting ready to accept the technology. Many a time farmers are happier in what they have been doing than switching to new technologies which they perceive as risky!

Take for instance the case of the cattle crossbreeding programme in India which is being implemented since the 1960's. In over the last 50 years, the crossbred population has not crossed over 15% with huge regional variations. The situation is compelling to rethink the breeding strategy to selection upgradation of the proven indigenous breeds rather than crossbreeding involving exotic breeds. One lesson we can clearly draw from such experiences is that the technology has to be appropriate, matching to the resource domain of categories of farmers not across all categories of farmers (one size fits all types). The technologies to be promoted in irrigated areas are obviously different from the technologies being promoted in drylands so should be the technologies for large farmers and small scale farmers if we want to speed up diffusion and adoption rate.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 02 December 2014 17:46
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 8: Re: Focus on crop vs animal husbandry // Weak scientist-extension worker-farmer linkages

I am Ngouambe Nestor, Agricultural economist (Agricultural Extension), Regional officer for Farmer Organization Registry at the Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development in Cameroon. I am also the main Founder of the Cameroon Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (www.facebook.com/CAMFAAS) to be officially launched in January. I am also coordinating Cameroon Youth Initiative for Rural Development (CAMYIRD).

I just want to comment a point raised by Dr Mahesh Chander (Message 1) when he said that: "Effective extension services can help develop appropriate technologies and their speedy transfer to the target group farmers only when micro-level situations are correctly assessed before making interventions". I agree with this point, because if some key facilities are not built around smallholders, it would be very difficult to ensure appropriate extension services. When I was an extension agent working in rural areas, it was too difficult to access villages because of bad roads. Based on that experience, I realized that we cannot talk about extension services without taking into account the farmer's micro-level situation.

Ngouambe Nestor
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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 03 December 2014 08:47
To: RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG
Subject: 9: Call centres giving advice to farmers

I am Dr Praveen Kumar Shrivastava from India and I teach organic chemistry to my graduates and postgraduates students at Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh.

Referring to Question 4.4 in the conference background document (i.e. "Are there regional specificities regarding rural advisory services for family farms?"), these are my observations:

The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India runs call centres in all or most of Indian languages. They are effective and give good advice to farmers. The main problem with understanding the advice is because:

- (i) Differences in vocabulary and poor language skills of farmers unable to understand agriculture information (agri information)
- (ii) Farmers perception and experts view are different and they live in their own world.
- (ii) The call centres are more interested in sending SMS to maximum number of registered farmers. They concerned with timely advice and expert view on agriculture.
- (iv) Old farmers cannot read, so SMS-based information is not useful. One to one communication by mobile or telephone is also not useful due to poor training of call centre employees and call centre employees are not interested in job.
- (v) Agri information is also provided by agri business shop keeper and many other field persons who do not know the ABC or basic of of agriculture.
- (vi) Although at block level and agriculture college farmer training are regularly organized.

My suggestion:

Each family volunteered one person (FVP) who can read and record the observation in writing and those persons formed a group in the village. Those persons record all the queries from the village and let the agriculture college student and their one faculty member understand the problem and give suggestion on the problem. Now this suggestion to the problem will be sent by SMS to all the members of village. Now the vocabulary is clearly understood by the farmers. Their query and answer are in same language having the same vocabulary. The Student and faculty member will provide marketing information, technical and all other information. The family volunteered person (FVP) will put forward their problems and knowledge to improve further. The FVP is the link between illiterate persons and an expert.

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2. Kisan Call Centre. <http://agricoop.nic.in/PolicyIncentives/kisanCallDetail.htm>

-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS

Sent: 03 December 2014 13:06

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 10: Re: How to address issues of scale when we tailor advisory services?

My name is Julie Nakalanda Matovu. I'm a Msc. Agroecology graduate from Uganda Martyrs University and have worked with several rural communities across Uganda and in the region. I have worked with NGOs, private farms and government. I'm an agribusiness consultant dealing in sustainable development in agricultural related business. I work in peri-urban and rural settings.

Discussing the issue of tailoring advisory services is indeed timely. Like Jerod Myers (Message 2) mentions, we cannot overlook the aspect of local context. Cultural diversity, differences in farming systems, governance and service delivery approaches are concerns that will guide the process of tailor-made advisory services. In Uganda, we have farming families in rural communities with access to land but who cannot earn one US dollar per day. So one may wonder why? From my field observation and experience, as we work with communities, we should endeavor first to understand everything "in the equation in their context". A family that has two chickens, 50 coffee plants, 30 banana plants, 20 plants of cassava, quarter of an acre of beans, maize, etc. needs to be handled at that level. This explains a lot in terms of farming system, skills, income levels, etc.

As advisory service providers, we tend to push our defined agendas as already predetermined by the project we work for. For instance, a program supporting such a farming family to get out of poverty may provide a grant for 50-100 exotic broilers or layer chickens, with some feed, training and drugs. Well, it may seem all well, but what happens is that such families are already overburdened with other needs such poor shelter, school fees, medical bills, clothing, etc. So, when such a project gets into the equation, it may seem okay for a while until these other needs encroach on it. Naturally, it collapses before celebrating its first birthday as a family business.

Based on this background, my take from a local perspective in Uganda is this: We should be willing to offer systematic support as mentors, make situation analysis with these communities (say in established community based groups), allow them to acknowledge their needs and start to handle them at that very level. Improving the 3-chicken project to 10, using locally available resources, supporting them all through up to marketing level, but NOT doing it for them, like when one says: 'keep these new 100 birds, I will get you the market'. That may be good in the short term but unsustainable in the long run. So, as we design projects we should prioritize the community needs ahead of project priorities. This will contribute towards sustainable development [which truly comes at the farmer's pace NOT the usual rapid project time frame]. I have a case study to share.

Finally, regarding Message 3 from Syed Hassan Raza: Thanks Syed. I concur with your submission of emphasizing community participation. It really works perfectly well. We have to re-think development and restrain from giving lip service to such key points in community development.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 03 December 2014 13:08
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 11: Current gaps in rural advisory services for smallholder family farms in Nigeria

I am Abdulmojeed Yakubu of the Department of Animal Science, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Shabu-Lafia Campus, Lafia, Nigeria. Permit me to state the following as regards the current gaps in rural advisory services for smallholder family farms in Nigeria:

1. Most farmers have little information on how to get subsidized inputs.
2. The subsistence farmers have little information on the best management practices to increase productivity. Most scholars and policy makers only get to the farmers when they need information for research and planning purposes.
3. The aspect of processing and preservation is also not well captured. This important aspect is often overlooked by extension workers because they see it as being tedious.
4. Most of the farmers are also not well equipped as regards marketing strategies. They do not know when to sell, or not to sell, their products to maximize profit.
5. I think the farmers need to equally comprehend the value chain systems.

Abdulmojeed Yakubu,
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[Thanks to Abdulmojeed for responding directly to Question 4.2 of the conference background document, i.e.

"4.2 What are the current gaps in rural advisory services for smallholder family farms? Based on your experiences, what are the kinds of rural advisory services that different types of family farms require but which are currently missing? If possible, provide specific examples of these kinds of gaps in your country or region"...Moderator].

-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 03 December 2014 13:09
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 12: The role of gender towards the success of family farming

I am Mr. Francis Okori, Graduate Student of Postharvest Technology, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.

The family farming concept is key in the elimination of hunger at the family level. The role of gender must be an emphasized priority as a tool towards the eradication of hunger. In its simple essence, we cannot talk about food security or hunger reduction without a mention of the role of the rural woman.

Where I come from in Uganda, and in many parts of Africa, women's roles are generally underestimated and constrained by their limitations on access to resources, financial and other services, and labor market opportunities. Most rural households and communities manage their agricultural production systems based on social norms and practices that determine the gender division of labor, access to land, access to finances, and so on, which in the majority of cases leave the women on a disadvantaged scale.

Policy framework in such regions should judiciously emphasize the role of the woman in the eradication of hunger. New technologies developed for farming must take into considerations gender roles as, in some cases, the technology ends up being used more by women than men. These interventions among other things can be one of the most important strategies towards the success of family farming, especially in regions where the problem is most notably experienced.

Francis Okori,
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[Participants responding to this message, are asked to focus on the gender aspects directly related to rural advisory services. For example, Question 4.5 in the conference background document discusses differential access to rural advisory services by men and women farmers. Thus,

"4.5 How to improve the outreach and impact of rural advisory services?

As described in Section 2, evidence from low- and middle-income countries suggests that only a small share of family farms may access rural advisory services and that access is lower for smaller family farms and for women farmers. What different approaches may be used to improve outreach of rural advisory services to family farms? Also, what particular approaches may be used to improve outreach for smaller family farms and for women farmers? In addition, how can the quality of rural advisory services be improved so that their impact can be increased?"...Moderator].

-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS

Sent: 03 December 2014 13:10

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 13: Village elites - Contradictory advice - Putting the last first

My name is Paul Zaake. I have a degree in Agriculture and accumulated broad knowledge and experience on rural advisory services. I have got the opportunity to be in the "shoes" of a researcher, extension worker and farmer. Currently my work involves linking all of them in rural part of Uganda.

This message deals with three issues: The village elites; contradicting advice to the same problem; and putting the last first.

The Village Elites

Even among the small-holder farmers, the village elites exist. The village elites have a comparative advantage to resources and opportunities. These village elites transform and become medium-sized family farms which are, or may become, market-oriented and commercial. The rest who are usually not connected, live far in the very remote areas, do not have access to other side income, whose mobility and influence is limited continue to survive as subsistence small-holder farmers. While the village elites can adopt the risky innovations, the extreme subsistence farmers cannot afford to take risks. Sometimes they are not informed about the extension training sessions. The extreme poverty existing puts them at a disadvantage in the society and their social status is seriously affected and the

fear grows. The fear creates the shyness behavior which prevents them actively participating in the community development initiatives.

Smallholder farmers have unique issues. For example here in Rakai District, I have visited farmers who do not have the necessary information about managing Banana Bacterial Wilt, yet the government and other stakeholders have for long carried out massive education of the public through workshops, posters, farm based training and others. The demonstrations are usually continuously done at the relatively successful farms and they expect extreme poor smallholders to learn from such farms. However, the existing social status gap creates a virtual boundary between these two repelling social worlds. These repelling social worlds include the medium-sized family farmers and the subsistence smallholders.

Contradicting Advice to the Same Problem

Coffee producer organizations in the Rakai District linked farmers to the Crop Protection Department in the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries. This was during the critical period when Coffee twig Borer was at the peak of wiping out the established coffee farms. The producer organization also reached out to other stakeholders like the Uganda coffee development authority. Most of such training involved selecting a representative group of farmers for training on how to manage, control and prevent the disease. The roles include buying farm inputs in bulk, securing incentives as groups and marketing together. Still the challenge is that many members of such groups are the village elites.

We have various providers of rural advisory farmers for farm families, however the differences in the recommendations to address similar issues is a serious problem. For example on the issue of low yields due to soil degradation, one organization may recommend using organic fertilizers and other sustainable land management practices. Then another organization will also come and recommend to the same farmer to use inorganic fertilizers to address the problem of soil degradation.

Put the Last First

Let us put the first last. Instead of setting up demonstration plots at the village elites' farms, let us establish these farms at the land of the smaller family farms. Instead of confusing farmers with opposite strategies and then reconciling, let us first reconcile the best strategies based on research. Rakai Environment Conservation Programme uses a Farmer Field School model and it is better compared to other models. In Uganda, the poor quality of rural advisory farmers was reportedly caused by the inefficient corrupt technical officers. So the government through restructuring has militarized the rural advisory services. Though it was intended to bring in the army officers to monitor, it has been observed that the army officers are the one distributing the farm inputs like coffee seedlings and they are undergoing thorough agricultural training. We are yet to see the results of this approach. While the activists are opposing this approach, some people are happy for it.

There is a need to involve family farmers in the formulation of policies. Farmers can be involved through continuous community based consultation. The rural advisory services should be decentralized such that the decisions made and activities better suit the grassroots farmers in the specific area. Local producer organizations should be empowered and their recommendations especially on the performance of the rural advisory service providers should be taken seriously.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS

Sent: 03 December 2014 13:12

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 14: ICTs as a means to provide advisory services to smallholder farmers

My name is Aditya. I completed post-graduation studies in May 2011 with Extension Education and recently entered the field of extension teaching and research at Bihar Agricultural University, Sabour, Bhagalpur, India. Very recently, I have been granted a Media Lab Asia project “Interactive Information Dissemination System (IIDS)” which aims to reach farmers through voice messaging and text based mobile advisory services. I have earlier worked for the Microsoft Research Labs.

I am currently engaged in organizing a National Seminar on Rural Youth in Family Farming at my university on 18-19 December 2014 keeping in view the UN General Assembly declaration of 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming (details on http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/sites/default/files/resources/RYFF_BAU_Final.pdf [2 MB]). The seminar would provide further insights to better family farming practices for the youth.

My question is in relation to scalability and efficiency issues through information and communication technologies (ICTs) as a means to provide advisory services to smallholder farmers. How do we tailor advisory services so as to reach them efficiently and attract them towards agriculture in a better way? What should be kept in mind to design better messages and advisory?

Aditya

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS

Sent: 03 December 2014 13:12

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 15: Trend and gaps in agricultural extension services in Vietnam

I am Huu-Nhuan Nguyen, a PhD candidate at the University of Queensland, Australia and a lecturer at the Vietnam National University of Agriculture (VNUA). I am currently working on developing a holistic framework for assessing impacts of agricultural research for development (AR4D) projects which aims at both understanding fully the contribution of AR4D to development and utilizing impacts towards influencing development policy, decision making and practices for regions with similar socio-economic and natural conditions to the Northwest Highlands of Vietnam. I am very interested in the conference topic “Tailoring rural advisory services to family farms”.

Regarding Question 4.2 in the conference background document about the current gap in rural advisory services for small farmers, from my research experience, I would like to share my observation about agricultural extension system of Vietnam.

Over the past two decades, the agricultural extension system has been transformed into a more diversified system in Vietnam but weaknesses still remain:

1. Overall agricultural extension trend:

- Agricultural extension services in poverty stricken regions have been mainly provided by the government.
- The purely formal supply of extension services has been initially complemented by an informal extension system shifting focus on meeting the needs of farmers. Since the late 1990s, the bottom-up driven extension initiatives (e.g., training visits, Farmer Farm Field schools, Integrated pest management, integrated crop management, farmer-scientists) have been promoted by development organizations and NGOs making positive impacts to rural communities (Van de Fliert et al., 2007). However, to date, these innovative approaches have been done mainly at only a small scale.
- Paid agricultural extension services by individual scientists or service companies have been accepted by some large scale and more commercial agricultural farms with individuals or organizations.
- Other private and voluntary extension actors (mainly private agricultural input companies) also participated in providing extension services, but their involvement is still limited (e.g., mainly through information dissemination activities, demonstration of new crop varieties or organizing study visits for farmers).
- Roles of agricultural cooperatives in family farms have been decreasing in low lands and agricultural cooperatives even do not exist in many rural upland areas.

2. Current gaps in existing extension services

- Extension services for rural areas are still weak in both quantity and quality delivery. I agree with Mahesh Chander in Message 1 that there is a weak relationship among researchers – extension staff - farmers, especially in extension activities in most poor regions.
- Dominant top-down communication strategies with poor feedback mechanisms lead to low interactions with farmers. As also emphasized by Syed Hassan Raza in Message 3, participation is the most important for any extension activities to improve social economic and environmental conditions for rural areas. However, top-down communication of formal extension results in passive participation of farmers in solving their own problems.
- The existing agricultural extension system has a limited role in facilitating people's access to markets or providing useful information on commodities. They provide mainly agricultural production techniques and input distribution through trainings, workshops, farm demonstrations and material or financial supports to farmers for economic improvement focus.
- Many extension staff lacks necessary experiences, communication skills and knowledge in working with minority ethnic groups leading to inefficient information and technological transferring (Hoang et al., 2006, p. 514).
- Lack of capacity in agricultural marketing and household economic analysis of extension staff is also a key factor that slows down local agricultural commercialization process in poor regions.
- Better-off households tend to have more access to extension services as well as information due to their having better livelihood resources for farm production and businesses (Clement & Amezaga, 2008, p. 273)
- A majority ethnic group (e.g., Kinh people) is likely to benefit more from extension activities because languages and handouts of extension activities are normally written in national language.

- Producer organizations (agricultural cooperatives, farmers' associations) have limited roles in tailoring rural advisory services to family farms in poor regions.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 03 December 2014 13:14
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 16: Re: Focus on crop vs animal husbandry // Weak scientist-extension worker-farmer linkages

I am Tshering Samdrup from Bhutan. I am an agricultural economist.

I agree with Dr. Mahesh Chander (Message 1) that micro level situations of farmers should be understood before talking about any extension services, which was supported by Ngouambe Nestor (Message 8) from Cameroon. Nestor added something from his field experience of not being able to access some villages due to bad roads. This is true especially in Asia and Africa where connectivity is poor but improving.

However, I would like to believe that 'extension agents' could also be based in rural areas where the services are required and where travel required from villages-to-village is minimal. Unless it is a resistance from the rural communities of social and institutional mindset that repels such services, infrastructure problem can be solved and is solvable to take extension services.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 03 December 2014 13:15
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 17: Who should be the target for agricultural extension services in family farms?

This is Mahesh Chander again, answering the question: who should be the target for agricultural extension services in family farms?

All members of the family farm need information and extension services. Some categories of members need more attention due to their crucial role in future agriculture. Youth apart from farm women, is one such category which should be the target for extension services.

Adult vs Youth: When India became independent in 1947, about 83% of the Indian population was living in rural areas and most of the Indians were illiterate (over 88%). Adult education was the main focus for extension at that time and the agricultural extension programmes, obviously, were mostly designed considering this mass scale rural illiteracy, focusing on interventions aimed at improving the functional literacy among rural adults. However, over the years, the literacy rates have gone up and in 2011, it stands at 74.04%. The rural youth are now more literate, aware, educated and many are looking for new livelihood options including migrating to urban areas. Here lies the importance of developing extension programmes for youth, who are the future farmers.

Head of family vs Youth: Most of the agricultural extension programmes which we implemented since independence in India traditionally targeted the head of families for training and technology transfer. In extension studies too, we consider the head of family, mostly male, as the respondent, though in every diffusion-adoption study we found the early adopters to be younger. Youth are more techno-savvy and they could access information and knowledge promoted through the new information and communication technologies (ICTs) which uses computer, internet and mobiles. Young farmers often have greater capacity for innovation, imagination, initiative and entrepreneurship than older adults and these characteristics should be effectively harnessed by extension services to provide better livelihood opportunities for youth in agriculture.

Agricultural extension services should tap the energy and creativity of rural youth to transform agricultural sector.

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Youth: Potential target for agricultural extension. Mahesh Chander, AESA Blog. <http://aesagfrs.net/blog.aspx?id=59&title=Youth:%20Potential%20Target%20For%20Agricultural%20Extension>

-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 03 December 2014 13:17
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 18: Rural resources centers can make a difference

My name is Francis Chilenga from Malawi, a Senior Agricultural Extensionist in the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development. I have worked with small-scale farmers for the past 10 years in areas related to agricultural technology dissemination, local institutional development and strengthening, and documentation and promotion of local agricultural innovations. I would like to

focus on question 4.5 of the conference background document, i.e. "How to improve the outreach and impact of rural advisory services for family farms?".

As a country extension services is grappling with reduced funding and a decreased extension worker to farmers ratio of 1:2500. FAO recommendation if not mistaken is roughly 1:800. As a response to this, the government plus other stakeholders have promoted farmer to farmer knowledge exchange through a concept known as Lead Farmer concept. The objective being to reach as many farm families as possible with information on agriculture. Agricultural resource centres are also being piloted but are also faced with inadequacies in funding. The point I would like to advance is rural resource centres furnished with information and communication technologies (ICTs) are a viable way of reaching many small farmers. Fields for demonstrations can be set aside and this can be scheduled for specific days. Resource centres can include DVDs, Internet with high connectivity. In addition, voice activity information services are a better way of reaching farmers than SMSs because of high literacy levels prevalent in most African countries.

Lead farmers can also be mobilised to form Lead farmer networks thus facilitating knowledge exchange. Recorded extension messages (Podcasts) can be handily used by Lead farmers where an extension worker acting as a mentor is not available. These can be played on MP3 devices thus enabling the lead farmer to reach as many small farmers as possible.

But the question still remains is funding there? Who is able to do that, NGO or Government?

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 03 December 2014 14:38
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 19: Reasons for the poor agricultural development of Nepal

This is from Puruswattam Rauniyar. I am an undergraduate level student studying at the Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science (IAAS), Paklihawa Campus, Rupendehi, Nepal.

Why the agricultural development of a country like Nepal is worse?

Nepal is an agricultural country. About 65% of the people of this country are involved in agriculture. But the country's production has not yet fulfilled the demand of the agricultural products inside the country. The terai (plain) regions of Nepal are called the bread basket of the country. Most of the agricultural farms are in the rural areas. Illiteracy is another main problem. The agriculture occupation is not considered as the profession but it is regarded as their ancestors assets. Especially, the rural farmers having one hectare of land are never engaged in the commercialization and they grow the seasonal crops like in the months of the June/July-November and after then cultivate potato, oilseed crops and wheat and this cultivation is on the subsistence basis. But the farmers having more than one hectare of land having found in the cultivation of the cash crops like sugarcane.

The problems start with the farmers during the cultivation practices. The Nepal Agricultural Research Council (NARC) has recommended the variety of agricultural crops according to the suitability for the different regions of Nepal. But the rural farmers, especially of the terai, which are close to the open boarder with India are using the Indian variety of rice in their fields. Similarly, the illiterate farmers often don't use the recommended dose of the fertilizers in their fields, many of them didn't know the

services and the role of District Agricultural Development Office (DADO), or even its location! (The DADO is a governmental organization and the services, policy and plans of the government of Nepal are implemented through this organization). The farmers, in the lack of knowledge of marketing and also the suitable market, sell their goods to the middleman. The middleman takes double benefits as compared to the farmers. Actually the role and the status of the farmers have not been addressed in our country. The attitude of the people is like this, Farmers are poor, illiterate and low standard of living as a result they have become a dominated part of this region. The main problem arose due to the lack of compatible plans and policy of the government which would address the problems of farmers. The execution of the plan is very poor at the implementation level.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 03 December 2014 14:49
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 20: Strategies for more effective extension services for family farms

This is Huu-Nhuan Nguyen again. In my previous message (nr. 15), I shared the overall agricultural extension trend and current gaps in extension services in Vietnam. I think they may be similar to many other regions around the world. In this message, I discuss some extension strategies for having more effective agricultural extension services for family farms in poor and cultural diverse regions:

- Engaging farmers actively in extension activities (as also mentioned by Syed Hassan Raza, Message 3). In many agricultural extension activities carried out by both governments, international development agencies, and NGOs, efforts have been made on making participation as a 'means' – to increase the effectiveness of an externally introduced program via the involvement of local people in the processes rather than as an 'end' which empowers farmers by equipping them with the capability to change their own lives (Pretty, 1995).
- Paying carefully attention to sustainable livelihoods of farmers, especially the poor. A livelihood is considered sustainable if it can be resilient to external shocks and stresses, independent from external supports, maintaining the long-term productivity but not undermining livelihood options of others (Chambers & Conway, 1992). On the other hand, agricultural extension services should be designed in ways that could deliver long-term impacts. Agricultural extension intervention should not merely focus on transferring technologies to improve short-term social economic situations but also social and human capacity building for sustainable livelihoods of small farmers;
- Shifting from top-down to bottom-up extension systems with appropriate participatory communication strategies that enable environments for learning and sharing feedback between researchers, extension workers and local farmers as well as overcome communication difficulties such as language barriers, low education and shortages of communication facilities in poor communities and regions;
- Building market capacity for technical extension staff and farmers because in order to develop market oriented agriculture for the less developed regions, transferring knowledge and building technical capacity may not be effective without improving market capacity for both local extension forces and people;

- Promoting paid but reasonable agricultural extension services could not only help to mobilize private investment for agricultural extension but also improve the effectiveness of extension services in certain communities and regions

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 03 December 2014 17:17
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 21: Extension strategies for subsistence farmers

This is Dr Mahesh Chander again, responding to Question 4.1 in the background document.

The discussion has rightly chosen to ignore large family farms which, being mostly large business ventures, are capable of accessing information and other services on their own, and also public extension services are mostly irrelevant to them. The small or medium-sized family farms being in transition to market-oriented and commercialization seek extension services from wherever they can get them, thus manage getting extension services from public agencies and NGOs. Also, they are capable of using modern ICT tools like mobile phones etc.

The real challenge is to cater to the needs of subsistence or near-subsistence smallholders who don't seek extension services on their own but extension services have to reach their doorsteps. This is the group which needs maximum attention considering their weak access to sources of information, low risk-taking ability, low affordability etc. But ironically the group which needs extension services (especially from government sources) most is ignored in many extension programmes. We have seen extension personnel feel comfortable to work with the small or medium-sized family farms. The public extension services find it difficult to meet the demands of large farms which are in a higher level, while they don't find it lucrative to cater to subsistence farms because it requires a certain level of dedication, commitment to work with very poor farmers and the chances of failure in terms of low adoption of recommendations are high. The efforts and resources, thus, should be focused more on this category of farm families.

The personal contact of extension agents may not be important to the first and second category of farm families, so the extension strategy should consider personal contact methods to exclusively serve this category of farm families. Secondly, Village Resource Centres/Village Knowledge Centers (VKCs) equipped with ICT-enabled services could be useful to them, provided the limitations with these VKCs are overcome to facilitate subsistence farmers to make good use of them. Community Radio can also be used to ensure their participation in developmental interventions. The strategies may differ for different categories of farmers in different geographical regions, but personal contact is very much essential for subsistence farmers anywhere.

