

BOOK REVIEW

Agricultural extension – Worldwide Innovations, Edited by R. Saravanan, New India Publishing Agency, New Delhi 110 088, 2008, xiv +420 p. RS 1200, USD 49.75 ISBN 818942296-0.

Farmers get much valuable information through the exchange of experience with other farmers. In a similar way extension services should learn from the experience of extension agencies in other countries. In order to make this easier the editor has asked authors from 7 Asian, 5 African and 2 Latin American countries to describe the extension system and the way this system is changing in their country. He has given them an outline which they were expected to follow, which not only gives attention to the development of the government extension service and the transfer of technologies, but also to the decentralization, commercialization and privatization of extension and to private extension by agri-business firms and NGOs, farmer to farmer extension, participatory extension, group approaches and gender specific extension, the reaction of clients to different approaches and how the author sees the way forward for extension in his country. Some the authors are leaders of extension and research organizations others staff members of university departments of agricultural extension. The best chapters are written by authors who took the freedom to deviate a bit from the guidelines in order to give also attention to aspects which are important in their experience, e.g. the chapter in the Philippines discusses factors influencing the motivation of the extension staff to work in the interest of farmers.

Many chapters contain ideas which are also valuable in extension systems in other countries, e.g. the discussion on Jordan convinced me that Indian farmers would profit if their extension services would learn from the experience in Jordan on farm management and market oriented extension, promotion of export marketing, increasing the role of women in extension and improving water management. This was a surprise to me. The chapter on the Philippines discusses several extension methods which should also be tested in other countries, e.g. working with model farmers, that are farmers who successfully introduced new production methods or farming systems on their own farm and then earn a bit extra by telling other farmers about their experience. Information based on practical experience is more convincing to many farmers than information based on scientific theories. In Mozambique and several other countries one stresses the need for Human Resource Development and Institution Building in the whole agricultural innovation system.

The chapter on Japan shows that there since 1950 the proportion of the labour force working in agriculture decreased with 90%. With the growth in labour productivity in agriculture this did not result in much decrease in agricultural production. In other countries with a rapid economic growth we can expect a similar development, but this important development is not discussed in this book, because unfortunately not many extension services in developing countries give no attention to this process of change, although many farmers realize that for them this is an important development.

Clearly some chapters are more valuable for the readers than others. From the chapters on Iran and Ivory Coast I did not get much insight in the extension systems in these countries. Valuable in this book is that it gives the opinion of local professionals and not of foreign consultants. Many authors will agree with the chapter on Nepal, which says: "Instead of working with donors' models and modalities, the time has now ripened for Nepal to request donors to be part of the national extension strategy and to support it. The country has already over experimented with different models and approaches. It is not in position any more to experiment with other models which might have produced tremendous good results, but in different environment, contexts and resource endowments." (p. 307). There are 2000 domestic/international NGO's working in Afghanistan, but most do not have enough social, economic, cultural, *etc.* knowledge of the country and therefore make wrong needs assessment (p.27). Many authors complain about the lack of coordination between the different agencies involved in extension in their country.

It seems that a change towards a participatory extension approach is often considered to be desirable, but not always easy to realize, e.g. in Benin one sees supervision of producers as a major role of extension (p. 48). It seems that not all authors are well informed about the international literature on agricultural extension, e.g. considerable attention is given to the financing of agricultural extension, but the valuable study of Katz on this issue is not used.

The book gives valuable food for thought for leaders of extension organizations in developing countries and for donors working with these organizations. This book is edited and written by people from the South and one Japanese. One might expect that Europeans and Americans play a major role in publishing a book like this, but times have changed.

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E. Katz, Innovative approaches to financing extension for agriculture and natural resource management, Lindau, LBL, Swiss Center for Agricultural Extension, 2002.