

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Farmers' Perceptive on Private Extension Services

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ABSTRACT

Farmers today are different from farmers in the past because they are more willing to use intense and diversified farming methods to increase their yields. The need of the farmer is not met by the government. So, public to private services for agricultural extension were changed. Additionally, the demand-driven strategy used by private extension service providers aims to close the gaps by identifying the needs of the farmers and providing services in response to those requirements. In this study, we tried to know the farmers' perception regarding private extension services. The present study was conducted in Khordha district of Odisha to know the farmers' responses on area, form, need and willingness to pay for technical support received from private extension services. The study included a random sample of 120 farmers. Farmers' readiness to pay for extension services was discovered to depend on the seriousness and urgency of the issue, as well as the potential for financial gains from a particular service. About 96 percent of the respondents stated that government agencies have failed to provide required technical information and need-based extension advisories to the farmers. We can conclude that Farmers perceived the need of private extension services mostly in the area of post-harvest management of agricultural produce. The majority of the respondents were of the view that government agencies failed to provide required technical information and advisories and thus they were looking forward to private extension services even on a payment basis.

Key words: Privatization; Agricultural extension services; Private extension service organization; Self-help approach.

Indian economy is heavily reliant on agriculture and livestock (Chauhan, 2022). Traditionally, Indian Agriculture has been subsistence-oriented with low energy, low amount of input use, and very low involvement of the private sector. This subsistence nature of agriculture is now changing into commercial, technologically dynamic; knowledge-intensive agriculture is now changing into commercial, technologically dynamic, knowledge-intensive agriculture with a high amount of inputs used in a judicious way and high integration of the market (Singh and Narain, 2016). Agricultural extension services provide technical assistance to farmers on various agricultural issues. It works to supply the farmers with the necessary inputs and services that support and enhance their agricultural production. Agricultural extension has been recently defined as “systems that facilitate the access of farmers, their organizations and other market

actors to knowledge, information and technologies; facilitate their interaction with partner in research, education, agri-business and other relevant institution; and assist them to develop their own technical, organizational and management skills and practices” (Christoplos, 2010).

With the advent of global issues like climate change, restructuring in the economy, globalization, and trade liberalization (Adejo et al., 2012), a revolution in information and communication technologies, the demand and approaches of extension have been changed (Alex et al., 2002) that call for a demand-driven, cost-effective, and efficient service combining state of art technologies and methods of transfer and delivery. It is reported that public agricultural extension free services to meet the needs of farmers in all agricultural sectors are gradually becoming unrealistic and insufficient due to limited financial resources and global change in

economics (*Saliu and Age, 2009*). This force for being reactive is giving rise to a call for a shift from traditional extension service to a more demand-driven, efficient, and effective one (*Uddin and Qijie, 2013*). Liberalization and privatization policies were adopted aimed at disengaging the state from the production and commercialization of agricultural products (*Amungwa, 2009*).

Agricultural production systems are complex even with well-defined components. It continues to demand an increasing level of intensive management, input supply, market infrastructure, support, and processing to help farmers maintain a competitive edge (*Jiyawan et al., 2016*). Agricultural extension services essentially shifted from a “provider mentality” to a “user mentality” (*Singh, 2016*).

The gap widening day by day between demand and supply of extension services like input delivery, advisory, diagnostic infrastructural, and technological (*Narain et al., 2016*). In this context, the private extension service is thus not just a question of efficiency (in either social or economic terms), but concerns the evolution task and the need for policy to understand how the process of learning and change takes place and can be promoted across a wide spectrum of players in the sector (*Kumar and Reddy, 2021*). Private consulting takes care of the technical, economic, and management aspects of a production project. Apart from the administered prices, the fluctuation of the prices of agricultural inputs and products in the development of the program and extension activities (*Himeur and Ikhlef, 2023*).

According to (*Satpathy and Mishra, 1997*) the privatization of extension services in a state like Orissa is constrained by the condition of extreme poverty, mass illiteracy, limited exposure to information world, non-use of sustainable technology, traditionalism, the interplay of the dry land situation and low productivity level; however, the emerging cropping scenario of Orissa like cultivation of scented rice, exportable onion, extensive area under groundnut, vegetables, mushroom production, long stretch sea shore, feasibility of dairy provide the scope for privatized extension services. A close examination of providing extension services on emerging technologies, their social responsibility, accountability, unified technological packages, linking with trade network, infrastructural facilities, and above all new agricultural policy which has given the status of industry to agriculture would help in formulating a sound privatized extension service system in Orissa. Against this backdrop, the present study was contemplated to

assess the perception of farmers regarding privatized extension services in the state of Odisha.

METHODOLOGY

The study's location was purposefully picked for the Khordha district of Odisha in the year 2020. Following the random sampling procedure, four blocks were chosen: Begunia, Khordha Sadar, Jatni, and Bhubaneswar. The respondents for this study were chosen at random from a sample of one hundred and twenty farmers. A random sampling technique was adopted for the selection of the respondents. The attending study comes within the preview of survey cum ex-post facto study examining how an independent variable viz; age, education, farm size, farm experience, annual income, contact with extension agencies and mass media exposure, present prior to the study in the participants, affect the dependent variable viz; need of the Private Extension Service Organization (PESO). Using a pretested interview schedule, responses were elicited from each chosen respondent. Suitable statistical methods, such as frequency, percentage, mean score, standard deviation, rank order, and correlation, were used in the collection, treatment, and analysis of the data to obtain descriptive and inferential statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In a state like Odisha, the government, private farms, input dealers, agriculture universities, ICAR, and NGOs, provide extension services. This service is availed by the farmers as and when they need it. Table 1 presents the magnitude of preferences of the farmers on different aspects of farming for extension and advisory services.

