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Client-oriented extension approach for effective transfer of technologies

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Abstract

Agricultural extension renders the best extension services and plays a major role in strengthening the farming community. Extension approaches have to be reconstructed to make the dissemination of technology response to the farmers' need. The Client-Oriented Extension Approach (COEA) is an approach which helps the agricultural research institutes to improve their client orientation level and hence the efficiency and quality of extension services. COEA can help extension organisations adapt themselves to new situations today and are featured by an emphasis on flexibility, performance, efficiency, accountability and quality service delivery. The Client-Oriented Extension Approach (COEA) gives emphasize on the importance of two way communication i.e, between the agricultural service providers and the users of agricultural services and products. A phenomenon of supply and demand, with extension services on the supply side and clients on the demand side can be identified in this particular approach. The supply side should be aware of the demand side and vice versa. A client is not a passive receipt of products and services, he is an actor who is able to express wishes and interests and to assess the quality of the products/ services that are delivered. For the effective transfer of technology, the desire and needs of the clients should be taken into account by the providers of products / services. In agricultural research, a client is defined as a person or organisation that utilizes research services. As such the client concept is suitable for the agricultural research institutions that have to build on expressed needs. Also the reinvention of technologies by the farmers, at the field level are assisted effectively by the extensionists.

Keywords: Client-oriented extension approach, extension service providers

Introduction

The role of extension system is very important in promoting agricultural development and increasing food production. Several emerging challenges confront Indian farmers. These include limited land and water availability, which is further exacerbated by degradation of natural resources; climate changes; changes in demand and consumption patterns, moving toward high-value agriculture; increasing population pressure; and liberalization of trade (Lele *et al.* 2010) [4].

Now the time has come when there is a need for closer interaction between public and private investment in the field of agriculture. Despite the variety of agricultural extension approaches that operate in parallel and sometimes duplicate one another, majority of farmers in India do not have access to any source of information. This severely limits their ability to increase their productivity and income and thereby reduce poverty (Claire J. Glendenning, 2010) [1].

As the agricultural research is a prime means to improve the productivity of resources, there is a need to revamp the extension approaches which is essential for the effective dissemination of the technologies.

Approaches like package programme, high yielding variety programme, training and visit, farmer-led extension, participatory approach etc. had been carried out for bridging this gap. Intensive agriculture district programme, popularly known as 'package of programme' which got introduced in 1960 intended to increase the agriculture production rapidly in areas giving emphasis on the factors of production. It showed a deviation from multipurpose approach to a single purpose approach. The programme had certain drawbacks like inadequate number of staffs, lack of sufficiently promising staff training programme and even the failure of village level extension workers in impressing the farmers inefficient functioning workshops, soil testing and seed testing laboratories which were intended to provide the required service to the farmers, lack of action research and conventional farm plans.

The HYVP (High Yielding Variety Programme) launched in 1996 with the objective of attaining self sufficiency in food was a comprehensive package of comprising of agricultural research, irrigation, supply of inputs like seeds, fertilizers and credits, intensive agricultural extension services and training.

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The HYVP was not a single programme, rather five separate ones, each designed for a single crop. The programme had limitations like high cost of cultivation, more intensive use of fertilizers as high yielding varieties are input responsive, constant attention of farmers, extensionists and researchers. Even though scale neutral it was not resource neutral.

T & V system approach envisages the principle of single line of command with continues training and contacts. It had a stronger research extension linkage but material support for adoption was quiet weak. The major reproaches of T & V system was that of placing the farmers in the role of simple users or recipients of technologies at the end of the linear chain of transfer of technologies from research by means of extension. The concept of identification and working contact farmers does not work well. The idea of message delivery to farmers does not make sense as the same message will not be appropriate for all. Regular training of the trainers, fiscal sustainability and logistic support were also an issue and the approach gave too little attention to local knowledge and practices and cultural values.

In the institutional approach, the faculties provide the transfer of technical knowledge which is relevant and useful to farm people. KVKs are institutions established by ICAR in 1974 which is designed to impart need based and skill oriented vocational training to the practicing farmers, in-service field level extension workers. Pant and Singh (2014) ^[3] noticed that the common basic constraints in the effective implementation of the KVK programmes were scattered and fragmented land holdings, non-availability of inputs, improper marketing facilities etc. Technological constraints included non availability of location specific and problem oriented technologies and lacking knowledge of modern technologies were some of the important technological constraints. Organizational and administrative constraints were that sometime even after launching very effective developmental schemes for the rural poor, the benefits of the programmes do not reach to its ultimate clientele. The political – bureaucratic patronage or top down administrative system continues to govern the rural agricultural development works with the result the rural people have been more a passive recipient of benefits, rather than active participants in the development process. Non-availability of trained staff, frequent transfers, lack of incentives and engagement in other official works were some important administrative constraints, which influences the extension system.