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References:

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[Question 4.1 from the conference background document was:

"What are the unique characteristics or features of rural advisory services for different types of family farms?

As described above, three broad categories of family farms can be described i.e.

- large family farms which are essentially large business ventures;*
- small or medium-sized family farms which are, or may become, market-oriented and commercial;*
- subsistence or near-subsistence smallholders.*

Given that the focus of this e-mail conference is on the second and third categories of family farms, what are the unique characteristics or features of rural advisory services for each of these two categories of family farms? Also, how do the characteristics differ between the two categories? Furthermore, how do they differ from the characteristics of rural advisory services needed by family farms in the first category?"...Moderator].

-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 04 December 2014 11:47
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 22: Views on questions 4.1 to 4.5

This is Datta Rangnekar from Ahmedabad presently a freelance consultant and associated with some NGOs, a research institute and a veterinary university. While I am basically a vet with specialization in animal nutrition for most of the last five decades I was involved with rural development / livelihood development programmes based on crop - livestock - natural resource development and community mobilizations and the goal was to achieve sustainable development. Most of these programmes were in less developed interior rural areas of western and central India, involving underprivileged families and would fall into category 2 and 3 as described in the conference background document. My contribution will be related to these farmer families.

The theme of the conference attracted my attention since most of my efforts were to try to understand the livelihood systems and perceptions and inner realities of the families and wish to exchange experiences, views and learn the latest approaches in agriculture extension.

I have gone through contributions of the learned participants and contribution of Dr. Mahesh Chander has attracted my attention and I wish to take further some of the aspects pointed out by him.

Let me start by making a provocative statement (based on experience and observations) that to be able to extend benefit to smallholder family farms there is need for a 'paradigm change in extension programmes' and 'change in mindset of policy makers planners of research and extension programmes'. I say that since 'pro-poor and need based approach' and the crucial step of 'testing technologies and recommendations adopting farmer participatory approach' is lacking in planning of most research and extension programmes.

Most smallholder producers follow a 'low external input mixed farming system' (more by compulsion than choice) and one of the major concerns is 'avoidance of risks'. Most research programmes are not planned on the basis of a low external input system, these are 'commodity oriented' and there is no intermediary step of testing appropriateness of recommendations or technologies. A 'whole farm approach' is lacking although it is known that change in one subsystem effects other sub-systems - sometimes negatively.

Much of extension in crop and livestock sectors is by government departments and fresh graduates get posted as extension officers without any training in extension - in most cases. For these officers, extension means 'transfer of technology (ToT)' done with 'postman-like approach' (without bothering to see the contents and impact of the package delivered). It is not their fault but the system is like that - there are targets for ToT to be achieved.

Underprivileged farmer families can benefit in case 'planning of research is need based and output is technically sound, economically beneficial and socially adoptable'. Such an approach is possible only when research and extension teams work hand in hand and the planners and implementers are well oriented and sensitized about resource poor smallholder farmers.

Some of the participants in this e-mail conference have suggested use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and such other communication technologies and I wish to caution that while technologies play an important role it is more important and challenging to 'select an appropriate message' to be communicated to the underprivileged family.

I would eagerly look forward to response of learned participants.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 04 December 2014 11:48
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 23: Re: Rural resources centers can make a difference

My name is Klaus Fleissner and I'm an International Research Staff of AVRDC (The World Vegetable Center) in Cameroon.

I completely agree with Francis Chilenga's statement (Message 18) on the importance of rural resource centers. I would like to emphasize especially the importance of non-governmental rural resource centers, because rural non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) are closer to the needs of the people in rural areas! I consider rural resource centers as one of the most effective scaling-out (and even scaling-up) tools for agricultural innovations. In Cameroon, the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) has developed local NGOs into rural resource centers to promote agroforestry and they have been very successful in reaching a large number of farmers. AVRDC has over the last years developed a local CBO into a competent and successful "vegetable resource center" and we reached hundreds of vegetable producers with this! But to avoid countless numbers of rural resource centers, I propose to create synergies and establish rural resource center, which are able to address several components of the farming system of the surrounding farming communities (e.g. agroforestry and vegetable production or agroforestry, crop and livestock production). It would really be a worthwhile investment for donors to provide funds to develop the capacities of local NGOs and CBOs into multifunctional rural research centers!

Dr. Klaus Fleissner

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS

Sent: 04 December 2014 11:50

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 24: Re: Call centres giving advice to farmers

This is from Julie Nakalanda Matovu, again.

Regarding Message 9 by Dr. Praveen Kumar Shrivastava:

This is very interesting. Especially on the bit of points (i), (ii) but also the rest up to (vi). These are very good, true and practical observations. I have liked the bit of engaging college/university students under their respective faculties to address some of these problems. This is something I have always thought of as part of what could be the solution to our very ineffective extension services. If such approaches are embraced while keeping in mind that these family farmers, on top of the agricultural challenges, also face other social challenges that directly affect their abilities to adopt skills or take on advice, then we hope to see a positive change.

I think Praveen's message may be helpful in the situation described by Aditya (Message 14).

Julie Nakalanda Matovu

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[In Message 9, Praveen list 6 main problems (i to vi) which can explain why farmers may not understand the advice they receive from call centres, i.e.

"(i) Differences in vocabulary and poor language skills of farmers unable to understand agriculture information (agri information)

(ii) Farmers perception and experts view are different and they live in their own world.

- (ii) The call centres are more interested in sending SMS to maximum number of registered farmers. They concerned with timely advice and expert view on agriculture.*
- (iv) Old farmers cannot read, so SMS-based information is not useful. One to one communication by mobile or telephone is also not useful due to poor training of call centre employees and call centre employees are not interested in job.*
- (v) Agri information is also provided by agri business shop keeper and many other field persons who do not know the ABC or basic of of agriculture.*
- (vi) Although at block level and agriculture college farmer training are regularly organized."...Moderator].*

-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 04 December 2014 11:50
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 25: Re: Current gaps in rural advisory services for smallholder family farms in Nigeria

This is from Julie Nakalanda Matovu, again.

Regarding Message 11 by Abdulmojeed Yakubu:

Thanks for your submission. The situation in Uganda is also true especially on point no. 2. Points 3-5 are also very critical in ensuring sustainable development in the agricultural sector.

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[In Message 11, Abdulmojeed stated the following regarding the current gaps in rural advisory services for smallholder family farms in Nigeria:

- "1. Most farmers have little information on how to get subsidized inputs.*
- 2. The subsistence farmers have little information on the best management practices to increase productivity. Most scholars and policy makers only get to the farmers when they need information for research and planning purposes.*
- 3. The aspect of processing and preservation is also not well captured. This important aspect is often overlooked by extension workers because they see it as being tedious.*
- 4. Most of the farmers are also not well equipped as regards marketing strategies. They do not know when to sell, or not to sell, their products to maximize profit.*
- 5. I think the farmers need to equally comprehend the value chain systems"....Moderator].*

-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 04 December 2014 11:51
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 26: Re: Village elites - Contradictory advice - Putting the last first

This is from Julie Nakalanda Matovu, again.

Regarding Message 13 by Paul Zaake:

Thanks for bringing out the real issues: Village elites, the demos at "rich" family farms. A true reflection of what's happenings here in Uganda.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 04 December 2014 13:53
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 27: Current gaps in rural advisory services for smallholder farms In Zimbabwe

My name is Moses Kondowe. I am Zimbabwean and am a food security specialist working for SNV Netherlands Development Organization in Zimbabwe.

My first contribution addresses question 4.2: What are the current gaps in rural advisory services for smallholder farms?

In Zimbabwe the following are the gaps;

1. Training of smallholder farmers in post-harvest handling and marketing of their agro produce.
2. Trainings on farming as a business (FAAB)
3. Trainings on safe use of pesticides
4. Training of smallholder farmer groups on value addition
5. Access to financial credit lines to support smallholder agricultural activities

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 04 December 2014 14:41
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 28: Gaps in rural advisory services in Armenia

My name is Harutyun Gevorgyan. I am an extension specialist in Armenia, and PhD researcher of agriculture extension education. I got qualifications about advisory systems and Extension education in the USA, Greece, Italy, Bulgaria and in the Netherlands. Currently I am doing my PhD in the Tuscia University, Viterbo, Italy.

I want to respond to questions 4.2 and 4.4. [*i.e. "4.2 What are the current gaps in rural advisory services for smallholder family farms?" and "4.4 Are there regional specificities regarding rural advisory services for family farms?"...Moderator*].

There are so many questions and problems in development of the Armenian agriculture extension education system, but I would like to write about one. The question is that before collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) there were very large collective farms in our rural areas (we called them Kolkhoz and Sovkhoz) which belonged to the rural community and villagers were working there and getting a salary.

But after collapse of the USSR, the Government of Armenia decided to privatize the agriculture land and distributed very small pieces of lands among all villagers. And then we started to have difficulties because, for example, a teacher of the rural school, who has never dealt with agriculture before, got a piece of land, became a farmer and without any knowledge started to grow plants. In my opinion, it has great negative impact of agriculture development, because if farmers do not have any education, they cannot grow crops or keep animals. And the advisory system cannot fill that gap and start education from the beginning.

So now my question is what shall Government do? Is there any experience between participants of this e-mail conference to give me advice? Can the Government create a special policy to allow farmers to work in agriculture only if they have a certification from the advisory system?

Looking forward to have your comments and discussion.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 04 December 2014 15:10
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 29: What role can producer organizations play?

My name is Violet Nyando, from Kenya. I work as an External Relations, Policy and Lobby officer at the Kenya National Farmers Federation (KENAFF), an Apex organization that represents the interest of all farmers in Kenya. Our core mandate is to engage with our membership in order to clearly articulate issues/concerns affecting the farming community and engaging in relevant dialogue processes with the right authorities to seek redress on the same. My training background is in agricultural extension and agricultural and rural innovations, and I believe this topic under discussion is timely and relevant particularly with regard to transforming the smallholder farm sector.

I want to contribute towards question 4.3 from the conference background document which asks "What role can producer organizations play in tailoring rural advisory services for family farms?"

Agriculture is the main economic activity for the majority of the people in Kenya and from literature review and international debates, the same scenario applies to most of the African countries. Traditionally, capital, land, labour, management/entrepreneurship were considered to be the critical factors of production that one needed to have to engage in any agribusiness. However, one critical factor of production has been added to the list and this factor is knowledge. For any business to thrive

in this century, knowledge has become key. Entrepreneurs require relevant, updated and real time information on technologies, innovations, markets and markets trends, consumer demands/needs, policy requirements and regulations etc.

The Kenya National Farmers Federation (KENAFF), as an apex organization for all Kenyan farmers, realized this critical component of production as being important if it wants its members to really transform the agricultural sector. Most of our members fall in category 2 and 3 as described in the conference background document. These groups of farmers are characterized by low levels of production. To help our members benefit from rural advisory services, the federation is promoting a farmer business model dubbed producer business model to help undertake targeted interventions that will help the membership. This model allows farmers to be organised along a specific value chain making it easy to carry out targeted extension and advisory services with the membership. Our approach is in such a way that we engage farmers in a prioritized value chain through the following steps:

1. We mobilize, sensitize and recruit our membership into Common Interest Groups (CIGs) along specific value chains
2. These groups are then consolidated (at least 10 CIGs each with a membership of between 20-30 farm families) to form a legalized producer business group
3. We undertake a needs assessment in terms of establishing the training needs gaps and other knowledge gaps that the groups have and organize to deliver these trainings as a federation and in collaboration with other stakeholders
4. These trainings/capacity building processes involve a lot of extension work and also advisory services and they are usually tailored towards improving the operation efficiency of that specific value chain that our farmers are engaged in.
5. We help establish and sustain mutually beneficial linkages between our membership and other value chain actors for purposes of enhancing sustainability
6. In the process of engaging with our membership, we also engage them in active policy debates especially with regard to getting the real issues affecting them. These issues are then packaged and processed through validation and discussed with the relevant authorities

NB - As a federation we have embraced the inclusivity principles with regard to human rights based approach and gender inclusiveness in our interventions. In this way we are able to incorporate both the men, women, the youth male, youth female and also special groups in the societies.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 04 December 2014 16:59
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 30: The equity gap in rural advisory services for smallholders - how should it be addressed?

My name is Michelle Carnegie and I am a Social Scientist based at the University of New England, in Australia. I am currently working on a Livelihoods and Extension research project in Myanmar. The project aims to build the capacity of Myanmar government officials and researchers who are tasked with providing education or training on extension, or managing or delivering research and extension

services. The focus is on incorporating socio-economic analyses, a livelihoods approach and participatory methodologies into their work, to ultimately improve smallholder farmer livelihoods.

The issue of how to effectively target and tailor extension services to diverse groups of farmers, including those who are very poor and marginalised, is very much at the forefront of my mind just now. Referring to question 4.1 in the conference background document I see these farmers as being in 2 of the 3 suggested broad categories - certainly subsistence or near subsistence smallholders, but also those who are market oriented, eg they may be selling cash crops but getting low returns as is the case for many farmers in Myanmar's Central Dry Zone who sell their legumes for export to India. Of course very poor and marginalised farmers include both women and men, and farming families, landed and landless, but women generally and female-headed households in particular are more likely to be in this category.

Several conference participants (message 11 – Abdulmojeed Yakubu; message 13 – Paul Zaake; message 21 - Mahesh Chander and message 22 - Datta Rangnekar) have raised their concerns about agricultural extension/rural advisory services having largely by-passed very poor and marginalised farmers, and some have suggested that there should be a shift in effort and resources towards these farmers. I have heard the saying "the group that get the most extension need it the least; and the group that get the least, need it the most". The reality seems to be that of all the financial investment globally that has gone into extension/advisory services for years now, so very little of it has actually made a serious and concerted effort at "tailoring" those services to the most disadvantaged smallholders.

Would it be fair, then, to say that extension/rural advisory services quietly ignore the issue of equity? If so, is this the same across government, private and NGO sectors?

On the other hand, some commentators argue that very poor farmers ultimately benefit from broad-based improvements in agricultural activities among better off farmers, which is the most cost-effective way of achieving equity for all. I'm not sure what the evidence base is for this argument, but it seems to be a justification put forward by policy and decision makers for extension/rural advisory service providers not to bother with engaging very poor farmers. The proponents of this argument assume that the benefits of economic and market reforms that stabilise and intensify agriculture in tandem with extension/advisory services that are targeted to better off farmers will "trickle down" to the rest (but never mind how long this might take).

I would like to encourage those of you who may happen to have direct experience of working with very poor and marginalised smallholder farmers in an extension/rural advisory capacity, to please share your story. Or through your networks, do you know of cases of success (or failure) in this arena?

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS

Sent: 04 December 2014 17:05

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 31: Advisory service providers pushing defined agendas

This is Klaus Fleissner from AVRDC again.

I want to commend Julie Nakalanda Matovu from Uganda for her honesty in the statement (in Message 10) that "as advisory service providers, we tend to push our defined agendas as already predetermined by the project we work for".

This for me is the plain truth and the reason, why agricultural development efforts have barely generated sustainable impact for smallholder farming families in Africa. She also appraised very rightly the complexity of smallholder family farms with its implications "in terms of farming system, skills, income levels, etc."

With 28 years of working experience in agricultural research, rural development and natural resource management in Sub-Saharan Africa, I have worked with the farming systems, the livelihoods, the action research and other participatory approaches, which were all meant to develop a bottom-up development agenda and ensure that smallholders evolve beyond subsistence production levels. They came in many cases not out on top for rural development, because they were expedited by donors, government institutions and the international research community. Being quite resource demanding and only delivering punctual impact, one turned to more attractive approaches as funding for these approaches decreased.

But the Forum for Integrated Resource Management (FIRM) approach, promoted by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and colleagues in the Desert Margins Program (DMP) early in the new millennium in Southern Africa was, and remains in my eyes, the climax in participatory approaches (as the short summary from the DMP website at the end of this message intends to show). Why was this approach never mainstreamed? In my opinion, this was because governments and international research and development organizations were no longer the determining factors and drivers of development!

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From <http://www.dmpafrica.net/FIRMOverview.htm> :

"Being FIRM about Community Leadership

What is FIRM, and why?

'Think global, act local' has become a slogan that, like so many others, belies the complexity—and richness—of the process that it zips into a sound bite.

All too often in the past, strong global organizations have attempted to impress solutions on local communities regardless of their interest (or lack of). Local action must be carried out by local actors if it is to be sustainable. They need to be in the driver's seat, determining what they want, and committing to follow it through.

FIRM (Forum for Integrated Resource Management) is shorthand for an approach that puts rural communities in charge of their own development. A Community-Based Organization (CBO)" [and here I see for agricultural smallholder development the link to agricultural resource center, as described in my earlier Message 18] "organizes, plans and monitors development activities while coordinating the interventions of others, called 'service providers' (SO). SOs may be traditional authorities, government extension services, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or project teams.

The FIRM approach can take many institutional forms, but all include these key elements:

- A community-based structure to take the lead (CBO);
- An annual planning meeting organized by the CBO, inviting and involving service organisations (SO);
- At least half-yearly, a review/monitoring and evaluation meeting (called by the CBO) including SOs to ensure accountability on all sides; and
- Making use of Local Level Monitoring (coordinated by the FIRM) through the CBO and other feedback coming from partner and SOs to make course corrections."

-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 04 December 2014 18:01
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 32: Support to women as rural producers

This is Dr. María Elena Murillo, from the Universidad Autónoma Agraria Antonio Narro in Mexico. I am a psychologist with a Ph.D. in vocational agriculture.

Even though women are responsible for 45% of agricultural production in the world, their rights are not recognized. Therefore, rural advisory programs should be comprehensive, so they train women in production techniques as in personal development.

In Northern Mexico, the Universidad Autonoma Agraria Antonio Narro, some professors and students have a program, "Huertos familiares para la sustentabilidad" (family orchards for sustainability), as a holistic concept for food, environmental, economic and community sustainability along with a self-confidence development program focused on women's personal improvement. The participating scholars are from animal science, horticulture, natural resources, food technology and rural sociology. We have a book in progress with techniques especially developed to work with non-schooled participants.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 05 December 2014 13:12
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 33: Seasonality - A big challenge

This is Olawale Olaniyan, a researcher with the International Trypanotolerance Centre, The Gambia.

It's been really insightful to read your various comments in this forum. Thanks to the moderator and everyone.

I would like to say that a one-size-fits-all advisory approach is neither effective nor productive! This among many other factors is due to seasonality and changes in farming conditions with the consequence that a package of information targeting a set of farmers this year may not be adequately sufficient for coping with next year's peculiar challenges. Such changes in the amount of annual rainfall, soil fertility, market price of farm outputs, etc. often predispose farmers to inaccurate decisions. Because some farmers will often look up to extension agents for pieces of

advice/information, it becomes expedient for the available advisory systems to rely on good data collection, analysis, prediction and interpretation in order to meet such needs.

Let's not forget that the basis of some farmers' relationship with the outsiders, including researchers, extension agents, development workers, etc., is principally on moral trust. Once disappointed through improper advice and inconsistency of advisory system, it becomes very difficult to regain such trust and confidence of the farmers.

Therefore, tailor-made information and communication strategies that could address the present circumstances while taking into account some inevitable future scenarios will improve the advisory system of family farming. Also in agreement with messages 1 (by Mahesh Chander), 8 (Ngouambe Nestor), 9 (Praveen Kumar Shrivastava) and 21 (Mahesh Chander), there is a need to continuously study farmers and their situations through personal contact, continuous research and support-based systems.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 05 December 2014 13:13
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 34: Observations from Panama

My name is Sabine Wischnat and I hold a master degree in agricultural sciences in the tropics/subtropics from Hohenheim University, Germany. I worked several years in Panama with smallholder farmers and lived on my husband's family's farm, which classifies as a medium-sized farm for subsistence and some sales of surplus.

The situation I observed in Panama is that there is great need for improvement in governmental support to address the following problems:

1. Livestock production: Seeds and support for establishing improved pastures are available to farmers. In order to improve productivity of livestock, especially cattle, it is very important though to improve the genetic material through crossbreeding of suitable varieties that tolerate the climatic conditions and poor feed quality and through selection of good performers. Programmes facilitating artificial insemination and capacity building on monitoring of performance and the establishment of breeding plans could enhance production and thus livelihoods significantly.

2. Crops and horticulture: Seed material for the production of cereals and horticulture consists to a large proportion in imported seeds from the United States. Very often, these plants are susceptible to pathogens and perform poorly as they are not adapted to the environmental conditions of Panama. Small-holder farmers often propagate plants through seed extraction from fruits, vegetables or grains purchased for consumption or produced on their own farm. While this might work out well for endemic varieties, very often the quality is not suitable for marketing with the result that fruits and vegetables on the formal markets are often imported and very costly. The local production is not suitable to cater to the national demand and little research is carried out to produce seed material providing high quality and disease-resistant varieties to enhance the local production of agricultural commodities.

While extension agencies exist, farmers in remote areas are not reached by the extension staff. The governmental extension agencies promote rather input-intensive practices that only commercial farmers can afford to implement. Less emphasis is put on upgrading small-scale farming productivity. Policies would be needed to shift the focus of the extension agencies while at the same time linking to research designed to develop innovative solutions and overcome the limitations for family farmers to produce marketable commodities and increase their livelihoods.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 05 December 2014 13:14
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 35: Advisory services moving along with the farmer

This is from Julie Nakalanda Matovu, again.

Thanks for all your submissions. This is a very lively discussion, it touches our lives, our work, our heritage and our future.

To Klaus Fleissner (Message 31): Thanks for your positive comment. We need to be honest to ourselves in order to establish where the real problem lies.

I go so biased by the topics of interest that I forgot to mention that I'm also a farmer. Like other professions, people may study law, medicine etc. but never actually practice it because of given magnitude of engagement at their respective jobs or offices of service, which may be political. Sometimes it is necessary for us to walk the talk. Along the way as a service provider, by choice I decided to engage in farming as a smallholder organic farmer. I do farming one day every week. For my masters thesis, I researched about The effectiveness of Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) In marketing of Organic products among small scale farmers in Uganda. A case study of vegetable growers in Wakiso and Kampala District. I thereafter mobilized a team of women doing organic farming, we are now engaged into a commercial business [at small scale], we do weekly deliveries (Nakalanda and Kugonza, 2015). While establishing this, we got all those setbacks you all know. Moving 3 steps forward, then 2 steps back. It has taken us three years to get established. The scheme is now growing steadily. We also have a Village Savings and Loan Association, we save on a weekly basis. These are very complementary initiatives. Back to the point, for all our submissions, if there could be a way to move along with the farmers, "feel" the pinch. Whereas it is very important to set targets, work in defined time frames, we also need to reconsider these issues so that we can get realistic progress. Through this discussion, I'm already seeing answers to the questions we ponder about. So it seems just need to figure out what works in our local contexts.

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Julie M. Nakalanda and B. Irene Kugonza. 2015. Facilitating social networks by linking smallholder organic farmers in Uganda to markets for sustainable products through Freshveggies PGS. Case study 11 in "Sustainable practices, sustainable markets? Exploring institutional innovations that link sustainable agricultural practices with markets", edited by Allison Loconto, Anne Sophie Poisot and Pilar Santacoloma. FAO. In Press.

-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 05 December 2014 13:14
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 36: A model training and services center

I am Lisa Kitinoja, a postharvest technology specialist and postharvest trainer. I've worked in many countries and on many types of extension projects that focus on linking smallholders or family farms to markets, and training young professionals as postharvest extension specialists.

I've found that too little funding for extension can be a real problem (since agents will not be able to reach the farmers), and too much funding can be a different problem, leading to waste and spending on large vehicles and fancy hotels, etc. One project that I worked on recently put the majority of the funding for a "postharvest training and services center" into building a simple shed for shade, some small hand tools and supplies, and a lot of time on training of local trainers on how to do loss assessments, design postharvest demos, do cost/benefit analyses and design training programs for smallholders who produced and handled horticultural crops. So far, the 36 persons from 7 Sub-Saharan Africa countries that we trained in 2012 as postharvest specialists (some were government extension workers, some from NGOs or charities, a few have become private consultants) have gone on to train more than 50,000 people in postharvest handling, storage, food processing and marketing practices for reducing food losses. We did not provide funding for them to do training, they just integrated what they had learned into their existing jobs or new assignments.

This model (located in Arusha, Tanzania) may be useful for others who are interested in reaching out to family farmers. The training center provides a menu of options for learners - they can see demos of improved practices, learn about the costs and benefits, participate in training programs on topics of interest to them (including food safety, postharvest handling, food processing, storage or marketing), purchase tools and needed supplies from the retail shop at the site, and try out postharvest services such as packing or storage for a small fee per kg. By providing a wide range of options for many different crops and budgets, it leaves the choices up to them - they can select what best fits their needs, and change to something else if they grow bigger or change crops the next year.

Dr. Lisa Kitinoja

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Arusha short course/study tour (February 2015):

http://postharvest.org/2015_tanzania_short_coursestudy_tour.aspx

Bali short course/study tour (February 2016):

http://postharvest.org/pef_2014_bali_short_coursestudy_tour.aspx

-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 05 December 2014 13:15
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 37: Re: Gaps in rural advisory services in Armenia

This is from Violet Nyando, again.

Replying to Harutyun Gevorgyan (Message 28):

Indeed it can be difficult to engage in an enterprise without even the basic knowledge and especially if you want farmers to enter into some sort of commercialized/business oriented agricultural production.

For your case, I believe these farmers have some knowledge about farming having grown and witnessed the former regime engaging in farming. The good news is that they are not really blank of any basic farming ideas.

