



global forum for rural advisory services
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The “New Extensionist”: Roles, Strategies, and Capacities to Strengthen Extension and Advisory Services

SUMMARY and RECOMMENDATIONS
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Extension and advisory services (EAS)¹ play an important role in agricultural development for food and nutrition security, food sovereignty, and economic stability. However many advisory services need new capacities to address the current challenges in agriculture in order to contribute better to agricultural innovation – a process that requires interactions and knowledge flows among a wide range of actors in the agricultural innovation system (AIS)². Over the past few years, the extension landscape has become more pluralistic, with increasing participation of the private sector (agro-inputs, agri-business, financial services), non-governmental organisations (international and local), producer groups, cooperatives and associations, consultants (independent and those associated with agri-business/producer associations), and ICT-based services. Yet such pluralism escapes planners, policy makers, researchers, and even the extension advisors.

To better contribute to agricultural innovation, EAS should collectively perform a wide range of roles. These include developing networks, organising producers, facilitating access to credit, inputs and output services, convening innovation platforms, promoting gender equality, facilitating knowledge management, supporting adaptation to climate change, and disseminating new knowledge through training and demonstrations. To perform these roles, EAS need new capacities at the individual, organisational, and enabling environment (system) levels.

What is NEW about the “New Extensionist”?

The new extensionist is a global view of extension and advisory services (EAS) that reinvents and clearly articulates the role of EAS in the rapidly-changing rural and agricultural context. It argues for an expanded role for EAS within agricultural innovation systems (AIS) and the development of new capacities at different levels to play this role.

The AIS approach focuses on interactions among the wide range of actors critical for innovation, and the institutions and policies that influence these interactions. EAS include actors from public, private, and civil society sectors who support rural and agricultural communities in many ways. EAS is an important actor within AIS and plays a major role in enabling innovation.

What is new is not necessarily the competencies needed by individuals, but the expanded role of EAS envisaged here and the focus on organisational and system level capacities. The new extensionist vision implies changes in EAS organisations, systems, and enabling environments, plus reskilling all types of individuals to better contribute to increasing the productivity and effectiveness of agricultural systems to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

At the individual level, EAS need staff with good understanding of technical knowledge plus skills to manage social processes. At the organisational level, EAS should have capacities to put in place systems and procedures to manage human and financial resources, institutions to facilitate partnerships and learning, and frameworks to deal with institutional, legal, and regulatory issues. At the enabling environment level, capacities for interaction, learning, and adaptation are important. Similarly, reform strategies should explicitly address institutional and policy changes that enhance the ability of the different actors in the AIS to work as a system. At all levels there should be mechanisms to look at gender representation and equal access to services by vulnerable groups; mechanisms to promote involvement of youth in agriculture; and opportunities to apply ICTs to enhance the performance of EAS. To develop new capacities in EAS, actions must be initiated at the national, regional, and global levels by different actors. These actions and actors are suggested below³. The full position paper is available at <http://www.g-fras.org/en/activities/the-new-extensionist>.

National level

Diagnosis and Reforms

- N1. Diagnose roles and functions in the agricultural innovation system and synthesise and share existing studies (Action by: Specialist agencies/consultants in consultation with different stakeholders)
- N2. Undertake surveys of EAS providers in the country, analyse existing models of EAS provision, and undertake further research to support evidence-based reforms and policy advocacy on EAS (Action by: Government through the Ministry of Agriculture; EAS platforms and networks, universities, research councils and other policy research centres, farmer organisations, FAO and CGIAR)
- N3. Undertake capacity self-diagnosis of EAS (Action by: EAS management, country EAS networks; EAS fora and platforms supported by facilitator)

Partnerships and Networks

- N4. Create innovation platforms, undertake needs assessments, and initiate pilot projects to experiment with new approaches and promote learning from these (Action by: EAS and other actors in the AIS especially universities and research centres)
- N5. Establish collaboration and partnerships with different actors in the AIS, as well as actors in the commodity value chains in action research and learning by doing (Action by: Research and extension councils, training centres in collaboration with EAS)
- N6. Support establishment of national networks of EAS providers at different levels and look for

synergies among networks (Action by: Extension division in the Ministry of Agriculture, EAS providers, professional societies in extension, regional networks of EAS, and private foundations)

Technical Backstopping and Institutional Development

- N7. Strengthen technical backstopping to EAS by organisations involved in research through joint research-extension initiatives (Action by: Research councils, universities, private sector, NGOs)
- N8. Focus on EAS and farmer institutional development by working through producer organizations at various levels (Action by: Extension Division in the Ministry of Agriculture, EAS providers)

Monitoring and Learning

- N9. Create mechanisms for accountability for results through regular monitoring, reflection, learning, and evaluation; review of systems and processes; create arrangements for coordination and collaborative action among EAS (Action by: EAS platforms and networks supported by facilitator; FOs)

