

Synthesis on the Privatization of Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services: Sub-Sahara Africa

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Abstract: *The basic idea of climate-smart agriculture is that location-specific climate-smart technologies should be made available, and this is where agricultural extension and rural advisory services come into play. The creation of location-specific technologies requires input from the private sector. The private sector plays a huge role in facilitating innovation processes, the focus of extension must move from transferring knowledge, skills, and technology relevant to the production of crops, livestock, and forestry products, and resilience to climate change consequences. However, an effective system for extension provision is essential for the successful implementation of climate-smart agriculture projects. Implementing climate-smart agriculture is important and must be a top goal for all agricultural extension and advisory service providers. The government, particularly in developing nations, must acknowledge and encourage partnerships through incentives and establish a setting in which farmers can transact with the private sector. Changes in societal behaviour, business plans, and farming methods would be necessary for millions of farmers to implement climate-smart agriculture. In order to adopt climate-smart agriculture and comprehend its effects, farmers require assistance from public and private entities; so that, farmers are connected with resources for new knowledge and tools, and that's where the rural extension and advisory service is particularly important. This synthesis study highlights the successes and failures of privatized extension and advisory service delivery.*

Keywords- Farmers, Government, Technologies, Practices, Productivity, Quality

1. INTRODUCTION

Agricultural extension and advisory services work to increase productivity and accomplish social and economic objectives at the same time (Jacob, 2019). Additionally, it addresses issues like bettering rural livelihoods and the sustainability of the agricultural system, especially in rural areas affected by climatic shocks (Fok, 2021). Menanga et al. (2019) prerogative alluded that climate-smart agricultural extension and advisory services have developed in many African nations (*i.e.*, participants from the public, nonprofit, and commercial sectors who play a significant role in the agricultural value chain) (Simpson and Burpee, 2014).

Agriculture extension and advisory services (EAS) integrate climate-smart agriculture and sustainable agriculture in Sub-Saharan African countries, which has a significant impact on food security and socioeconomic development (FAO, 2019; WFP, 2016). As a result, recent developments toward a pluralistic delivery system, including the appearance

of private-sector-led projects in a number of countries, have been the subject of current policies and scholarly discussions. In order to improve agricultural productivity (*i.e.*, addressing climate-related challenges among smallholder farmers) and develop more effective value chains, the development of a more pluralistic EAS ecosystem is becoming a development priority. Private sector actors are taking a bigger role in farmer-level outreach as compared to the public.

In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), smallholder farmers make up more than 60% of the population, but only a small proportion of them regularly use agricultural extension and advisory services (EAS). This extension gap hinders the development of sustainable agricultural systems, increased agricultural production, and productivity (Fok, 2021). However, although this need is regularly met by members of civil society, project-based aid falls short of rural communities' long-term needs for ongoing EAS (Tarawallie, 2018). Agricultural extension services are becoming privatized as an organizational response to the issues posed

by an environment that is getting more complicated and changing quickly by Lawrence and Lorsh (1967). Whereas a change in service provider will not affect the effectiveness of extension, privatization is premised on the notion that sufficient technology is accessible for circulation among the intended target group (Mioshnik and Basu, 2021; Grande et al., 2019).