If the government wants to enhance the farmers capacities in the agricultural sector so that they can fully play their role as farmers, then I want to believe a comprehensive National Extension Policy with accompanied regulations for enforcement should be developed. This extension policy should try as much as possible to embrace a sector wide approach that is guided by principles of public-private partnership because the public alone may not be able to deliver all the agricultural extension and advisory services needed by farmers. This is what agricultural institutions refer to as a pluralistic approach to extension and advisory services.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 05 December 2014 13:16
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 38: Re: Gaps in rural advisory services in Armenia

This is Archie Cameron, again.

In reply to Harutyun Gevorgyan's message (nr. 28):

Denmark and possibly other countries in Europe had a requirement for people acquiring land for agriculture to have a "green certificate", that is having done a study about agriculture. Whether that still applies and how it was actually done, I'm not sure, however, the principal is good. Managing to achieve this type of approach in the area we are discussing is going to be the major challenge. Having said that, all efforts should be made to achieve this aim, as that is the crux of our discussion, empowering all farmers to do better and achieve sustainability, both agriculturally and financially.

Although much of our discussion is revolving round the small and often subsistence segment of agriculture (where the great majority of the world farming numbers are) many of the problems of

equity and a fair return for their production is right across most farming enterprises throughout the world. It has been said that “a farmer is the only one who is at the end of the line, receives the least, has great difficulty in passing on their costs and pays the freight both ways”!!!?? It is in this arena that we are holding these discussions and we need to move forward in doing everything we can to achieve equitable outcomes for all farmers.

As we know, the world population is projected to reach 9 billion people by the year 2050; there is no more land for agriculture, in fact it is reducing through various factors of degradation and encroachments of towns, cities etc. So we all have to do better and produce more with what we have and this means lifting the productivity and sustainability of all farmers across the world, so that the world population can receive at least the basic nutritional needs to survive in a reasonable way.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 05 December 2014 13:16
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 39: Knowledge and adoption of animal husbandry related aspects

I am Dr. Purushottam Sharma, Principal Scientist at the Indian Grassland and Fodder Research Institute of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Jhansi.

We conducted a study in Bundelkhand region (part of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh) of India and found that:

The farmers of this region had 39.06% of knowledge on improved feeding practices of dairy animals. Large and marginal farmers had more knowledge compared to other categories. The feeding-related aspects according to their descending extent of knowledge score were dry animal feeding followed by heifer feeding, lactating animal feeding, pregnant animal feeding, low cost feeding technologies (LCFT), calves, fodder and grazing. In order to improve adoption of technologies it is necessary to improve their knowledge. Knowledge had a highly significant correlation with milk production, mass media exposure and information source utilization and a significant correlation with herd size and milk consumption.

It was found that farmers of the sample area were adopting 30.66% livestock feeding practices. Large farmers had maximum extent of adoption (35.44%) and landless dairy farmers had minimum extent of adoption (25.78%) of livestock feeding practices. Adoption had a highly significant correlation with information sources and knowledge; and a significant correlation with education, milk production, milk consumption, mass media exposure. The feeding-related aspects according to their descending extent of adoption score were dry animal feeding followed by heifer feeding, lactating animal feeding, LCFT, pregnant animal feeding, calves, grazing and fodder. It is necessary to improve their adoption.

In order to improve profitability of dairying, in my view for rural advisory services for family farms, due emphasis should be given to fodder production, conservation and utilization.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 05 December 2014 16:58
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 40: Re: Seasonality - A big challenge

This is Puruswattam Rauniyar, again.

I am 100 percent in agreement with the point of Olawale Olaniyan (Message 33) that: "Let's not forget that the basis of some farmers' relationship with the outsiders, including researchers, extension agents, development workers, etc., is principally on moral trust. Once disappointed through improper advice and inconsistency of advisory system, it becomes very difficult to regain such trust and confidence of the farmers".

So, the responsible sectors most choose experienced extension agents and suitable means of media for proper dissemination of knowledge at the farmers level.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 06 December 2014 07:25
To: RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG
Subject: 41: Capacities of extension professionals

This is from Mahesh Chander, again, on the topic of capacities of extension service providers.

Farmers in developing countries are increasingly expecting and requesting from rural advisory services a much broader range of services than before. For instance, farmers need information on certified agriculture/organic agriculture, good agricultural practices, traceability tools, climate smart agricultural practices, requirements for exporting agricultural products, organic standards and certification procedures, agro/rural tourism, exploring remunerative markets for their designer/innovative products etc.

The agricultural extension professionals in developing countries are often found deficient in their capacities to cater to these emerging needs of farmers especially in poor developing countries. Here arises the question of capacity building of extension professionals. The institutions which typically train extensionists are also at times not equipped with the human resource which can help on these new requirements. The training institutions have to take note of these emerging requirements of farmers as well as the trainers who need new capacities to meet out the new challenges.

The regional, national extension networks have to take a lead in orienting and building capacities of extension personnel. We have to accept the fact that the conventional way of doing farming is not helping much and farmers need to diversify their income sources including changing their practices to keep pace with the modernizing world where consumers too want to taste a diversity of food products for which there is a willingness to pay too. The farmer needs to change so extensionists too need to change by improving their capacities in these new areas of agrifood production. For instance, the small scale producers can do better collectively in organic agriculture by forming organic producer groups, but they need information and support in skilling and linking with market for organic products. Organic agriculture is highly knowledge intensive system and also the markets need to be developed/explored for niche products like Organic. If we think, a small scale producer will convert to organic on his own simply by receiving some information on organic farming, it would be a fallacy and misbelief. Such farmers need a whole range of support including bio-inputs, production/processing standards, certification procedures and linking with market for organic products.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 08 December 2014 10:56
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 42: Regional specificities: Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus

I am Botir Dosov, facilitating an Innovation Platform within the CGIAR Research Program on Dryland Systems in Central Asia, and providing consultancy to the Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC) Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (CACAARI), and further will be much involved in strengthening the regional network/forum on rural advisory services for 8 countries in the CAC region, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

My first contributions for this email conference would be related to Question 4.4 in the conference background document: Are there regional specificities regarding rural advisory services for family farms?

Ref: Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the soviet republics obtained their independence, most of those newly independent countries in the Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus (CAC) region reoriented their economies from a centralized planning system towards the market driven systems and have experienced variable levels of economic growth. The collapse led to a drastic economic decline until the mid-1990s, and the role of family farms naturally became critically important for provision of food security, while countries experienced robust economic growth, driven by government reforms. In some cases, those reforms turned into protracted crises that first of all negatively influenced the well-being of family farms. Under such circumstances, enhancing or strengthening of rural advisory services (RAS) was not much at the focus of those national wide reforms and agricultural development programs. The case of Armenia is very well explained by Mr. Harutyun Gevorgyan (Message 28).

The agricultural policies implying RAS for family farms in the different countries of the region vary, and do not emphasise "RAS for family farms" in many CAC countries. Thus, some of the countries in

post-soviet areas conducted a thorough land reform and the agricultural land was distributed among the population resulting in large numbers of family farms. In others, the transformation happened through privatisation of the existing collective and state farm structures. In many countries, RAS for family farms per se or RAS at all were not stipulated in rural/agricultural development policies. Unfortunately, this approach was limited by the lack of understanding among policy-makers of the RAS for farmers, particularly for smallholders and family farms, and why RAS play a crucial role in increasing agricultural productivity. Thus, in reality, smallholders and family lag behind and out of focus of government interventions in agriculture and rural areas, and furthermore in the RAS system.

It has to be emphasized that poor linkages between researchers, extension agents, farmers, especially women farmers and family, and policy makers are a common issue to many countries in the region. The low interaction as well as undeveloped advisory and delivery services undermines the effectiveness of technology transfer to family farms, which thus deprives them of innovations oriented to improve productivity of family farms and smallholders.

Most of the CA countries do not pay adequate attention to aspects of technology transfer and hardly support the extension system, through which small scale technologies and innovations could serve the needs of family farms. In most cases, this is due to the low profitability of organizations providing services or the lack of public and private funding, and thus RAS in the CAC region are not oriented to family farms, although they produce the essential part of basic agricultural commodities, such as milk, meat, eggs, poultry, fruits and vegetables, and therefore play the critical role for insuring food security in the region.

Summary: Here we are discussing HOW to tailor RAS to family farms (FF). For the Central Asia and Southern Caucasus region, prior to discussing HOW, we should agree on WHAT are RAS for FF, and widely advocate and agree on WHY do we need to shape RAS for FF, where governments still are the key drivers of reforms, and the public sector does not substantially support RAS, and prioritizing the investments to other, most profitable niches and/or domains with low levels of sustainability, and where the RAS system is poorly supported and developed.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 08 December 2014 10:58
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 43: Need to revive the advisory service by banks in India

I am S.S. Roy, doctorate in agriculture, presently associated with the BAIF Development Research Foundation, a Pune based national level NGO engaged in livelihood development activities in the country, after serving for 35 years in the field of agriculture and rural banking sector in India in various capacities in commercial bank and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).

The much needed advisory service to the family farm may broadly covers three areas viz. technical, financial and organisational. The technical advice, being the most important, may encompass pre-production, production and post-production areas. The financial advisory may include arrangement for credit/finance and its judicious utilisation, marketing of the produce at competitive prices and maximising the revenue to the farmers. Lastly, the organisational aspect that focuses on community mobilisation to leverage the market and also access to many other tangible and intangible facilities available in the village.

As is well known, credit is a critical component for agricultural production. Easy accessibility and the cost of credit are very important for the farmers, especially for small and marginal farmers. Though a number of pro-farmer initiatives have been taken by the Government of India during the past four decades, there is still a gap persisting in realising the desired objectives of easy access to low cost institutional credit. The first initiative was taken by the Government of India by stipulating a credit target of 18% towards the agriculture sector by the commercial banks after nationalisation in 1969. To cater for the requirements of small farmers and micro-entrepreneurs in the rural areas, a specialised bank known as the Regional Rural Bank (RRB) was formed as a subsidiary of the existing commercial banks in 1976. To give more focus and comprehensive support to various financial institutions for augmenting the rural credit, a new organisation known as the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) was created in 1982 at the national level by subsuming some responsibility of policy planning and regulatory role of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

There is no denying the fact with these initiatives and many more similar initiatives like formation of self-help groups (SHGs) and micro credit institutions, various credit linked subsidy schemes, in the later years have resulted in a phenomenal growth in agricultural credit in India (from 368 billion rupees in 1998-1999, to 6073 billion in 2012-13). The fact remains that small and marginal family farmers have not been able to get the benefit commensurate with its proportion to total numbers. One of the major impediments of low credit intake for this section of the farmers was non-availability of any comprehensive advisory service.

Banking institutions (Commercial Bank, RRB, NABARD) earlier used to provide the comprehensive advisory service (both technical and financial) to the farmers through their own technical officers/staff, specially recruited for this purpose. These officers/staff, with agriculture or animal husbandry degrees, used to provide the requisite technical inputs related to the production of crops and livestock and simultaneously provide guidance regarding credit and financial prudence to farmers, especially to the small and marginal farmer who needed it most. However, the erstwhile advisory service by the banks (also then used to be known as social banking), has taken the back seat and is now dominated by pure profitability index which has led to dispensing this important service.

It is time to revisit this approach by the banking industry so that the interest of the farmers, especially the small and marginal farmers, and also the problem of non-performing assets (NPA) of the banks are addressed through quality lending.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS

Sent: 08 December 2014 10:59
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 44: Rural extension services and family production

This is from Marisa de Luján Gonnella. I work as a teacher, researcher and extension specialist at the National University of Rosario, Argentina. I am Professor of Rural Sociology and Rural Extension.

Generally speaking, family production can be divided into two broad categories.

- 1- The family production with access to capital that incorporates inputs for production.
- 2- The family subsistence production.

In the first group, competing private companies and public services rural extension when speaking of rural development. This is because they have different interests. This leads to various institutional agreements in the territories.

The subsistence agriculture has increased public presence services rural extension and NGOs.

How to improve rural extension services?

- It should deepen the analysis of the relationship between public and private extension services.
- Working with participation to enable better communication.
- Ask family farmers as they see extension services.
- Systematize knowledge that emerges at work among farmers and extension workers.
- Improve extension teaming with interdisciplinary approaches.

Generate proposals to improve the conditions of economic, social and environmental sustainability for the family production.

States should encourage the emergence of this form of production. They are the historical protagonists of food production, highlighting the members of the household production units as youth and women. There are problems to increase yields of production, but there are problems of infrastructure and access to land and capital.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 08 December 2014 11:00
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 45: Re: Seasonality - A big challenge

This is from Julie Nakalanda Matovu, again.

To Olawale Olaniyan (Message 33): Thanks for your submission. I'm also in total agreement with your idea of not thinking of a one-size-fits all advisory approach. This e-mail conference is very useful for us all to learn from each other and tried out possible options to our local situations.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 08 December 2014 11:14
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 46: Re: Rural resources centers can make a difference

This is Prakashkumar Rathod from the Division of Extension Education at the Indian Veterinary Research Institute in Izatnagar.

In response to Message 18 by Francis Chilenga:

Rural resources centers can make a difference. I would like to make a mention that these centres have been successful in few parts of India but also face various challenges and constraints. These centres can also act as effective innovation brokers. There is a need to focus on stimulating and enabling the institutional innovations needed to allow these telecentres to emerge and grow organically in context-specific ways. The telecentres can act as an effective tool depending on asset positions, production environments, gender issues etc. indicating that detailed understanding of telecentres is essential for agricultural and animal husbandry development in India and other developing countries.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 08 December 2014 14:52
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 47: Aquaculture sector: Questions 4.1 to 4.5

I am Dr. Kumaran from India, working with the aquaculture sector. Here are some of my views on the questions raised in the conference background document for your thought:

Question 4.1: What are the unique characteristics or features of rural advisory services for different types of family farms?

The aquaculture/fish farming sector is relatively commercial in nature and has these three categories of farms in the ratio of 10:70:20.

The large farms or corporates are self-reliant.

The 70% small or medium category, the regulation (registration) is with the government and the inputs, technical counselling and market is in the hands of private inputs companies and processing companies respectively. The fish/shrimp grown requires regular attention and at least weekly attention from the technical expert which the inputs company alone can provide, though their service is paid indirectly in the inputs cost. The government can only facilitate the provision of quality inputs by

imposing certain standards but it is not possible for it to supply them. The government extension system is mostly skewed towards welfare measures and lacks adequate manpower, capacity, extension orientation and budget as the case of elsewhere. The small and medium aqua farmers rather do not expect the government machinery to do technical counselling rather they expect facilitation in the form of institutional credit, insurance, electricity, market intelligence etc.

The third category (20%) is truly traditional and it requires the support of the public extension system. This category can be nurtured and notified as organic producers as they mostly farm with home-made feeds and indigenous technical knowledge. The public funded extension system should spend their maximum time and budget with this category by providing quality seeds and technical backstopping. Hence, the extension system has the following roles:

category I: Only regulatory role

category II: Regulator, mobiliser and facilitator role category III: Education, input provision and facilitation.

Question 4.2. What are the current gaps in rural advisory services for smallholder family farms?

I agree with Dr. Mahesh Chander that the small and medium scale farmers need technical counselling on specialised topics like food safety, traceability, labour standards, market intelligence etc. which are lacking even with the private extension services that are dominant in the aquaculture sector. *[I presume the reference is to Mahesh's message 41, where he describes the widening range of rural advisory services expected and required by farmers in developing countries...Moderator].*

Question 4.3 What role can producer organizations play in tailoring rural advisory services for family farms?

Aquaculture is being done along the water bodies as clusters. Disease is the major issue in aquaculture, particularly in shrimp farming. The disease-causing pathogen can enter into the farm either through seed (vertical) or by cross contamination and vectors. The research institutions have recommended better management practices and biosecurity measures to prevent the risks of entry of pathogens. It is essential that all the farms operating in the cluster should follow all these better management practices otherwise one farmer's mistake can spoil the whole cluster. Hence, collective compliance of better management practices is the key with an institutional mechanism (farmer group) to enforce it. These producer groups do collective seed procurement by contracting a reliable hatchery and in some occasions do collective marketing by negotiating with buyers/marketers.

Question 4.4 Are there regional specificities regarding rural advisory services for family farms?

Provinces are differently developed and connected accordingly where the extension agencies can reach through appropriate mode. I feel it is the sectoral differences (like agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries etc) that need different kinds of extension approaches and services. There is no one fit to all situations. Again, one crucial question is that, many a times we lack demand-driven technologies/technological packages. Unless the extension worker is not provided with technological input how can he/she perform at the field level? Farmers need immediate solution and we do not have an answer?.

Question 4.5 How to improve the outreach and impact of rural advisory services?

As discussed previously, division of labour/work between different service providers is one point. Information and communication technologies (ICTs), particularly mobile phones, are going to play an important role in the days to come. Voice and text messages in local languages could be very useful. For that, dedicated mobile service providers with wider networking is important. As somebody pointed out, most of the new/innovative methods are confined only to the project sites and when the project is over/withdrawn there is no follow up. Any new concept need to be linked and integrated with existing extension department to continue after the project is over.

The viability of any new concept with manpower, organizational and budgetary requirement (costing of the model) is very important for success.

The conference is going on well and I will join you again.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 08 December 2014 16:09
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 48: Re: Regional specificities: Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus

This is Puruswattam Rauniyar, again.

Actually, there is an organizational structure for agricultural development in every country. The target groups are always farmers for these organizations. The main objective has been always to raise the living standard of the farmers and to sustain the living of the farmers. Besides, this various international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are working inside the developing country and conducting their activities in the name of the various projects. These projects also publish various reports in their annual publication. But, when I talk taking the reference of the media, annual GDP and their contribution through agricultural development, it seem likes "water have been poured in the sand" which tells us that the efforts have been all useless.

The organizational structures place highly professional and experienced personnel at the upper level but they are not in close touch with the farmers. There must be professional extension agents who are going to be in direct touch with farmers. I think when any NGO, international NGO (INGO) or other governmental organization are performing any activities at the farmer level, they should be very careful about the data and the report provided to them from the lower level. They should analyze the potential of the lower staff. The monitoring activities should be focused and prioritise sectors of such organization. The other factors like the social status of the farmer, motivation level of the farmers, political status of person, economic condition of the farmers, cast discrimination, gender discrimination while providing opportunity and bureaucracy in South Asian countries (like Nepal) where the activities are conducted against the rule and system are the major factors which are affecting the development of the rural farmers. The opportunity and the services are provided but in this case the rural farmers are always dominated by the village elites.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS

Sent: 08 December 2014 17:50
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 49: Farmer producer organizations

This is from Mahesh Chander, again, on the topic of farmer producer organizations.

It has been recognized and emphasized by many, and in many countries, that producer organizations, cooperatives and other community-based organizations are playing a key role in providing services to smallholders and helping them voice their requirements. In India, in the dairy sector as also in sugar production, cooperatives are active since a long time. These cooperatives are highly successful in some States and ailing and failing in many other States.

While studying them a bit closely, we found that the small scale producers have serious grievances against these cooperatives too! Some small scale producers recently shared that the cooperatives are manipulated and governed by influential big farmers and small scale producers don't have much say in their management. The structure and functioning of producer organizations like cooperatives in principle do not allow for such grievances of farmers but in practice it might be true. It's a matter of further investigation and correcting the situation so that poor farmers are not exploited in institutions like cooperatives which are meant to protect the interest of members.

Today, we had a brain storming session on dairying and dairy cooperatives in an area where dairy cooperatives have miserably failed and reasons given were corruption, mismanagement and political interference in functioning of their cooperatives.

Yes, the producer organizations are great institutions to serve the interest of small scale farmers, but it is important that the principles and practices of cooperation, cooperatives and their role need to be popularized further especially among small scale producers so that the small scale producers are able to draw benefits from producer organizations.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 09 December 2014 09:10
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 50: Current gaps in rural advisory services - Nigeria

This is Akinremi Peter Taiwo from Nigeria. I am an ICT consultant. I work with the commissioner of Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Calabar, Nigeria.

I would like to add a few points to the wonderful ideas circulating on this platform on question 4.2 (What are the current gaps in rural advisory services for smallholder family farms?), based on the recent meeting of the Niger Delta Development Forum (NDDF) in Calabar, Cross Rivers State, on 25-26 November 2014, with the theme "Unlocking investment opportunities in agriculture in the Niger Delta for regional competitiveness" (<http://www.pindfoundation.org/news/niger-delta-development-forum-unlocking-investment-opportunities-in-agriculture-for-regional-competitiveness/>).

The following points I noted as what farmers agitated for concerning advisory services: Unskilled extension workers, poor relationship and dedication, lack of right and appropriate information to market as well as agribusiness generally, lack of practical training, processing and best practices, playing political game with farmers, low knowledge of technological tools and it's uses and lots more. The farmers need well trained and skilled extension committed workers to help transform agribusiness.

I personally would say it is high time we take advisory services beyond face to face (although not totally neglecting it) and maximize the advent of information communication and technology to deliver effective advisory services.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 09 December 2014 10:14
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 51: Re: Farmer producer organizations

This is Ngouambe Nestor, again.

I just want to give some comments on the thoughts raised by Dr Mahesh Chander (Message 49) concerning farmer organizations.

Talking about farming families by neglecting farmer organizations is not possible within an Africa context. Farmer organizations like cooperative have key driven approach to sustain food productivity. For extension systems to be more efficient, cooperative societies must be used as a relay to disseminate Innovation from research institutes among farmers practices.

For example, from 2012-2013 I experienced the use of information and communication technology (ICT) tools for extension to keep contacts with all farmers living in remote rural Cameroon. Thirty farmer organizations were involved in the project. Each farmer did not have a mobile phone, but at least the delegate had one. So when there is crucial information I just called two or three members within the group and used them as a channel to disseminate the information among other farmers. Based on the feedback, the information was well transmitted. Just one call via those farmer organizations permitted four villages to avoid Africa swine fever in August 2013.

Remember that in 2012 we celebrated the International Year of Cooperatives. This was according to the great role they play for agriculture development. During the World Food Day of the same year the main theme was "Agricultural cooperatives - key to feeding the world".

In Africa (west and central), farmer organizations are fully involved in national extension platform. I will come back next time for more details on those points.

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[International years are declared by the United Nations to draw attention to and encourage action on major issues. The UN declared 2012 to be the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC). For more information, see the official IYC website (<http://social.un.org/coopsyear/>) and the website of the 2012 World Food Day (<http://www.fao.org/world-food-day/history/wfd2012/en/>)...Moderator].

-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 09 December 2014 10:14
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 52: Re: Farmer producer organizations

This is Subhash Mehta again, and I would like to request all contributors who have raised concerns/questions about the farmer producer organisations/company (PC) to please read my Message no. 4 very carefully as it provides all the answers and backed by evidence of a successful case study (Nava Jyoti PC Community Enterprise System) of many years at www.navajyoti.org. This producer company (PC) is of, for and by (owned) the producers but managed by professionals, accountable to them, in keeping with the legal requirements of the Indian Companies Act, and not to a department (cooperative and or societies) of the state Government.

PC is a good intervention for governments to invest in public private partnerships (PPP) as public funds are meant for public good.

Please do not hesitate to ask any further questions and/or clarifications.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 09 December 2014 11:17
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 53: Re: Current gaps in rural advisory services - Nigeria

This is Francis Chilenga again.

I totally agree with Akinremi Peter Taiwo (Message 50) on current gaps in rural advisory services especially on markets and agro-processing. There has been much talk of agro-processing/value addition of agricultural products. However, the missing link is farmers capacity to add value to their products. As a result, most farmers either working as individuals are still selling raw products far much below minimum prices. This is quite commonplace in Malawi where a majority are small-scale farmers and with minimal capital to access agro-processing equipment. We therefore need to focus rural advisory services on value chain development and strengthening by provision of training to farmers on product quality, gross margins and market linkages. Market-led extension approaches should either complement other rural advisory approaches or be a major shift from current extension approaches.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 09 December 2014 13:55
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 54: Agricultural extension policies

Dr Mahesh Chander again, responding to Section 4.7 of the conference background document which seeks to know, how can family farmers be best involved in formulating policies relevant to rural advisory services for family farms?

This is one of the important points raised in this document. The evidence-based policies on rural advisory services (RAS) are required to benefit effectively from these services. However, it needs to be seen whether such policies exist in many developing countries. Inclusive and context-specific agricultural extension policies (AEPs), strategies and approaches can effectively contribute to national, continental and international development goals, while addressing the agricultural development needs of any country. Yet, not many countries in Asia and Africa in particular could develop AEPs despite the importance and clear recommendations for the same.

The importance of extension policy was recognized by FAO's Global Consultation on Agricultural Extension when it recommended that "all national governments should develop and periodically review their agricultural extension policy. This policy should include the goals of agricultural extension, the responsible agencies and personnel, the CLIENTELE TO BE SERVED, the broad programme areas to be addressed and other relevant guidelines" (Contado, 1997). The Global Consultation further recommended that "the FAO, in cooperation with the donor community, should engage in policy dialogue with national governments to stress the importance of agricultural extension in national agricultural development and the need to have an explicit, formally enacted agricultural extension policy" (Swanson, 1990).

Thus, the importance of extension policy has been sufficiently emphasized and elaborated at the international level especially by the FAO (Contado, 1997) as well as in the Asian context (Sulaiman and Hall, 2005). However, even after various deliberations and discussions, many countries do not have a National Agricultural Extension Policy to date. Appreciably, the 5th Annual Meeting of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) addressed this issue substantially during 23-25 September, 2014 at Buenos Aires, Argentina (<http://www.g-fras.org/en/events/gfras-events/annual-meeting-2014-argentina.html>).

Maybe it will help, if the evidence based policies are framed, wherein, different categories of farmers, especially the subsistence farmers are addressed to be included in the policy formulation and its implementation.