Education and Training

- N10. Establish and strengthen training centres; contract in specific competencies required for supporting capacity development; encourage management training centres and business schools to organise tailor-made capacity development programmes for EAS on coaching, facilitation, leadership, vision building, using ICTs where appropriate (Action by: Ministries of Agriculture and EAS in collaboration with training/management institutions)
- N11. Develop curriculum for vocational and continuing education and skill up-gradation of individuals in EAS and farmers and undertake curriculum revisions at least once every five years (Action by: Universities, research centres, training centres and NGOs in collaboration with EAS, FOs and organisations such as FAO, GIZ)

Financing

- N12. Enhance sustainable financing mechanisms for all sectors of EAS (Action by: National, provincial, and local governments, EAS networks, donors, private sector, farmer organisations, private foundations)

Regional level

- R1. Support establishment of regional and sub-regional networks and engage them in design, implementation, and evaluation of EAS interventions; strengthen similar existing networks at



the regional and sub-regional levels (Action by: Regional lending organisations such as ADB, AfDB, IADB, EBRD etc.; regional economic groupings such as regional economic communities e.g. SADC in Africa, ASEAN in Asia and Pacific, SAARC in South Asia, CAEPNet in the Caribbean)

- R2. Collect and synthesise evidence on different aspects of EAS in the region and support the development of synergies and partnerships (Action by: Regional EAS networks; FAO; CGIAR; regional university, education and research networks e.g. ANAFE, RUFORUM in Africa, AGRINATURA/Agreenium in Europe, APAARI, and FARA; regional farmer organisations)
- R3. Develop policy briefs and position papers to influence policy processes to support EAS (Action by: Regional networks of EAS in collaboration with regional policy bodies, regional farmer organisations, researchers in the region in universities and research centres)
- R4. Develop and promote new knowledge, frameworks and methodologies related to EAS and support their up-scaling and out-scaling (Action by: Regional EAS networks in collaboration with farmer organisations, researchers and practitioners; regional universities and academic centres (e.g.: RUFORUM in Africa; SEARCA in South East Asia, UWI/CARICOM in the Caribbean))
- R5. Organise regional and sub-regional consultations and training programmes to share experiences and influence conditions in the enabling environment (Action by: Regional networks of EAS supported by other actors in the AIS)

Global level

- G1. Support GFRAS and other international actors to lead and guide networking and capacity development and policy advocacy for EAS at the global level (Action by: Donors and intergovernmental bodies engaged in agriculture and rural development such as World Bank, EU, FAO, CTA, GIZ, IFAD, MEAS, World Farmers Organization, GCHERA, GFAR; universities and training centres)
- G2. Strengthen, support, and coordinate regional networks of EAS to achieve their respective goals (Action by: GFRAS, FAO, CTA, MEAS, international and regional development agencies)
- G3. Develop frameworks, tools, training modules, investment source books, discussion papers to shape the evolution of EAS and share these outputs widely (Action by: GFRAS in collaboration with donors, researchers, and practitioners linked to EAS; and by FAO, World Bank, CTA, MEAS, CABI, and CRS)
- G4. Liaise with donors at the global and regional levels engaged in EAS (Action by: GFRAS, GDRPD)

1 EAS consist of all the different activities that provide the information and services needed and demanded by farmers and other actors in rural settings to assist them in developing their own technical, organisational, and management skills and practices so as to improve their livelihoods and well-being.

2 An AIS is a network of organisations, enterprises, and individuals focussed on bringing new products, processes, and new forms of organisations into social or economic use, together with the institutions and policies that affect their behaviour and performance.

3 Acronyms.

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AfDB	African Development Bank
AGRINATURA	The European Alliance for Agricultural Knowledge for Development
Agreenium	The French Institute for Cooperation in Agrosiences
AIAEE	Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education
ANAFE	African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
APAARI	Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CTA	Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations
FARA	Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa
FOs	Farmers' organisations
GCHERA	Global Confederation of Higher Education Associations for the Agricultural and Life Sciences

- G5. Conduct policy advocacy on strengthening the role of EAS in agricultural development and poverty reduction, enhanced funding support, and institutional and policy reforms in AIS (Action by: GFRAS in collaboration with regional networks and other bi-lateral and international development agencies, international research and development organizations, G8 and G20)
- G6. Promote inter-regional sharing of experiences with reforms and new approaches in EAS (Action by: GFRAS in collaboration with regional networks, FAO, World Bank and other development partners)
- G7. Provide long term financial and technical support to EAS to manage change and develop new capacities and develop business models; use new investments to experiment with new approaches and promote institutional reforms (Action by: Donors and intergovernmental bodies engaged in agriculture and rural development such as World Bank, FAO, and IFAD)
- G8. Develop a research programme on EAS and capacity strengthening (Action by: AIAEE, GCHERA, TAP, GFAR, CGIAR and universities)

GDRPD	Global Donor Platform for Rural Development
GFAR	Global Forum on Agricultural Research
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
MEAS	Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services
RUFORUM	Regional Universities' Forum
SAARC	South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SEARCA	Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture
TAP	Tropical Agricultural Platform
UWI	University of the West Indies

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