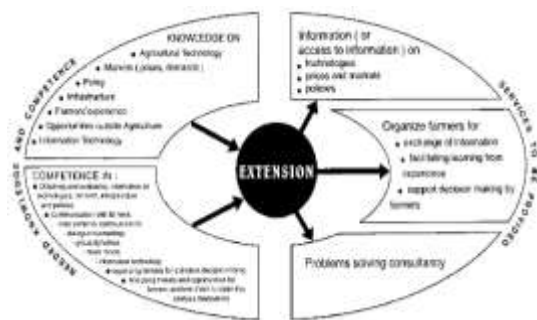


Figure 1: Delivering Agricultural Extension Services. Semanticscholar.Org

Also, with the privatization of agricultural extension and advisory services in the 1990s and early 2000s, there was a significant departure from public sector implementation mechanisms in the delivery of EAS for agriculture. Famine fears had been allayed by accomplishments, and market globalization had opened up chances for exporting high-value goods. Agribusiness investments and donor support increased while government funding for agriculture, especially for EAS, dropped (Vincent et al., 2019). Donor money for the EAS has moved to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and farmers' interest programs. New initiatives sought to reconsider the obligations and procedures of extension workers (Neuchatel, 1999). Input suppliers for extension and advisory services sell seed, fertilizer, herbicides, farm machinery, and other agricultural inputs in the context of privatized climate-smart agriculture extension and advisory service delivery. For rural areas, these service providers can also act as information centers (e.g. a single modest input supply franchise may provide services to nearly 2,000 individuals in rural Zambia) (White, 2015). On the other side, multinational corporations, large international suppliers, and international NGOs have recognized the potential for regional input suppliers to provide farmers with technical information as part of a customer-focused business model and market-driven development strategy (Madan and Maredia, 2021). The success of this strategy depends on local dealers' capacity to deliver valuable knowledge alongside product sales, hence training and assistance for these providers are crucial. Contract farming may be used as a supply chain management strategy by large buyers, such as food processors and exporters, who source from smallholder producers. According to food and agriculture organization (FAO) (2016), contract farming agreements or out-grower schemes frequently include suppliers of inputs and technical assistance to increase

farm productivity and product quality, particularly in locations where government extension services fall short of farmers' need for information. The development effects of contract farming for smallholder producers have been debated, despite research left unfinished by FAO suggesting that well-managed agreements can successfully link small farmers to higher-value markets for increased farm profitability.

Additionally, as production technologies have increasingly become private assets due to the expansion of the commercial agriculture sector and trade liberalization around the world, technology transfer channels have become increasingly privatized (Swanson, 2008). Farmers still exhibit a need for information and may be willing to pay for it if they believe it will be valuable to their operations. Therefore, it is advised that the private sector should increase its role in providing extension services in partnership with the public sector, which would play the role of creating a favourable legal environment for private entities to participate in extension delivery, even though the public sector still plays a significant role in supporting farmers (Virmani, 2012; Swanson, 2008). Therefore, FAO (2018) suggested that the improvement of the impact of extension services on agricultural and rural development necessitates the use of novel extension methodologies and/or approaches. Therefore, in order to overcome the shortcomings of earlier EAS models, it is necessary to unite the potential of the public and private sectors. It is crucial to combine the public and private sectors to offer extension services in line with climate-smart agriculture (Muyanga and Jayne, 2008).

2. PRIVATE AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AND ADVISORY SERVICES

The privatization of agriculture extension and advisory services garnered attention in the 1980s and 1990s, and numerous studies were conducted to either support or communicate the opinions of those who were directly impacted, such as extension advisors and farmers. The public extension and advisory service were ineffectual and inefficient in comparison to private or non-governmental organizations, which was the main driver for privatization. NGOs primarily oppose governments and their institutional partners because they do not stifle local initiatives or act in a bureaucratic, inflexible, or directive manner. The vast array of agricultural extension and advisory services that the private sector may provide profitably and efficiently is supported by experience in a number of different countries.

2.1. Why Private Sector Extension and Advisory Services?

Farmers believe that a key factor in the growth of private extension has been the availability of private extension. Numerous research studies have been carried out to ascertain how farmers feel about the privatization of agricultural extension services (Jasvinder et al., 2014). Extension and advisory services provided by the private sector are becoming

more significant in emerging nations. The private sector EAS have long had a close relationship, albeit it can be challenging to gauge how much impact they have. The backing of EAS initiatives has also been significantly aided by civil society organizations. Government EAS programs have decreased in Sub-Saharan Africa, making more room for private initiatives. The demise of parastatals has given the private sector the chance to increase activities that are dependent on or closely associated with EAS. Uncertainties in the market have had a bigger impact than expected on the growth of private sector EAS.

Farmers require more specialized EAS assistance as agriculture gets increasingly commercialized in order to transition from informal marketplaces to more formal market systems with strict quality and other requirements. Nearly all EAS have elements from the private sector by nature (Ferris et al., 2014). As a result, EAS can help farmers develop economies of scale through the formation of marketing groups, cooperatives, fee-based service delivery arrangements, group input sourcing arrangements, and value chain partnerships. Private sector EAS can offer services in any of these and might even be more qualified to do so given their increased market knowledge. Even though they might offer a high return on other sector investments, Sub-Saharan African governments consistently underinvest in agricultural EAS. The agricultural sector needs appropriate EAS, but many governments are unable or unwilling to do so in order to accomplish social and economic goals related to food security, climate change, resilience, environmental conservation, stability, and poverty reduction. One possibility for addressing this EAS gap is the private sector.

