

**Training-cum-Workshop
Strengthening Extension-Policy Interface
9-11 November 2016
National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management, Hyderabad (India)**



This Training-cum-Workshop aimed to deliberate on ways to strengthen the extension-policy interface so as to fortify EAS delivery in India. Dr PVK Sasidhar reflects on his participation at this event.

CONTEXT

Institutions, individuals and policies affect the performance of extension advisory services (EAS). Therefore an enabling policy environment is critical for the development, sustainability, and effectiveness of EAS. This necessitates EAS' engagement with the policy process. To engage with the policy process, extension professionals should know:

- How do policy changes happen?
- Are policy makers looking for evidence, and if so, what type of evidence?
- What are the experiences of extension researchers in providing policy-relevant evidence?
- Do documentation, engagement with policy makers, and advocacy help in making policy changes?
- What are the areas for capacity strengthening among extension professionals in policy engagement?



To discuss these issues, MANAGE (National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management), CRISP (Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy), and ICAR-ATARI (Agricultural Technology Application Research Institute), Bengaluru, jointly organized a training-cum-workshop on *Strengthening Extension-Policy Interface* with the following objectives:

- a. Orient participants on the importance of policies in shaping extension's performance;
- b. Discuss ways of generating policy-relevant evidence on extension to influence policies; and
- c. Develop capacities to engage with policy actors and the policy development process.

PROGRAMME

Inaugural Session

The meeting started with an informal opening-cum-welcome ceremony by the organizers represented by Saravanan Raj (MANAGE), Sreenath Dixit (ICAR-ATARI, Bengaluru) and Rasheed Sulaiman V (CRISP). They welcomed the participants and highlighted the significance of the meeting with overall emphasis on how to bring the field extension functionaries into the policy making process. This was followed by a paired introduction of the 35 participants (from 11 states),



representing agriculture and allied sectors at various levels. Mrs V Usha Rani, IAS (Director General, MANAGE) who could not attend the inaugural session, addressed the participants through a pre-recorded video message. She stressed the importance of policies and she assured that MANAGE will take up the recommendations arising from this workshop in strengthening the extension policy interface. She stressed that extension is important in reaching to the farmers and EAS providers need to support the farmers in a holistic way.

Technical Sessions

Session 1: Introduction to the Workshop

This session started with a paired card exercise on why extension should engage with the policy process. Participants were paired and asked to discuss briefly and then write their response on a card. The responses of all the participants on the question are summarized in Box 1.

This was followed by a presentation by Rasheed Sulaiman (CRISP), wherein he introduced the theme of the workshop and elaborated on its structure. He also gave insights on the need for new capacities within extension to deal with new challenges; and argued for a supportive enabling policy environment for the

Box 1. Why should Extension Engage with the Policy Process?

- To help in formulating policies reflecting field problems;
- Policy engagement is essential to solve field problems;
- To convert knowledge, technologies, and practices into policies;
- For fostering a bottom-up approach in policy making;
- To provide feedback and evidence of the impacts of extension;
- For effective implementation of formulated policies; and
- To avoid poor policies and to refine existing policies.

development, sustainability, and effectiveness of pluralistic EAS. As extension's performance is dependent on the contribution and support of different organizations in the Agricultural Innovation System (AIS), it should also influence policies of other agencies so as to enhance extension's contribution and effectiveness. This session, while identifying policy engagement as a key capacity gap, helped participants understand why policies are important for extension; why extension should engage with policy; and how capacities can be strengthened in policy engagement.

Session 2: Why Policy Matters

Rasheed made a presentation on this theme which was divided into 3 parts.

Part 1 - How Policies Influence / Do not Influence Extension Performance:

In this part he talked about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 2 on food security which clearly mentions the need for increasing investments in extension (2a) and how this is influencing donors and national governments to spend more on extension. He discussed how extension also got affected by policies related to economic development (structural adjustments) and governance (decentralization). Other examples related to the Indian extension policy include:

- Policy Framework for Agricultural Extension finalized by the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Government of India in 2000, which acknowledges current limitations of public sector extension and sets out a new vision and strategy;
- 12th Plan Working Group on Agricultural Extension, which recommended the National Mission on Agricultural Extension;
- non-implementation of several recommendations made by the 12th Plan Working Group on Agricultural Extension; and
- Occasional Paper of NITI Aayog (2015) - 'Raising Agricultural Productivity and Making Farming Remunerative for Farmers', which makes only marginal reference to the role of agricultural extension services, and is especially marked by the absence of any mention of the Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) or the Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs).

