

## Blog 25; January 2014

### It is time to influence the 13<sup>th</sup> Plan



*Planning is a massive and time consuming exercise in India, involving multi-agency and multi-stake holder consultations. Changing policies after formulation is not easy and there is no platform or forum for extensive deliberations, after the plan is finalised. All those interested in influencing the policy framework should therefore use the current plan document as the base paper for conferences, workshops, consultations, research and analysis and should start influencing the next plan. Policy discourses conducted without taking note of the Plan document often fails to yield results, argues Shri Suresh Kumar.*

#### CONTEXT

The Five Year Plans form the basis of development planning indicating strategy, policy and programs of every sector including agriculture. Each plan is based upon recommendations of various subject matter working groups and sub-groups (Box 1). These groups and sub-groups comprise representatives of various ministries, public agencies, experts, activists and stakeholders. Every sector also has a steering committee to consider the recommendations of various working groups. Working group recommendations are formulated after detailed deliberations at various levels. For the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2012-17) preparations, 11 working groups were constituted for agricultural sector, including one for agricultural extension (Box 1).

The Planning Commission also invites suggestions from the general public during the plan preparation process. Planning process thus provides the only forum for convergence of various intra and inter-sectoral objectives, concerns and interests.

### Box 1: Planning for Agricultural Extension for the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan

The Planning Commission (Government of India) constituted a Working Group on “Agricultural Extension for Agriculture and Allied sectors” for the Twelfth Five Year Plan in March 2011 with 27 members representing different organisations and interests related to extension. The group was tasked to review the effectiveness of the on-going extension services including the recent innovations in it, and to recommend a more responsive and accountable extension mechanism to the farmers.

The working group constituted 9 sub-groups (comprising 8-11 members) to deal with different themes related to extension in May 2011. The working group and the sub-groups held extensive consultations to come up with specific recommendations. These were consolidated by the Working Group in its report submitted in November 2011.

The recommendations of the Working Group are grouped into 12 thematic areas: 1. Technology Solutions and Innovations; 2. Extension Policy and Systems; 3. Convergence, Programme Delivery, Governance and Innovations; 4. Manpower Planning, HRD and Accreditation; 5. Leveraging ICT, Mass media and e-Governance; 6. Partnership for Agri-preneurship and Business Development; 7. National and International Linkages and Partnerships; 8. Jai-Kisan- Mobilisation for Farmers Empowerment; 9. Women Empowerment and Household Food and Nutritional Security; 10. Leveraging Youth for Agriculture; 11. Extension Strategies for Difficult Areas and Disadvantaged Groups; and 12. Agrarian Distress and Conflicts, Instantaneous Response and Farm Studies (Planning Commission, 2013b).

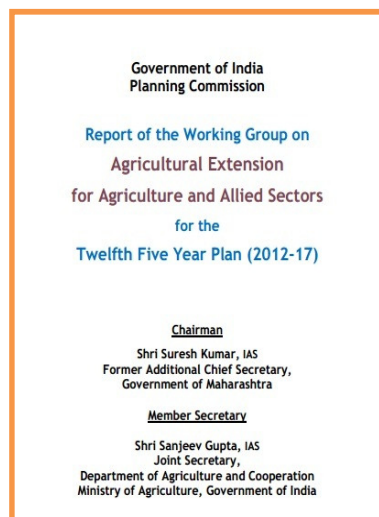
These Plans are finalised after discussions in the National Development Council (NDC), which provides broadest political support. Programs are formulated in the light of the plan and announced after approvals by competent authorities. In between the plans, there is a mid-term review.

## 12<sup>th</sup> PLAN DOCUMENTS

The 12th Plan document (Planning Commission, 2013a) and the recommendations of the various working groups are uploaded on the Planning Commission website. The next opportunity to influence this plan is during the mid-term review and later during the formulation of the 13<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2017-2022). If we are serious about influencing policy changes, we should start scrutinising the plan document and the working group reports, and organise policy advocacy events now so that the recommendations will be ripe for consideration during the 13<sup>th</sup> Plan.

This advocacy should meet the following requisites:

- Issues, concerns and demands should be reflected in public policy and pronouncement
- Public policy should be translated into specific legislations, schemes and programs
- Legislations should be enforced and schemes and programs are implemented



## INFLUENCING PLAN FORMULATION

National plans provide the right forum for advocacy as multi-agency and multi-stakeholder consultations are easier and happen as part of the planning process. Advocacy with the Planning Commission should include getting the policy reflected in the reports of the various working groups and then the plan; ensuring that the plan write up is reflected in the schemes and programs and

further that the same are implemented as proposed. This requires advocacy before and after plan formulation.

### **Advocacy before Plan Formulation:**

One could approach the Planning Commission well in time with suggestions about the constitution of working groups and sub-groups. This should include both the constitution and TORs of the groups.

TORs are most important as these determine the scope and contents of the reports. Even after the group composition is announced, concerned groups and the planning commission could be approached to include certain stakeholders and modify the TOR. One could send the proposals for inclusion in these groups and presentation of views by writing to the Chairman or Member Secretary of these groups.

In the event of the sub-groups not accepting the proposal, appropriate working groups may be approached and if the sub-groups accept the proposal, it needs to be ensured that the same is included in the report of the working groups. In the event of a particular working group not accepting the recommendation, the matter may be taken up directly with the Planning Commission.



### **Advocacy after Plan Formulation:**

Issues and concerns not accepted in the plan may be referred to the Planning Commission for consideration in the mid-term review. It would be useful to prepare a directory of issues and concepts that are included in the Plan document and against each item indicate whether specific policies, schemes and programs have been formulated to operationalise these items.

Subsequent advocacy should be aimed at the gap between reflection of issues in the plan and their being operationalised through policies, schemes and programs. Planning commission may be approached during the mid-term review to examine operationalisation of the concepts that are yet to get reflected in policies and programs.

### **IT IS TIME TO ACT**

Considering the magnitude of the task, initiatives for influencing the 13<sup>th</sup> Plan (2017-2022) need to start now. Every sector has various dimensions and large number of stake holders with divergent

views. Wider consultations are necessary to achieve maximum convergence of views and this requires time.

Workshops and seminars organised on specific policy issues should use the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan document and working group reports as a base document to make new recommendations. Making recommendations for policy without taking note of the 12<sup>th</sup> plan exercise doesn't yield results. More over specific recommendations for improving performances should be brought to the working groups and sub-groups during the plan formulation phase to make sure that these are included.

## References

Planning Commission (2013a) The Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017)

<http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/12thplan/welcome.html>

Planning Commission (2013b) Report of the Working Group on Agricultural Extension for Agriculture and Allied Sectors"

[http://planningcommission.nic.in/aboutus/committee/wrkgrp12/agri/wg\\_agriextn.pdf](http://planningcommission.nic.in/aboutus/committee/wrkgrp12/agri/wg_agriextn.pdf)

*Shri Suresh Kumar, former Additional Chief Secretary & Principal Secretary (Agriculture), Government of Maharashtra acted as the Chairman of the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan "Working Group on Agricultural Extension for Agriculture and Allied Sectors" constituted by the Planning Commission.  
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