



CONCEPT NOTE

Background

Hunger, poverty, and unemployment are major challenges especially in developing countries and agricultural and rural communities are highly vulnerable to external shocks. National systems are unable to respond effectively to the interconnected challenges of high volatility in food and energy markets, climate change, and the global economic crisis. Revitalizing extension and advisory services, and strengthening their linkage with other actors in agricultural value chains and the wider innovation system are fundamental to the future of agricultural and rural development. Concerted action is needed to; support small-holder producers, including resource poor farmers and women, develop their capacities and build self-reliance.

After many years of under-investment in agriculture, particularly in extension, research, education and training, the tide has changed and governments and the international community are fully mobilized and committed to urgent action and making funding available to support agricultural and rural development. Within the past decade or more, there have been reforms to extension and advisory services to make them more pluralistic, demand-driven, cost effective, efficient and sustainable. The success and impact of these changes have not been fully studied and the time has come to reflect on the lessons learned to inform future policy and practice so that extension and advisory services can play a valuable role in addressing the failures in the global food system and assisting countries to respond to the diverse needs of their agricultural and rural communities.

Given the renewed interest in agriculture and the vital role of extension and advisory services in increasing access to knowledge and markets especially for millions of small-holder farmers; there is need to take stock of promising initiatives and opportunities, define and promote mechanisms for up-scaling successful models and improve policy and practice to support the global effort to reduce hunger, and improve livelihoods especially of millions of small-holder farmers.

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA), the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS), the New Partnership for Africa's Development Planning and Coordinating Agency (NEPAD Agency), The International Centre for development oriented Research in Agriculture (ICRA) and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) in collaboration with several national, regional and international partners including the African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education (ANAFE), the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), the Ministry of Agriculture – Kenya, the European Initiative on Agricultural Research for Development (EIARD), the University of the West Indies (UWI) and the University of the South Pacific (USP) will organise an international conference to take stock of current policies, thinking and practice, successes and failures of ongoing and past reforms in extension and advisory services and build a coalition moving forward to specifically address meeting the future needs of small-holder farmers, marginalized communities, women and youth in a sustainable and cost effective manner. This conference integrates the GFRAS 2nd annual conference.

Problem Statement

Extension agents and advisory service providers work with farmers, and several other actors; researchers, academicians and policymakers, to evaluate, interpret and share new and existing knowledge, research outputs, technology developments, policies and market opportunities that benefit farmers. They also serve as the conduit for bringing the challenges that farmers face to the attention of multiple actors in the value chain and wider innovation systems. Given the past decades of under-investments, many of these service providers do not have the necessary resources - training, skills, tools and financial support, to help farmers operate in the new dynamic business and market-oriented environment.

Evidence-based information on key priority issues for guiding future policies, strategies and practice and, for increasing investments in education, training and research for extension and advisory services, is not readily available. Policies are uncoordinated and implementation of new and promising initiatives is under-resourced. The recent efforts at reforms of governance structures, and attempts at privatization and cost recovery are yet to be fully evaluated.

Small-holder farmers, especially the resource poor in remote rural communities are not receiving adequate extension and advisory services. Their inability to articulate demand and the failure of other actors to understand their demands act as deterrents to fully benefitting from these services. The diminished role of extension and advisory services as public goods is a hindrance to future agricultural and rural development and urgency is needed for redesigning and revitalizing their role in reshaping the global food system. There is also need for coordination of development actors to articulate and advocate for investments in agricultural extension and advisory services and to ensure that they remain priorities on the national, regional and global development agenda.

Overall Objective

To provide a **space** for sharing current thinking and practice and building **coalitions** of farmers, practitioners, policymakers and other key actors to **advocate** and implement policy reforms and innovations in extension and advisory services; especially those that benefit smallholder and resource poor farmers, including women and marginalized rural communities.

Conference Themes

There are four cross-cutting conference themes.