He urged the participants to reflect on two key aspects from the presentation:

1. Do policy makers know enough of what is happening on the ground?
2. Are they asking EAS providers for any evidence to help them take decisions?

Part 2 - Why Extension Needs Policy Changes to Impact at Scale:

In this part he discussed various actors in the agriculture innovation system, and stressed that innovation to have impact often needs new policy regimes for impact at scale. He presented several examples of

successful pilots failing to make larger impacts due to lack of policy changes at several levels, as well as other examples where policy changes allowed up scaling of successful interventions tried on a pilot scale.

Part 3 - Policy Incoherence:

By discussing the example of policy incoherence in smallholder dairying in Bihar, he emphasized how lack of capacities in implementing existing policies and contradicting policies affected the performance of this sector. This also has implications for performance of extension services.

The key messages from this presentation were as follows:

Policies impact extension, extension needs policy support, extension should influence policies to enhance its impact at scale, extension should generate policy-relevant evidence to influence policies, and extension providers need to strengthen their capacities to engage in policy communication.

Session 3: Extension's Engagement with the Policy Process

Sreenath Dixit's (ICAR-ATARI) presentation focused on experiences of how good science have led to good agricultural policies, drawing from his experience with the National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA) and National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) projects. The interventions along with evidence of impact discussed rainwater harvesting in farm ponds; community farm ponds' convergence with the rural employment scheme, harvesting the river flow; sharing of groundwater through pipeline networking and social mobilization; addressing labour scarcity, and resource conservation in paddy cultivation. The key message from this presentation was that good science, most of the time, leads to good policy, but political decisions also play a major role in scaling-up of interventions.



P Chandrasekhara (Director-Agricultural Extension, MANAGE) made his presentation on 'Policy Changes in Public Private Partnerships in Agricultural Extension'. He discussed his experiences of how policy changes happen in the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, illustrating it further with his experience while working with the Planning Commission Working Group on Agricultural Extension in the 12th Plan period. He narrated his own successful and not so successful



attempts at changing policies at different levels, and he argued that there is space for policy changes at every level (within our own families, within our own teams, departments and organizations at all levels). Later he discussed policy issues in-depth by taking the Hoshangabad model (private extension initiative) vs. Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres (public led extension) initiated by MANAGE. He stressed the need for sensitization of politicians on extension-related aspects as the philosophies of political parties are reflected in their election manifestos.

M J Chandre Gowda (Principal Scientist, ICAR – ATARI, Bengaluru) discussed various issues related to policy engagement within the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, by discussing examples of important policy changes in the past 15 years. The focus of this session was on mechanisms of policy engagement, and he covered experiences of several kinds – with think tanks and Commissions, such as the National Commission on Farmers (2004-06); Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture; Seminars (for example, National Seminar on Agricultural Extension, 2009); Stakeholders meet (Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana [PMFBY]); Working Groups of the Planning Commission –12th Plan; Donor agency influence in policy making – Training and Visit (T&V), National Agricultural Technology Project - Agricultural Technology Management Agency (NATP-ATMA); political ideologies (such as National Food Security Mission [NFSM]), etc.

By taking Kisan Call Centre as an example, he further elaborated on the time taken to initiate, implement and revise a policy. This presentation also gave a clear picture of the ways in which internal intricacies and political ideologies influence policies, and how one policy initiative helps in developing another policy (examples: double annual food grain production - doubling the farm income; KVKs developed into *Krishi and Udyog Vigyan Kendras* under the Skill Development Mission; Scientist - Panchayat linkage : *Mera Gaon Mera Gaurav*).

