

FUTURE CHALLENGES OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION IN ALBANIA

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Abstract

Development of agricultural extension services has been an important component of the transition from the centrally planned to market-driven economies of Eastern Europe. Even though in Albania as in other eastern European countries, the goal of integration in EU is an important driver of structures, a range of approaches is evident. Agricultural extension is a system that links the development of agricultural information and technology and its application by agricultural producers. Advice has been provided to the farmers for thousands of years, with the earliest known example from Mesopotamia from 1800BC. Throughout the development of public agricultural extension, the major players have been farmer organizations, agricultural universities and government agencies. But these have been differently integrated and balanced in different countries. The pros and cons of current models of organizing and delivering extension services may be affected by the development of transitional stage of a country. Developing countries, transitional countries and developed countries, with their differing needs, may not all find the same system of extension to be the most effective. In all cases there is a need to integrate extension and research and to develop the coordination and communication that are vital in providing effective support to the farmers. The aim of this study is to present the actual situation of the agriculture extension services in Albania. We have tried to follow a logic framework starting from the beginning of these systems in Albania till now, focusing more into the problems faced and also in the future challenges. The methodological approach is more a literature review and consulting with target groups, such as farmers, extensionists and also representatives of administration. Agriculture extension did not exist in Albania before 90's. After that period can be noticed a rapid and huge changes have taken place in the agricultural sector. There have been a number of programs supporting the development of public extension services over the years. In the structure of the public extension service, actually we have about 250 extensions which provide free of cost services offer for farmers. Many activities are organized purposing technology transfer as: demonstrations, field days, individual and groups consultations, short training of farmers, preparation and distribution of leaflets etc.

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