Participatory extension approaches (PEA) accentuate on the point that the farmers linked with their skills in crop production along with additional knowledge could improve their living levels. This approach demands effective involvement of rural farmers in planning and implementing of agricultural development activities. Farmers are motivated to take initiative and work with extension staff on equal terms. The farmers also have the capacity to diffuse new technologies among themselves i.e, farmer to farmer approach. It is also called as Farmer First Approach. The approach includes Farmers field school, Farmer Group etc. It has limitations in efficient organisation of groups, leadership ability, continuity of program, great time and efforts. The extension agent has no personal stakes in outcomes. Many scientists, teachers and extensionists are still 'trapped' in top-down, centre-outward institutions and ToT thinking and not all of them are ready or able to change their attitudes and role-perception.

In Farmer Led Extension, farmers play a significant role in identification, selection and transfer of technologies. In this

approach, farmers are made themselves capable by raising their basic level of knowledge. Even though this particular approach will enhance the involvement of farmers, there are some limitations also which involves logistic issues, ideological conflicts that affects the strength of the organisation, lack of professional attitude among farmers, issues regarding fiscal sustainability, lack of leadership competency etc.

In the commodity specialized approach all functions related to a particular commodity are grouped together, including input supply, output marketing, and prices extension and research. There are limitations such as need of highly trained scientific personnel equipped with expensive vehicles and field scientific apparatus, difficulties in group maintenance and logistics problems. Interests of farmers, however, may have less priority than those of commodity production organizations.

This is the time to trace out the constraints, which obstructs the results of extension approaches and identify possible approaches that shall overcome the constraints. One such approach is the client-oriented extension. The client oriented extension approach is an approach which helps the agricultural research institutes to improve their client orientation level and hence the efficiency and quality of extension services. The Client-Oriented Extension Approach (COEA) can help extension organisations adapt themselves to new situations today and are featured by an emphasis on flexibility, performance, efficiency, accountability and quality service delivery. The Client-Oriented Extension Approach (COEA) gives emphasize on the importance of two way communication i.e, between the agricultural service providers and the users of agricultural services and products. A phenomenon of supply and demand, with extension services on the supply side and clients on the demand side can be identified in this particular approach. The supply side should be aware of the demand side and vice versa. The extension service providers have to be in a position to sense the needs of the clients in particular and avail them on timely basis. The clients must know about the services or solutions available to overcome the problems or needs and the extension services should be utilized efficiently. Here according to the demand supply is done that is with reference to the particular needs of a farmer, the service is given. It will pay way for the effective transfer of technology, since the farmer is getting a more specific advice in technology transfer he will be motivated more for learning, understanding and adopting technologies. A good rapport will develop between the extension personnel and farmer. For introducing any new technology into the field of farmer, there matters credibility of the extension personnel. The trust worthiness seems to be high in client orient extension approach as there is more personal contact. The suggestions given by the extension agents, knowing the farmer and his farm (financial capacity, land area, sentemence to particular crop, education etc.) can make much better results. More over if the service is provided individually, timely interventions are possible in case of serious problems. The client specific advice will give better results since it will be more sustainable.

A client is not a passive receipt of products and services, he is an actor who is able to express wishes and interests and to assess the quality of the products/ services that are delivered. For the effective transfer of technology, the desire and needs of the clients should be taken into account by the providers of products / services.

As such the client concept is suitable for the agricultural research institutions that have to build on expressed needs. In agricultural research, a client is defined as a person or organisation that utilizes research services. Also the reinvention of technologies by the farmers, at the field level are assisted effectively by the extensionists.

The Client-Oriented Extension Approach addresses the areas like stakeholder involvement, participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation, networking, information management, management of human resources and production of client friendly output. This strategy enhances the dissemination of agro-information either by public or private interventions to a wider spectrum of users, including women and youth, that and vibrant farmers' unlike the formal extension systems.

The Client-Oriented Extension Approach makes technology transfer better by ensuring the following

Meeting the clients and knowing them better, ensures that clients are aware of their services. Feedbacks are obtained as there is better communication between the extension service provider and clients. To provide motivation to the farmers to take up new technologies rather than any other approach it suits best, as there is a good rapport between the extension personnel and the farmer.

To ensure long term viability of the technology application

To increase the impact of agricultural research on rural development through increase output production and effective dissemination of information. To make assessment on the needs of the clients and plan accordingly To make sustainable agriculture by providing more location specific, resource specific advices to farmers which will fetch better yield.

Conclusion

Constraints in the extension approaches need to be eliminated to make the transfer of technology in rural areas rapid. Farmers require information which is relevant to strategic that can finally enhance their standard of living. There is a major shift from the production driven farming to market driven farming in the global context. In this regard there is much importance for the functioning of extension personals. Agricultural extension renders the best extension services and plays a major role in strengthening the farming community. Extension approaches have to be reconstructed to make the dissemination of technology response to the farmers' need. The extension personnel have to be multifaceted. They should act the roles of a co-ordinator, facilitator, motivator, and regulator. And this role function can be effectively carried out by Client-Oriented Extension Approach as there is better contact between the extension personals and farmers (clients) in this approach.

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