1. **Policy:** What are the policy lessons from the past two decades of reforms of governance structures, reductions in public funding and increased privatization of extension and advisory services? Have they resulted in increased accountability, efficiency, empowerment and impact? What is the future role of governments in providing extension and advisory services as public goods? What mix of regulations, goods and services is most appropriate for offering extension and advisory services that meet country-specific goals within any given socio-economic and agro-ecological context? What research is needed to fill the knowledge gaps?

2. **Capacity Development:** What new knowledge, skills, and infrastructure are needed in light of the expanded role of extension and advisory services? How best can the capacity of the actors (farmers, organizations and networks) be strengthened in the short to medium term? What good practices exist in capacity development? What research is needed to fill the knowledge gaps? What types and level of investments are needed?
3. **Tools and Approaches:** What innovative tools (including the use of ICTs and the mass media) and approaches are proving effective in the delivery of extension and advisory services? How can the islands of successes be captured and the lessons and best practices shared within countries and across regions with policymakers, development actors and extension practitioners? How can they be up-and out-scaled to ensure quality, cost-effectiveness, sustainability and impact of these services on agricultural productivity, sustainable livelihoods and natural resource management?
4. **Learning Networks:** What is the role of learning in enhancing the effectiveness of extension and advisory services and increasing their impact? What institutional arrangements need to be put in place to support lifelong learning by farmers and other key actors for continuous innovation? What form should they take and how should they evolve? What mechanisms exist for monitoring and evaluating extension and advisory services to support learning and make them more accountable and which are feasible? What research is needed to fill the knowledge gaps?

Expected Results

- Shared understanding and enhanced profile of the vital role of extension and advisory services in agricultural value chain and wider innovation system within the context of the present environment for agricultural and rural development.
- Good practice and policy options for improving the future delivery and effectiveness of extension and advisory services clearly defined, endorsed and widely disseminated.
- Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating extension and advisory services to provide lessons for policy and practice and contribute to enhanced knowledge sharing, learning, innovation and accountability identified, endorsed and widely disseminated.
- Priorities for research, capacity development and investments that enhance the impact of extension and advisory services on agricultural productivity, food security, sustainable livelihoods and natural resource management identified and strategies for addressing these priorities elaborated, endorsed and widely disseminated.
- Coalition of stakeholders committed to advancing extension and advisory services to contribute to developing resilience of small-holder farmers and redefining the global food system.

Participants

The Conference is open to extension practitioners from public, private and civil society organizations including representatives of farmers' organizations and commodity associations, policy makers, the research and development community, academia, processors, traders, donors, financial institutions and the media. Financial support will be restricted to invited individuals and participants who meet the established criteria for sponsorship. Self sponsored delegates are welcome to attend.

Processes Leading Up to the Conference

1. Call for abstracts/papers/success stories/case studies/videos/photo collages.
2. Commissioned papers and reports on the main themes; policy, capacity development, tools and approaches and learning networks/institutional arrangements that contribute to defining the future role and mechanisms for delivery of high quality and cost-effective extension and advisory services.
3. Development, maintenance and continuous updating of a conference website that facilitates online registration, a blog and other relevant social media tools, contributions by countries and experts on the state-of-the-art and current policies, thinking and practice on extension and advisory services.
4. E-discussions and/or face-to-face discussions and debates on the future role of extension and the need for investments.

The Conference

The Conference will be different and will provide a platform for listening to the voices of farmers, practitioners, private sector and policymakers. It will include plenary and parallel technical and working group sessions which respond to the four thematic areas. The selected and invited papers/case studies/success stories/videos/photo collages, and commissioned papers and reports will be presented at the Conference. An open innovation and market place will be provided for facilitating interaction and knowledge sharing among participants. An exhibition space will be set up for posters and booths to showcase good practice, success stories, tools, materials and information and other products from the public and private sectors and civil society organizations from across the continents. Live streaming and a conference blog will provide updates to an international audience worldwide. There will also be a field trip to sites which demonstrate extension in action.