2.1.1. Agribusiness enterprises

Smallholder farmers who are on out-grower scheme contracts are linked to agro-processing and marketing firms which offer in-house agricultural extension services in order to promote a variety of commodities. These private businesses typically focus on harvest and postharvest procedures, disease prevention or management, input types and volumes, and input amounts. They are designed to increase agricultural production, reduce post-harvest losses, and improve crop quality, consistency, and timeliness. Examples from many developing countries include poultry, fruits, vegetables, cotton, and tobacco (Zijp, 1991; Schwartz, 1992; Okidegbe, 1996; Venkatesan, 1995).

2.1.2. Nature of Agricultural Innovation

Innovation approaches are used in a variety of ways, with different benefits for both customers and providers. The majority of benefits are financial, but they can also be social. They differ in terms of how quickly they can propagate, how far they can be spread, and how easily they may be sold. Although the fundamental concept of separating public from private goods is simple, it is more challenging to draw differences due to the broad variety of EAS services and innovations (DLEC, 2019). There is access to farm-related

data, seed and seedling sales, fertilizer and agrochemical sales, as well as education and training. As a marketing strategy, information is packaged with the products of private input supply corporations. Two private businesses in Cameroon, Farmers' House Limited (a seed company) and PAMOL Estates Limited (an oil palm grove company), have utilized cutting-edge technologies to create premium maize, oil palms, and horticulture products. Extension advice was provided not just to raise the caliber of the farmers but also to encourage cooperation in order to get the farmers to sell to the available markets.

3. PRIVATIZED AGRICULTURE ADVISORY AND SERVICE PROVIDERS' CASE STUDIES

According to Rabatsky and Krause (2017) agribusinesses that offer EAS services include input suppliers, service providers (financial and technical), and offtake (produce/product buyers). EAS availability for each could aid overall profitability. These initiatives have the ability to strengthen farmer-client connections and long-term business ties, increase marketing effectiveness, and mobilize specialized internal information on crops and products that can be passed along to producers.

In South Africa, Raidimi and Kabiti (2017) discovered that public agricultural extension and advisory service providers are constrained by a lack of resources and a variety of other issues, necessitating the promotion of private sector involvement. The study demonstrated that although the private sector is required to participate in the provision of extension services throughout South Africa, the arrangements to make them actual and effective are unclear because both farmers' and governments' efforts are required. However, expanding the role of the private sector in the delivery of extension services necessitates not just institutional frameworks but also farmers' willingness to make financial sacrifices. As a result of the study's findings, despite the reliance on public extension services, private extension service providers are likely to close the gap between farmers and institutions.

According to Babu and Zhou (2016), privatized agriculture extension and advisory services are adaptable in overcoming different resource limitations to EAS delivery, offering opportunities for farmers to learn new skills, and increase shared value by boosting profits. Smallholder farmers are able to unite to solve problems together, enhance product quality, and recuperate indirect expenses through connected economic dealings by using the private EAS. Private extension programs, on the other hand, are constrained in their reach, concentrating on particular goods and denying service to farmers who did not have an agreement with the service providers.

A global study by Gomez et al. (2016) on private sector extension providers in developing countries. The results showed a significant amount of variation in terms of extension goals, processes, and techniques. The public program was

found to use ICTs and other extension strategies less creatively than private providers. The majority of goals focused on increasing productivity, but 70% of respondents indicated a surprising number of goals for their EAS program. Predictably, private extension efforts tended to overlook social constraints and issues with community development.

According to Alphonse (2008), in Côte d'Ivoire, private sector expansion was focused on cotton, sugar, palm oil, rubber, cotton, and poultry. It refers to a particular industry and serves to deliver important agricultural supplies like fertilizer, insecticides, etc. in addition to offering agricultural advice services. Also helping farmers who grow these crops are companies that grow rubber (SAPH, SOGB), palm oil (PALMCI, PALMAFRIQUE, PHCI, etc.), cotton (CIDT, LCCI, IVOPIRE COTTON), and others (FACI, SIPRA, IVOGRAINS). The farmers' association uses the money to recruit experts, pay for technical advice, and support extension advisor farm visits. This predominantly affects rice, coffee, cocoa, rubber, and oil palm crops. Similar to this, suppliers of agricultural inputs and farm equipment put a lot of time and attention into advising clients on how to use their products since they care deeply about their customers' satisfaction. In terms of private extension and extension service providers, the price of agricultural products takes into consideration the costs of the services provided by the extended enterprise.

