

Smart technologies for enhanced partnerships in RAS: An overview

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Smart technologies are new generation Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) that allows Rural Advisory Service (RAS) stakeholders to interact, create, share, retrieve, monitor, automate and exchange information, and ideas that can be discussed upon, archived, analysed, better insights and expert decisions are arrived, and used by anyone in virtual communities and networks. Smart technologies has the potential to form informed communities in the agriculture sector that can take better decisions and form enhanced partnerships to prepare themselves to practice and management of better agriculture and also navigate against emerging agricultural challenges of climate change, global food price instability, unsustainable agricultural activities, and so on. The impact of smart technologies like smart phones, social media, big data, Artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), Robotics, and Drones have been immense on agriculture sector, especially giving a special edge to Rural Advisory Services (RAS). Agricultural extension and rural advisory services needs to apply smart technologies to emerge as a facilitator in the changing context of agriculture to foster partnerships among stakeholders and also to develop conducive environment for innovation and development in Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS). As a platform of mass influence with agriculture as content, Rural Advisory Services can facilitate a value chain extension system, engage multiple stakeholders, increase profit margin of producers, increase the negotiating power of producers, all through mass-personal communication using smart technologies. Increased online visibility of rural advisory organizations through smart technologies like social media also adds to the cause, while creating a network of agricultural peers and professionals. Smart technology based start-ups in agriculture helps to access and share information and content and provides a platform to share information helping rural youth and farmers get trained and engage in economic agricultural activities; increases youth-youth engagement, encouraging agripreneurship; helps in real time updates on activities and deliberation on issues with instant solutions to queries and feedback, and also helps to leverage partnerships among multi-stakeholders of Rural Advisory services. Smart technologies can improve the effectiveness and efficiency across the agriculture value chain and mitigate inherent risks across RAS stakeholder activities.