

## AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION POLICY: THE MISSING LINK IN INNOVATIONS IN EXTENSION AND ADVISORY SERVICES

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### ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the features of agricultural extension models and policy in 27 sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. It is based on the premise that extension policy in SSA cannot be isolated from the extension models that are used in these countries. A major problem in organising agricultural extension in developing countries is the absence of legal and policy frameworks for providing these services. Putting such frameworks in place is a basic and indispensable way of supporting extension in developing countries. It will help streamline the confusion currently existing around the effort to transfer agricultural knowledge to farmers, particularly in the areas of service provision, programme development and funding. Results from the analysis show that pluralistic

extension systems dominate the extension and advisory landscape of many SSA countries. Of the 27 countries covered in the study, only two have a legislated extension policy, despite the fact that such policies tend to favour well-organised and financially stable extension systems that have sustained effectiveness and a cumulative impact. The paper recommends that SSA countries adopt the legislated extension policies option to improve extension service delivery and to reduce contradictions in extension models.

**KEY WORDS:** *CONTRADICTIONS, CUMULATIVE IMPACT, LEGISLATED POLICY, MODELS, STREAMLINE*

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## INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

The rapidly increasing population of sub-Saharan Africa consists mainly of farmers and their families who have limited access to health and education, among other services. Reducing poverty and social inequalities, ensuring food security, sustainable use of natural resources, and participatory development, are overall objectives to which extension and advisory services are making a significant contribution. These objectives highlight the fact that extension systems must be accessible and useful to the poorest, and address the special concerns of women farmers and young farmers (Rivera and Alex, 2004). A sound agricultural policy is indispensable, and an agricultural extension programme is more likely to succeed if the conditions for growth in agriculture and related industries are in place. Extension is only one aspect of agricultural policy, which is largely a matter of a broad economic policy. A major problem of organising agricultural extension in developing countries is the absence of a legal and policy framework for providing service. Policy framework is one basic indispensable way of conducting extension in developing countries that will help streamline the confusion currently existing in the effort to transfer agricultural knowledge to farmers, particularly in the areas of service provision, programme development and funding (Akiyama *et al.*, 2003).

Farmers, planners, economists and practitioners, among others, have different views on the provision of extension services, particularly

in SSA. Farmers view extension as a form of assistance to help improve their know-how, efficiency, productivity, profitability and contribution to the welfare of their family, community and society. Politicians, planners and policy-makers consider it to be a policy instrument to increase agricultural production, to achieve national food security and to help alleviate rural poverty. In addition, some economists view extension as a policy instrument that will contribute to human capital development and economic growth, therefore any resources allocated to extension are viewed as an economic investment that must produce competitive economic returns. Agricultural extension enhances and accelerates the spread of useful know-how and technologies to rural people. It is expected to lead to increased and sustained productivity, increased income and well-being of farm families and to the promotion of national food security and economic growth (World Bank, 2005). The adoption of policy directives for extension services or the absence of an extension policy has informed several types of extension service delivery reforms in Africa (Rivera and Qamar, 2003). This has affected the kind of reforms extension service delivery (Table 1) has been exposed to since the 1980s in most countries.

### Forms of extension policy in SSA

In the literature, extension policy (provisional extension policies, decrees and proclamations and

legislated extension policy) is often driven by factors such as population, natural resources and environment. Increasing population will demand more resources from extension in terms of skills, training, diversification of livelihoods and pressure on natural resources. Agricultural extension policy is a part of national development policy in general and of agricultural and rural development policy in particular (Jones, 1986). Each country should have a comprehensive agricultural extension policy which provides for co-ordination with research, education, input supply and credit and marketing systems, and which includes some flexibility to reflect the dynamic nature of the agricultural sector. The policy should include the mission and goals for agricultural extension, the responsible agencies and personnel, the clientele to be served, the broad programmatic areas to be addressed and other relevant guidelines. This should be developed through a multi-stakeholder process. The development of extension is dependent on agriculture in most SSA countries, which is often tied to government stability and the system of government (Contado, 1997).

Provisional extension policies are the most common form of extension policy in operation in most developing countries in the absence of more formalised extension policies or during suspension of formally enacted policy. Decrees and proclamations are policies issued by the head of State, which do not go through the process of



**TABLE 1: PUBLIC SECTOR AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION REFORMS SINCE THE 1980S**

		Funding	
		Public	Private
Delivery	Public	Deconcentration Devolution [move toward federalism]	Cost recovery (fee-based) projects [commodification of information]
	Private	Contracting out to public and/or private providers [enabling the private sector]  Funding for community-driven development [subsidiarity]	Commercialization Total privatisation to private companies [shifting authority for the public good to the private sector]  Withdrawal from support for extension, leaving responsibility to NGOs [State withdrawal from agricultural extension]

