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## Back on the Agenda: Extension and its Institutional Linkages — Some Personal Observations on the Re-discovery of a Key Player

UWE JENS NAGEL

*Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Department of Agricultural Economics and Social Sciences, Germany*

### Abstract

While there is wide agreement on the need to address global poverty, food security, and environmental problems one notes a visible reluctance to commit the corresponding resources. This is particularly true for the field of extension. Agricultural research, on the other hand, has not suffered similar financial or status losses. Methodologically, scientifically, and organisationally the research system has been extremely innovative during the last two decades. More recently, extension has received renewed interest. In this paper, the ongoing discussion — rather undogmatic and highly cosmopolitan — is analysed and commented upon.

Questions of finance, efficiency, effectiveness as well as the delivery of public and private goods are discussed by looking at challenges, new organisational or institutional arrangements and the corresponding linkages and players.

The poverty issue is discussed as the single most important challenge. The formal incorporation of poverty alleviation into the goals of the CGIAR was of immediate practical importance. Very recently the question of pro-poor extension activities has again received increased attention. Policy reforms are to be expected which will concern a differentiation of target groups, organisations, and innovations.

The debate on organisational questions has gone beyond the simple public vs. private extension issue. There is growing agreement that organisational pluralism is called for. Funding of advisory work and delivery of innovative knowledge must not necessarily be in one hand. The overall system can accommodate different organisational and institutional models.

Not all linkage problems that need to be solved are new: The lack of strong linkages between the sources of innovative knowledge and the dissemination system is still a widespread phenomenon. New and important actors are playing an active part in the Agricultural Knowledge System. The role of consumers and environmentalists with regard to priority setting and communication is a challenging research topic.