

Proceeding of Workshop on Agriculture Extension in Bangladesh

Date: 01 September, 2014; Venue: BARC

Meeting Background:

In order to make extension and rural advisory services more effective, a network-based organisation of agricultural extension professionals is already in place. At the international level, the “Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services” (GFRAS) established in 2010 is leading this network (www.g-fras.org) and in South Asia, the sub-regional network “Agricultural Extension in South Asia” (AESA) is working with the GFRAS (www.aesa-gfras.net). A two-day long face to face meeting on “Strengthening Extension and Advisory Services in South Asia” was organised by AESA on 14th and 15th January 2014 at Kathmandu, Nepal. A total of 29 participants from seven South Asian countries including Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India participated in this event.

One of the important decisions (under governance structure) in that meeting was to promote country forums involving all stakeholders dealing with extension and advisory services. To strengthen AESA and to promote its activities in countries in the region, formation of “AESA working group” was proposed. With the consent from the Government of Bangladesh, the regional forum has selected Md. Hamidur Rahman, Project Director, Second Crop Diversification Project (SCDP) of Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) as the Country Representative for Bangladesh to coordinate the process of formation and operationalization of the country level forum in Bangladesh. As part of this process, a workshop to form a country level forum in Bangladesh was organized at Dhaka on September 1, 2014.

The Meeting:

The Second Crop Diversification Project of DAE (www.scdp.gov.org) with technical collaboration with Agriculture Extension in South Asia (www.aesa.gfras.net) organized a day long meeting on “Agriculture Extension in Bangladesh” at the conference room-1, Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council (BARC), Farmgate, Dhaka on 1st September 2014. Md. Hamidur Rahman, PD, SCDP, DAE and Country Representative, AESA welcomed the participants to this meeting. A total of 76 participants (see annexure-1) from various stakeholders (extension agencies, research institutes, academic institutes, NGOs, private sector actors) involved with agriculture extension and advisory services attended the meeting.

The meeting had two different sessions. The first session was inauguration and the second session was on technical aspects including drawing of recommendation and decisions on ways forward.

Inauguration Session:

Mr. Abbas Ali, Director General, DAE chaired the inaugural session, Mr. Abdul Manan, Honourable MP and member of Parliamentarian Standing Committee for Ministry of Agriculture was the Chief Guest. Dr. Rahseed Sulaiman V, Chairman GFRAS and Focal Point AESA graced the session as guest of honor. Dr. Alamgir Saiful Alam, Director Extension, DLS and M.I. Golder, Director, DoF were present as Special Guests.

Dr. Gul Hossain, Former Director TTMU, BARC presented the key note paper on Agriculture Extension in South Asia. Dr Rasheed Sulaiman V, made a presentation on the functions and activities of GFRAS and AESA. Mr. Alamgir Saiful Alam, highlighted the importance of networking among the stakeholders involved in agricultural extension services to increase efficiency. Mr. M.I Golder noted that apart from other functions, rendering extension services and developing quality human resources are important activities of the Department of Fisheries. In doing so, they are confronting several challenges. Mutual exchange, interaction and collaboration may contribute to overcome such challenges to a large extent. Establishment of a country network based organization is therefore a useful step.

The chief guest highlighted the need of improving the efficiency of extension services to enhance the growth of agricultural sector to reach the target of becoming a middle income country by 2021 as per the commitment of present government. He also endorsed the idea of formation of a network among the stakeholders involved in agricultural extension and advisory services. The chairperson highlighted the increasing diversity of the extension service providers in Bangladesh and the need for strengthening collaboration and coordination amongst the various extension agencies such as DLS, DoF, DAE, academic institutes, research institutes, NGOs and the private sectors dealing with inputs and outputs market. He also mentioned, a network based organization may contribute to enhancing exchange, collaboration and coordination amongst the various stakeholders.

Technical Session:

The technical session was chaired by Dr. M.A. Kashem, Professor Bangladesh Agricultural University and Dr. Amir Hossain Former Professor of Bangladesh Agricultural University acted as the Lead discussant. There were three presentations. Dr. Nurul Islam, DAE presented on the evolution of Agriculture Extension Services in Bangladesh and its current status. Dr. Sirajul Islam, Programme Head Agriculture, BRAC, Bangladesh presented on Agriculture Extension Services of Non-Government Sector and Md. Hamidur Rahman presented the back ground of forming a country extension network. After the presentation, a open floor discussion was held under the leadership of Chairperson and Lead discussant. Through the open floor discussion the following issues were identified.

- Methods, Approaches, Models of Extension “from subsistence farming to mechanized commercial farming”;
- *Research-Education-Extension-Farmer Linkages*;

- *Agricultural Extension Delivery Systems;*
- *Extension Policy Issues;*
- *Human Resources Development;*
- *Monitoring and Evaluation;*
- *Use of ICT in agriculture extension;*
- Mobilizing youth in agriculture, small scale farm mechanization and creating agricultural service providers;
- Appropriate value addition and market linkages of the surplus with consumers in the domestic as well as overseas markets;
- Limited coordination and integration among the extension agencies due to separate administrative procedure ;
- Limited holistic approach due to department wise individual implementation approach at grass root level ;
- Technologies takes lots of time to develop and release through research to combat the immediate problems of the farmers ;
- Mainstreaming gender: issues of gender friendly extension services and delivery ;

Decisions:

1. The meeting decided to form an extension network. All participants agreed to become the member of the network.
2. The name of the network was determined as Bangladesh Extension Network in short **“BENet”**.
3. A ad-hock executive committee was formed consisting of 18 members (**see annexure-2**)
4. The ad-hock committee will organize a meeting by September 30, 2014. Amongst other the following agenda will be discussed and decided:
 - a. Formulation of a constitution;
 - b. Resources mobilization;
 - c. Annual Plan;
 - d. Develop Directory of RAS providers;
 - e. Formation of a formal Executive Committee.

The workshop concluded with a vote of thanks from Md. Hamidur Rahman, Project Director, Second Crop Diversification Project (SCDP) of Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) and the Country Representative for Bangladesh, AESA.



(Md. Hamidur Rahman)
 Convener of Workshop &
 PD
 Second Crop Diversification Project

**Workshop on
Agriculture Extension in Bangladesh**

Date: September 01, 2014
Venue: Meeting Room-I, BARC

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Annexure -02

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