

Transition of Agricultural Extension in Iran

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Introduction

- *Extension activities are being pulled in many directions, and are being called on to respond more effectively to **the needs of farmers*** (Rivera & Sulaiman, 2009, p. 276).
- Three types of extension: public, private and semi-public 'systems', making up a multi-institutional, multisectoral 'pluralistic' system.
- Changing extension concept and role: from a production orientation to facilitating farmers being organized and linking to markets (Swanson, 2006)
- *A major concern for extension is **to operate in the context of agricultural innovation systems** (AIS)*

Purpose

- To understand the agricultural extension changes in Iran in a historical review
- To understand the influence of environmental factors, especially macro policies, on agricultural extension
- To show main challenges

Agricultural extension in 1948-1979

Main policies: Socio-economic modernization

Official start (1948): technical support from USA & FAO

International and national Public funds

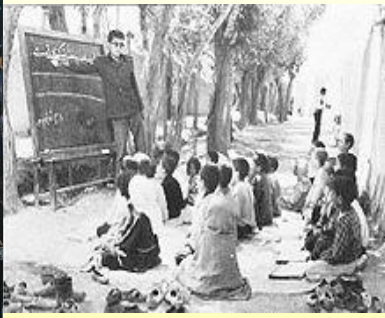
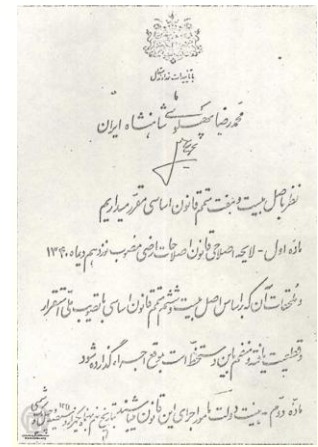
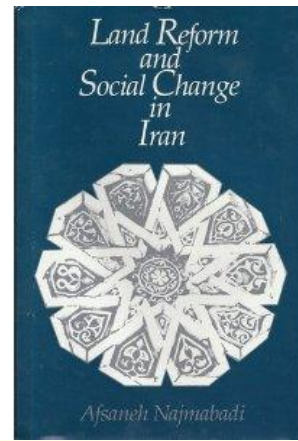
Extension in 1950s, a golden period: Extension as an enlightening and educational concept: “out of school education” or “information transfer”: agricultural extension, home economics and rural youth programmes

Extension in 1960s-1970s: start of deviation

Less concentration on educational and information:

- Land reform (main modernization policy) by extension workers: decreasing their extension performance
- Use of soldiers /corps in extension
- Agricultural input delivery for increased productions

Extension in 1960s



Extension in 1970s: input delivery



Extension after 1979-1980s



- Revolution 1979 and Iran- Iraq war 1980-87
- Policies: Natural resource conservation; b) Welfare; 3) Production; and 4) Social capital
- Public extension continued: input delivery
- Elimination of Youth Clubs, Extension Soldiers
- Dehestan/ county “Agricultural Service Centres” (for extension and Non-extension services): **no independent & sufficient agents**
- A top-down planning: an overload of activities
- Establishing *Jihad Sazandegi* Institution/ Ministry for eliminating poverty:: **rural libraries, youth centres, festivals, rural theatres, agricultural and non-agricultural training courses participatory activities**
- **Extension in mid1980s: Publicizing Extension**



Extension in 1990s: two rival extension

Start of economic adjustment (privatization, decrease of subsidies and increase of dollar value against *Rial*)

- Attention given to more resource based farms or areas
- Increased non-agricultural product prices: more vulnerability for small farmers and nomads

Agricultural plans divided between two ministries: MOJS and Extension and Participation Deputy (EPD) dealt with natural conservation, animal husbandry, and rural infrastructure (with no extension workers & limited Individual contacts at Dehestan level)

- MOA in charge of land farming and irrigation projects

Both ministries with their own extension: little coordination

- Some attempts to relate Research and Extension
- Insufficient financial & human resources for extension

Extension in 2000-05: strengthening extension position

Third socio-economic development plan with emphasise:

- Productivity, Civil society, participation, sustainable NRM
- Governmental institutions had to hand over some of their projects to the village councils, CBOs and NGOs.
- Emergence of Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture (MOJA) from merging two ministries: an Extension with better position at national and provincial levels
- Main extension aim: to increase general and technical knowledge and encourage participation
- Some input delivery tasks given to cooperatives or private sector
- Using agricultural graduates as “Corps of Development”
- Equipping and changing Agricultural Service Centres

