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Use of E-Readers for Improving Agricultural Extension Service Delivery in Ethiopia

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Abstract

Agriculture is a major sector in the Ethiopian economy. The Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) puts it as the government strategy to double yields of smallholder producers and achieve a status of middle income country by 2025. For increased effectiveness and efficiency of the intended impact, innovative and cost effective approaches to agricultural extension are mandatory. One way of realising this is bringing the information and communication technology (ICT) tools and means into the extension delivery system and approach. One such tool is electronic readers (e-readers) or e-book readers. The use of e-readers have become widespread in the developed parts of the world and some developing countries. E-reader is a mobile electronic device that is designed primarily for the purpose of reading digital e-books and other publications. The advantage of an e-reader is that it could hold the digital equivalent of many printed books without added mass or bulk making it portable. This paper assesses the potential of electronic readers (E-readers) in contributing to increasing the effectiveness of agricultural extension service delivery in Ethiopia by availing easier access to reading materials and references. The paper assess the attitude of respondents towards using e-readers to refer or read agricultural documents in order to support their extension service delivery and the extent of the use of the device by extension service providers at regional, zonal and district levels. We argue that even though the device has a potential to serve as an alternative means for easier access to information and knowledge, there are other equally important technical, social and institutional factors that need to be considered to use e-readers as tools for extension service delivery.

Keywords: Agricultural extension service, development experts, e-reader, Ethiopia