

BOOK REVIEW

Global Agricultural Extension Practices: Country by Country Approaches

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Global Agricultural Extension Practices: Country by Country Approaches, edited by two eminent agricultural extension scientists, is a state of the arts publication on the agricultural extension services system of eight (8) countries in Africa, two (2) countries in Asia, one (1) country in Europe and two (2) countries in North America. Global agricultural extension services have been subjected to drastic transformation and reform in several countries, occasioned by a generally accepted fact that it is a mechanism for the diversification of agriculture as the lead sector for growth and development in most economies. The chapter authors have provided, in this book, a very vivid and comprehensive description of the development of agricultural extension, its connotative definitions, practices and approaches.

It is significant that at a time when the literature of agricultural development strategies is replete with possible alternatives options, such as:

- Value chain approach,
- Agricultural innovation systems,
- Sustainable agricultural intensification,
- Agri-business advisory services,
- Digitally enabled extension,
- Several private sector models, etc.

The authors have succeeded in maintaining focus in the use of appropriate terminology in the discourse on agricultural extension as a concept, discipline and profession. The authors discussed the evolution of agricultural extension from inception to contemporary times, drawing attention to reforms and reorganizations. For the nine African countries (Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Swaziland and Tanzania), the book undertook a time series analysis through several reforms and reorganizations in search for a more effective and efficient service delivery. The authors discussed the historical antecedents and colonial influence which determined the similarity in their agricultural extension practices and approaches.

For the two Asian countries: In India, the book described the transition from a predominantly free of cost service by the public sector to a pluralistic and private sector driven service by partnerships, NGOs/donors, and private agricultural extension service providers. Notwithstanding, agricultural extension remained primarily the responsibility of Government.

In Pakistan, where agricultural extension seem to be a recent organizational import, the book focused on the USAID and Ford Foundation interventions in installing agricultural extension as an institution of service delivery. Prior to donor intervention, agricultural extension type service was provided through Village AID programs, Basic Democracy System, Rural Work Program, and Integrated Rural Development Program. Formal Agricultural Extension was introduced in 1961 with associated reforms.

In Ukraine, the authors indicated that Agricultural Advisory Service was the modus operandi for knowledge and information delivery to farmers until it became part of the Soviet Union in 1917 and the system was abrogated. The system was however restored when the Law “On Agricultural Advisory Services” was enacted and the first modern center of Advisory service was established. Both actions formalized agricultural extension functions through public and participatory approaches involving private companies, NGOs and International Donor organizations. It is relevant to infer that the approaches and practices of the Ukrainian Agricultural Extension Service are similar to those of the African countries.

In the United States of America, the authors affirmed the legal establishment of the cooperative extension service, approaches and practices, which were performed by both public and private sectors. The provision of Agricultural Advisory Service was the responsibility of Government, but it was regularized and formalized by both the Morrill and Smith Lever Acts. The Morrill Act formalized State assistance to farmers through the cooperative agricultural extension service, while the Smith Lever Act (Land Grant University system) enabled university involvement in agricultural extension and by association, the private sector.

This most recent book is a valuable addition to global knowledge on agricultural extension science and practice. It provides a comparative insight into the development, reform, practices and approaches deployed in some countries. It deals with various dimensions of development of global agricultural extension practices and approaches in the United States of America where it all started in the contemporary “classical” format to Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe.

I commend the book to Faculties of Agriculture that have training and research programs in agricultural extension, agricultural extension scientists, teachers and students, extension agronomists, policy makers, national research and extension organizations, regional and international organizations, agencies and institutions.

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