

Research Application Summary

**Factors hindering extension staffs efficiency in assisting maize farmers in western province in the agricultural reform era**

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**Abstract**

The extension service in Kenya is charged with the responsibility of ensuring sustainable food production that is sufficient for domestic use and for export. The extension staff performance is constrained by various factors which may have been exacerbated by the introduction of agricultural reforms resulting from Structural Adjustment Programme, hence the study. An ex-post facto research design was used, based on a one-time cross sectional survey to find factors responsible for the poor extension services in Western Kenya. One hundred (100) extension staff from Western Province of Kenya were asked to respond to questionnaires containing both open and closed ended questions. Data were analysed using percentages and cross tabulations using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 11.0 for windows. The results revealed that the extension service in Western Province of Kenya has been constrained as a result of weak farmer-extension-research linkages, lack of incentives for extension staff, lack of adequate facilitation and reduced number of extension staff. It was recommended that efforts by the Kenya government, Non-governmental organisations and development partners be directed towards improving funding of the extension service in Kenya.

Key words: Agricultural Reform, extension-research linkage, extension service, Structural Adjustment Programme

**Résumé**

Le service de vulgarisation au Kenya est chargé d'assurer une production alimentaire durable qui est suffisant pour un usage domestique et pour l'exportation. La performance du personnel de vulgarisation est limitée par différents facteurs qui peuvent avoir été aggravée par l'introduction de réformes agricoles résultant de programme d'ajustement structurel, d'où l'étude. Une conception de la recherche ex post facto a été utilisé, basé sur une enquête unique pour trouver des facteurs

responsables de ce pauvre services de vulgarisation dans l'ouest du Kenya. Cent (100) agents de vulgarisation de la province occidentale du Kenya ont été invités à répondre à des questionnaires contenant à la fois des questions ouvertes et fermées. Les données ont été analysées à l'aide des pourcentages et des tableaux croisés à l'aide du logiciel de statistiques pour les sciences sociales (SPSS) version 11.0 pour Windows. Les résultats ont révélé que les services de vulgarisation dans la province occidentale du Kenya ont été limités en raison des liens faibles entre agriculteurs, agent de vulgarisation et chercheurs, le manque de motivation pour le personnel de vulgarisation, le manque de facilitation appropriée et le nombre réduit de personnel de vulgarisation. Il a été recommandé que les efforts déployés par le gouvernement du Kenya, des organisations non gouvernementales et les partenaires au développement soient canalisés sur l'amélioration du financement du service de vulgarisation au Kenya.

Mots clés: Réforme agraire, le service de liaison de vulgarisation et de recherche de vulgarisation, Programme d'ajustement structurel

## **Background**

Over the last two decades, Kenya has implemented agricultural reforms stemming from the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Since then, the agricultural sector with the exception of horticulture has continued to experience low and declining productivity. This has resulted in a decline in export earnings; employment creation, food security and household farm incomes. The decline in agricultural production may be traced to the Structural Adjustment Programmes and the resultant agricultural reforms (World Bank 1994). The Structural Adjustment Programme involves the periodic devaluation of the country's currency, massive cuts in government expenditure, de-subsidisation and maintenance of positive interest rates. The programme also brought about reduction in the number of public servants including extension staff, reduction in Government expenses on health and education, lack of investment in small scale agriculture, privatisation of public enterprises, increase in government revenue collection mainly through taxes, and liberalisation of trade (Madaya *et al*; 1999; Redding, 1999). Due to the importance of the agricultural sector to Kenya and countries in the region, governments are concerned about this state and have been devising measures to ensure that the sector does not die completely. This study was

carried out to document extension staff experiences on what they perceive to be limitations to their performance.

### **Literature Summary**

The Kenyan extension service is severely resource constrained characterised by limited operating funds. Funds for staff transport, vehicle maintenance and fuel, field days, telephone communication and basic stationery are near non-existent. Extension worker's pay and morale is low, yet at times officers spend their own money to facilitate extension work (Benor *et al.*, 1984; Kodhek, 2005). In addition, farmer to extension worker ratio continues to remain high as a result of reduction of number of staff because of SAP, in addition to natural attrition and a freeze on new hiring (Nyoro and Muiruri, 2001; Kodhek, 2005).

In Western Province, according to Nyoro and Muiruri (2001) farmer-extension –research linkage which was poor before agricultural reforms have been worsened as the government cuts down on its expenditure on extension services and research.

### **Study Description**

An ex-post facto research design was used via a cross-sectional survey. This was because the study used naturally occurring treatments on subjects having a self-selected level of the independent variables (Kathuri and Pals, 1993). The study districts representing Western Province were Bumula and Webuye divisions in Bungoma District; Kaptama and Kapsokwony divisions in Mt. Elgon District; Funyula and Butula divisions in Busia District and Lugri and Likuyani in Lugari District. Twenty extension staff were selected through stratified sampling from each division making a total of one hundred and twenty respondents. The extra twenty respondents took care of attrition. Questionnaires were developed containing both open and closed-ended questions. These were pilot tested in Lurambi Division, Kakamega District. Data were analysed using percentages and cross-tabulations.

### **Research Application**

The extension staff reported that due to the weak farmer-extension-research linkage, improved research findings do not reach farmers. Similarly, the extension staff are unable to access new information to pass to farmers and therefore some staff lack confidence in facing the farmers and the public.

Extension staff reported that researchers go directly to farmers with new innovations, without considering farmers' capacity to adopt as they disregard factors that influence adoption of innovations. These factors are usually well known by the

extension staff in the area. Besides the extension staff may contradict the researcher on some innovation and therefore confuse farmers.

A high percentage of extension staff reported lack of incentives (79.8%), lack of adequate facilitation (91.7%) and inadequate staff numbers (86.9%) as factors hindering their efficiency in assisting maize farmers. Lack of incentives for the extension staffs have resulted in low staff motivation resulting in lack of commitment to work. Extension staff pay is low, while allowances for subsistence, lunch and bicycle have either been reduced or eliminated completely. Promotion of staff takes a very long time and when it is done, it is not on merit (Table 1).

**Table 1. Factors hindering efficiency of extension staffs.**

Factors hindering efficiency of extension staffs	Percentage
Weak farmer-extension – research linkage	79.8
Lack of incentive for extension staff	79.8
Lack of adequate facilitation	91.7
Few extension staff	86.9
Inaccessibility to technical information	41.7

While some officers holding a certificate are agriculture officer one (AO1), most officers who hold diplomas are assistant agricultural officers two (AAOII), a junior position to the AOI. Masters degree holders are also holding junior positions because the extension service promotes staff depending on the number of years in service. This mode of promotion discourages the extension staff making them inefficient.

## **Recommendation**

It was recommended that (i) efforts by the Kenya government, Non-governmental organisations and development partners be directed towards improving funding of the extension service in Kenya, and (ii) Farmer-Extension – Research linkages should be improved.

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