Extension in 2000-2005

Some strategies: need assessments; supporting CBOs, cooperatives and NGOs; facilitating private sector interventions; using research findings; implementing on-farm extension-research projects; women's empowerment; selecting and training rural technical leaders or models; and establishing Clubs, Rural Training Centres, Cooperation Homes, Rural Libraries, and Rural Parks; rewarding the best producers and facilitators; and organizing rural shows

Extension in 2000-2005

Tendency towards private extension:

- Shortage of financial & human resources: in 1996-2002 , extension received 0.1-0.2 percent of AGDP
- Dependency to other administrations' specialists for technical subjects: Half of extension staff had qualifications in agriculture, extension, development or relevant subjects
- Graduation of a large number of agricultural students in 1990s-2000s and their unemployment (important concern for the government), leading to emerging 1) "Organization of Agriculture and Natural Resources Engineering System" as an NGO to organize them for monitoring agricultural activities, 2) some private companies regarding extension or other agricultural services
- Influence of economic adjustment: employment reduced

Extension 2005-2010: privatizing extension

- New trend of economic adjustment, especially based on Article 44 of the constitution and the Fourth Five-Year Economic Development Plan (2005-2010): important force for handing over governmental activities to private sector and cooperatives
- This supported the tendency of the ministry for privatization of extension, leading to reducing organizational structure and staff

Extension 2005-2010: Main policies

- Increasing extension coverage (public & private)
- Establishing and supporting “agricultural technical and engineering private service companies” and community organizations in order to perform government’s activities,
- Increasing agricultural productivity through younger farmers and developing career skills
- Transferring research results to farmers, exchanging farmers’ technical knowledge, and linking research-extension-education and other administrations,
- Extension of sustainable and organic production,
- Emphasizing rural and nomadic women and youth

Extension 2010: challenges and resources

Innovation to manage productivity, poverty reduction, food security, natural resource management

Over 4.3 million farmers and 200,000 nomadic families

Governmental Extension human resources:

- 1213 Jihad Agriculture Centres at Dehestan level with 4500 extension agents (not fully extension work)
- Extension personnel: 200 at national, 700 at provincial, 1500 at township levels
- Development Soldiers: 3428 in 2010,

Private extension: 2288 Agricultural Technical and Engineering Private Service Companies with 20084 members in 30 provinces;

30497 local leaders or contact farmers or aides

Challenges of private Extension: sustainability, independency, information

Dependency: private extension companies were supported by public extension: facilitating and providing land and credits to establish their buildings, providing a place for temporal use and organizing training for their members

Making contract with public extension and Jihad Agriculture Organizations to provide free services to farmers (purpose was to receive %80 of costs from farmers)

Problem of sustainability (long term efficiency and effectiveness): Most clients are small scale farmers with no experience of paid information: reluctant to pay

Poor relation with agricultural research has been worse: lack of any mechanism for linkage with researchers or other information sources.

Extension and non-extension services dilemma

Extension outside of Agriculture Ministry

- In the 2000s, the graduates of agricultural extension were gradually entered in other rural or urban organizations and extended the concept of extension in other subjects rather than only agricultural extension, for example in health, mass media, electricity and water companies, commerce, civil society, cooperatives, municipalities and etc.
- Although the Ministry of Jihad Agriculture eliminated the departments responsible for research on extension and knowledge systems, the universities continued their research and a mass number of publications.
- Therefore, extension in the Ministry of Jihad Agriculture showed a weak body, but the extension concept out of this ministry was developed.

Lessons learned

- Extension has been influenced by state's main policies
- Public extension has suffered from lack of extension agents at grassroots acting solely on providing or facilitating information / innovation
- Public extension in the ministry is viewed by production-oriented departments as a divided extension system in each organization rather than a unified organization
- Agriculture and public extension has suffered from financial deficiencies: a heritage for private sector
- Poor linkage of extension, research and other actors of innovation system (new public and private institutions, CBOs, NGOs and market): it seemed both public and private extension have no sufficient capability to manage this complex system

The last word

We are helping a man, whom we think he is weak and old, die

and

we are waiting for a new born baby whom we do not know his body figure, his health, and his acts!

We do not know if he is handicapped or with no disability!



**Thank you for
Your attention**