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References:

- Contado, T.E. (1997). Formulating extension policy. Chapter 12 in: "Improving agricultural extension: A reference manual", B.E. Swanson, R.P. Bentz and A.J. Sofranko (eds). pp107-114. FAO. 220 p. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/W5830E/w5830e00.htm>
- Sulaiman, R. and Hall, A. (2005). Extension policy at the national level in Asia, *Plant Production Science*, 8(3):308-319.
- Swanson, B.E. (ed). (1990). *Global Consultation on Agricultural Extension: A report*. Rome: FAO

[1. FAO's Global Consultation on Agricultural Extension took place on 4-8 December 1989 in Rome. The Global Consultation participants examined the concepts and policies of agricultural extension, target clientele, extension approaches, programmes and methods, extension impacts and effectiveness, human resources, and technical and financial assistance issues.

2. A large number of FAO publications on Extension can be downloaded from <http://www.fao.org/nr/research-extension-systems/informres/extension/en/> ...Moderator].

-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 09 December 2014 16:59
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 55: Current gaps in rural advisory services - national extension services

This is Lisa Kitinoja, again.

Many of those who have been posting on gaps in rural advisory services (RAS) have mentioned how smallholders and family farmers need access to information and training on value addition, agro-processing and marketing.

Many countries are represented in this discussion, so I have a question for each of you. Does your National Agricultural Extension Service have personnel who are extension specialists with expertise in the following technical and educational fields?

- 1) postharvest handling and technology for food loss prevention?
- 2) food storage structures and management of storage?
- 3) food processing for adding value and extending shelf life?
- 4) cold chain management for perishable foods?
- 5) extension of postharvest/food processing technologies (capacity building)

Without these specialists, the front line extension workers (public sector or private sector based) will not be well prepared to provide the needed information and training for farmers.

Dr. Lisa Kitinoja

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 10 December 2014 09:14
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 56: Reflections from thirty years of experience in extension work in rural communities

I am Rob Sacco, Principal of the Nyahode Union Sustainable Agriculture College, which is a subsidiary of the Nyahode Union Community Trust Technical College in Chimanimani, in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe.

We have thirty years of experience in extension work in rural communities in the Eastern Highlands and further afield. Every time we think we have a handle on the work, different deeper problems emerge, and we and the communities go back to scratching our heads.

We have seen the limitations of short-term, technology transfer, donor-driven extension, which all too often meets the needs of the donor and only incidentally of the community as a whole or the needs of the smallholder farmer families themselves.

We have seen the limitations in State extension systems, where the focus is necessarily on 'increasing and diversifying production of food and industrial crops', to feed the cities and the industries, but which miss the actual needs and aspirations of the smallholder farmers, who strive to meet their family needs, to establish and defend their own dignity and sustainability.

We have seen that even in the most participatory process, local elites invariably emerge, grab control of the community project, use and abuse it, run it into the ground, and then walk away from it.

We have seen how colonisation not only stripped the land off the colonised peasantry, but it stripped them of their culture, their identity, their seed base, their traditional nutrition, and perhaps most of all, much of their organisational tradition and capacity.

When people have been reduced to having almost nothing, as we have seen, what little is offered is grabbed indiscriminately, for immediate gratification, such as it may be, with little focus on deferred gratification.

We have come to recognise the importance of 'life-long commitment' from rural activists and facilitators. And we are seeing now that we face a generational problem, as those deeper elements of culture and organisation take time to evolve and develop in a community.

Currently we have evolved accredited Post O-Level, National Foundation Certificate syllabuses in Agro-Ecology/Sustainable Agriculture for young adults in rural communities to gain in-depth knowledge in 'Integrated Land Use Design-Water', and 'Integrated Land Use Design-Soil'. Now we are developing the next layer, a National Certificate in 'Participatory Methods'. The aim is to equip young adults from within their own communities with agro-ecological knowledge, each trainee building a 'model agro-ecology model' at his or her own homestead, a grain of developmental yeast trying in this

way to evolve an extension system that works from the ground up, reflecting the real and ongoing interest of the smallholder farmers themselves.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 10 December 2014 09:22
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 57: Re: Current gaps in rural advisory services - national extension services

This is Ngouambe Nestor, again, responding to Lisa Kitinoja (Message 55):

When we talk about extension and rural advisory services, I think we also refer to value chains. If an extension system does not build its strategy around a value chain, it would be very difficult to satisfy farmers living in remote rural areas. That is why postharvest losses and food processing is the main challenge for the extension system in Cameroon. Some sectors like roots and tubers which has a high added value, are considered within our extension and advisory system.

Presently we are building our strategy around cooperatives in order to have just one cooperative per crop per village. This will let extension agents (public and private) better advise farmers. So there are many specialists with proper skills in the main domains you mentioned in your message.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 10 December 2014 09:28
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 58: Re: Farmer producer organizations

This is Prakashkumar Rathod from India again.

I want to respond to the comments of Ngouambe Nestor (Message 51) concerning farmer organizations for the Indian context.

I hope that most of us would agree that farmer organizations (referring to dairy cooperatives) have been more successful in India. They have provided multiple benefits if not the direct economic benefits at times. The dairy cooperative members are highly benefited compared to non-members. Further, dairy cooperatives also contribute to the social and economic empowerment of women members to a greater extent. However, studies have also pointed out that dairy cooperatives are facing constraints, in terms of human resources, financial, policy related and administrative, which hamper the effective functioning of dairy cooperatives. Hence, effective strategies are essential for their sustainability in India. Although the case may be different in the African context.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 10 December 2014 09:38
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 59: Re: Knowledge and adoption of animal husbandry related aspects

I am Prakashkumar Rathod again, responding to Dr. Purushottam Sharma (Message 39).

With huge infrastructure, public and private sector agencies are struggling to educate the farmers on scientific practices. Although heavy investments are made on generation and transfer of technologies, very few of them are adopted by farmers and very few of them are aware about the same. It is interesting to note that the majority of farmers in India are not connected to any organizations or producer organizations (POs) for accessing the information. The population of farmers who require information or who never search information is more as compared to farmers searching for information.

Hope, this requires an effective capacity building by the extension and advisory services. The questions that can arise are:

1. Do we have need-based information to satisfy the needs of different categories of farmers based on their socio-economic conditions (may be for small, marginal etc.)?
2. Do we have appropriate and field-relevant technologies for different categories of farmers based on their socio-economic conditions (may be for small, marginal etc.)?

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 11 December 2014 10:18
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 60: Private sector approach - Access to markets, food safety certifications & mobile innovation

Sensitivity: Confidential

My name is Rachel Zedeck, Director of Sustainable Programs for Control Union from Holland, currently based in Kabul, Afghanistan. We are a certification body who support food safety programs in 61 countries.

In reference to extension and "access to markets": While many programs/teams focus on accessing export markets, we regularly advocate for prioritizing local and regional trade. When export production is appropriate with a business model that generates sustainable income and good corporate governance, we find that producers and processors are then confused and challenged by both the technical implementation and costs of commercial certification programs. This is especially for fresh fruit and vegetables and other cash food crops like coffee, tea and dried nuts.

In response and in partnership with GeoPoll in the United States, we are launching an education and survey tool developed for the mobile phone specifically supporting smallholder farmers and compliance with food safety certifications like Global G.A.P. and Organic - most applicable for the EU but also for Japan, Dubai and even Russia.

I would like to hear from any other professionals working with food safety certifications. In addition, we are actively seeking projects to develop pilot programs, at no charge, in the following countries; Afghanistan, Kenya, Ghana, Philippines or Indonesia [*Anyone interested, please contact Rachel directly...Moderator*].

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 11 December 2014 10:38
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 61: Commenting on comments!

Dr Mahesh Chander again, commenting on comments!

1. Agree with Lisa Kitinoja (Message 55) and Ngouambe Nestor (Message 57) that an ideal extension system must build its strategy around a value chain. The farmers need extension support not only for production but for the rest of the processes like postharvest/processing including marketing. Also, not only the farmers but also the extension and advisory services need skills required along the value chain.

2. Agree with Dr Datta Rangnekar (Message 22), when he very rightly says "select an appropriate message to be communicated to the underprivileged family". While using information and communication technologies (ICTs) for information delivery, we must know what message should be transmitted to what category of farmer, and when. Moreover, updating context-specific content is one frequent problem faced with information kiosks, village knowledge centres, farmers portals/websites.

When using mobile phones, text messages are often irrelevant to subsistence farmers, so voice messaging is required that is also in the dialects they can understand well. The farmers are being bombarded with messages at times which actually they don't need given their requirements and circumstances.

Sometime extension personnel speak to farmers or the message is delivered in such a way that the farmers fail to get it correctly. For instance, if we tell the farmers to apply 120 Kg nitrogen per ha in wheat or rice crop, they would not understand actually how much urea/number of sacks they need to buy and apply on their crops so as to make it 120 Kg nitrogen prescribed by the extensionist.

3. Dr Subhash Mehta (Messages 4 and 52) has conveyed one good message: That compared to government created cooperatives, farmer societies/producer companies/self-help groups can do well using the facilities of loans and technical support from various organizations including banks. We have seen many self-help groups (SHGs) and societies are coming up in different parts of India for different commodities viz milk, fruits, vegetables due to the self realization of the people. These groups are doing better than those which are thrust upon them by government under some schemes. The government must encourage, facilitate, support in technical assistance and make their way smooth by not interfering.

4. Message 43 by Dr SS Roy on "Need to revive the advisory service by banks in India" appears interesting but I wonder why banks chose to discontinue. In fact, efforts are being made on convergence so that duplication of efforts are minimized. Many organizations were found to be doing the same kind of extension activity in the same area leading to wastage of resources as well as confusion among the farmers as there was, and still, very little coordination among different agencies which are pushing their own agendas. How development agencies push their own agenda has been very nicely explained by Julie Nakalanda Matovu in her message 10.

It's a good learning experience to be part of this e-conference, in an area which is dear to us -
AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION !

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 11 December 2014 11:30
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 62: National level strategies to enhance rural advisory services

My name is Katinka Weinberger, and I am the Head of the Centre for the Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture (CAPSA) of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).

With this intervention, I would like to contribute to question 4.6 of the email conference, on national strategies, based on the findings of an Expert Consultation that CAPSA hosted in Bangkok, Thailand on 11-12 December 2013, and that addressed the question of how to enhance research to extension linkages (see full report here: http://www.uncapsa.org/publication/Research_extension_linkages_report.pdf (6 MB)). The expert

group, representing public (extension & research), civil society and private sector, deliberated on an Action Framework for the Asia-Pacific region that included the following:

Adapting to a new research-extension environment:

New and emerging challenges such as climate change and land degradation are leading to a paradigm shift from input-intensive to knowledge-intensive agriculture. There is thus need to reorient the institutional capacity of extension systems to better align with the change in research focus towards sustainable practices. It is necessary for extension systems to move beyond a narrow commodity focus and adopt a broader focus on diversified farming systems, sustainable value-chains and industries. This requires innovative thinking and out-of-the-box solutions.

Creating space for research-extension interface:

Research-extension linkages need to be institutionalized more effectively through coordinated agriculture sector programmes. The concept of Research and Development and Commercialization (R&D&C – a strategy pursued in Malaysia) in agricultural development can be introduced to take science to commercialization, as the commercialization of science outputs can accelerate the use of research findings by farmers. The increased involvement of researchers in farmers' fields must also be encouraged to provide opportunities for them to be extension agents, better assess farmers' needs and socioeconomic constraints, and to undertake adaptive and applied research. Building of national and regional consortia of research-extension organizations, as well as establishment of a dedicated 'Extension Research Institute' at national levels and a Network at regional level were suggested to facilitate closer linkages between research and extension.

Enhancing quality of extension services:

Extension systems must deliver up-to-date, accurate and location-specific information and services to farmers, but are often not up to the required standards. In this context, development of legal frameworks defining roles and responsibilities of all extension stakeholders should be assessed. In addition, professionalizing capacity-building of extension agents through regular skill development programmes including improved university education and refresher courses, must be prioritized. The training should ensure that the knowledge of extension agents keeps ahead of that of their clientele and must address the shift in emphasis in their role from technology transfer to facilitating knowledge-sharing as 'knowledge brokers'. The potential for introduction of a certification programme for trained extension workers (both public and private sector) for quality assurance can be explored. Moreover, to enhance the quality of services in areas with an excessively high ratio of farmers' households per extension worker, more extension workers can be hired if permitted by availability of financial resources.

Mobilizing resources and establishing stakeholder partnerships:

Increased investment in strengthening research-extension systems is necessary to meet new and difficult challenges facing the agriculture sector. Innovative mechanisms to leverage additional resources like creation of a competitive investment fund for agricultural extension and innovation to support entrepreneurial ideas should thus be explored to address the frequent budgetary constraints faced by these systems. The engagement of other stakeholders such as the private sector and civil society organizations in delivery of integrated research-extension services, of which successful examples are already available in many countries, needs to be further strengthened and institutionalized. The possibility of organizing multi-stakeholder 'National Consultations' to promote research-extension linkages and to allow private sector and civil society organizations to undertake advocacy, pitch new ideas to governments, share knowledge and enable review of market distortions and subsidies, should be explored.

Fostering enabling policy initiatives:

The public sector has a central role in providing integrated research-extension services in most countries of the region while also enabling access to knowledge and undertaking overall regulation and monitoring. At the same time, government policy initiatives can be leveraged to promote a market-alignment and technology-provider role for the private sector, a community-mobilization role

for NGOs, and a cost-sharing and change-facilitator role for development agencies. Policy interventions can also be used to support innovation by small and medium enterprises (SME) in the agricultural sector, investment in research and extension systems, increased use of ICT for agricultural innovation, promotion of fairly managed contract farming or similar approaches and sharing of experiences on implementation of national agricultural extension policies and impacts via an official platform.

Documenting evidence:

It is important to initiate studies to enable better understanding of the impact of research-extension linkages on agricultural growth. Documenting this impact and spreading greater awareness about impact pathways and potential returns from agricultural innovation can facilitate advocacy initiatives and attract investors. A meta-study at the regional level to provide a firm empirical basis for further promoting integration of research and extension is required.

Dr Katinka Weinberger

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS

Sent: 11 December 2014 11:39

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 63: Pluralistic extension services

This is Dr Mahesh Chander again, on the growing pluralism in agricultural extension services.

Pluralism in agricultural extension services is showing an increasing trend. The private players, especially seed and other input companies like pesticides, fertilizers etc, are making efforts to reach out to farming communities primarily to serve their own interests by pushing their products. As also many industries, under their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes they are increasingly opting to serve farming communities. Also, donors/NGOs are trying to reach to farmers in increasing numbers. This means that the burden on public sector extension services is going to reduce. Since these new or emerging players would focus on specific groups of farmers, often neglecting marginalized or subsistence farmers, the public sector extension services can focus on subsistence farmers through personal contacts at least to provide hand holding kind of support to bring them up to the level where they can take care of themselves better.

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Reference:

Hybrid seeds maker Monsanto bets big, this time on agriculture extension. The Indian Express. 27 November 2014. <http://indianexpress.com/article/business/business-others/hybrid-seeds-maker-monsanto-bets-big-this-time-on-agriculture-extension/>

-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 11 December 2014 16:11
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 64: A business model for rural advisory services

This is S.S. Roy again.

While appreciating the three broad categories of family farms, as indicated in Section 4 of the conference background document, and also the observation made by Dr. Marisa de Luján Gonnella (Message 44), there seems to be another dimension of this categorisation which needs to be recognized: The organised farmers and the unorganised farmers.

The organised farmers, who may even be small and marginal, that come under the umbrella of producer organisations, cooperative societies or self-help groups (SHG) etc. are always better placed in accessing the rural advisory service (RAS), while the unorganised farmers do not have the ability to avail of this service.

Since the group of unorganised farmers constitutes the majority of the farming community in India, greater attention needs to be given by the concerned government extension department, NGOs and various national and international development organisations to provide quality RAS. The requirement of this group of farmers is for wholesome agriculture, means a basket of agriculture produce (field crops, vegetables, fruits, livestock, fishery), which is substantially different from the organised group, where one or two commodities are in production. Hence, the service providers for unorganised farmers need to be expert in multiple crops and sectors. This poses a challenge to the existing service providers both in quality and sustainability front.

To adequately address this issue, the Government of India had introduced an innovative business model (in 2002) known as Agri-Clinic and Agri-Business Centre (ACABC). The concept was aimed to make a self-sustaining RAS, which would provide expert advice on various aspect of production technology in the field of agriculture, livestock and fishery sectors by the graduates of the concerned discipline. Agri-Business was made an integral part of this model for its sustenance. This ACABC was designed to cater for the requirement of quality RAS especially for the unorganised sectors of the farmers.

To date about 16000 of such Agri-ventures have reportedly been established across the country. Though the number is not adequate in comparison to its vast requirement, it provides a lead in developing a sustainable model for the RAS. More details on ACABC is available at <http://www.agriclinics.net/>

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 11 December 2014 16:48
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 65: Up scaling and out scaling

This is Guy Faure, deputy director of the “Innovation in Agricultural and Agri-food systems” Research Unit in Montpellier (France). I am an economist and carry out research in Western Africa and Latin America focusing on three main topics: farmers’ organizations and provision of services, farm management and advisory services, innovation systems and impacts.

The scaling up and scaling out of innovative extension approach is a huge issue. Experiments in Management Advice for Family Farms (MAFF) for nearly two decades in many Francophone African countries have sought to promote comprehensive advice to farms, one that is based on learning methods. Questions now arise on how to increase the number of producers with access to advisory services and how to improve institutional and financial sustainability of advisory mechanisms.

To address such questions a workshop was organized on 13-15 November 2012 in Bohicon, Benin with actors involved in MAFF activities in more than 10 countries. On the initiative of CIRAD and the French Agency for Development (AFD), the workshop was organized in conjunction with Inter-Réseaux, University of Parakou (Benin), PADYP (an AFD project in Benin) and FEPAB (a farmers organization in Burkina Faso) on improving the sustainability of approaches for management advice for family farms (MAFF) in Africa (<http://www.g-fras.org/en/gfras/434-management-advice-for-family-farms-in-west-africa.html>).

A participatory evaluation was carried out in order to identify the constraints and perspectives to scale them up and/or out and to improve the sustainability. Four main criteria were used based on a systemic framework to assess extension system: (i) modalities of mechanism of governance, (ii) MAFF funding modalities, (iii) modalities for capacity and skill building for advisers and other actors, and (iv) modalities to adapt advisory services to regional or national situations.

The results show that scaling out and scaling-up issues entail addressing the institutional dimensions of advisory services. In the case of MAFF, there is evidence of the need to strengthen the role played by Producers’ Organizations in the governance mechanisms in order to better orient advice, reduce the costs and increase the sustainability beyond the projects’ investments. Farmer extension workers appeared as a key factor for sustainability and extension of advisory services to a larger audience. New promising opportunities to train advisors are observed in order to better insert training programmes in permanent national organizations. Funding of advisory services remains a challenge even if some relevant experiences do exist. Efforts are made in reshaping delivery models with less costly and time-consuming methods. But all the analysed cases face difficulties to address these questions related to the scaling-up and scaling-out.

Finally there is a need to draw lessons about scaling up and scaling out issues from different innovative extension approach and beyond MAFF experiences. There is a need to design a common framework to be able to compare different innovative extension approaches.

Note, scaling out of advisory services means expanding them geographically or involving more farmers, where scaling up means involving more organizations and building new rules, new arrangements between actors, new funding mechanisms, etc. to address the scaling out issue. See Franzel et al (2004) for more information regarding definitions of scaling up and scaling out.

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Reference:

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 12 December 2014 11:15
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 66: Some more limitations of existing extension systems

This is Datta Rangnekar, from Ahmedabad, again.

Reading contributions of participants (particularly by Dr. Mahesh Chandra and Dr. Rathod) during the last 2-3 days I am encouraged to convey issues/aspects related to existing extension systems that are on my mind since a long time and get the benefit of the conference to learn/refine/confirm or change my perceptions. My comments and views are related to experiences with underprivileged rural families from Western and Central India.

A very common statement is that smallholder farmers are resistant to change and do not adopt scientific recommendations and technologies and continue to follow traditional practices (as if all traditional practices are un-scientific). I learned that in many cases 'resistance to change is a blessing in disguise'. Planned research (with participatory - systems approach) to find out 'why this is so'; and good understanding of 'why farmers are doing what they are doing' can provide the pathway for an effective extension approach.

In many areas, small farmers are bombarded with recommendations that create confusing/conflicting situations and they find it difficult to decide what to accept and adopt. Let me state two examples.

Before the onset of the rainy season, farmers in many areas are approached by agriculture extension officers to convince them to adopt new paddy (rice) variety and at the same time horticulture extension officers approach them to convince them about adoption of new variety of some fruit crop and dairy extension officers to put most of their land under fodder crops and each one tries to convince them that what they are recommending is the most profitable. Some of the farmers get utterly confused, some get carried away, some adopt recommendation till subsidy is available, while some having 'innate wisdom' say YES to all extension officers and make their own decision. This situation arises since most extension officers are commodity oriented or project/target driven and they are not to be blamed. It is their seniors - the planners/managers of projects who guide or direct them that lack 'farming system and whole farm approach' and ignore that extension should aim at helping farmer to take better decisions rather than confusing them.

Another example of how conflict/confusion is created by technical persons (with due apologies) due to changing/conflicting messages: Till a few years ago, agriculture extension officers recommended increasing use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides (some recommend it even now) and now most recommend to cut down use of chemical fertilisers/insecticides and explain the harmful effects. In the same manner, dairy extension officers strongly recommended cross breeding of dairy cattle and explained how cross-bred is profitable (to all farmers) and now keeping and development of indigenous cattle is strongly recommended. In some extension meetings, farmers commented that

technical persons should make up their mind as to what they wish to recommend since frequent changes cannot be made.

Involving and extending benefit to women in agriculture is a much talked about subject but in most extension/training programmes the only change is to involve farm women in extension meetings or training programmes and literature/leaflets are provided to them. However, hardly any attempt is made to understand how they perceive various agriculture operations and what are their priorities in respect of production of crops and livestock and the problems or constraints faced. Women have a key role in some aspects of livestock and crop production and improvement can be faster if extension approaches are based on good understanding of their perceptions and priorities. Virtual absence of women extensionists in crop and livestock sector is a major limitation in this regard.

Lastly, I wish to ask whether there are studies to understand 'traditional communication systems' - I always wondered at commonality of some practices related to crop and livestock production (agronomic practices/feeding and management systems). I found that traditional fairs and social functions are occasions for exchanges of information/practices but there could be some more ways.

I may be excused for this longish mail but wish to make the best of this opportunity and would eagerly look forward to feedback from participants.

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[The point raised by Datta about farmers receiving contradictory advice from advisory services, was also discussed by Paul Zaake from Uganda (Message 13), who wrote "We have various providers of rural advisory farmers for farm families, however the differences in the recommendations to address similar issues is a serious problem. For example on the issue of low yields due to soil degradation, one organization may recommend using organic fertilizers and other sustainable land management practices. Then another organization will also come and recommend to the same farmer to use inorganic fertilizers to address the problem of soil degradation"...Moderator].

-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 12 December 2014 14:18
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 67: Re: Some more limitations of existing extension systems

This is Prakashkumar Rathod from India again, responding to different points in Message 66 by Datta Rangnekar.

Regarding the limitations of current extension systems, I would prefer to say that it's not the problem only with the extension system but also with our research, extension and farmers linkage which is very weak. In the older systems, the roles of research scientist, extension agent and farmer were well defined and seen as unproblematic: researchers generated the technology, extension officers communicated it, and farmers adopted (or failed to adopt) the solutions to their problems (Scoones and Cousins, 1989). But, over the years with the changing times and trends, the technologies generated lose their importance due to the fact that most of them are not field based and hence are inappropriate. However, it has been realized that there is also a lack of awareness on the part of the researchers and extension agencies regarding the farmers' priorities. Hence, it is essential to appreciate and recognize the perceptions and priorities of the farmers before contemplating development programmes (Rao et al., 1995). These things will obviously lead to poor adoption of technologies. Only a shared vision

among the researchers, extension personnel, farmers and the policy makers can help to evolve suitable strategies for increased production and prosperity(Rao et al.,1995).

Regarding women in agriculture, producer organizations in the form of cooperatives, self-help groups etc. have been highly successful with the membership and support of women farmers in India and few developing countries. Since agriculture and dairying in India is feminized, there is a need to create matching programmes and budgeting for women to promote their participation accordingly. There is a need for women extension workers to act as para-extension workers for a community or village both in formal and informal mode with a minimum honorarium. This can help the women to access better extension and advisory services.

With regards to the traditional models of information dissemination, it is very interesting that many of the villages in India (maybe in a few other countries also) are still not connected by roads and electricity. Under such conditions the traditional modes like one-act play and folk songs would be more successful and the farmers even feel more comfortable with such kind of information dissemination mechanism. But reaching large number of farmers may be a difficult task through that method. Maybe we need a mix of both modern and traditional methods for dissemination without hurting the sentiments of the rural masses.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 12 December 2014 15:03
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 68: Scaling down to scale up

This is Simon Manda from Zambia extending Prakashkumar Rathod's ideas (Message 67) on limitation of extension services.

If at the broader level, agreement is elusive with regards interventions required in rural spaces and for family farmers, then we should expect more confusion in family farming. What form of rural transformation do we envisage in the rural spaces? What will transformed livelihoods look like? And what will be the pathways for small famers? Migration, employment or producers as meta-narratives suggest?

The nature of extension services particularly in Zambia takes a scaling down approach and where family farmers buy in, results point to disappointing outcomes. I argue that current research and in this

regards extension services is misplaced and the sooner we re-orient our efforts towards appreciating local dynamics and what can be built in rural spaces the better for all of us. I am of the view that extension services should start with the way our research for rural livelihoods is conceptualised.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 12 December 2014 15:51
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 69: Re: Some more limitations of existing extension systems

This is Dr Mahesh Chander, again, responding to Dr Datta Rangnekar's Message (66).