According to Agbo et al. (2008), agricultural extension services are primarily provided free of charge to farmers in Benin as part of the spread of most technologies. The extension services provided by CeRPA are paid for by some organized sectors, such as cotton producers, through their association, which has a contract with that structure. So, in an oblique way, the producer contributes to the funding of supervision. Specifically, the private sector charges for:

- ✓ *Giving inputs to farmers; in the cotton zone, the private sector took over these functions. Provision of input and other services.*
- ✓ *Marketing and transformation: The commercial activities were transferred to the private sector (entrepreneurs, farmers' organizations, NGO).*
- ✓ *Support services, and specifically agricultural support services, are areas where the private sector's engagement is slow to develop. Professional organizations should assume responsibility for these services either themselves or through private suppliers.*

The functions have also been supported by other private sector actors, including NGOs and businesses in the agro-food and agricultural production support sectors. These actors have partially taken over state-disengaged roles or roles for which the state were unable to mobilize specific competencies because they are currently outside of their mandate.

3.1. Success of privatization extension and advisory services

The privatization of extension and advisory services must meet a number of requirements in order to be successful. These requirements may have an independent or combined impact on the process. Due to these circumstances, it is imperative that every government that plans to adopt and implement the reform method first complete a situational analysis. Fee for service in agricultural extension has a complicated impact that is influenced by a variety of variables, such as the institutional environment, socioeconomic and cultural structures, and the policy environment. The continuation of a cost-sharing, commercialization, or privatization arrangement in any given economy is heavily influenced by factors like these and numerous others. The following are some examples of successful private extension system services:

- ✓ Relevance of private extension strategies to the agricultural community
- ✓ The private extension system's efficiency
- ✓ Private extension's effectiveness
- ✓ The private extension system's viability

3.2. Challenges and issues facing the development and expansion of private extension

The development and expansion of private extension and advisory services continue to face several challenges:

- ✓ *Non-Conducive Policy Environment: In many developing nations, there is little policy support or incentive for the private sector to engage in extension operations.*
- ✓ *Private Extension Has a Limited Scope: The majority of private extension service providers concentrate on a small number of commercial crops. The majority of the winners were commercial farmers and huge landowners.*
- ✓ *Limited Capacity of Private Extension: For agricultural extension and advising services, private extension employs the fewest number of people possible. As a result, it is challenging to communicate with many farmers.*
- ✓ *Farmers' Mentality: In the majority of developing nations, small and marginal landholder farmers see the extension as a state welfare program, hence they are reluctant to share responsibility for paying for the services.*
- ✓ *Public-private partnerships are difficult to establish and maintain over a longer length of time due to the institutional cultures of the public and private sectors.*
- ✓ *The majority of extension services are provided for the public good, which prevents the development of the private sector.*
- ✓ *Limited Research Capacity of Private Extension: The private sector only has research expertise in a small number of specific fields, which limits its ability to engage with the full agriculture value chain and provide advisory services.*

- ✓ *Food security and resource management: Due to the possibility of low returns, private extension often has limited interest in field crop and resource management challenges.*

4. Lessons from Private Extension

Based on a review of private extension and advisory services, the following key lessons from the case study were identified as follows:

- The private sector's extension has a lot of potentials to supplement and complete that of the public sector, but its commodity-focused approach, while very valuable, is limited in that it ignores other closely related issues, like the growth of farmer organizations or those pertaining to the sustainability of resource use.
- Both the public and private sectors' extension programs do a poor job of serving remote areas and poor producers, particularly those that raise low-value crops and have little marketable surpluses. Although public money would still be crucial, not all services need to be provided by the public sector.
- Private extension cannot replace public extension, and in the years to come, significant public expenditure will be required. The difficulty is to provide high-quality services because farmers are also willing to pay for value-added services, so some cost recovery can start.
- Financial participation needs to be viewed less as a cost-cutting tool and more as a way to improve accountability.
- Fee-for-service approaches to cost recovery for farmer EAS services are infrequently practical, and cooperative agreements with the donor-funded program to support EAS activities are a bad choice because these arrangements are by their very nature illusory and unsustainable.

5. CONCLUSION

Public EAS is preferable for primary production systems, successful rural outreach, and information, legislation, and standards—even though private EAS providers have a competitive edge in providing high-quality, market-oriented commercial services." Private consulting services are rapidly dominating today's services for commercial farmers who are reasonably well-off, but these investments rarely benefit the rural poor." The majority of farmers have lost access to unbiased and independent counsel as a result of privatization (which is often achieved by simply withholding funding for public sector organizations). This experience made clear how crucial it is to give private extension providers an equal playing field, but that this must be done as part of a bigger reform process that promotes diversity and acknowledges the need for public financial support.

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