

SYSTEMIC MODEL OF DEVELOPING AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY SERVICES  
IN IRAN

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ABSTRACT

*Functionality, agricultural extension, particularly advisory services have been and still are being criticized for ineffectiveness, supply-drivenness, lack of sustainability and inability to offer appropriate services which benefit the poor. Nevertheless, agricultural advisory services remain crucial to improving the livelihoods of rural poor people as well as facilitating sustainable agricultural development. Even the best policy environment will not result in pro-poor agricultural growth if the concerned rural people do not have access to adequate services be they knowledge services, or more tangible services such as farm inputs, credit, land, water, appropriate technology or marketing. Hence, agricultural advisory services must continually adapt to the changing agricultural environment and to changes in farm family circumstances in order to remain relevant. The purpose of this paper was to outline the agricultural advisory services in Iran from beginning to the present based on conceptualizing expert's opinions and empirical evidences. The processes and approaches used in the implementation of the advisory services need as much as focus as the actual conditions and programs or products around which the changes are centered. This paper explains a systemic model for institutional developing agricultural advisory services in Iran and identifies related institutional challenges and opportunities.*

Key Words: Agricultural Advisory Services, Systemic Model

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is a vital development tool for achieving the Millennium Development Goals that calls for halving by 2015 the share of people suffering from extreme poverty and hunger (World Bank, 2007). As a necessary condition for sustainable agricultural development, more purposeful attention should be paid to all agricultural extension functions, including advisory services, non-formal and in-formal education, technology development, information and technology diffusion, facilitation and so on, based on a contingency and specific –situation manner.

On the other hand, Development experiences of the last decades have shown that human resources development is essential for food security and market integration. Achieving sustainable agricultural development is less based on material inputs (e.g., seeds and fertilizer) than on the people involved in their use. This focus on human resources calls for increased knowledge and information sharing about food production (FAO, 2004). It is widely accepted that farmers' performance is affected by human capital, which encompasses both innate and learned skills, including the ability to process information (Jamison and Lau, 1982). All forms of agricultural advisory services, including advisory services, within the array of market and non market entities and agents that provide human capital-enhancing inputs, as well as flows of information that can improve farmers' and other rural peoples' welfare, has long been recognized as an important factor in promoting sustainable