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“Resilience of agricultural systems against crises”

Impact-oriented Evaluation for Improvement of Extension Services in Vietnam

SUSANNE HOFMANN-SOUKI¹, THOMAS AENIS¹, MAJA-CATRIN RIECHER¹, JUDITH EMMERLING¹,
ANNA KROPINA¹, UTA ZETEK¹, KAROLIN KÖLLING¹, NAM LE PHUONG²

¹*Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Dept. of Agricultural Economics, Germany*

²*Hanoi University of Agriculture, Dept. of Resource and Environmental Economics, Vietnam*

Abstract

The ability to adjust extension programs to farmers' needs is clearly linked with resilience of the agricultural system. Extensionists in Vietnam are aware of serious limitations in this field. One particular problem is the absence of a useable methodology to improve their services to farmers under serious personal and financial constraints.

A co-operative project between junior lecturers of Hanoi University of Agriculture and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin has been carried out in order to develop a model for a rapid and impact-oriented appraisal of extension programs to be applied by the National Agricultural Extension Centre in Hanoi.

As a main element, the logical framework approach has been adapted to be used for ongoing programme evaluation. The result is an iterative process of situational analysis, development of a goal system which shows impact pathways for the respective extension programs' activities, intelligent choices on the priority aspects to be analysed, definition and selection of indicators, and rapid appraisals.

After a first hypothetical loop, in March 2012 three extension programmes have been evaluated with the following results:

- The systems' clear orientation towards best farmers is a main constraint. While “collaborative” and “demonstration” farmers who both have formal relationship to the extension system expressed their satisfaction with the trainings, “normal” farmers who typically are the poorer ones are not even addressed by the extension programs and even do not receive input supply such as new varieties or special fodder.
- The main challenges for the vertical knowledge flow between extensionists and farmers are the low number of extensionists on commune and village level, and their heavy workload;
- Horizontal knowledge transfer between farmers is quite effective especially due to informal meetings;
- Farmers' capabilities are different – while the better educated farmers were able to attend and understand the content the extension activities, especially the poorer farmers demanded more practical training and learning by doing;
- Need assessment and monitoring turned out to be rather informal, sporadic and unsystematic.

The contribution will further discuss consequences for both, application within the system and further development of the methodology.

Keywords: Extension, impact-oriented evaluation, logical framework, Vietnam

Contact Address: Thomas Aenis, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Agricultural Extension and Subject Related Didactics Group, Luisenstr. 53, 10099 Berlin, Germany, e-mail: thomas.aenis@agr.ar.hu-berlin.de