I do have very high regard for the wisdom, rich field experiences and practical approach of Dr Rangnekar who is a source of inspiration for many of us.

In addition to the comments of Prakashkumar Rathod (Message 67), I wish to highlight two livestock technologies viz urea treatment of straw and azolla as animal feed! Both of these are excellent in terms of their feeding value (protein), but only in laboratories - in the field these are an utter failure. Yet, urea treatment was promoted among farmers since 1980s in many developing countries. Azolla is the current favorite among research and development institutions including NGOs especially in developing countries like India. Often billions are being spent on promoting such non sustainable (inappropriate) technologies and lessons are hardly drawn from the failures. While large farmers know quickly that there is no substance in these technologies, a subsistence farmer has no choice but to listen and follow what he is being told to do. The demonstrations are done, subsidies or development funds utilized, project tenure over - the resource poor farmers are left to their fate. We find there is hardly any horizontal spread of such technologies, yet it goes on for long! Mostly small scale farmers are victim of such unwarranted propagation of technologies which have operational difficulties in field conditions.

The references given here throw enough light on these two technologies, which have implications for livestock extension services in developing countries in particular. Can we save subsistence farmers from such impractical technologies!!

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS

Sent: 12 December 2014 16:07

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 70: Re: Some more limitations of existing extension systems

This is Prakashkumar Rathod from India again, adding a few more points to Message 66 of Datta Rangnekar.

The issue regarding the confusion created by various scientists or extension experts (like agriculture, horticulture, dairy etc.) is very interesting. In this context, I would like to add a few more points about the same confusion that we normally have as extension experts while giving certain suggestions or advice for the farmers.

Once a farmer visited me in my office (maybe in 2012-13) asking for some information about animal husbandry and poultry rearing. I could respond to all the doubts raised by him but was stuck on a few questions since the discussion had shifted towards fisheries science which I was not aware. In that case, I asked the farmer to contact the fisheries office. After a month he came to my office saying that he could not get the relevant information about fisheries even after visiting the concerned expert 5 to 6 times.

I am putting few questions below in this regard and this may be more relevant to Indian conditions (I am not much aware about other countries !):

1. Do we need an interdisciplinary team in all the institutes so that all types of doubts can be answered ? (I think Agricultural Technology Information Centre and Farm Science Centre (Krishi Vigyan Kendra) are working with the same concept. These institutes also have various constraints like human resource, finance etc.)
2. The other idea may be can we develop an individual professionally so that he can be made responsible to answer all the questions (I feel that he may be taught at least the basics of agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries etc. so that he can respond to all types of questions).

This is my opinion and I look forward to suggestions and comments in this regard.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS

Sent: 12 December 2014 16:30

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 71: Levels of technology adoption - Value chain approach - Scaling out

I am Dr. Deogratias Lwezaura, Principal economist in the Ministry of Agriculture, Tanzania.

I have been following the good comments coming out. While we are in agreement that there are still, of course in general terms, low levels of technology adoption, my concern is whether we have developed the benchmarks regarding the appropriate level/rate to say that a technology has been adequately adopted with a particular intervention. Is it 50%, 60%, 80% or 100%. Probably we may think of having scenarios across target groups i.e. project participants (direct), non-participants (but in the project area) and non-project participants (non-project area). If we have not developed these scenarios we will always say there is low level of technology adoption – and the debate will be endless.

Much has been said regarding the importance of advisory services looking at the whole value chain (see for example in Abdulmojeed Yakubu (Message 11), Moses Kondowe (27) and others). In fact, I am truly in agreement with Datta Rangnekar (66) that we are pushing too much to farmers to adopt. While his comments were on many technologies across commodities and enterprises, my concern is the now topical focus on value chain approaches, meaning that the same farmer should embrace production, processing, preservation, value addition, marketing aspects etc. This to me is another dimension of pushing too much to a farmer. A farmer needs to specialize to be able to be in better place to utilize the available scarce labour/resources. If a farmer can be allowed to act on every segment along the value chain, what will the other players in the system such as the processors, transporters, middle men, traders do? Everyone only had to do what s/he were good at (comparative advantage), that is when there would be efficiency of the value chain - increases economic efficiency and opportunities for growth for competitive sectors. My statement might be provocative, but in a sense this is my own view point.

Another issue I want to put across is based on experience in Tanzania regarding farmers being organized in groups particularly in irrigation schemes. The groups set their rules under which every member has to abide. For example, each member is required to grow quality/improved rice varieties such as SARO 5 to be able to qualify to remain in the group. This is probably one approach that can be adopted in any extension methods to ensure technology scaling out.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS

Sent: 12 December 2014 16:50

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 72: Questions 4.4. and 4.6: Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC) region

This is Botir Dosov again, from the Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC) region.

My second contribution for this email conference is related to the following questions in the conference background document:

Question 4.4 Are there regional specificities regarding rural advisory services for family farms? And
Question 4.6 What strategies are needed at the national/state level to enhance rural advisory services for family farms?

1. Rural advisory services (RAS) tailored for family farms in the CAC region should be focused on smallholders and households, i.e. family farms which are subsistence or near-subsistence smallholders who produce essentially for their own consumption and have little potential to generate a surplus for the market. Those family farms are small in size, but have essential contribution to food security and nutrition at the national level as they are producing the biggest part of food products: milk, meat, poultry, eggs, fruits and vegetable at the country level. (Question 4.4)

2. Sustainable RAS for family farms should be pluralistic and linking different social actors and institutions: farmers, researchers, education and training centers, policy and decision makers, NGOs and other sectors' players at local, district, province, national levels, and the higher level at which the RAS system is considered the more diversity institutions have to involved in pluralistic RAS system. (Questions 4.4. and 4.6)

3. Enhancing evidence-based knowledge for family farms and developing better understanding of the trade-offs involved in using different policy mechanisms and identifying those that are more effective under existing institutional and social settings. (Question 4.6)

4. Setting up operational knowledge platforms to provide best traditional knowledge and updated information about family farming practices accompanied by clear strategy to assure sustainability and link with worldwide resources. (Question 4.6)

5. Downstreaming the management of natural resources based on congruent decision by raising awareness on sustainable use of natural resources through the dissemination of information about technologies, and providing training and advice to smallholders, households, farmers, water and land users, government bodies at local, district and province, national regional levels. (Question 4.4)

6. Gender mainstreaming to RAS through deeper and integrated understanding of gender in order to be able to use gender as a tool for further work in rural communities on improving well-being and increasing income of rural families. (Questions 4.4 and 4.6)

7. While tailoring RAS for family farms, to ensure that those RAS should be responsive to current and emerging risks: climate change, population, greedy use of natural resources, environment pollution, sanitary and health threats etc. (Question 4.6).

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 13 December 2014 06:43
To: RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG
Subject: 73: Adoption, scale and the private sector

This is Rachel Zedeck, again. Good morning from chilly Kabul.

In response to Dr. Chander (Message 69): The propagation of inappropriate technologies or practices is not unique to India...Rather than focus on the technologies, I would ask where is the influence of both the private sector and free market economics on rural economic development strategies? Yes, big agri producers often learn because they have the capital to make mistakes but they also have access to expert advice from input suppliers.

In response to Dr. Deogratias Lwezaura (Message 71)... HALLELUJAH! Excellent feedback on motivation and scale of farmer led adoptions. I would also reference access to finance. We expect farmers to adopt, scale and then replicate within their community but finance models for most of the emerging markets are either not mature or affordable. And should thresholds of adoption be measured in percentages or in finite numbers which should eventually create a tipping point within local and eventually national economic development? In reference to women, access to credit is even more challenging without the same collateral of land or livestock in their own names.

Yes, farmers are now the intended receptacles for any and all economic and/or social interventions but who should be implementing these programs with the experience to both support and respond to the needs of these communities. My concern is that these and other discussions exclude the private sector. Even if we only focus on knowledge transfer of legitimate research and production methods, if you are in a country with 20-30 million smallholder farmers, no team of government researchers or local NGOs is going to effectively replicate distribution of these materials. The private sector ... aka companies seeking sustainable revenue are critical to the introduction, adoption and scale of any techniques or technologies in rural communities. The private sector is a reasonable conduit to the working capital needed to fund inventory, human resources, distribution, finance and of course marketing/education campaigns. If Coke and P&G can successfully penetrate the most rural markets, then why is the private sector still not the best link between the science and practical implementation and impact? (*no, this was not intended to spark a conflict especially about corporate governance vs government corruption or intrusion of big multinationals – just offering examples of familiar brands).

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 14 December 2014 07:23
To: RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG
Subject: 74: Regional specificities regarding rural advisory services for family farms

This is Dr Mahesh Chander again, responding to Question 4.4 in the conference background document.

There are regional specificities regarding rural advisory services for family farms!

Often technologies are advocated to producers without analyzing the associated requirements, consequently leading at times to failure of a high potential technology. A technology doing very well in irrigated areas having medium or large farmers like in the Punjab state of India may not sustain/perform equally well or fail in states falling in dry zones dependent on rainfed agriculture within a country like India.

Here comes the role of doing analysis of region-specific characteristics, conditions, problems or issues which need to be considered. In India, the Green Revolution failed to take off in the drylands because the associated requirements like irrigation, chemical fertilizers to grow hybrid crops were not available/applicable to farming systems in place. Thankfully, the lessons from failure of the Green Revolution in drylands have been learnt well in India as now location-specific crops/varieties and technologies are being developed, tried and promoted by agricultural extension mechanisms like KVKs/ATMA/ICAR/central and federal Departments of Agriculture and other agencies.

Within the same geographical region too, there is a difference in the way we grow a traditional low yielding crop variety under a low input low output system compared to high yielding hybrids. It is expected to inform/train the farmers on rearing high yielding improved breeds of livestock before we introduce these in a farming system. These high yielders generally require higher levels of management, including improved nutrition, housing, and preventive health practices. While tailoring rural advisory services to family farms, it must be kept in mind what technology we are recommending to which category of family farms in which region.

Sometimes, the farmers may do well with a low input low output technology regime compared to a high input high output systems because of low capacities to meet the associated requirements like seeds, chemical fertilizers, pesticides etc. Such farmers can be oriented and trained on cashing in upon opportunities now available in the form of certified organic food products, for which new capacities are required among farmers and extensionists both! Besides, more production does not necessarily result in more profit and this is going to be more prominent in coming days, where quality would matter more than the quantity. The traditional mindset of 'more production' has to shift to 'more profit' among the minds of both the farmers and extension agents!

The farmers can do farming beneficially in all the regions - irrigated, drylands, mountain terrains, deserts and other adverse situations provided the agricultural extension systems have capacities to analyse the regional situations, constraints and opportunities and then orient and train the farmers to raise crops and livestock under the given geographical specificities and resource domains of the categories of farmers they are working with. There is a saying, by Jamie Paolinetti, "Limitations live only in our minds. But if we use our imaginations, our possibilities become limitless."

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- Government of India. 2000. Policy framework for agricultural extension. Department of Agriculture & Cooperation. Ministry of Agriculture. http://agricoop.nic.in/policy_framework.htm
- Has green revolution failed India's poor? Green Revolution Vs Rain-fed Farming. <http://www.im4change.org/blog/has-green-revolution-failed-indias-poor-12.html>

-----Original Message-----

From: AIS

Sent: 15 December 2014 09:57

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 75: Current big gap in Myanmar and importance of INGOs, NGOs and CBOs in rural advisory services

[Thanks to Myo Min Aung for the message below. I remind all participants that there are just 4 days left in this 18-day long conference. The last day for receiving messages for posting is Thursday 18 December 2014. The final messages will be posted on 19 December and the conference is then finished. All messages posted so far are available at <https://listserv.fao.org/cgi-bin/wa?A0=RAS-L...Moderator>].

My name is Mr. Myo Min Aung, from Myanmar (Burma). I am working in the Italian international non-governmental organization (INGO) called CESVI with the position of Township Coordinator in Seik Phyu Township, Magway region, Shae Thot (the way forward), a program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). My professional field is agriculture and extension. I believe that the e-conference is relevant to small holder farmers.

I want to contribute towards Question 4.2 of the conference background document ("What are the current gaps in rural advisory services for smallholder family farms?").

Most of farms in Myanmar are family farms except for large scale farms. But the big gap between farmers and the government extension service is due to a few permit budget from Government sector. Most of the villages in the remote areas are missing rural advisory services. The government extension service is still poor, not only regarding budget limitation but also poor transportation and basic infrastructure. On my idea, government should permit sufficient amount of budget for Township level extension service of the Department of Agriculture. More staff are needed to be appointed or recruited for Township level extension staff but also the transportation charges for extension staff to go to the field regularly.

On the other hand, INGOs, Local NGOs (LNGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) are going to rural extension service instead of government extension service. UN agencies, INGOs, LNGOs and CBOs recognize the importance of effective organizations for rural advisory services - they are implementing training, Farmer Field Schools, farmer extension groups, training on field FEG, etc. These activities are supporting rural advisory service of family farms.

I want to also address Questions 4.5 ("How to improve the outreach and impact of rural advisory services?") and 4.6 ("What strategies are needed at the national/state level to enhance rural advisory services for family farms?"). My experience is also the same with our implementation in Shae Thot Program funded by USAID.

Our implementation is also helping to develop rural advisory service for sustainable in their villages. Our implementation started to organize Farmer Extension Group (FEG). This group was organized by 4 sub-groups such as Seed groups, Research groups, Technology groups and Market groups. These 4 components are very important for rural advisory services for family farms but also agriculture development. Our project targeted on 4 groups and is supporting the classroom training, on-farm training, farmers level trials plot and demonstration and continuously research and development approach.

Beyond the project, FEG will become rural advisory group and they will implement advisory services to farmers. The FEG approach/strategy is very useful to enhance rural advisory services for family farms but also we will get good result/impact of rural advisory service.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 15 December 2014 11:02
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 76: Questions 4.1 to 4.5 - Rural Kerala in India

I am Das Joseph, aged 35 from Kerala, India. After my post graduation in commerce, I choose my career in agriculture (not in office) and do all works in the farm including labour works. I own a total of 1.5 hectares of agriculture farm land. Mixed farming is the secret behind my success. My main crops are paddy, coconut, duck, hen, cattle, fish etc. This means all are inter related.

Based on the specific subjects of small farms and tailoring rural advisory service, I would like to give the following responses to questions in the conference background document.

4.1 What are the unique characteristics or features of rural advisory services for different types of family farms?

In Kerala, large population have their own small proportions of land. It can only be called as plots. People are not interested in producing their own vegetables. Even farmers are interested in buying vegetables and food items which are produced with the help of highly concentrated and dangerous pesticides in large farms. But some negligible people find their organic vegetables on house terrace.

4.2 What are the current gaps in rural advisory services for smallholder family farms?

There is no effective advisory service here. Only with the help of advisory service, it is not possible to increase production here. Because here the cost of production is very high for small farms (labour wages, cost of manure, etc). So it is profitable for small farmers to buy food items from large scale producers who have large sized farms. Also those who are responsible for rural advisory service are not interested to take part in the same. My advice to overcome this problem is by

a) Appointing a national/international agency for strict supervision of government officers who are intended for rural advisory service

b) Providing material like small machinery ploughs, reapers, etc. that minimize labour efforts and provide technical knowledge of these machines.

4.3 What role can producer organizations play in tailoring rural advisory services for family farms?

In India there are many producer organizations that help to provide advisory service and organize agricultural activities. Some successful organizations are:

* KERAFED (Kerala Kerakarshaka Sahakarana Federation Ltd) - related to improvement of coconut development

- * NAFED (National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India) - related to whole agriculture direct marketing by eliminating intermediaries
- * SUPPLYCO (Kerala State Civil Supplies Corporation Limited) - related to collection and distribution of food grains
- * MILMA and AMUL (milk collection and supply milk in Kerala and Gujarat - in India)
- * VFPCCK (Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council Keralam) - related with collection and distribution of vegetable and fruits by eliminating business men

These organizations are independent to take any decision for their success. Also, farmers have the right to get any information on these organizations activities. These organizations directly provide information to farmers and collect agricultural products directly from farmers. This helps to eliminate intermediary business people. This leads to increase the profits of farmers.

Following are the effective measures for the improvement of good performance to some extent:

- * Creating self-help groups of 15 members of same locality.
- * Women agricultural organization of 10 members (like the Kudumbashree project) in Kerala, India.
- * Group farming shall be organized by small farmland holders so that they can share their common machineries, tools and equipments.
- * The most educated person from the group shall be selected as the leader of the group
- * A group of these leaders shall be formed. Various information training, and knowledge on agriculture can be passed to these group of leaders and ultimately reach their group members.
- * Opportunities are given to technically educated persons for the improvement of small agricultural machinery which may lessen the physical effort of the labour.
- * Information about various schemes on agriculture expansion are informed to farmers through newspapers and the above selected group leaders.

4.4 Are there regional specificities regarding rural advisory services for family farms?

On considering the regional specific problems, issues, etc. the most important are given below:

- * Lack of interest to conduct training programme by some corrupted officials.
- * Lack of woman participation in training programme is one problem here.
- * The real fact is that, only through advisory service, agriculture expansion cannot be achieved. Distribution of funds and subsidies have equal importance in successful agriculture. But these funds are leaked to the hands of corrupted officials. Also the distribution expense of balance funds after leakage is very high
- * The farmers get only a nominal amount of funds and subsidies when huge expenses are incurred for them. Here it seems profitable to buy food than cultivate it. This is why here people are seeking any other work leaving small agriculture farmland bare. So what is the need of advisory service? This is the question of farmers here.

4.5 How to improve the outreach and impact of rural advisory services?

Approaches to improve rural advisory service: Activities like training programmes, classes on improvement of agriculture method, fertilizers etc. are not reaching to farmers on time. So only a few people can attend the training programme. This problem can be overcome. The details of the training programme shall be conveyed to the selected group leaders (section 4.3). Other methods are by publishing notices in newspapers, public announcement in markets and main streets clubs, etc. where farmers gather together. Training venue and time should be convenient to farmers to attend. This means training should not be conducted at offices. It shall be in the field, where demonstration plots are organized by agriculture officers themselves. These demonstration plots will attract farmers and they will reach training programme themselves and follow the practices in demonstration plots.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 16 December 2014 09:13
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 77: A crop pest rural advisory service

I am Javier Franco, previously a research scientist for several years and now working with the CABI-Plantwise program with plant clinics in Bolivia and Peru.

The questions from the conference background document that I will discuss are described below:

Question 4.1

Small or medium-sized family farms and subsistence or near-subsistence smallholders of family farms differ regarding financial capability to have access to rural advisory services. For the last category of family farms, there is no way they can pay for that service as the second group could do it.

Questions 4.2 and 4.5

As indicated above, if subsistence family farms are not capable of paying for any kind of rural advisory services these family farms require a free advisory service, such as that given in plant clinics by Plantwise-CABI which provide specific attention to solve plant health problems in several crops in some Latin American countries and other regions of the world.

Plantwise is a programme which fosters diverse partnerships across the plant health system to remove constraints to agricultural productivity. Working with partners in over 30 countries worldwide, the programme enables actors at all levels to better respond to pest threats. This includes providing diagnosis and advice based on integrated pest management (IPM) through a network of plant clinics, like those for human health, where farmers bring their crop problems. It is through Plantwise that countries can also tap into a global knowledge bank of information on pest diagnosis, management and distribution (<http://www.plantwise.org/KnowledgeBank/home.aspx>). With all the data from plant clinics collected into a secured area of the knowledge bank, Plantwise can inform policy makers about emerging pests and pesticide issues, helping put international frameworks into practice. Data coming in from the plant health clinics allow plant doctors to have pest and disease information from the farmers visiting their clinics and record it on prescription and record sheets. The intention is to capture as much accurate information as possible, enabling the plant doctor coordinators to monitor the activities within their districts. Accurate data collection also means that the knowledge bank will be displaying the latest and most detailed information on the global distribution of pests and diseases.

In August this year, the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Secretariat, FAO and Plantwise convened a workshop in Accra, Ghana to build linkages that will enhance safe and sustainable food security at a national, regional and global level. It was one in a series of recent efforts to better integrate plant health activities and resources in the region. See <http://www.fao.org/africa/news/detail-news/en/c/240451/> for more details.

Currently, in most countries with plant clinics, the internet is not used because very few people have access to a computer. However, the use of mobile phones is widespread and they could be used at

plant clinics for advertising future clinic sessions. In Cochabamba in Bolivia, plant clinic doctors promoted by SMS messages to farmers' phones. In fact, as almost all farmers around the world have a mobile phone, the regular use of a mobile network as a means of communication to farmers about soil, seed, fertiliser, weather and crop information is being planned.

Question 4.6

A strong national program for establishment of plant clinics for small farmer families as explained above.

Question 4.7

Participating in decision-making processes at local organization level such as municipalities, family associations, etc.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 16 December 2014 10:37
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 78: Family farmers involved in formulating policies relevant to rural advisory services

This is from Violet Nyando, again.

Here is my contribution on Question 4.7 (How can family farmers be best involved in formulating policies relevant to rural advisory services for family farms?).

Policy formulation processes are important in any development plans as they provide guidance and frameworks against which investments can be directed and monitored. Farmers are at the core of agricultural based value chains and for their services and their contribution to be sustained, they need to be consulted as far as important key decision making processes are concerned. Policies being critical decisions in any given economy, farmers need to be involved in agricultural based policy making processes with regard to rural advisory services.

The state and non-state actors, including researchers, educationists, agribusiness entrepreneurs and other relevant institutions, should be facilitated to participate in these forums together with farmers to discuss and deliberate on pertinent issues concerning agriculture. Farmers particularly can contribute by giving their written positions to policy makers or through actual participation in policy making processes at all levels. Through their groups, farmers can generate issues affecting their agricultural productivity. Once these issues have been consolidated, the farmers can be guided to have them validated through conducting action research to qualify the issues. Once the issues have been qualified, then farmers can be guided to develop policy positions in form of proposals that they can now present to the relevant authorities. These issues can also be presented directly by farmers to the relevant authorities or committees through their nominated representatives in these forums.

Farmers can also be facilitated to initiate new policies especially those that are new with regard to the new value chains they are engaging in. Based on the issues they have raised, a policy expert can draft the zero draft policy for sharing with the larger community and also for sharing with other stakeholders for their inputs to improve it.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 16 December 2014 10:48
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 79: Participation and family production

This is Marisa Gonnella, again.

All participants agreed on the importance of family production. Comments and experiences refer to different situations considering the contexts of rural development and cultural meanings established family production, making each experience unique. This is because rural extension works with social relationships so you cannot isolate and standardize methodology since the same methodology can be considered successful in one context and not in another. This issue must be present when speaking of adaptation of extension services to household production conditions.

Moreover, the key issue is to analyze between public and private interests extension services which priorities are set in relation to food production and the continuity of family production. The country data show a decrease in the number of producers, which are mostly of family production. A situation that has been existing since the late 1980s in countries and coincides with decades of expansion of private extension services. What kind of rural extension services and institutions do we think about when talking to adapt our rural extension services? What kind of institutions are required for the pluri institutions in rural extension services have priority to small and medium producers based organization whose productions are family work?

In Argentina, the experiences are diverse both in public service rural extension as well as the advice offered by companies related to technology inputs or processes. Experiences relate to capitalized family production.

With family subsistence production, the NGOs and public services have greater presence and have diversity of experiences.

In general the programs present difficulties of continuity when not installed from producer involvement and participation is not achieved only by incorporating a technology aimed at increasing productivity.

The expansion of soybean shows incorporation of technological packages, but not related to the participation of producers in institutions and forms of social organization through which participation is consolidated in institutional frameworks.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 16 December 2014 11:27
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 80: Re: Regional specificities regarding rural advisory services for family farms

This is B L Jangid, working as a Principal Scientist (Agricultural Extension) at the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) Central Arid Zone Research Institute (CAZRI), Regional Research Station, Pali-Marwar, Rajasthan, India.

I have been going through all the messages of this conference and it's going great. It has been great learning about the issues of the conference in various parts of the world.

I wish to respond to Message 74 of Dr. Mahesh Chander. In this part of western Rajasthan, dryland agriculture is the major agriculture activity of family farms. Though family farms are generally falls under the large category, but mostly due to rainfed-based single cropping the agriculture is still in subsistence mode. However, wherever there is availability of irrigation water, two or even three crops a year are taken up. Livestock rearing forms part and parcel of family farming in this region. So, there exists a complex subsistence family farming phenomenon.

Providing agriculture advisory service is a real challenge. What Dr. Mahesh Chander has pointed out is true within the region for family farming.

The agro-advisory provided is in pluristic mode. The major player is the state agriculture department with a well-organised extension set up, presently mainly operating through ATMA mode implementing various programmes of State/Central Government's Dept of Agriculture. The other players are: KVKs of/and SAU's and ICAR institutes, state animal husbandry dept, farmers cooperative societies, dairy cooperative societies, state dept of horticulture, input dealers and suppliers etc. *[Following Glendenning et al (2010), the Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) model is a central government initiative of the 2005–06 Support to State Extension Programmes for Extension Reforms (SSEPER) scheme; the main extension activities of the central autonomous Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) are achieved through the 40 Agriculture Technology Information Centres (ATICs) and 569 district-level Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), or farm science centers; and each India state has a state agricultural university (SAU), which provides extension and training activities through the Directorate of Extension and Education...Moderator].*

The radio and televisions channels are regularly broadcasting agro-advisory programmes two or three times a day using inputs from subject matter specialists. The ICTs are also penetrating through continuously increasing accessibility of masses to mobiles through e-KVK service in specific and general increase in telephonic network.