Source: Rivera and Qamar (2003)

consultation and debate involving various stakeholders and beneficiaries. For example in Nigeria, under the military regime, extension services were based on the ‘Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure’ (DFRRI) and ‘Better Life for Rural Women’, among others. Legislated

extension policies are embodied by the country’s highest law-making authority such as congress or parliament and are common in many developing countries. Countries that have enacted extension policy through legislative action tend to have well-organised, financially stable extension systems that have sustained effectiveness and a cumulative impact. Examples of legislated extension policies include: The Smith–Lever Act of May 8, 1914 that established the Cooperative Extension Service in the United States, the Japanese Agricultural Promotion Law of 1948 and Agricultural Extension Law of 1957; Rural Development Law of 1962 in South Korea and the 1956 law that created the Department of Agricultural Extension as one of nine departments of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (Contado, 1997; APO, 1994; Rogers, 2003). Also, Zimbabwe’s Department of Agricultural Technical and Extension Services was established by law in 1981 but eventually collapsed and gave way to other forms of extension policy. The objective of this paper was to examine agricultural extension and advisory models and policies that are operational in SSA countries.

### **MATERIALS, METHODS AND DATA SOURCES**

In this paper a review of scientific literature on extension and advisory models and policy in SSA was carried out to assess operational practices using online scholarly and scientific databases as well as more general search engines such as

Google. The review included desk research of online and government published data. For each of the countries reviewed, the current operating extension and advisory models and policy were identified. The review also revealed the process through which extension policy has been developed in some countries. The findings from the review were collated and tabulated and are discussed in the following sections of the paper.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 2 describes various extension models that have been adopted in many SSA countries. It shows that most African countries today are experimenting with reforms to existing extension systems. The models that have been practised include: rural development and extension programme, farmer field school, participatory management approach, national agricultural extension and research programme support project, participatory demonstration and training extension system, pluralistic extension system including, ministry, private companies, NGOs, unified agricultural extension system, university-based extension system, participatory extension system, ministry-based approach, commodity-based approach, community extension, cyber extension system, farming system approach, commercialised extension system and community participation approach. The extension system in Ghana was modified in 2003, based on the policy of



**TABLE 2: EXTENSION MODELS ADOPTED IN SELECTED SSA COUNTRIES**

Countries	Extension Models
Angola	Rural development and extension programme, farmer field schools
Benin	Participatory management approach, farmer field school
Burkina Faso	Farmer field school
Cameroon	National agricultural extension and research programme support project
Ethiopia	Participatory demonstration and training extension system, farmer field school
Ghana	Pluralistic extension system including ministry, private companies, NGOs and farmer field school
Kenya	Pluralistic extension system including ministry, private companies and NGOs
Malawi	Pluralistic extension system, farmer field school
Mali	Participatory demonstration and training extension system, farmer field school, modified training and visit extension system
Mozambique	Farmer field school, government-led pluralistic extension
Nigeria	Unified agricultural extension system, pluralistic extension system including ministry, private companies, NGOs and farmer field school
Rwanda	Farmer field school, pluralistic extension system
Senegal	Farmer field school, pluralistic extension system
Tanzania	Farmer field school, university-based extension system and pluralistic extension system
Uganda	Pluralistic, national agricultural advisory services and farmer field school
Kenya	Pluralistic and farmer field school
Zambia	Participatory extension system, farmer field school

*Adapted from Davis (2008)*

decentralisation (Anderson, 2007). The increasing number of stakeholders makes the issues of co-ordination and regulation crucial and underlines the need for the government to remain involved in extension in order to ensure food security, regulation of food quality and safety and environmental conservation, among others (Davis, 2008). The

discussion of extension policy in SSA countries cannot be isolated from the extension models that are used in these countries. While the models are direct products of the type of policy that has been adopted, the policy dictates the models used in each country. Several reasons have been suggested for the ineffectiveness of extension

service delivery and systems in sub-Saharan Africa. This has led to different approaches and applications. FAO (1997) reported that all national governments should develop and periodically review their agricultural extension policy. 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. In addition, extension must be responsive to changes in the agricultural sector, the drive toward market reforms and shrinking government budgets.

Table 3 shows the extension policy in selected SSA countries. From a list of 27 countries under review, only three countries have a legislated form of extension policy. While arguments have been put forward in terms of prevalent socio-cultural milieu of different countries and home-grown solutions and application of extension systems, the consequent contradictions in the extension coverage, missions and goals of such countries left nothing to be desired from the political rhetoric. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, extension services are based on the decree and proclamation policy. The government prepared, with the support of donors, a strategic framework for the development of the agricultural and rural sector. In Zimbabwe, the government discontinued the legislated option for the commercialisation and privatisation of extension services (Hall and Kuiper,





