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## Developing Private Research and Extension Designs in Benin: Review of Three Case Studies

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### Abstract

Liberalisation and privatisation are often perceived as the way to improve the effectiveness and the efficiency of service provision. In many developing countries, policies are being oriented according to this with the expectation of making right progress in offering better services to farmers. Since 1991, many steps were taken to liberalise the agricultural services in Benin. A privatisation of research and extension, although hardly noticeable, is progressively going on in the country. Surveying three cases, this paper highlights the diversity of (i) actors involved in the process, (ii) services provided to farmers, (iii) service delivery systems, and (iv) approaches of integrating farmers in the financing of the organisation of services. Overall, bunches services to meet the needs of farmers are often provided, partnerships to balance technical weaknesses are sealed up and farmers are invited to share the costs of the direct implementation of the activities. Nevertheless, development projects, farmer organisations and Non Government Organisations use different specific strategies to achieve their goals. Public institutions are taking part in the private extension, using their long and broad experience to offer technical competences. But whether the confidence relationships between the partners take place for an agricultural development remains a crucial issue. This study provides evidence that for different reasons - not always related to agricultural production - farmers are willing to pay for services, even for public services. Furthermore, farmers are not invited to share costs with the intention of reinforcing their position, but more of solving financial problems and of ensuring a so-called sustainability. More effort should be made to better direct the privatisation of agricultural research and extension in Benin so as to develop true accountability mechanisms.

**Keywords:** Accountability, Benin, cost sharing, private research and extension, willingness to pay