Session 4: Global Experience with Extension Policy

In his presentation, Rasheed Sulaiman noted that despite the recommendations of FAO's Global Consultation on Agricultural Extension (1990) to all national governments to develop and periodically review their agricultural extension policies, very few countries have an explicit extension policy supported by legislations / laws / acts / decrees. Extension in most cases is mentioned in a few paragraphs in the Agricultural Policy. The major issues in extension policy implementation discussed by him are: poor implementation of existing policies; donor driven policy development; lack of capacities and resources to implement policies; poor consultations among stakeholders during development; and limited ownership beyond the Agriculture Ministry. The key message was that we need to 'strengthen capacities to develop and use evidence to influence policies that impact EAS and also develop a National Extension Policy'.

This session was followed by a group exercise. The participants were divided into three groups and each group deliberated on the following questions:

- Do we need an extension policy (National / State level)?
- If so, how do we develop the same?
- How do we make sure that these are implemented?
- Should we focus on the policy process and engage with these processes at regular intervals?
- Do we have the necessary capacities to generate policy-relevant evidence on extension so as to influence policies?
- Do we have the capacities to engage with policy actors and the policy development process?
- How do we enhance those capacities?

The outcome of the exercise is summarized in Box 2.

Box 2. Do We Need an Extension Policy?

- We need an extension policy at district, state and national levels with converging inputs from bottom to top.
- The policies at respective levels are to be developed by consulting all the relevant stakeholders and reviewed periodically.
- The developed policies need to be backed by legislation / Acts for effective implementation.
- EAS providers have the capacities to engage with policy actors and generate evidence on extension to influence policies.
- However, there is a need for further strengthening of these capacities so that we generate and communicate policy-relevant evidence to influence policies that impact EAS at various levels across sectors.

Session 5: Generating Evidence to Influence Policy: Policy Research and Communication



Mruthyunjaya (Former Director, National Institute of Agricultural Economics and Policy Research & Former National Director, NAIP) focused on 'Research-Evidence-Policy' in this session. He put forth his critical observations on functioning of the extension system through these points: Why is a new direction for agricultural extension required? What can be the new direction? How can we link research evidences to policy? Why and which evidence? When will evidence have maximum impact? He also dealt with policy experiments at National Institute of

Agricultural Economics and Policy Research (NIAP) related to EAS. These issues were discussed in detail along with plenty of examples garnered from his rich and diverse experience at various levels.

Session 6: Extension Policy in the Allied Sector

Mahesh Chander (Head - Extension Education Division, IVRI, Izatnagar) presented this session on 'Extension's Engagement with Policy and Planning in the Livestock Sector'. He discussed his experiences as a member / convener of Planning Commission's Working Groups on Livestock Technology Transfer Service. He argued the need for effective provision of livestock EAS to further improve production and productivity, but the national and state governments spend less than 10% and 1-3% of their budgets, respectively, on livestock extension activities. He stated that the lack of a livestock extension



policy and administrative structure for livestock extension at the centre and state levels are leading to unorganized, sporadic and ineffective delivery of EAS to livestock farmers. He went on to suggest various policy options, viz., formulation of a National Livestock Extension Policy, establishment of Livestock Extension Directorates at central and state levels with qualified personnel, strengthening of Veterinary Colleges, Universities, KVKs and ATMAs with livestock extension components.

PVK Sasidhar (Director, School of Extension and Development Studies, Indira Gandhi National Open University [IGNOU]), shared his policy engagement experiences related to livestock and poultry sectors with focus on four specific topics: Assessment of core competencies of livestock extension professionals; Evaluation of contract broiler farming; Improving the delivery of veterinary services; and Reclaiming research in livestock development through policy interventions. His key argument was that any policy on livestock EAS must reflect integrated provision of three support services to farmers: (i) Extension and advisory services (to enrich knowledge & skills of livestock farmers); (ii) Ensuring availability and access to input services - AI, vaccines, medicines, equipment, feed, etc. (to augment production and productivity); and (iii) Delivery of technical services (clinical and para-clinical health care of livestock).