Post Conference

The organizers and partners commit to ensuring that the outputs of the Conference and the recommendations from the commissioned reports and studies feed into high level policy processes and to monitor the uptake of good practice at national and regional levels. CTA will also publish and disseminate the Proceedings of the Conference.

International Steering Committee

An international steering committee (ISC) composed of experts drawn from various organizations and representative of various disciplines including policy, extension, research, academia, gender, communication and rural development will oversee the design and implementation of the conference.

Local Planning Committee

A local planning committee (LPC) composed of representatives of organizations including farmers' organizations based in the host country will be responsible for in-country logistics, liaison with national organizations, officials and media and on-site conference organization. The LPC will be represented on the ISC.

Communication, Media and Marketing Strategy

A visual identity and other promotional material have been developed for the Conference. Promotional activities will be undertaken for mobilizing and sustaining interest in the conference. The main communication activities include; creation, maintenance and updating of the conference website, updating and maintaining contacts and providing continuous updates on the conference to the key audiences. The media will also play an important part leading up to, during and after the conference. The main activities which will form part of the media strategy include preparation and dissemination of press releases to various journalists' networks, hosting press conferences, organizing interviews with specialists and political decision-makers and providing live webcasts during the conference to national, regional and international media houses.

Organizers and Partners

CTA

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA) is a joint institution operating under the framework of the Cotonou Agreement between the ACP Group of States (Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific) and the European Union (EU) Member States. CTA's mission is to advance food security, increase prosperity and support sound natural resource management through information, communication and knowledge management, facilitation, capacity-building and empowerment of agricultural and rural development organisations and networks in ACP countries.

AFAAS

The African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS) is a continental body that brings national Agricultural Advisory Services under one umbrella. The mission of AFAAS is to "promote lesson learning and add value to initiatives in Agricultural Advisory Services through sharing information and increased professional interaction." It operates within the framework of the fourth pillar of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP Pillar IV) which has the objective of enhancing the livelihoods of African farmers and pastoralists.

FARA

The Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa is an apex organization bringing together and forming coalitions of major stakeholders in agricultural research and development in Africa. FARA is the technical arm of the African Union Commission (AUC) on rural economy and agricultural development. FARA is also the lead agency of the AU's NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency to implement the fourth pillar of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), involving agricultural research, technology dissemination and uptake. FARA provides a strategic platform to foster continental and global networking that reinforces the capacities of Africa's national agricultural research for development systems.

GFRAS

The Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) is a non-profit international organisation formed in 2010 to provide a space for advocacy and leadership on pluralistic, demand-driven rural advisory services. GFRAS does this in the context of the global development agenda, with a goal of promoting sustainable growth and reducing poverty.

IFAD

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a specialized agency of the United Nations, was established as an international financial institution in 1977 as one of the major outcomes of the 1974 World Food Conference. IFAD is dedicated to eradicating rural poverty in developing countries. Working with rural poor people, governments, donors, non-governmental organizations and many other partners, IFAD focuses on country-specific solutions, which can involve increasing rural poor peoples' access to financial services, markets, technology, land and other natural resources.

NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a programme of the African Union (AU) adopted in Lusaka, Zambia in 2001. NEPAD is a radically new intervention, spearheaded by African leaders to pursue new priorities and approaches to the political and socio-economic transformation of Africa. In February 2010, the 14th AU Assembly established the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NEPAD Agency) as a technical body of the AU to replace the NEPAD Secretariat. The NEPAD Agency is a key outcome of the integration of NEPAD into the AU structures and processes. The core mandate of the NEPAD Agency is to facilitate and coordinate the implementation of regional and continental priority programmes and projects and to push for partnerships, resource mobilisation and research and knowledge management.

World Agroforestry Centre

The World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), a member of the Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research (CGIAR), is an autonomous, non-profit research organization. The Centre generates science-based knowledge about the diverse roles that trees play in agricultural landscapes and uses its research to advance policies and practices that benefit the poor and the environment.

