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The Agricultural Knowledge System in Tigray, Ethiopia: Empirical Study about its Recent History and Actual Effectiveness

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Abstract

Policies conducive to the development of the agriculture sector in Ethiopia are laid down. According to the Agricultural Development Led Industrialisation (ADLI), the development of the agricultural sector is to serve as the engine for the overall development of the economy and the government is dedicating tremendous efforts to achieving greater progress in this sector. The ADLI strategy depends on improved agricultural packages, proper use of land and water resources, access to improved rural finance, better functioning markets and better roads. Along the lines of the Sasakawa Global 2000 (SG 2000) agricultural programme in Africa, the Government of Ethiopia has launched a National Extension Intervention Program to feed into the ADLI strategy. The national extension programme is implemented throughout the country based on the principles and approaches of the SG 2000 program.

Based on empirical findings using narrative interviews and focus group discussions, the study explores the current situation of extension services in Tigray. The paper first describes the socio-economic, agro-ecological, institutional and human resources factors which affect the performance of the agricultural knowledge system in Tigray. The paper then reviews the history of agricultural extension in Tigray and analyses the organisation and functions of the agricultural knowledge system in the region. The paper identifies critical gaps in the planning and implementation of the extension package programme and describes farmers' adaptations of introduced packages. Further, the paper discusses farmers' perceptions of the roles and competences of development agents and the use of model farmers.

The paper also explores institutional coordination and information flows between the various rural development actors in the region. It examines the potential synergies which could be gained from close collaboration between extension, input supply, credit and marketing systems. It also discusses the roles of agricultural research and education in the agricultural knowledge system in Tigray. The study observes that current policy frameworks and institutional arrangements have laid the foundation for improving the effectiveness of the agricultural knowledge system in Tigray region.

Keywords: Agricultural education, agricultural knowledge system, agricultural research, extension services, institutional coordination, Tigray