The package of practices for the zone are updated on the basis of inputs of the research and extension systems conversed through the Zonal Research and Extension Advisory Committee (ZREAC) meeting held twice a year (one before Rabi season and another before kharif season) at a designated Zonal research centre. The outcome of ZREAC forms the basis for all major advisory services in the zone. The advisory service is not distinguishing to family farm size but it is for the whole agriculture system

of the zone. However, the various extension programmes implemented distinguish between various categories of family farms viz. almost every programme of training, demonstration, subsidized input etc. based on category of marginal/small/medium/scheduled castes (SC)/scheduled tribes (ST)/farm women farmers.

It will be a mammoth task to tailor the advisory according to category of family farms in such a diverse and complex agriculture.

I have tried to share the scenario of this region regarding the issues on which participants of this conference are deliberating. I hope it will help in understanding the same.

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Reference:
Glendenning, C.J., Babu, S. and K. Asenso-Okyere. 2010. Review of agricultural extension in India: Are farmers' information needs being met? IFPRI Discussion Paper 01048. <http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp01048.pdf> (1.7 MB).

From: AIS
Sent: 16 December 2014 11:53
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 81: Current gaps in rural advisory services - Guatemala

This is Horacio Luis Villagrán Juárez. I am a Master of Science student, specializing in Rural Development at the University of San Carlos in Guatemala.

I agree with the statement in previous messages, they have the same structural problems in almost all regions of the world, to which the lack of training for proper human development is subject of special significance for a productive enterprise in the short term. With regard to the principles expressed in the synthesis of opening of this enriching forum I would like to expand upon Question 4.2 - What are the current gaps in rural advisory services for smallholder family farms?

In my brief experience in this dynamic, rural stakeholders; having no coverage of basic services throughout life are in a position where it is almost impossible to develop new skills, abilities and knowledge among many other things, which ends up being a strong constraint which makes a difference in the economic growth of each individual within this scenario. This keeps them subjugated to subsistence activities (like selling unskilled labor) which in the juxtaposition of this dynamic does not impede economic growth but complicates the scenario to achieve it. Due to this I agree with the statement by Professor Marisa di Luján Gonnella of Argentina (Message 44), concerning the classification of models of family production within this dynamic. So, extrapolating this to my country of residence with information from the 2003 National Census of Agriculture (CENAGRO) published by the National Institute of Statistics (<http://www.ine.gov.gt/sistema/uploads/2014/01/16/cv9H2R2CyhS1n0c1XfKqXVf4pLlxONTg.pdf> - 3.8 MB), which made a classification by category production models according to land tenure;

Category	% of producers	Acre hectares) (Mz=0.7	% of terrain	Average plot size (Mz)
Infrasubsistence	45.2	172,412.75	3.2%	0.46

(less than 1 Mz)				
Subsistence	46.8	989,790.71	18.6%	2.5
(1- 10 Mz)				
Surplus	6.1	1,145,318.00	21.6%	22.7
(10 – 64 manzanas)				
Commercial	1.9	3,008,316.31	56.6%	194.4
(more than 64 Mz)				

Here you can consider land tenure as another turning point within the model of Rural Development; so now the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA) resolves its rural extension services through its Family Farming Programme (Programa de Agricultura Familiar para el Fomento de la Economía Campesina (PAFFEC)) which also takes into account the landless, in addition to providing coverage to commercial agricultural activities on the side. And not like a few years ago where advisory services were only offered to those that were included with tenure of land.

You can find the guidelines take this dynamic within my country in the link for the PAFFEC 2012-2015 which can be found at http://web.maga.gob.gt/wp-content/uploads/pdf/home/programa_agricultura.pdf (900 KB).

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
 Sent: 16 December 2014 13:40
 To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
 Subject: 82: Some gaps in rural advisory services to family farmers - Ashanti Region, Ghana

I am Gabriel Adukpo, head of Department of Agriculture, Obuasi Municipal Assembly in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. One of my duties is to promote extension in the district. I have a few front line agricultural extension agents and their supervisors to execute that mandate.

I want to contribute to the discourse based on discussion topic No. 4.2

A number of gaps exist in the rural advisory services to family farmers. However the under-listed shortcomings became glaring when we implemented a sustainable livelihoods project together with a non-governmental organization (NGO) in the Eastern Region of Ghana.

In the first place it came out that our contact hours with farmers were too short prior to the project. Because of the reduced number of extension officers we tend to spread thin over a large number of family farmers. With the NGO coming in we went to the field with a pack of light refreshment for

both farmers and staff. This prolonged our engagement with the farmers. We never gave them cash anyway.

We also realized that though the extension officers were technically imbued they lacked the soft skills to facilitate farmers' group formation and advocacy. When we worked on that gap, extension officers in the project area became more competent than their counterparts whose operational areas were not covered by the project.

Another good thing we did was that we were in teams comprising agricultural officers, community development staff and co-operative officers. This enabled different perspectives of rural development to be implemented to the advantage of family farmers. After the project we went our old ways because we live under different administrations.

The bottom line of the few gaps mentioned above is low level of funding to the public sector rural advisory services. I am always reluctant to mention funding but we can do little without enough financial support to the sector.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 16 December 2014 17:16
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 83: Extension and advisory services by producer organizations

Dr Mahesh Chander again, this time on the potential of producer groups in providing extension and advisory services (EAS) to member producers.

In our recently submitted study of dairy cooperatives in India, we found that: The EAS role was not well recognized by the cooperatives at least when compared with the animal breeding and health service role, the quality and quantity as well as poor professional orientation of practitioners within the cooperatives with regards to EAS was apparent, lack of funding for EAS by cooperatives, social capital, cultural practices and social networking were not taken into account to design EAS by cooperatives. Information and communication technology (ICT), although a powerful tool to inform members for providing EAS, was used very little. Business/entrepreneurship orientation required was also lacking in the context of RAS. Thus, the competence of EAS personnel of producer organizations needs to be improved through training.

The EAS can help link up smallholder farmers, rural entrepreneurs and other members of the producer groups with institutions offering training and education in fields relevant to the agricultural sector. Besides, the EAS has to take up the challenge to develop business management skills among smallholder farmers and other local entrepreneurs. For this to happen, producer organizations have to recognize the importance of EAS as one of their important roles.

While most of the large farmers and, to some extent, medium farmers are equipped with some business management skills to cash in on opportunities in entrepreneurship, the smallholders lag far behind in this important area of agribusiness. The big retail chains are now opening shops in developing countries, which often marginalize small scale producers unless they organize themselves

into groups. Ever increasing numbers of producer groups, farmer producer organizations, cooperatives are coming in every corner of the world. These groups have a far more important role in poor developing countries in Asia and Africa where the small scale farmers lack capacities individually and so are not capable of competing in rapidly developing markets.

The producer groups having membership of small scale producers need EAS to improve their capacities and skills not only in production and processing but also in business skills. This emerging need for business acumen can be met if producer groups realize and recognize the importance of EAS and take action to improve EAS by strategic planning considering the changing requirements of the members with respect to EAS in particular.

It's high time producer organizations consider EAS as one of their important roles and take measures to improve their capacities on EAS to be effective brokers for the members.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 17 December 2014 09:12
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 84: Family farmers are getting older and older

This is Ehsan Masoomi. I am a second year master of science student at the Department of Agricultural Extension and Education, Faculty of Agriculture, Shiraz University, Iran.

Family farms study is an important issue in Iran which can lead to rural development and improvement, since most rural farms are family oriented and the majority of them are small scale. Therefore, the farm governing style must be considered in rural development plans and policy making.

There are a couple of main differences between small farmers and large-scale farmers. First, the majority of large-scale farmers are not rural residents and their role in rural development is not significant compared to small farmers. Second, the majority of farmers are small farmers and their share in rural development is significant.

As an example, one of the issues that is important in rural development is change in the farmer family members number when a fixed resources (such as water and land) is going to be distributed to more people due to increase in the farmer family members and subsequent change in member roles. Consequences of those changes are: decrease of family income, weaker perspective of agriculture for the young generation, reduction of young people in the farmers family and an older farmers family.

Therefore, old farmers need their own special consultancy. It should be mentioned that, meanwhile, young people must be considered and try to give them a better agriculture perspective.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS

Sent: 17 December 2014 09:25

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 85: Re: Some gaps in rural advisory services to family farmers - Ashanti Region, Ghana

This is Dr. Deogratias Lwezaura from the Tanzania Ministry of Agriculture, again.

I continue to congratulate the remarkable contributions. One of the many points I am learning from Message 82 by Gabriel Adukpo and others is that we need to go as a multidisciplinary team (sociologist, cooperative officer, economist, extension officer, value chain experts, etc.) in family farms engagement. In this way we will avoid placing too much to extension officers, which in the end we may not achieve the knowledge required to the farmers. So, extension services would need a well-coordinated approach with the involvement of various actors each playing his/her area of expertise.

Another point which I think we have missed out in our approaches is embracing wholesale the advisory services from the West and tending too much to apply knowledge based on theories without adapting them based in our family farms context. It is of significance that we Africanize our methodologies of agricultural advisory services - make them African. The issue of integrating indigenous knowledge of family farms into the mainstream of advisory services is critical.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS

Sent: 17 December 2014 12:30

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 86: Rural advisory services in Pakistan - Responses to questions 4.1 to 4.7

My name is Shahid Sheikh, retired from the agrochemicals industry in Pakistan. I am now working as freelance agriculture consultant and promoting sustainable agriculture through Good Agricultural Practices and Organic Farming System voluntarily.

The hosting of this e-mail conference by FAO on "Tailoring Rural Advisory Service to Family Farms" must be appreciated in view of food security challenges.

Family Farms:

The concept of the family farm is not popular in our situation but all farms are owned by a family head, either an owner holds large farmland area but land is divided into different members of family and all agricultural operations are done by staff/farm workers. While owners of medium farm holdings, the land is also divided among the family members and children. In case of smallholders, one member owns the land and manages all agricultural operations on that land, family members may join him in work in free time, in the case of children after school if there is facility near to farm and wife or family women also joins after homework.

In Pakistan, the following is the farm size holding and their contribution in cultivation;

Size of Farms in AcresNo. of Farms (%) Cultivated Area (%)

1- Less than 12.5	85%	47 %
2- 12.5 -25	10 %	27 %
3- 25-50	4%	17 %
4- 50-100	1%	8 %
5- 100 and above	Below 1%	

The small farmers are the backbone of agriculture in most countries, including Pakistan, but no importance has been given to improve the life style. There is a need to improve their livelihood through investment in training for innovative practices and soft credit facilities to small holders for purchase of seed, fertilizer pesticides and equipment used in farming.

Agriculture in Pakistan is facing major challenges due to climate change, energy shortage, land degradation, water scarcity and untimely monsoon and devastating heavy floods disturbing the life and infrastructure of the rural areas. Well planned and established infra-structure contributes significantly towards the improvement of livelihoods of the population as well as welfare and prosperity through increase economic activity.

Here, I would like to address the 7 questions in Section 4 of the conference background document.

Question 4.1 What are the unique characteristics or features of rural advisory services for different types of family farms?

As mentioned in Section 3 of the conference background document, there are the same three categories of farmers in Pakistan also. The small farmers are increasing in our country as the lands are dividing. So, there are large numbers of small farmers who hold 4 acres of land only. Focusing more on land, crop production and low yield problems, the man behind the plough is always ignored. Most of the farmers are illiterate, poor and ignorant. These small farmers do not get any financial support from bank credit facilities to purchase inputs like seeds, pesticides, fertilizers etc. Additionally, a large area of land is owned by feudal and the farmers who work on their lands, are just tenants.

Question 4.2 What are the current gaps in rural advisory services for smallholder family farms?

At the moment, there is no such organized rural advisory service for any category of farms except agriculture extension services from the Agriculture Department from all provinces. Large farmers or high medium farmers influence the medium and small holder in their practices.

According to views expressed by farmers, the Agricultural Extension Department of Government is not providing quality services. The staff in the Department do not have adequate knowledge on innovative technology and also no dedication to the cause of food security and welfare of farmers. Another point to be considered is the lack of mobility equipment for the staff of agricultural extension to offer services at the place of farmers.

As for rural support program, it cannot be run without the support of government and universities offering courses in agriculture. In my opinion, the services of final year students of agricultural colleges and universities as internship will be much important for the compliance of their degree program. Another important point to be considered - this task must be given to dedicated and sincere officials for implementation.

There is communication gap between farmers and government officials responsible for extension services, specific research findings benefiting the farmers are not delivered in appropriate manner.

Electronic media is the best means of communication in rural areas broadcast the programmes related to the new agricultural techniques and day to day forecasting for crop requirement in their area with the help of qualified experts.

Question 4.3 What role can producer organizations play in tailoring rural advisory services for family farms?

Producer organizations can arrange education and training programs for their members, can prepare projects for the development of infrastructure to ease marketing of their produce such as road network, energy resources, research activity to develop plant propagation material with the help of agricultural scientists, can negotiate with banks for affordable farm credit facility, crop insurance, innovation practices for value addition, protection of environment as well as social work for family health and welfare.

The services offered by companies selling fertilizers, pesticides and seeds can be availed of giving them additional task to support rural development and education of youth with their support.

In my opinion, government must ensure an effective rural extension service to the farmers in collaboration with farmers association at the village level, this can play an important role in setting the goal and achieving the task.

Question 4.4 Are there regional specificities regarding rural advisory services for family farms?

In Pakistan conditions, agricultural extension services are a provincial subject but their services are not efficiently delivered in all areas. Only the Punjab province is better organized than three other provinces due to management at top level. In the Punjab province, the Agriculture Department has activated a toll free helpline to resolve the emergent problems of farmers and also an additional SMS helpline from any cellular phone. I cannot say how many farmers have benefited from this helpline and how much these services are effective and solving the problem of farmers.

Radio programs also broadcast in the Punjab province, providing guidance to farmers as compared to other provinces or region. In Punjab, there are 27059 villages and total farming families are 3.8 million, out which 3.67 million families have less than 12.5 acres.

Question 4.5 How to improve the outreach and impact of rural advisory services?

Pakistan agriculture needs a major transformation if it has to significantly contribute towards the improvement of livelihoods of the rural population as well as macroeconomic activity for welfare and prosperity. Pakistan agriculture and food security concerns remain high on the policy agenda at the national level. Due to concerted actions, the performance of agriculture has been encouraging with growth of 2.1 percent during 2013-14.

Government must ensure quality agricultural research to enhance productivity and good agricultural practices for value addition for the domestic and international market. Dedicated team of experts for rural advisory with communication facilities are the basic requirement.

Question 4.6 What strategies are needed at the national/state level to enhance rural advisory services for family farms?

The rural population is at risk from disaster of climate change, which must be considered to improve the rural advisory services as well developing infra-structure on self-help basis by providing financial and technical support from experts. There is need to establish rural infrastructure for accelerated agricultural growth which may help in minimizing poverty and provides the farmers a required level of services for better livelihoods. There must be the well-intended and focused efforts by the government to exploit maximum benefit from this sector. The ultimate objective is food security and achieving self-sufficiency in nutritious grains/staple food. It depends upon prosperity of a large fragment of community that revolves around agriculture that requires timely and adequate inputs, ensures better environment for sustainable economic growth. Government must try to modernize the

agriculture sector by introducing innovation, developing resources, education and training of farmers, exchange of information from quality research around the regional countries to increase production which in turn may help in achieving sustainable economic growth.

Question 4.7 How can family farmers be best involved in formulating policies relevant to rural advisory services for family farms?

There is no say of the small farmers or role in formulating policies in our condition. Sometimes farmers do not get return on their investment or they performed labour work to cultivate their land. For this purpose, there must be cooperative associations, dedicated members and strong membership to force the government.

Pakistan's agriculture sector involves 43.7 percent of the labour force that produces their own food needs and ensures availability of food for the rest of nation and value-added activities. The potential role for agriculture in development is to reduce poverty and drive growth for countries whose economies are agriculture-based. Growing population size requires agriculture growth compatible to meet required level of healthy and safe food. Government must ensure quality agricultural research to enhance productivity and good agricultural practices for value addition for the domestic and international market.

There is need to meet the challenge of transition in agriculture from traditional to modern farming techniques, based on adequate availability of inputs like certified seeds, balanced use of fertilizers, mechanization, agricultural credit and opportunities of investment in agricultural research. The achievement of better productivity requires efficient utilization of water resources while the static cropping pattern requires serious attention as well. The adverse impact of climatic change on productivity needs to be countered through adaptation and mitigating measures based on innovations and diversification by inculcating farming community to adopt advanced techniques. The way forward is to raise the yield of crops along with livestock and fisheries production, and improve the agro-based industrial value addition. The improved road and communication infrastructure in rural areas has facilitated the farmers to tap more income from production cycle of crops, livestock and perishable items (vegetables and fruits) through improved supply chain.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS

Sent: 17 December 2014 12:15
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 87: Agricultural extension in Cameroon

This is Nguouambe Nestor, again.

Agricultural extension in Cameroon started before independency. During that period, agricultural extension was controlled by the colonial administration and was based on two main approaches:

- i. Farmer contact approach: where farmers were trained to experience some crops (palm oil, coffee, tea, rubber) to be imported to colonial metropolis.
- ii. Visit and trips approach: leading new farmers to learn more through other experimented farmers.

The mains approaches of agricultural extension used in Cameroon since the 1960s were:

- i. National extension services approach (NESA)
- ii. Approach centered on specific crops
- iii. Integrated project approach
- iv. Training and visit approach
- v. Advisory approach

Between these main approaches, there were others approaches centered on specific activities, specific categories of farmers and specific zones. We can notice the:

- i. Farming systems approach
- ii. Land and college approach, also called farmer field school (FFS)
- iii. Research-development-training approach
- iv. Research-action-partnership approach

Main effect of agricultural education institutions in Cameroon: Nowadays, Cameroon has more than 140 schools and instructions for agricultural education among which two higher schools, the Faculty of Agronomy and Agricultural Sciences (FASA) and National Higher School for Agro-industry and Alimentary Sciences (ENSAI). We can count 23 public schools which train technicians, 86 public schools for agricultural agents and 26 private schools for both technicians and agents.

Institutions supporting agricultural extension and education in Cameroon: Most of the extension approaches implemented in Cameroon were supported by various types of institutions, national as international. Each institution brought its support according to its vision of extension systems.

Research institutions supporting extension and advisory services in Cameroon:

- Centre de cooperation international pour la Recherche Agronomique et de développement (CIRAD), a French institute present in Cameroon working with various ministries notably the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation (MINERESI).
- International Institute for tropical Agriculture (IITA), supports extension by two ways: learning and/or training, and dissemination. IITA is more involved in tropical agriculture by developing new genetic material for high variety seeds.
- Research and Development Institute (IRD), a French institute supporting agricultural research and extension in Cameroon. IRD was involving in field demonstration and farmers contact in old extension approach.
- International Agro-Forestry Center (CIFOR) mostly involved in agro-forestry. CIFOR supports farmer in sustainable agriculture and extends new agro-forestry plants notably to cocoa farmers in Cameroon.

Financial institutions:

- World Bank: The most part of funds for Training and visit was provided by the World Bank from 1990 to 2004. The first loan convention was signed in 1990 for the implementation of the National Agricultural Extension and Training Program (PNVFA). This ran from 1988 to 1998 for a total amount of 21 million USD.
- French Development Agency (FDA): The FDA brought, and is still bringing, the essential funding to new extension approaches in Cameroon. This is done through the "Debt-Clearing contract's" (Contrat de Desendettement et de Développement-C2D), agricultural sector. In fact, FDA supports three main extension programs in Cameroon (ACEFA, AFOP and AMO). In 2008, the first phase of AFOP

received 7.8 billion FCFA (15.6 million USD) - this phase goes from 2008 to 2012. The second phase has begun in July 2012 until 2014 for a total budget of 48.9 million euros supported in 71% by FDA (61% for C2D grant and 10% for FDA Loan).

Prospects: Agricultural extension in Cameroon must be based on participatory diagnostic of farming family. Farmer education tools must also take into account their school level (both for literate and non-literate farmers). If farmers and their micro-projects are taking into account in extension program, they will better feel themselves involved and considered innovation as their own knowledge. By doing so, appropriation can be easy and ensure sustainability of approaches.

Conclusion: The extension system in Cameroon has faced most problems like exclusion of farmers in decision making process, orientation of farmer's activities for massive extension, lack of skills and good school levels both for farmers and extension agents to better understand approaches. Also, there are insufficient funds for supporting activities in all regions of the country.

I have prepared a draft paper with an analysis of agricultural extension and education approaches in Cameroon since independence, and can send an electronic copy to anyone who is interested.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 17 December 2014 12:59
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 88: Questions 4.1 to 4.5 - Rural Kerala in India

I am Das Joseph Koottappillil again, from Kerala, India.

From my experience, I'd like to inform one fact. Lack of effective rural advisory service and supply of adequate input factors such as agriculture machinery, manure, etc. leads to loss of interest in agriculture. The farmers are seeking other jobs. At the same time, agricultural farm lands are converted into commercial plots and other plantations. Ultimately in recent future poverty will affect in worst condition.

Responding to Questions 4.6 and 4.7 in the conference background document:

4.6 What strategies are needed at the national/state level to enhance rural advisory services for family farms?

To avoid the above worst situation, several strategies are to be formed.

A) At the regional level:

- * Efficient agricultural demonstration plots using high yielding seeds should be maintained and run by government level to attract existing/potential farmers.
- * At the time of training, certain awards shall be distributed to best farmers who achieve best results in food production based on evidence.
- * Offer agriculture inputs such as machinery, manure, subsidies to those who attend training programmes.
- * Conduct group farming techniques and share common agriculture equipment. *Encourage high school students to conduct and participate in agriculture in school compound. This will increase the interest of children in agriculture.

B) At state level:

- * Manage and monitor regional level organizations
- * Funds and financial aids shall be distributed on needy basis for different crops.
- * Projects on waste management techniques and construction of biogas plants will lessen the waste, effort of women in house. It also increase the fertility of soil and ultimately can conserve our non-renewable fuels.

C) National level

- * National level organizations can formulate policies to attract farmers and to effective means of advice to farmers through national level telecasting.
- * Extra bonus and promotions should be given to best state level agricultural organizations
- * Also demotion should be given to government official who did not achieve a basic level agriculture output, by giving prior warning (considering natural calamities)
- * National level law making body should be formed to regulate and execute the rules to improve agriculture production through advisory service and agriculture inputs factors. Functions of this body should be based on democratic system.
- * FAO should make a strict supervision over these national level organizations, agriculture land misuse and corruption in agriculture related activities.

4.7 How can family farmers be best involved in formulating policies relevant to rural advisory services for family farms?

It is not good for any agricultural organization alone to take any decision. Participation of farmers is also a very important factor.

- * In Kerala, India here we conduct GRAMA SABHA (Village/panchayath meeting) of farmers once in three months. In this meeting, agriculture officers, Panchayath President, veterinary doctors etc. will participate along with farmers.
- * In this meeting, decisions are taken for the next agriculture season, fund utilization, clearing doubts of farmers etc.
- * Notices on these GRAMA SABHA will be published nearby shops, public noticeboards and inform to the group farming leaders.
- * Older farmers have their own hereditary knowledge on some farming methods, organic pesticides, herbal(ayurvedic) treatment etc. Scientific studies of this knowledge may leads to agriculture extension.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 17 December 2014 13:05
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 89: Re: Some gaps in rural advisory services to family farmers - Ashanti Region, Ghana

This is Francis Chilenga again from Ministry of Agriculture, Malawi.

I would like to concur with Dr. Deogratias Lwezaura from Tanzania (message 85) that we need to integrate indigenous knowledge of family farms into mainstream rural advisory services. Recently, a local farmer-led innovation emerged among global Top 20 innovations that benefit small farmers. The competition was launched by the Dutch-based organisation the Center for Technical and Rural Cooperation in Agriculture (CTA) ACP-EU and I was the one who wrote about the innovation story. A lot of family farms are innovating but their knowledge is completely unrecognised because of the dominant conventional rural advisory services. It is high time that as professionals concerned with rural advisory services, local innovations that seem promising for upscaling and outscaling should be promoted while tasking research to explore such innovations. *[For more information on the CTA Top 20 innovations, see <http://www.cta.int/en/article/2014-10-14/cta-top-20-innovators-to-be-trained-in-scientific-writing.html> ...Moderator].*

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 17 December 2014 13:11
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 90: Advisory services for family farmers must focus on multi-functional agriculture

This is Ehsan Masoomi, again.

Rural consultancy services in Iran are mostly economic oriented and the goal is national production increase or farmer income. Rural consultancy services should consider other aspects of farmers life and, even if the goal is increase of farmer's income, rural economy development as a whole must be considered and not just agricultural economy.

It is interesting that this important issue is ignored even in university programs. As an example, rural economy is not included in rural consultancy services in Iran. In reality, most rural consultancy services are established for agricultural economy although their name is simply rural consultancy services responsible for whole package of services.

With the help of rural development officers (not only agricultural) in already existing consultancy centers, the rural development plan can be enhanced and improved significantly. Iran needs both rural development plan in national scale and meanwhile a plan for accurate investigations in rural scale. From another hand, expert rural development officers are needed to perform research about the contribution of small farmers in rural development plans instead of agricultural economy development plans.

University should educate fresh graduates in rural development programs to help in implementation and execution of research-based rural development plans. With regard to the above, rural advisory services must focus on multi-functional agriculture and development of new opportunities rather than working on farm only. With stress on multifunctional agriculture, farmers will gain all aspects of agriculture and rural economy also will be devolved in addition to agricultural economy.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 17 December 2014 13:31
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 91: Adapting to local conditions/aging farmers

This is Archie Cameron again, commenting on Message 84 by Ehsan Masoomi on family farmers aging and Message 85 by Dr Deogratias Lwezaura on adapting to local conditions.