ICRA

The International Centre for development oriented Research in Agriculture (ICRA) is an international centre established by European members of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) to support leadership and develop critical mass in facilitating knowledge-based rural and agricultural innovation. ICRA does so, by providing training to professionals of education, research, and development organisations, and by strengthening the competency of inter-organisational and multidisciplinary teams to put their knowledge to work for innovation. At ICRA we believe that food and nutrition security, pro-poor economic growth and poverty reduction, and sustainable resource use can only come from people and organisations empowered to address their collective challenges themselves by working together and sharing knowledge. ICRA therefore also supports local level multi-stakeholder partnerships in the South (involving ICRA's alumni), to establish: 1) dynamic learning networks and develop clusters of innovation and, 2) national level partnerships facilitating institutional change in support of research and education for development.

ANAFE

The African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education (ANAFE) is a Pan African network registered in 2007 in Kenya, Tanzania and Niger as an International NGO of over 134 Agricultural colleges and Universities teaching Agriculture, Agroforestry, Forestry and environment and incorporating important elements of agricultural sustainability. ANAFE facilitates change in agriculture and natural resources management by linking education to rural communities and by empowering member institutions to act as cornerstones in the implementation of activities, paying great attention to grassroots ownership, empowerment and decision making.

EIARD

The European Initiative on Agricultural Research for Development (EIARD) is a permanent policy coordination platform on Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) which aims to promote and implement coherent European policies at international, regional and sub-regional levels in order to increase the impact of ARD on poverty reduction, food security and sustainable management of natural resources in developing countries. It is active since October 1995 and was recognised in 1997 by a Communication of the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. EIARD members are the Member States of the European Union, plus Norway, Switzerland and the European Commission.

FSA, UWI

The Faculty of Science and Agriculture (FSA), University of the West Indies, has been serving both the human capacity needs as well as the research and development needs of the contributing territories of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) for the past fifty years. The FSA is situated on the St. Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago. Teaching and Research in Agriculture began in 1960. The FSA provides agricultural extension training and outreach services and conducts research primarily through its Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension (DAEE) in association with the Department of Food Production. In the process, the DAEE works closely with all related government agencies both local and regional, commodity groups, CBOs and NGOs with the view of improving the quality of Extension delivery throughout the region and in the process impacting on food and nutritional security and the quality of life of its CARICOM citizens.

IRETA, USP

The Institute of Research, Extension and Training in Agriculture (IRETA) is one of the six Institutes of The University of the South Pacific (USP), set up in the 1980's to complement agricultural development efforts of the South Pacific Region. IRETA has maintained strong collaborative relations with the School of Agriculture and Food Technology (SAFT) and the national governments of the Pacific- ACP countries. IRETA's mission as mandated by its Advisory Board is to improve food security and income generation opportunities within the context of sustainable development and equal participation of men, women and youth. IRETA also runs the USP-IRETA Agriculture farm that produces commercial crops and livestock and provides practical training to students of agriculture at SAFT.

KARI

The Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) is the premier national agricultural research organization whose mission is to contribute to increased productivity, commercialization and competitiveness of the agricultural sector through generation and promotion of knowledge, information and technologies that respond to clients' demands and opportunities. KARI is currently using the agricultural product value chain approach and works with an array of strategic partnerships to achieve its objectives.

Ministry of Agriculture - Kenya

The Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kenya aspires to be the leader in achievement of food security, employment creation, income generation and poverty reduction by promoting competitive and sustainable agriculture through creation of an enabling environment and provision of support services. The Ministry is committed to efficient and effective service delivery guided by its quality policy objectives and promoting public-private sector partnerships in order to meet its clients changing needs.

Budget

A Conference budget is available. Contributions are being solicited from other national, regional and international partners, donors and the private sector.

Contacts

Please visit the conference web site at <http://extensionconference2011.cta.int> or email to extension2011@cta.int, with a copy to info@fara-africa.org and info@g-fras.org.

