

ADVISORY SERVICE TOWARD NEEDS OF AGRIBUSINESS IN KOLONJA DISTRICT: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

Starting from its establishment in nineties, the agricultural advisory/extension service in Albania has undergone evolution which is reflected in the quality of service and its structural changes. The dynamic of economy and market changes imposes changes also in the agribusiness and farmers need for advice. Logically, this imposes the extension service makes improvements in order to adapt to the farmer's needs. This adaption can be oriented toward the structure of extension service, number of advisors, channel of communication and the content of advices itself. The objectives of the present work were to explore the thematic needs of agribusiness and farms for consultancy service in Kolonja district and to assess the quality of advice given by public advisory service to fulfil those needs. The present study is based on semi-structured interviews with extension service officers in Kolonja district, structured interviews/questionnaires with advisors of information centres at commune level (field advisors) and structured interviews/questionnaires with farmers in the region. Questionnaires intended for field advisors from information centres covered all the number of advisors exercising activity in the district area while the questionnaires intended for farmers and agribusiness were fulfilled randomly in the farmer's families in the six communes of the district. Further, data collected were used for qualitative and descriptive statistical analyses in order to draw conclusions and recommendations for improvement of extension service in the area. It was found a discrepancy between farmers/agribusiness needs and the quality of the offer by the public extension service. These discrepancies were consisting in different aspects of advice given by extension service, such as: thematic, modes and methods to what the advices were offered to the farmers. Besides that, there is an inability of extension service to cover all the farmers of the district with direct extension service as needed. The main reasons for this discrepancies were the limited number of advisors, their specializations to not fulfilling all specializations that farmers need followed by a lack of operating funds to carry out the consultancy. The public extension service can fit better to the farmers/agribusiness needs through its re-orientation policies in the favour of: participatory methods, enlargement of the service and its enrichment with other profiles of specializations except agronomists, further training of experts as well as a better budgeting of the service.

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