It is a world-wide trend on all farms that there is a rising average age of farmers. This presents challenges to assist them in continuing in farming, passing the farm on (succession planning) and attending to other problems arising from the aging (assistance to carry out their work, health provisions etc.) - all sections of the rural advisory services can provide help from governments, co-ops, farmer associations, NGO's etc. If it can be shown that farms are profitable/sustainable, then a number of younger potential farmers will be attracted. Our discussions have centred round many of these approaches.

If we can world-wide succeed in applying the various approaches we have discussed, there is a good possibility we can be successful in our aims; one quote which should be borne in mind in agriculture is "Staying Power". Agriculture is a long haul matter, quick ins and outs do not work for most involved in agriculture. With the growing world population and quite a number of regions and countries increasing their returns (earning/paying power/position), there should be scope for better returns for all farmers and this is where the rural advisory services and the various approaches we have been discussing should give us a way forward, provided we are able to implement all the proposals we have been discussing.

As mentioned in Message 85 there needs to be adaption and adjustment to local conditions/perceptions and cultural and other concerns at the local level "if it works/will work, do it".

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 17 December 2014 15:28

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 92: Gender dimension in extension and advisory services

Dr Mahesh Chander again, on the gender dimension in agricultural extension services.

In 2005, I supervised a Master's thesis*, wherein we found that male and female members of farming households differ with respect to their access to information. This difference in accessing information was due to the variation in opportunities available to male and female members of households for training, exposure visits, credit, mass media exposure, educational opportunities and social participation in informal and formal associations including contacts with development agencies.

Likewise, many reports are now available, which indicate that extension and advisory service agents hardly reach poor rural women in many developing countries. It's also true that most of the agricultural operations are performed by women, especially in animal husbandry women take up most of the task in India. This poor access to information, resources and opportunities to rural women have adverse effects on the productivity of crops and livestock in one way or another. The FAO report has rightly said: Agriculture underperforms because half of all farmers—women—lack equal access to the resources and opportunities they need to be more productive (FAO, 2011).

We have observed, while organizing agricultural extension activities including animal health camps/vaccination camps, farmers' fair etc., that if women extension agents are placed women farmers find themselves comfortable in sharing their problems related to livestock. Yet, female extension agents are very rare. In India, development of women's groups like self-help groups and all women dairy cooperatives are being promoted as a strategy to expand women's access to information, increase their comparative bargaining power, and create opportunities for collective action to access economic inputs. In practice, however, persisting gender biases, deep-seated community dynamics and women's time constraints prevent women from actively participating in these organizations intended to bring about social capital benefits and female empowerment. There is need to develop methodologies to ensure greater participation of women so that women are more formally associated and recognized as a productive force.

Since there are clear gaps with regards to extension and advisory services for women farmers, we need not only more female extension agents, but also the extension and advisory services considerate to the needs of rural women. Improving the access of rural women to information, resources and opportunities could be the key factor in enhancing the profitability of small scale farms in developing countries. Therefore, while "Tailoring rural advisory services to family farms", the gender dimensions should be kept in mind so that productivity can be substantially improved in small scale family farms.

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Community Development through Self-Help groups. <http://www.readindia.in/shg.html>

-----Original Message-----

From: AIS

Sent: 17 December 2014 15:37

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 93: Mobile phone for advisory service: A successful experience in West Cameroon

This is Ngouambe Nestor, again.

One of the missions of agricultural extension and advisory service is to provide proper information and other services required by farmers for their activities. The mobile phone is thus used as a communication tool to achieve this mission and reach a large mass of farmer living in remote areas. Despite the remoteness of Fondonéra (village in West Cameroon), farmers continued to benefit from remote coaching via their mobile phone. Dissemination of information on the markets/prices and opportunities are made by voice calls and SMS. A positive assessment is seen as it links farmers and other stakeholders (suppliers and traders). Women have proven that they are well anchored to the current technology. Despite the low level of education that limits the use of SMS service, there is a lack of ICT infrastructure that limits access to all GSM signal. The Government of Cameroon in partnership with mobile phone operators in both the public and private sector must be involved to make available the adequate infrastructure to facilitate the daily use of mobile phones by farmers and extension workers.

The favorable determinants of mobile phone use in agriculture extension and advisory service in West Cameroon: In the study area, three main factors are critical for setting up a mentoring service through the mobile phone:

the dynamism of farmers; awareness of the use of the phone as farming tools; and youth farmers, including women.

The population is very dynamic and organized into Common Initiative Group (ICG), each leader has at least one mobile phone. This facilitated the exchange of information within the group and between other groups. A similar case was observed in Indonesia, Uganda and Zimbabwe where the phone application in extension has fostered collaboration and exchange between farmers (see the APC's (Association for Progressive Communications) Gender, Agriculture and Rural Development in the Information Society (GenARDIS) project - <http://genardis.apcwomen.org/en>).

The respondents have already warned of the importance of mobile phones in production because, according to Shanmugavelan and Wariock (2004), producers are increasingly eager to use the mobile phone for their activities. It would simply strengthen their capacity to its appropriation. In the same

vein, this study shows that about 90% of producers use their phones to communicate with suppliers and/or other farmers. This rightly shows that they are already aware of the importance of these communication tools.

About 70% of farmers have less than 40 years, including 36 years for women. We can conclude that youth is a key factor in the promotion of ICTs in agriculture. In Benin, for example, GenARDIS showed that women are more aware of the opportunities offered by ICT including mobile phone for their activities. While in Cameroon more than 72% of farmers consider their phones as key tools for communication with buyers. Although O'Farell (2003) had thought that women are likely to remain on the sidelines of ICT opportunities even more, they have a limited access to agricultural extension and advisory services. Meanwhile they have nevertheless an important role to play in promoting the use of the phone for agricultural household activities.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 17 December 2014 15:42
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 94: Re: Agricultural extension in Cameroon

I am Godswill Ntsomboh Ntsefong, of the Institute of Agricultural Research for Development (IRAD), Cameroon.

I have so far followed this e-mail conference keenly and am pleased with the wealth of knowledge gained through the numerous interventions of participants. I just wish to thank FAO for the initiative and most especially all participants for sharing their wide experiences in agriculture.

Among others, I am particularly blessed with message 87 from Mr Ngouambe Nestor, a fellow compatriot, through which I have learned even more concerning my own country. Cheers to all!

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS

Sent: 17 December 2014 16:18

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 95: Business intelligence and advisory services

I am Ayanda Saki from South Africa with extensive experience in assisting blue chip companies, government departments and other organisations leverage information and communication technology (ICT). I am currently a Masters student at the University of Liverpool in the United Kingdom, looking at how business intelligence (and other ICTs) can be used to enhance food and nutrition security. It is a case study in family farms considering that 500 family farms produce over 80% of the world's food.

Some broad comments

I have been most privileged to join this session even though I did not have enough opportunities to participate because I now realise that business intelligence as an ICT concept can support this program from inception. I would love to share a lot more information but I do not have much time but the approach proposed in message 85 (by Deogratias Lwezaura) and 82 (Gabriel Adukpo) as an initial approach. But I also believe that FAO representatives at different locations needs to set up a business intelligence system immediately as this will facilitate an organised and systematic way to manage, store and analyse data. At a simple level, this can start with a data mart that captures advisory transactions, information about where the farmer is, time of transactions, farmers and advisors. This can be used already to trend types of queries per region and, over time, may lead to insights on how the service can be categorised or segmented in the short or long terms. Themes per region may also start to emerge per region.

The benefit of this is twofold. It will allow a central repository for all advisory transactions, allow transparency of information to all members participating and will facilitate collaboration, information sharing etc. Over and above this, business intelligence allows for lifecycle management of issues from beginning to end, ensures ease of reporting and analysis on the advisory services themselves and on various aspects of family farmers for different stakeholders. This ultimately allows for a multilevel and multidimensional approach to management of issues across the food supply value chain.

I wish I had more time to share more. Thanks for the opportunity.

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[According to the McGill University business intelligence glossary, the term 'business intelligence' is defined as the "Environment that provides methodologies facilitating in-depth analysis of detailed business data. It includes technology (database and software applications) as well as analysis practices. Business intelligence allows users to receive information that is reliable, consistent, timely, understandable, and easily manipulated"

<http://kb.mcgill.ca/?portalid=2&articleid=1464#tab:homeTab:crumb:7:artId:1464> ...Moderator].

-----Original Message-----

From: AIS

Sent: 17 December 2014 16:44

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 96: Towards a science-based approach to extension

I am Robert Agunga, associate professor at Ohio State University (USA) and a native of Ghana. I have great field experience in extension from Ghana as well as from many African countries where I have worked as a consultant.

First of all, I am very grateful to the FAO and GFRAS for their endless effort at finding lasting solutions to problems of extension as a vehicle for increasing smallholder farm family productivity. I am also thankful to all of you who have contributed to this discussion. It is unfortunate that I am coming in at the tail end. I am trying to read up so if I am saying something that has been discussed already I apologize.

A couple of years ago a number of African extension faculty members and extension administrators from nine African countries plus a couple of us in the USA came together to found an organization called ExtensionAfrica with the primary objective of injecting professionalism into African extension. Again, we are a very young organization and do not have our cards fully outlined yet. So, I cannot tell as much as I would have liked. Also, I am not speaking for the organization, just a personal contribution to this discussion.

In a nutshell, my conviction is that we are expecting far too much from grassroots extension workers than we have trained them to deliver. The extension task is becoming increasingly sophisticated yet extension workers seem to lack the training to cope with this increasing sophistication. Many of us contributing to this discussion have PhDs. I have hardly heard the voice of a grassroots worker. Now, we are telling extension workers that their task is to facilitate holistic development as in promoting "integrated rural development approach", that they serve as facilitators of holistic development programs. I am not sure if their training has prepared them for this type of activity.

Also, I really don't think that we are taking a social scientific approach to extension. I think we are all agreed that extension is a problem solving process whereby we identify the needs, set goals and objectives and design strategies to achieve these goals. We need to set clear extension goals and then see if we have the expertise in place to achieve them. Also, we seem to be talking about value chains or processing of agricultural products yet the basic challenge is production. Let's achieve the production and then we can take on the processing aspect when we get there. We have big industry people ready to handle the processing but the problem is where it has always been--increasing smallholder production. Let's stop talking much about value chains and get production done. *[This echoes the comments by Deogratias Lwezaura (Message 71), who wrote "Much has been said regarding the importance of advisory services looking at the whole value chain (see for example in Abdulmojeed Yakubu (Message 11), Moses Kondowe (27) and others). In fact, I am truly in agreement with Datta Rangnekar (66) that we are pushing too much to farmers to adopt. While his comments were on many technologies across commodities and enterprises, my concern is the now topical focus on value chain approaches, meaning that the same farmer should embrace production, processing, preservation, value addition, marketing aspects etc. This to me is another dimension of pushing too much to a farmer. A farmer needs to specialize to be able to be in better place to utilize the available scarce labour/resources. If a farmer can be allowed to act on every segment along the value chain, what will the other players in the system such as the processors, transporters, middle men, traders do? Everyone only had to do what s/he were good at (comparative advantage), that is when there would be efficiency of the value chain - increases economic efficiency and opportunities for growth for competitive sectors. My statement might be provocative, but in a sense this is my own view point" ...Moderator].*

Another point, a fundamental extension philosophy is that not all farmers want to go in the same direction. So, the need is to provide flexibility for farmers to go on their different ways. However, when we choose specialized crops to promote or give input subsidies. When we do that we are essentially discriminating against certain farmers. I was in one country where the government will put fertilizer subsidy for maize growers but not for vegetable growers. Yet, how can you provide the family with balanced diet feeding them with carbohydrates alone?

Last point, extension workers across Africa and the developing world as a whole, are being subjected to all kinds of treatments from politicians, consultant, and what have you. If extension workers are organized into a profession I believe they are better able to function as such--by getting the professional training they need, for example. Now, there are all kinds of extension approaches out there yet, as my revered colleague, Neils Roling, has argued, if extension methods differ so much how can we ever get to a generalization of extension science?

Cultures may vary but extension methods need not vary with differences in culture. I hope we can debate this a little.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 18 December 2014 09:48
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 97: Family farming and extension - Pakistan

I am Dr Muhammad Anjum Ali, Director General Agriculture Extension, Punjab, Pakistan, working in the agriculture extension wing for the last 20 years.

I am following this discussion regularly and found it very useful to extract valuable information to finalize policy for family farms.

Pakistan agriculture is governed by family farms as more than 8 million farms are present with over 95% of farms less than 10 hectares. In addition, 67% of the population of 184 million people is living in rural areas. Pakistan is also divided in 10 different agro ecological regions based on rainfall, temperature and soil. Every region has a dominant cropping pattern but wheat is dominant in all regions followed by cotton, rice, sugarcane, maize, pulses, fruits and vegetables. Since the vision of Pakistan agriculture is productivity enhancement, diversification, intensification and value addition without harming soil, water and environment, therefore, facing challenges to improve soil health, improve water availability and healthy environment beside availability of agriculture inputs of standard quality especially of seed. In spite of all these, Pakistan agriculture has also delivered to feed the burgeoning population and is a food surplus country. However, now family farming without any cohesion is creating a trouble in adoption of technologies and there is a big gap between the yield of progressive and average farms. Family setup at the farms has also less support of agriculture credit and scale specific technologies to bridge these gaps.

Various agriculture extension tools like the Training and Visit (T&V) system, Reformed T&V, Hub Farmers Approach, Farmers Field School, Plant Clinics and heavy reliance of ICT tools are being used to increase the reach of the extension service, and every new intervention proposed after the culmination of this discussion to create maximum spread to the small family farms will be appreciated.

It is also apt to mention that lady farm workers are dominant in Pakistan agriculture being the integral part of the family. Moreover, each family farm has major, minor crops and livestock to maintain their livelihoods. Therefore, cooperative farming, farmers organization, village organization, one village one product for exact technology, water productivity and market connectivity, village adoption program through the experts, philanthropist, provision of seed money to run village societies like interpolations can be tested to upgrade the socio-economic conditions of the family farms with specific, refined, quick and crisp message according to their needs fortified with all ancillaries mandatory for farming.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 18 December 2014 10:33
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 98: Coordinating extension services supply in response to evolving demands

This is Laurens Klerkx, associate professor at the Knowledge, Technology and Innovation group of Wageningen University.

I have enjoyed the discussion so far, with the rich contributions from so many countries. It is obvious that there are still many challenges to solve in term of the reach and competences of extension to serve family farmers. Many of the concerns raised seem to be about coordinating different types of extension providers in pluralistic systems, and making sure that advice is consistent and coherent and that complementarity amongst different types of advice (agronomic, technical, economic, farm management, nutrition, etc.) is achieved. This in turn should follow the different demands of family farmers.

I'll now try to respond to some of the questions raised in the conference background document based on our experiences studying extension systems in different places.

As regards question 4.2 ('What are the current gaps in rural advisory services for smallholder family farms?')

In line with earlier comments, I would say that often coordinating and achieving coherence among different extension providers is a key gap. In a study we did on achieving such coherence in extension provisioning in onion production in Kenya (see Kilelu et al, 2013), we found that it is by no means easy, because often extension mandates or project plans are geared towards following pre-described delivery pathways which could not respond flexibly to what we called a 'dynamic learning agenda' of farmers. Also, different reforms may result in reduced coverage of extension as we found in a study on reforms in veterinary services provisioning in the north of Ghana, as there is no adequate monitoring on the effects of reforms (see Amankwah et al, 2014). As a response to gaps left by structural reforms, local providers and farmers themselves self-organized to fill some of the gaps left by reforms but this did not restore the original level of service provisioning. So mapping demands and seeing how a coherent supply can be organized is of key importance. Such supply does not necessarily mean that the

number of extensionists should increase, also group based methods or employing local people such as in the Farm Input Promotions (FIPS) model may be an option (see Priest, 2012).

As regards the questions 4.3 ('What role can producer organizations play in tailoring rural advisory services for family farms?') and 4.6 ('What strategies are needed at the national/state level to enhance rural advisory services for family farms?')

In response to the challenge to achieve coherence and synergy in pluralistic extension systems, and optimize the match between demand and supply, farmer organizations can be key as intermediaries between demand and supply, and beyond linking farmers to technical services also make the link with value chain parties (I think both addressing farming system level and value chain level in extension is equally important as they mutually influence each other).

We did a study in China which showed different linkage building and brokering roles of farmer organizations (see Yang et al, 2014) and in countries like Kenya the 'hub model' fulfils these role (see chapter 4 in Kilelu et al, 2013). Chile and other Latin American countries have good experiences with the 'Alianzas Productivas' model ('Productive Alliances' - in which agro-industry together with government coordinates private extension provision for smallholders, see e.g. <http://indap.gob.cl/programas/alanzas-productivas> - in Spanish) and the AGI model (Agencias de Gestión de Innovación – Innovation Management Centres) in Mexico which is built around centres of collaborating private advisors (see Aguilar Ávila et al, 2010).

So while challenges are still substantial, interesting integrative models are also emerging.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS

Sent: 18 December 2014 10:45

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 99: Mobile messaging apps to improve outreach and impact of rural advisory services

This is Naser Zamani-Miandashti, assistant professor and chair of the Department of Agricultural Extension and Education, Shiraz University, Iran.

Rural advisory service providers face many obstacles in providing advisory services for poor family farmers. Budget tightening is one of their main obstacles. Governments are reducing their support for public extension services, and private service providers have no choice but to focus on target groups who can pay for advisory services. Therefore, public institutions providing rural advisory services should mobilize all resources to improve outreach of their services. One of the resources which could be of real help in this regard is mobile messaging apps.

Mobile use has been increasing in the world. According to the International Telecommunication Union (2014), the number of mobile-cellular subscriptions worldwide is approaching the number of people on earth (7 billion). In developing countries, mobile cellular subscription will reach 90% by end 2014. More and more people are turning to mobile messaging apps, like Whatsapp, Viber, Hike, Line, WeChat, and Kakao Talk, to communicate and share information. Their main features are free messaging and voice calls between individuals or in groups. They make it more convenient and more fun for users to create and save chat groups and enable better sharing of images, videos and music.

Now, I would like to share my experience in using mobile messaging apps for sharing agricultural entrepreneurship knowledge and information in Iran. I, along with one of my graduate students, have been moderating three virtual communities in recent months. These virtual communities are available through Viber and Whatsapp. More than 240 agricultural students and agricultural graduate entrepreneurs are sharing their knowledge and information in these communities. A small number of university professors and government agents are also participating in community processes. Some of the students who are members of these communities are family farm members and are taking advantage of this opportunity to provide their families with entrepreneurship knowledge and information available in these communities. We receive community members' positive feedbacks and their interests in inviting their contacts to join the communities. Members are sharing agricultural knowledge and practical experiences. One government agent in our Viber community shared an interesting experience of using mobile messaging apps to encourage farmers to take part in a collective action against drought.

To conclude, the reasons why I see many opportunities in using these apps for advisory services include:

- 1) mobile messaging apps are already extremely popular, particularly among young generations in both urban and rural areas;
- 2) the number of their users is mushrooming (I see the evidence in my smartphone showing new users from my contacts);

- 3) the number of virtual communities available through these apps is growing rapidly;
- 4) several new interesting features are being added to these apps;
- 5) users feel comfortable with the apps having no time and place restrictions;
- 6) these apps are available at no cost for every smartphone owner who has access to the Internet;
- 7) their environment is interesting due to including text, audio, video and image.

However, the main challenges which should be paid special attention for employing these apps in providing agricultural advisory services are the Internet costs, and low-speed and unstable internet connections in remote areas that impede users' ability to make full advantage of the apps. To establish successful virtual communities using mobile messaging apps, members' e-maturity and virtual community management skills should be improved in the target population.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 18 December 2014 11:09
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 100: Re: Gender dimension in extension and advisory services

This is Ngouambe Nestor again. I just want to add some comments to Message 92 by Mahesh Chander:

Gender analysis in extension and advisory services must be targeted to both men and women. Because it is important to identify what are the main strengths of each within the farming systems. What are the specific activities for women, men and youth? This will give an overview of the kind of services that can be brought to them.

In my country, we think that women have limited access to extension services, but a deep analysis has proven that this depends on some customs and traditional considerations.

In the Northern part of Cameroon, customs and tradition considerations prohibit women from discussing with men. Due to the fact that most extension agents in the region are men, women cannot assist in meetings or discussions moderated by a male. The main challenge is to break down all those considerations aiming to reduce or limit access to extension and advisory services.

In the Western region instead, small scale farming is the main activities of women and youth. So they are the one going through the extension agent to beg for their support and services. I was surprised during a field trip to observe that women in Fondonera (a small village in west Cameroon) spent up to 50 USD per month to benefit from private advisory services. If the services offered are most centered on maize, beans, cabbage, potatoes, sweet potatoes, women in West Cameroon are able to pay more than USD 50 to benefit from the services in question.

For my concern, and according to what I experienced during this 6 last years, we can think about oriented advisory services or oriented extension services. Meaning that, if men are champions for e.g. cocoa or coffee, they can be considered in priority within the extension systems based on cocoa or coffee value chain.

Ngouambe Nestor
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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 18 December 2014 11:30
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 101: Farmer groups strategy - Myanmar

I am Mr. Myo Min Aung, again. I am working in CESVI- Myanmar organization and ShaeThot (the way forward) program in Magway Region of Myanmar funded by USAID.

I would like to respond to question 4.6 ("What strategies are needed at the national/state level to enhance rural advisory services for family farms?").

Our organization CESVI is focusing on Farmer Extension Group (FEG) which group was organized by Seed Group, Research group, Technology group. The Seed group was organized with seed growers, seed multiplication farmers. The Research group related with Farmers Field School who were conducted on farm trial plot such as varietal trial, testing for integrated pest management (IPM), fertilizer trial plot. The Technology group members involving on crop demonstration with improved technology, soil fertility improvement activity, soil and water conservation structure and integrated farming system. CESVI is targeting FEG which will become rural advisory groups for smallholder farmers and their family farm in Dry Zone under the Shae Thot (the way forward) program funded by USAID.

Thus, we need to promote the different type of farmer group as Farmer Extension Group (FEG) or Farmers Income Generation Group (FIGG) or Farmer Field School (FFS), Farmer Innovation Group (FIG), Smallholder farmer Group. Government services, NGOs and extension service need to organize first and give continuous training, not only technical but also management sector, for this group. Also need to enhance farmers' innovative idea and they can implement by themselves.

Farmer Field School is very smart and related with rural advisory services approach. The Farmer Field School approach was based on problem of farmer priority. The training topics were drawn by the farmers themselves. They can identify problems and adaptation practices among the farmers. Farmers' group needs to focus on research and development approach.

In my township, most of the farmers are growing the crop with their family members as a family farm because they have only a small amount of land. Different farmers grow the paddy in different types of system, depending on the water availability. Most of the farmers are occupying rain-fed paddy land and some farmer have irrigated land which was constructed by government sector. Farmers who have rain-fed paddy land, would like to test new types of drought resistant paddy variety to get increased yield. Some farmers who are irrigated land owners, would like to test new paddy varieties to increase yield, better taste and quality, more marketable and export quality and more rice straw for animal folder. We need to help, enhance them for their need. During and after research, the valuable results

and recorded information were quickly disseminated among the farmers and new variety was expended grown by farmer in their farm. The Farmer Field School group will become Rural Advisory Group in the village but also Research and Development approach was establish in their village.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 18 December 2014 11:43
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 102: Improving the outreach and impacts of rural advisory services for small farmers

This is Huu-Nhuan Nguyen again.

Regarding question 4.5 about how to improve the outreach and impacts of rural advisory services for small farmers, from my research experience, I would like to share my opinions about it. In this message, I focus on discussing why and how communicating impacts among stakeholders is important for improving the outreach and impacts of rural advisory services for small farmers.

First, I believe that impact assessment of rural advisory services should be well integrated in any rural advisory services to increase development impacts of agricultural extension intervention. Impact sharing helps key stakeholders, especially small farmers, to understand well about the contribution of rural advisory services to social, economic and environmental development of target communities and regions. Designing appropriate communication strategies for communicating impact assessment of rural advisory services to family farms should pay much attention to how and for what purposes impact findings could be utilized for improving outreach of rural advisory services.

There are two main groups of impacts findings users: local stakeholders and beneficiaries (such as local farmers, extension staff, local traders, and local policy makers) and external stakeholders (such as agricultural research institutions, international development agencies and high-level policy makers). Without having clear and appropriate strategies for these groups to utilize impacts of rural advisory services, we could not scale-out and scale-up successful agricultural technologies or innovations to achieve wider and multi-layer impacts.

Second, in my point of view, communication of impacts of rural advisory services for small farmers should therefore pay attention to these two key groups of impact users:

- To local stakeholders and beneficiaries: Communicating impacts should be done right after, or after a short period impact assessment processes. Impact findings could be shared in both impact assessment and impact sharing processes. Communicating impact findings with local stakeholders and beneficiaries should be flexibly conducted depending on a particular social context and availability of time and financial resources. It could be carried out in the field or at most convenient places for the participation of different stakeholders, especially vulnerable groups. Simple and understandable languages should also be carefully considered when disseminating impact findings for meeting

different levels of education, or relevant skills of local stakeholders, especially poor women and minority ethnic groups.

- To research institutions, donors and higher level policy-makers: After sharing and getting feedback from key stakeholders and beneficiaries, written report types in combination with publications could be produced and shared among research partners and policy makers. Dissemination of visual products such as videos, photo stories and posters in international conferences, university lectures and seminars, agricultural extension trainings could be an effective way to sustaining impacts. The promotion of research products and innovations through websites and electronic forums, email conferences also helps to promote impact sharing to wider range of audience.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 18 December 2014 11:59
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 103: Responding to farmers' needs

This is Dr Mahesh Chander again, finally, sharing an incidence about responding to farmers' needs!

Towards the end of this interesting e-discussion, I am tempted to share one small incident.