**TABLE 3: EXTENSION POLICY ADOPTED IN SELECTED SSA COUNTRIES**

Countries	Extension Models
Swaziland	Participatory extension system, farmer field school
Lesotho	Unified agricultural extension system, pluralistic extension system including, ministry, private companies and NGOs
South Africa	Ministry-based approach, university based, commodity-based approach, community extension and cyber extension system
Sierra Leone	Pluralistic extension system including ministry-based approach, private companies, NGOs
Liberia	Pluralistic extension system including ministry-based approach, private companies and NGOs
Guinea	Pluralistic extension system including ministry-based approach, private companies and NGOs
Botswana	Farming system approach, national master plan for arable agriculture and dairy development
Côte d'Ivoire	Ministry of agriculture (MINAGRA) led pluralistic system and farmer field school,
Namibia	Ministry-based, commodity-based approach, community participation approach
Madagascar	Ministry-based approach, training and visits extension system, commodity-based approach
Zimbabwe	Ministry-based approach, commercialised extension system community participation approach
Mauritius	Ministry-based approach, Training and visits extension system, Commodity-based approach, The community extension type

1998). In Madagascar, the agricultural sector suffered from discriminatory policies that have not been enough to stimulate growth in rural area (Minten *et al.*, 2006). The form of policy that is being currently used in Zambia is the Provisional Extension Policy, whereby the national agricultural sector policy has been implemented, which is guiding all the key players wishing to be involved in extension service delivery. The current policy in South Africa is the provisional extension policy though attempts were made to consult various stakeholders. It is important to note that countries that have enacted extension policy through

legislative action tend to have well-organised, financially stable extension systems that have sustained effectiveness and a cumulative impact (Hanyani-Mlambo, 2000).

Uganda is an example of legislated extension policy in SSA – the national agricultural research organisation (NARO) is the apex body for guidance and co-ordination of all agricultural research activities. Established by an act of Parliament, it comprises the council as its governing body, committees of the council as its specialised organs, a secretariat for its day-to-day operations with the semi autonomous public agricultural research

institutes under its policy guidance. The government has been implementing the Plan for the modernisation of agriculture through the national agricultural advisory services (NAADS) programme which aims to increase market-oriented production through empowering farmers to demand and control extension services (Anderson, 2007).

### Extension policy formulation process

Several authors have mentioned that there is no standard formula for use in formulating agricultural extension policy because it is usually a broad-based participatory process which includes many stakeholders. Chowdhury (2003) noted the steps followed in the formulation and approval of national policies as: formation of a working group (with the representatives of the concerned agencies, departments and consultants) to prepare a draft policy, reviewing of existing sector policy and legislation, data collection, scrutiny of the data and draft preparation, preparation of discussion paper on proposed policy directions, arrangement of workshop, inter-ministerial meetings, on proposed policy direction, attended by various interest groups including ministers and wider consultations with civil society, stakeholders, target groups, local government functionaries and formal and informal local and public representatives. Other steps in the process are: revision of the draft using feedback from workshop and meetings, circulation of the draft to different ministries, agencies, groups,



institutions and organisations for review and written comments, incorporation of comments and observations, workshop arranged, finalisation of the draft policy through an inter-ministerial meeting after discussing the comments and observations received through the consultations, discussions and workshop, the sponsoring ministry formally approves the draft policy through usual procedures, sending the draft policy to Cabinet/Council of Ministers for final approval, the Cabinet/Council of Ministers accords the final approval to the draft policy after discussions in its formal meeting; the approved policy is then published in the official gazette for the information of the members of the public, the sponsoring ministry initiates institutional and administrative actions for implementation of the policy statements and initiates formulation of strategies, plans and programmes supporting the approved policy. Swanson (1990) noted that farmers' involvement in policy formulation and periodic review is the most effective means of creating a demand-driven national extension system.

In Bangladesh, a task force was formed under the chairmanship of the Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture for the development of an effective extension policy. It comprised of representatives from the private sector, the non-government organisation sector and the public sector. The task force prepared a draft new agricultural extension policy which was circulated for comment, and a final

document prepared (Bangladesh Ministry of Agriculture, 1996).

According to Leach (2007), the process of extension policy development in Australia included an extension policy workshop, which involved the Australasia Pacific Extension Network (APEN) executive, a small number of Co-operative Joint Venture for Capacity Building (CVCB) members and Rural Development Committee (RDC) and academic representatives. This workshop generated draft extension policy documents and a recommendation for a higher order extension policy process involving wider practitioner, funder, beneficiary and political input. A key resolution from the workshop was that a wider extension policy forum would be conducted in 2004. An evaluation showed that the majority of participants believed the event to be an effective step in the development of an APEN position on extension policy. Workshop participants considered that this needed to be contextualised alongside a character description of 'good extension practice'.

## **CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

Here we have shown that extension policy is lacking in many SSA countries and this has been largely responsible for the ineffectiveness of extension systems in SSA countries. It has also led to an indefinite search for a workable extension system in Africa. The different forms of extension

policy were examined and we recommend adoption of an extension policy in order to make extension service work for diverse end-users. This will in turn stimulate the much expected food security and improved livelihoods in the lives of the majority of rural population in SSA countries that continue to be intrinsically dependent on agricultural extension services.

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