



## Developments of Agricultural Extension Reforms towards the Modern Era

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### DESCRIPTION

The cycle of poor production, vulnerability, and poverty can be broken by smallholders with the aid of agricultural extension and consulting services. EAS can be a significant driver for change by arming farmers with information and resources about contemporary agricultural methods, connecting them to new technology, and giving them better access to financing and market options. Nevertheless, agricultural extension strategies in developing nations have been based on conventional, top-down strategies that rely on "transfer of technology" models, rigid packages of advised inputs and practices, and teaching strategies that don't take into account the complex ways in which farmers learn and innovate. While some smallholders may benefit from these techniques' crucial technical assistance, they frequently lack a context-specific solution to problems that can only be solved *via* user empowerment, engagement, communication, and demand-driven approaches. Due to inefficiencies, a lack of expertise, a bad enabling environment, and an inadequate number of suppliers, many EAS systems perform below standard. Links between extension agents and knowledge providers, farmers, and organizations that can gather and analyse data to improve EAS are frequently shaky, as are links between official extension services and farmers [1].

Any extension reform initiative should start by addressing the following fundamental issues: what services and information do farmers require, and how can these services be supplied in a way that is collectively effective, efficient, and sustainable by the service providers in the community? Without paying enough attention to the demands of the farmers, many of the reform initiatives implemented in India mainly depended on the information supplied by research. The effective knowledge transfer strategy used during the "Green Revolution" era is no longer totally applicable since farmers are now growing crops other than cereal grains, and their agro ecological conditions and resource restrictions have evolved over time. In order to deliver the best services and have the most impact, it is crucial to consider the farmer's contextual elements while creating suitable extension systems. Depending on their amount of access to

available information sources and the quality of their ability to collect information, both of which rely on their socioeconomic factors, farmers' needs for information and services vary. The capacity of a farmer to obtain and utilise agricultural information is influenced by a variety of factors, such as money, education, farm size, and participation in a farmer's organization or group [2].

- Colonial agriculture- The colonial powers created experimental stations in various Asian nations. Typically, export products like rubber, tea, cotton, and sugar were the centre of emphasis. Large landowners and plantation managers received technical guidance, except during times of emergency, help for small farmers who raised food for their own consumption was uncommon.
- Diverse top-down extension- Following independence, colonial system relics gave way to commodity-based extension services, with output objectives set as part of five-year development plans. With assistance from international donors, other programs were also started to satisfy the needs of small farmers.
- Unified top-down extension- The World Bank introduced the Training and Visit system (T&V) in the 1970s and 1980s. A unified national service was formed by combining many existing entities. Farmers were often sent communications encouraging the use of "Green Revolution" technology.
- Diverse bottom-up extension- After the World Bank's support ended, the T&V system disintegrated in several nations, leaving behind a patchwork of initiatives and projects that were sponsored by different other sources. Top-down strategies are gradually being replaced with participatory ones as a result of the fall of central planning and the rise in sustainability and equitable concerns.

Some of the most promising recent advancements in extension methods have taken place in fields where equity or environmental issues are prioritized, such as the need for professional and local forest users to jointly manage local forests and integrated pest management [3]. A fundamental shift in the relative roles of extension agent and client is a recurring element

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among the novel methodologies being deployed, such as participatory rural evaluation. The agent is no longer viewed as the subject matter expert with all the pertinent knowledge and technical answers [4].

- **Technology transfer-** When the "Training and Visit" system was implemented throughout Asia in the 1970s and 1980s, this paradigm, which was common during colonial times, made a comeback. Top-down strategies are used in technology transfer to provide farmers precise advice on the procedures they should use.
- **Advisory work-** This paradigm is still prevalent today, with government agencies or for-profit consulting firms responding to farmers' questions with technical advice. It can also take the shape of initiatives run by NGOs and donor organizations that promote specified technological bundles through participatory methods.
- **Human resource development-** When universities provided instruction to rural residents who were too impoverished to attend full-time classes, this paradigm predominated in the early days of extension in Europe and North America. It is still present in the outreach initiatives that institutions worldwide engage in today. Although top-down teaching strategies are used, students are still required to choose how to use their newfound information.
- **Facilitation for empowerment-** This paradigm uses techniques including hands-on education and farmer-to-farmer

interactions. Through participatory procedures, knowledge is learned, and participants are urged to take charge of their own learning. Projects utilizing Farmer Field Schools (FFS) or Participatory Technology Development (PTD) are the most well-known examples in Asia [5].

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