It's now over 10 years since I was on duty at an agro-exhibition stall organized by the Ministry of Agriculture in the Indian capital and we junior extension personnel then were joined by our very senior colleague - an extensionist. One farmer visiting our stall asked, "Sir, I wish to go organic, would you please tell how to do it?". Listening to this, our superior became nearly wild, telling the farmer why he wants to switch to this very unproductive and primitive system of production when he can have very high productivity using agro-chemicals. The farmer while remaining cool and in very polite manner (contrary to the angry response of our superior!) responded, "Sir, You didn't listen my question well/properly. I am not asking whether to do organic or not but want to know how to go organic or how to do it, what are the standards/guidelines and procedures for converting to organic agriculture". He further said, if you know it, please tell me or else I will look for another source for this information as I have come this far to seek this information only. Obviously, this superior of ours was not aware of the procedure of conversion to organic agriculture, organic standards and certification procedures. Also, he had his personal negative attitude towards organic farming though the Government of India had already announced the National Programme on Organic Production (NPOP) in 2001-2002. Thus, he chose to respond in a manner to dictate what farmers should do based on his personal thinking and attitude. Gone are the days when extensionists would have one-way transfer of information and the farmer would blindly follow without having questions to be answered.

This case speaks volumes about the need of improving the capacities of extensionists to meet new challenges. On his retirement from government service, our senior extension colleague has changed his attitude towards organic agriculture and now he speaks highly about organic agriculture, maybe criticizing conventional agricultural practices too, which again is not a desirable trait! The extensionists are there to help farmers cash in on opportunities available in conventional or organic agriculture depending on the policies and market. I believe we are not supposed to take sides depending on our personal beliefs - in other words being professional in delivery of extension services.

Thankfully, the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) has realized this need by addressing it in The New Extensionist Position Paper on “Roles, Strategies, and Capacities to Strengthen Extension and Advisory Services”.

Thanks to FAO for hosting this e-discussion, which was a great learning experience for me.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 18 December 2014 14:31
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 104: Sustainability of the rural advisory service

This is S.S. Roy again.

This e-mail conference has provided an opportunity to get an insight of the present situation of advisory services in different parts of the world especially the developing countries where it is more relevant.

While I find the observations of many participants are very pertinent and are worth emulating, very few participants have shared any experience of a self-sustaining model of rural advisory service

existing in their country or given any direction as to how to make it sustainable without any external financial support (national/international).

As we all know that grant, charity, subsidy etc. cannot prolong for a long time to keep a system function. Efforts must be made to evolve a sustainable model (maybe area/sector specific or maybe uniform) that should drastically reduce the dependency of external support.

There is no denying the fact that all national governments have to play an important role in enhancing agriculture production to ensure food security for the increasing population. However, with the emergence of any self-sustaining model of advisory service, the governments may be able to focus more on research and technology development and play a more pro-active role in creation of infrastructure facilities to address the various complex issues of production, value addition and supply chain management particularly for the small farmers.

However, advisory service by private companies (multinational company like Pepsi), focusing on one or two commodities of their interest, may not be considered as an ideal model since it is primarily driven by the company's interest and not the farmer's long term interest.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 18 December 2014 14:40
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 105: Characteristics of rural advisory services for small family farmers - Bulgaria

My name is Dimitar Vanev. I'm working in the Bulgarian National Agricultural Advisory Service. It is a public institution and we annually provide advice to about 20 000 farmers - most of them (above 80%) are small family farmers.

I would like to take up a position to question 4.1 about the unique characteristics or features of rural advisory services for different types of family farms especially for small family farmers.

In Bulgaria, most of the small farmers are from mixed farms, which are not specialized in one production. They cultivate different crops; some of them also breed animals. Also one part of them works on other places. Their income is low.

For these reasons, rural advisory services for them in comparison with big farmers are more connected with consultations about improving the production technologies (with the purpose of increasing the quantity and quality of production), possibilities for diversification (with the purpose of increasing the income and management of the risk), setting up producer organizations (with the purpose of selling at a better price their produce), etc.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 18 December 2014 14:47
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 106: The use of radio to engage family farmers in policy making

I am Gabriel Adukpo again, from the Department of Agriculture, Obuasi - Ashanti, Ghana.

The potential of radio to the development of rural advisory services is immense. Broadcasters are doing a great job to educate family farmers on various topics. Most radio stations rightly engage extension officers, researchers and policy makers to communicate their ideas to listeners.

Fortunately for us in Sub-Saharan Africa, Farm Radio International, based in Ottawa, Canada, assists its affiliate stations with resource materials and training. Farm Radio International and its partners have developed a standard known as VOICE standards in broadcasting. I have the privilege of being trained in script writing and farm radio program design. I believe if practitioners of rural advisory services can incorporate the use of radio in reaching out to family farmers it would go a long way to mobilize the latter for decision making.

I will shed a little light on the VOICE standards:

V stands for valuing the farmers - men, women and the youth.

O stands for opportunity. This means giving listeners the chance to contribute to the program. This can be realized through phone-in and phone-out calls, playback of farmers voices recorded on their farms and formation of listening clubs in the communities, among others.

I stands for information and includes the content of the message. Before generating the content, Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques are applied to determine the needs of the farmers.

C stands for consistency and it has to do with the regularity of the programs at a time the majority of family farmers are at home.

E - Entertaining. It entails suitable signature tune, appropriate formats, skillful broadcasting and anything that will make listeners stick to the program.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 18 December 2014 15:24

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 107: A few general points about extension work

This is Dr. Kumaran again.

Thank you for enriching all of us through the e-conference and it is innovative.

A few points I wish to make in general.

- Extension personnel are mostly busy with implementing welfare schemes. Should this job be assigned to a non-technical people in the department OR make an 'employee segmentation' by providing this job alone to a selected few and the remaining people can concentrate only on technical service provision ?

- Budgeting for extension work should be there specifically.

- Economically viable farming modules are expected by the younger generation farmers and otherwise it is difficult to retain them in farming. Hence, location specific, sector specific (agri, horti, animal husbandry, fisheries), farmer specific (small, medium, large), economically viable farming models are the need of the hour. Researchers and extension workers should jointly develop such models and demonstrate. Market intelligence is a core area the extension personnel need capacity enhancement. Branding of products (local and regional) is very important for their unique and niche position.

- Professionalism – scientifically explaining and convincing the concept – is very much needed for the extension workers. The personal appearance, outlook of extension personnel needs a radical change. Even a dress code can be thought of for extension workers.

- Engaging press and media for information dissemination and getting visibility/show case the 'good extension work done' is also very important and keeps the subject in the front line.

- Networking of extension professionals and e-conferences like this are important to give proper perspective to the discipline, exchange of field experiences and sometimes counter the unworthy criticisms on the discipline per se.

Thank you all for the nice intellectual get together.

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-----Original Message-----

From: AIS
Sent: 19 December 2014 16:45
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 108: Revitalizing agriculture education and vocational training for strong advisory services

This is Ngouambe Nestor again.

As we are concluding our e-discussion, I want to share an approach developed in Cameroon to better tailor farmers' needs to extension/advisory services offered both by public and private sector.

When I evaluated an extension programme experienced by a private extension service in Cameroon in 2008, I realized that the skills and qualifications of extension agents or advisory officers has a significant impact on the message/innovation to be diffused. Most extension agents within the program had at least 15 years of experience in agriculture, but they had never actually studied agriculture because agriculture was not their initial profession. All they learned was by experience. That is why these extension agents were perfect during practical demonstrations but, during training courses, they were unable to meet the farmers needs due to the agents' incomplete comprehension of extension tools.

In the Northern part of Cameroon, extension agents were very good during basic level advisory services, but they faced many difficulties with more complicated aspects like accounting, because of their low level of education. That is why we agreed that it is very important to put more emphasis on skills and qualifications of extension/advisory workers. According to you what are the skills and qualification an extension worker needs to let him be very performant on field in order to meet farmer's need?

Based on these observations, in 2011 the Government with the support of French Development Agency, experienced a pilot training programme in some public school of agriculture. Because there is no specific training based on extension service, this programme aims to have specific young professionals with good skills in advisory service. The diploma obtained is called "Conseiller Agropastoral" (Agropastoral adviser). So those professionals during their two years of training focused their courses on extension and advisory services. Now, most of them are directly recruited by the Government to reinforce the National Agricultural Extension and Research Programme, in place since 1988. The first phase of the project trained about 2000 professionals in agropastoral advisory services. Now the second phase was extended to private college of agriculture and other vocational training in agriculture.

So, to have a prompt and efficient response to farmer needs, it is very important to pay more attention of skills and qualifications of extension workers. Because, as farmers, if I realize that the person supposed to bring more light to my activities is not able to help me improve my situation, I will not be able to ask for the services.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 19 December 2014 16:45
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 109: Agricultural education, training, extension and research services/systems

This is Jacques Fremy, from South Africa, a senior specialist for the development and management of skills training systems. I am a past member, from 1987 to 1998, of the World Bank team who had been

supporting the cost-effective implementation of the Agricultural Services Initiative of the World Bank for Sub-Saharan Africa. Born in 1942, I grew up on a family farm in a small French rural village and have a lifelong experience of family farmers especially after decades of hands-on capacity building/training-projects in Africa at the service of department managers and technicians, trainers and trainees, family farmers and many other types of village food producers. Since 1967, in and for Africa, my special training and management responsibilities included a “rural animation” project in Niger, an “integrated rural development” project in Cameroon, education and training projects and components and agricultural services projects for about 30 African countries. From 1987 to 1998 and through the coaching and training of about 8.000 national trainers, managers, engineers, scientists and technicians from about 30 countries, we have assisted our public and private partners, colleagues and farmers groups for the renaissance, rehabilitation, reinvention, re-organisation, integration and consolidation of their National Agricultural services.

Family and village farmers have provided food subsistence for humanity for 10.000 years but too many have been unable to survive or to evolve in a viable, profitable and sustainable manner. For many various reasons millions of “family farmers” have now become endangered species who are under immediate threat despite the evidence that toxic industrial farming technologies and chemical food factories can never provide food safety and security while being in fact a major threat to the environment in toxic partnership with transnational industrial/chemical companies for the mining and urban sectors. The huge and permanent fragmentation of efforts during the last 50 years or so has resulted in the destruction of the vital chain of knowledge and skills for family farmers. This vital chain has been broken so many times that it has already badly damaged the traditional and institutional memory for most nations and societies.

Yet, and more than any time before in human history, we badly need the millions of family farmers as much as they first need for themselves those precious skills to survive and/or to grow safely into viable, profitable and sustainable practices. Only the family farmers and their organic practices can help us to remain the only “free-range food producers” who are credible to produce free-range food thanks to their own production of the BLACK GOLD” “HUMUS”, which is in their own hands if we assist them to produce it on a gigantic scale. And they can do it starting tomorrow morning. At the village and local market levels, the family farmers would secure much better and stable incomes together with village food consumers who would also benefit from safe and cheaper food products. Immediate and long-term benefits would be shared by the vast majority of poor food producers and food consumers. Well-defined, qualified and complementary rural services would contribute to a much better quality of life for all. In fact, cities are not sustainable because there are the very greedy engines and polluting machines producing billions of hungry consumers and wasteful customers.

For 400 years in Europe, the lessons and skills learnt by family farmers have been endless thanks to the consistent growth of public agricultural education, training, extension and research services/systems (AETERS). Thanks to better information, knowledge, skills, motivation and stimulation, our family farmers and village farmers could grow from being mainly or only subsistence farmers into becoming more modern farmers and commercial farmers. But we have to know that the problem for the future of human kind started with the industrial revolution. Before the 1950s our millions of family farmers could grow our food organically and ecologically. After the 1950s, they were pushed into buying toxic farming technologies which helped most of them to be in permanent debt, to disappear or to die. The biggest drama of all time is the continuing death of thousands of villages which had been sustainable when family farmers, larger families and relatives had been nurturing, protecting and renewing our natural resources and the quality of our environment.

Everybody suffers from rural desertification, rural migrations, unaffordable urbanisation and pollution, socio economic inequities, youth unemployment, waste contamination and modern social pests and diseases in our jungle cities. Today our modified economists and “private sales scientists” have replaced “the quality of life indicators” by “the cost of living indicators” as if human beings had already been transformed into numbers and statistics which are very useful for the global village traders, food speculators and human predators. We urgently need to rebuild the lifelines for our

millions of family food producers and food consumers who could still protect themselves and the rest of us for food safety and food security through the revival of our organic family farmers and agro-ecological villages.

Well-educated and well-skilled family farmers are critical in the determination of other adequate rural services which would finally be efficient to answer their priority needs, gaps, constraints and concerns. The competition for survival and constructive socio-economic transformation at lowest possible costs and optimum rates of returns on investments would start to be observed and measured when “free public front-line extension technicians” and “best subject-matter extension specialists” are properly organized and qualified for being really accessible and available at the village and farm levels. This must be done if we all want to witness sound, participative and useful interactions between services, family farmers and small interest village groups under a regular and systematic monthly or bimonthly work schedule.

Without good public training and extension services the researchers are isolated in the towers of paper publications and simply become useless for family farmers, village citizens and food consumers as well. Can you imagine a restaurant when there would be no waiter between the kitchen and the customers or any clinic or hospital without qualified nurses? Such restaurants and clinics would be bankrupt in two twos and rightly so.

But the vast majority of poor family farmers and food consumers urgently need to be respected at long last for their priority needs to be attended to efficiently by their own public services. Please observe the proliferation of project cemeteries and NGOs when good public services cannot do their jobs properly because they are turned by you know who into captive and servile bureaucracies. Together the public and integrated AETERS could play a major role to advise family food farmers but also in guiding/advising other rural services, farmers organisations, village and community associations, credit banks and cooperatives, etc.

We must avoid the catastrophic mergers of agricultural services with education and health services and together with other key services that are specialized in providing technical and financial support for rural infrastructure, collective equipment and other rural services that are specialized for water, energy, housing, health and education infrastructures and services. The quality of the people coming out of the best primary schools at village level accompanied by best professional AETERS would of course ensure the delivery of services for the best interest of most citizens in rural areas while creating the survival conditions for forced migrants to urban and periurban concrete jungles.

Rural women, old timers, traditional leaders, FAO, UNESCO, the World Bank and other respected and specialized national, bilateral and international Institutions still have the INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY which could help rural communities, parliaments, governments and national societies for playing a vital role for food safety, security and sovereignty and for the protection of our environment as climate changes are the next most critical world challenges for humankind.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 19 December 2014 16:51
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 110: Extension processes - Perú

My name is Dick López Heredia, from Perú. I am a biologist, an agronomist with specialization in plant health and agricultural economy from the Universidad Agraria "La Molina" a doctoral candidate in education.

For 20 years, I work linked to the development of small farmers. In that time, there are few changes in productivity - coffee 12 quintales per hectare since then, cocoa 500 Kg per hectare and one feels responsible. I have not seen a serious agricultural extension scheme in Peru since the 1990s , and they're replicas of models brought in from outside, just a few failed attempts and successful light flashes, there is no clear formula that not only expect the it is because we have to accommodate different contexts (Jerod Myers - Message 2).

For some years I have been with the Centro de Desarrollos Andragogicos para la Extension (CEDAE), a non-profit organization for extension, to intervene with these small farmers that make family farming. We start with a format of extension based on competencies: Transfer ..Capacity Development... Support ... supported with information. All processes are based on the neuroeducación. This formula has given us interesting results. Thinking about an adaptation of family agriculture extension, it should be from a base form which allows us to compare interventions.

In the industry we say "A greater variability, lower quality". I think that happens and has happened to extension services. In discussing the issue of adaptation I emphasize, we must adapt from what? i.e. What model do we think to adapt? Then answer, to what extent adapt? How to adapt? There are areas in Latin America and Asia and Africa (for example) where we have to say: "Not to live in the countryside you are a farmer". Perhaps at other times. But in today's world, being a farmer is not a rural resident, there are skills needed and whether these are reduced it is not possible to do agriculture. Therefore, not all who have a piece of land are farmers... and we would have to correct our statistics. Cooperative organizations and associations they belong to do not represent a strategy for personal development - they are an aid to economic type, but not social. The organization helps the "personal development" before recipe extension, but this depends on the nature of the management of the organization.

Extension efforts often prove futile for impoverished farmers. We have tried for a few years previous personal development programs for outreach programs. The extension does not solve everything . Previous programs "Personal Rural Development", which by the way do not focus on generic skills level of rural people to urban dwellers, but empower them to develop are those which deserve outreach programs. It will not be that family farming requires other services that the extension has been unable to them. Why not think of a specialized service for family farming and not think about adapting a service like extension that is so hackneyed and drawing held by non-educators with good intentions.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 19 December 2014 16:52
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 111: Re: Sustainability of the rural advisory service

This is Botir Dosov again.

I would like to support the view of S.S. Roy (Message 104), that in transition economies when and where rural advisory service are operating in a diversity models and pursue sustainability, any sources of supporting their operationalization could be considered conducive at certain extent. I agree that national rural advisory service systems should reduce the dependency on external support, and governments have to play a more pro-active role in creation of infrastructure facilities to address gaps or niches that private companies are neglecting as they have their own interests which sometimes are not aligned with the interests or needs of stakeholders and family farms. But, more considerations are needed to answer how to make governments play a more pro-active role in creation of a favorable environment, while those transition economies in many countries experience the lack of public investments in agricultural niches, such as rural advisory services.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 19 December 2014 16:53
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: 112: Current gaps in rural advisory services - Nicaragua

My name is Maria Auxiliadora Briones, from Nicaragua. I am an economist and have more than 20 years of work in agriculture innovation systems in Latin American and as a consultant I have been supporting the Ministry of Agriculture in many country to strengthen the rural advisory services as an important factor to changing the lives of rural families. I Have been a consultant of World Bank, IFAD, FAO, and other national institutions.

I would like to contribute to question 4.2 (What are the current gaps in rural advisory services for family smallholder farmers?):

Rural advisory services, in general, have always been relegated by the states budget for political and social reasons, especially because it is supposed that the rural advisory services aren't giving fast responses to the agriculture sector problems. And they are less productive rural advisory programs and knowledge transfer because these less visible results by the considerations and vision of planners are prioritized. Family farming is no exception and indeed some of the gaps faced by rural advisory services in this case is the lack of funding by governments intended to serve this population. However, the priority given during the year 2014 to family agriculture, this is not reflected in the budgets of countries.

Another clearly identified gap is the use of unsuitable methodologies and tools for different types of producers involved in family farming that are mentioned in section 4.1, classified according to tenure, activity and destination of production, which itself can be inferred demand. Methodologies and tools for differentiated attention to counseling services may have the desired effect that their production units and other generators change in the lives of their families.

A third and no less important issue, is the lack of public policies that promote comprehensive care to family farming and identify clear and appropriate incentives to ensure rural advisory services for the needs of producers and their production systems. This involves ensuring planning systems in which clearly the role of producers and farm families in identifying the demand for services and participation in social evaluation or audit become visible - so what has been another of the large gaps that have been identified in the rural advisory services for family agriculture.

In this particular and in many countries, particularly in Nicaragua, one of the mechanisms used to ensure the inclusion of producers in the identification of demand are territorial consultation tables, or so-called "cabinets of production", convened by the national government, where different actors come together to develop regional development plans and identify the roles and demands, with particular attention to the institutions of the public agricultural sector. Despite not being an integral process and even biased public institutions and sectors of interest, it is a good start which leads to important lessons that can be taken up and enhanced joint planning processes and participation of producers to articulate demands of rural advisory services and ensuring social audit processes to ensure efficiency and quality thereof.

Structural problems such as the issue of under-capacity of extension providing services to family agriculture on the one hand and low levels of education of farmers involved in family farming, is one of the largest gaps in the framework. New development proposals should be considered to strengthen the impact of services on the lives of rural families, among others.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Ruane, John (DDNR) On Behalf Of AIS

Sent: 19 December 2014 16:54

To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'

Subject: 113: Rural advisory services and nutrition sensitive agriculture

My name is Madeleine Smith and I am an Agriculture Advisor with John Snow Research and Training Institute in Arlington, VA, USA, and working on a USAID Feed the Future funded program: Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally - SPRING. One of our key initiatives is building the evidence base for integration of agriculture and nutrition in view of improving health and nutrition, reducing stunting, and impacting food systems.

Within that scope, we are very interested in building the evidence around the role rural advisory services have in promoting integration nutrition sensitive agriculture, and linking agriculture agents and private service providers with other more health and nutrition-specific actors, such as front-line community health workers. There is a growing body of literature on agriculture-nutrition among many other global actors now, including UN agencies, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), etc. *[For example, see all the documents etc. made available for the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), which took place at FAO Headquarters, 19-21 November 2014. The conference was an inclusive inter-governmental meeting on nutrition jointly organized by FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO), in cooperation with the High Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis (HLTF), IFAD, IFPRI, UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, WFP and the WTO (<http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/icn2/en/...Moderator>].*

I recently had the pleasure of visiting a very impressive USAID nutrition-led agriculture program in Senegal, which included a key component to build a network of community based service providers focused on agriculture and nutrition. These agents started as lead farmers and community health workers, and are collaborating to provide highly effective integrated services through selling nutrition sensitive agricultural inputs and providing training and demonstrations. They have also now formed apex groups, and are growing and increasing groups through input financing. Along with mainstreamed agricultural inputs, where they still make most of their income, they are marketing products such as high quality vegetable seeds, promotion of Vitamin A rich products such as orange-fleshed sweet potato (OFSP), as well as improved gardening techniques, conservation agriculture, and other climate smart agriculture approaches. Additionally, many community health volunteers also use this model to sell products such as soap, disinfectant, iodized salt, as well as other agriculture inputs. They are increasing cross-learning and service provision, and bundling of agriculture-nutrition products and services. This initiative also targets households with pregnant and lactating mothers with children under 2 and women of reproductive age, recognizing the significant role of women, and gender dynamics in the household that directly impact decisions to grow and consume more nutritious foods, and adopt more nutrition sensitive, and nutrition specific practices.

I could say a lot more, but would be very interested in connecting with those interested in integrating nutrition into rural advisory services, but also along the broader spectrum of agriculture and nutrition, e.g. policy, monitoring agricultural indicators for nutritional outcomes, design of nutrition-led agriculture programs.

Please see the technical brief and webinar materials referenced below, and please visit SPRING's library of publications and resources as well.

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References:

Aakesson, A., V. Pinga, and S. Titus. 2014. Using agriculture extension agents to promote nutrition: A process review of three Feed the Future activities in Ethiopia. Arlington, VA: USAID/ Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING) Project. <http://www.spring-nutrition.org/publications/reports/ethiopia-process-review-feed-the-future>

The making of a messenger: Engaging extension and advisory service providers in nutrition-sensitive agriculture webinar series. 2014. Event materials. <http://www.spring-nutrition.org/events/making-messenger-engaging-extension-and-advisory-service-providers-nutrition>

-----Original Message-----

From: Moderated conference on impact assessment of agricultural research On Behalf Of AIS
Sent: 19 December 2014 16:55
To: 'RAS-L@LISTSERV.FAO.ORG'
Subject: End of FAO e-conference on Rural advisory services for family farms

Dear Colleagues,

The last messages have just been posted (numbers 108 to 113), so this FAO conference on "Tailoring rural advisory services to family farms" is now officially closed.

I wish to sincerely thank all of you who participated actively in this conference. Like Deogratias Lwezaura (Message 85), I too wish to congratulate these people for their "remarkable contributions", covering so many different relevant aspects (too numerous to mention here) of rural advisory services for different categories of family farms in different countries around the world.

I remind you that the Background Document to the conference is available on the web at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-at652e.pdf> (70 KB). In addition, all of the messages are available on the web, at <https://listserv.fao.org/cgi-bin/wa?A0=RAS-L> and, in chronological order, at <https://listserv.fao.org/cgi-bin/wa?A1=ind1412&L=RAS-L&O=D&H=0&D=1&T=1>. The message archives are searchable, with a 'free text' search button on the right hand side of the webpage.

The conference ran for just 18 days. There were 235 subscribers when the conference began on 1 December when the conference began and the numbers rose to 356 people on 18 December when the conference finished. Of these, 58 people (i.e. 16%) submitted at least one message. People were asked to introduce themselves in their first message and they typically provided their full work address and a description of their professional background and current occupation. Based on the address, an analysis was carried out of participation by country, geographical area and work place. Note, the analysis is based on where people were living when they posted the message and does not indicate where they come from originally.

Of the 113 messages, 47% came from people living in Asia; 31% from Africa; 7% from Latin America and the Caribbean; 6% from Oceania; and 4% each from North America and Europe. A total of 96 messages (i.e. 85%) were posted by people living in developing countries.

The messages came from people living in 34 different countries. The greatest number came from people living in India (35); Cameroon (10); Australia and Uganda (7 each); the United States (5); and Ghana, Iran, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal, Pakistan and Uzbekistan (3 each).

Of the 113 messages, 31% were from people in research organisations (mostly national research centres with 3 messages from international agricultural research centres); 19% from universities; 15% from people working in Government ministries or Government bodies; 12% from non-governmental organizations; 10% from independent consultants; 7% from farmers or people working for farmer organisations; 3% from the private sector and the remaining 4% from people working in the UN, development agencies and agricultural colleges.

I would like to thank again the people who provided very useful and constructive comments on the conference background document: Magdalena Blum, Delgermaa Chuluunbaatar and Andrea Sonnino (all from the FAO Research and Extension Unit); Sarah Lowder and Jakob Skoet (both from the FAO Agricultural Development Economics Division); Rasheed Sulaiman (Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy); and Kristin Davies (GFRAS Executive Secretary).

And finally, from myself and on behalf of the other participants, I would like to give a special thanks to each of the 58 people who made this e-mail conference such a successful conference, by dedicating your time and effort to sharing your knowledge, ideas, experiences and viewpoints with the rest of us.

With best wishes

John

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