Session 7: Good Practices in Influencing Policies



Ajith Radhakrishnan’s (Oxford Policy Management, New Delhi) presentation was on ‘Evidence-based Policy Making in Practice: Designing a Drip Irrigation Policy for Karnataka’. He talked on several topics with regard to designing a drip irrigation policy for Karnataka, such as vision, policy cycle, problem definition, policy questions, methodology and outcomes. He demonstrated how to build evidence for policy action using technology, primary and secondary data, state action plans and policy goals, trend analysis in key sectors, multi-criteria modeling

outputs, and co-benefits to other sectors vis-à-vis investments required. This was a clear case of how policies are developed and promoted in a donor-funded project implemented in partnership with the state government.

G V Ramanjaneyulu (CSA, Hyderabad) talked of how CSA works with and supports various initiatives by governments in six Indian states. CSA’s policy advocacy is through campaigns against anti-farmer technologies and policies, advocacy in support of alternatives and a variety of strategies and tools, such as studies, makers to the field, seminars and workshops, petitioning, supporting court cases, networking, trainings, RTI data and opinion pieces. He discussed some of CSA’s policy engagement initiatives, which were well appreciated by participants.



In a nutshell, CSA’s policy engagement is through incentivizing better models for farmers and regulating unsustainable models.



Saravanan Raj (MANAGE) focused on the role of ICTs and social media in influencing policies. He discussed the changing nature of engagement between government and public in the era of ICTs and how social media is influencing government’s decision making. He gave several examples on this, such as the RTI Act-2005, India against Corruption Movement-2011, and Net Neutrality Movement-2015.

Madeep Pujara (Project Director, ATMA, Amritsar) shared his experience of establishing “ATMA Kisan Hut” for promoting agribusiness and entrepreneurship development in the farming sector. ATMA also set up an incubation centre at SAI Institute of Management as a joint initiative. His presentation focused on the need for policy support for these types of interventions, and using resources from different agencies to strengthen these initiatives.



Session 8: Road Map for Strengthening Extension Policy Interface

Rasheed Sulaiman in his presentation focused on the activities of GFRAS (Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services) in strengthening extension policies. He talked about the GFRAS Policy Compendium and the forthcoming Module on Policy Advocacy which is part of the New Extensionist Learning Kit.

This was followed by a group exercise. The participants were divided into four groups and they discussed the following questions:

- What are the areas for capacity development?
- How can capacities be strengthened in the identified areas?

The outcome of the exercise is summarized in Box 3.

Box 3: Areas for Capacity Development and Ways to Strengthen Capacities in Policy Engagement	
Areas for capacity development Policy communication Soft skills, especially related to facilitation, networking and negotiation skills Generating policy-relevant evidence Achieving coordination and inter-departmental convergence Leadership Social media / ICT skills	Ways to Strengthen Capacities Trainings Pre-service (induction level) In service (refresher) Seminars / conferences Developing standard templates and protocols for policy engagement Involving in policy discussions at various levels Mentoring

MY IMPRESSIONS

The training-cum-workshop was announced in good time with a well-drafted concept note on the purpose of the meeting. Noticeably, the entire opening session was completed within 45 minutes allowing more time for technical sessions. The organizers took care in selecting 35 participants, representing agriculture and allied sectors from 11 Indian states at various levels. In the three days there were only 12 presentations that kept well within the scheduled time, two experience sharing sessions, and three exercises leaving ample time for discussion, questions, and clarifications. All resource persons who made presentations have several years of experience on policy engagement. It is worth mentioning that the participants were actively involved in discussions in all the sessions and engaged keenly in the exercises on all the days. The exercises provided lots of opportunities to discuss the questions in small groups and suggest possible collective solutions. In the valedictory session, a CD containing all presentations was given to participants and they were also uploaded on the CRISP website.

FINAL REMARKS

Generally field functionaries rarely get opportunities to participate in workshops of this nature. However, this meeting offered an opportunity for several young participants working in line departments to understand how policies are shaping extension's performance and the ways to generate evidence to influence policies. To me this event not only provided an opportunity to share my recent policy engagement works, but also to synthesize the learning as I had to recap the entire day's outcome on the subsequent days. The feedback on my work and suggestions from senior resource persons will be helpful for my future research. By attending this workshop, I also acquired knowledge of the several internal intricacies that goes towards policy making and the new areas of capacities that I need to develop to engage better with policy makers.

My sincere thanks to MANAGE, CRISP, ICAR-ATARI, and IGNOU for facilitating this learning experience.

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