The responses of the sampled farmers were recorded on a 3-point continuum scale (very much-3, much-2, and little-1). It is evident from Table 1 that

Table 1. Farmers need private extension services in various areas of farming

Area of Farming	MS	Rank
Farming in general	1.80	V
Selection and use of quality seed	2.23	II
Cultural operation	1.80	V
Fertilizer management	1.73	VI
Plant protection	1.80	V
Use and maintenance of farm	1.70	VII
Machinery	2.17	III
Post-harvest care	2.76	I
Market information	1.96	IV
Livestock management	1.46	VIII

post-harvest care ranked first in terms of required extension advisories from private extension agencies as most of the farming commodities are perishable in nature. Farmers expressed their second most need for private extension services for the selection and use of quality seed, followed using farm machinery and market information, respectively. Respondents expressed qual preferences for the privatized extension services for farming in general, cultural operation, and plant protection (fifth rank). Fertiliser management ranked sixth followed by use and maintenance of farm and livestock management as seventh and eighth areas of farming, respectively, requiring extension and advisory services from private extension agencies.

Table 2 indicates that the respondents preferred the privatized extension services through the process of self-help approach (90%) followed by the organization of a need-based program and tie up with traders for marketing of farm produce (76.67% each). It indicates that farmers needed more personal contact in the form of a group approach and the involvement of traders. One-third of the respondents (33.33%) preferred extension services through ICT. A critical look at this study indicates that the respondents were not that interested in the literature since those do not have a scope for any feedback.

The findings of the present study are related to the past research of *Deiningor (1997)*, who reported that a larger number of farmers' associations also provided agricultural extension services through a self-help

Table 2. Preferred form of private extension service

Forms	%	Mean	S.D
Regular farm and home visit	23.33		
Through the process of the self-help approach	90		
Organization of a need-based training program	76.67	3.1	0.9
Information through literature	10		
Provision of ICT	33.33		
Tie up with the traders for the marketing farm produce	76.67		

Table 3. Need for privatization of agricultural extension services

Reasons	%	Mean	S.D
Government agencies have failed	96.67		
Private farms are not committed	10.00	2.467	0.776
NGOs are not competent	43.33		
No other effective exist	36.67		

approach. These associations covered a wide range of commodity-specific topics, including new technologies, production techniques, farm management, disease management, disease prevention and disease control, marketing, and processing procedures.

Table 3 revealed that as much as 96.67 per cent of the respondents were of the view that government agencies have failed to provide required technical information and need-based extension advisories to the farmers. As much as 10 per cent of the respondents stated that the private farms could not take up this job alone because they were not committed to the overall welfare of the farmers. Such organizations were more interested in their own profit only. About 43 per cent of the respondents opined that the NGOs were incompetent to meet the technical requirements of farmers because their structure and function do not fulfill the technical requirements. 36.67 per cent of respondents mentioned that no such specific effective agency existed to fulfill their requirements.

In a similar context, *Supre (2003)* has opined the public extension system is facing constraints of funds, inefficient field staff, political pressures, centralized bureaucratic authority, large areas, diverged cropping systems, and large population. Due to these reasons, the private extension service is encouraged now-a-days.

From Table 4, it is observed that as much as 93.33 per cent preferred to avail technical support through making partial payments by them and the government. So, it is indicated that partial payment by the farmers and the government ranked highest followed by full payment by the government i.e., 43.33 per cent which is prevailing now. While 42.50 per cent of the respondents opted for making full payment by themselves for the technical support and guidance during their urgency, revealed during focused group discussion. Thus, partial privatization of extension services may be a possible option.

A similar study was conducted in the Nizamabad district of Andhra Pradesh, where it was observed that most of the farmers (82.22%) preferred cost-sharing by farmers (*Kumar and Reddy, 2007*). The willingness

Table 4. Willingness to pay for availing technical support

Items	%	Mean	S.D
Full payment by the farmer	42.50		
Full payment by the government	43.33	1.6	0.56
Partial payment by the farmer and govt.	93.33		

**Table 5. Coefficient of correlation value (r):
Need for private extension services**

Independent variables	Need
Age	-0.054
Education	0.083
Farm Size	0.004**
Farm Experience	0
Annual Income	0.044*
Contact with extension agencies	0.212
Mass media exposure	-0.082

**Significant at 0.01% level, *Significant at 0.05% level

of farmers to pay for extension services was found to depend upon the severity and urgency of the problem and on the possibility of economic returns from a particular service (Singh and Narain, 2016).

From Table 5, it is observed that independent variables like the size of the farm and annual income are positively and significantly correlated with the need for private extension service of the respondent farmers at 1 per cent and 5 per cent levels of significance respectively. This may be because both farm size as well as annual income enhance the risk-bearing ability of the respondent farmers, which in turn makes them less reluctant to avail the extension services being rendered by private players. Accordingly, the null hypothesis for both the variable and with dependent variable need is rejected and the empirical hypothesis is accepted.

CONCLUSION

The entire study provided insight into the viewpoints of the farmers who participated regarding the farming practices that they felt most strongly needed private extension services in post-harvest care, the choice and use of high-quality seed, the usage of farm equipment, market information, etc. The forms of privatized extension services preferred were a self-help approach, organization of a need-based training program, and tie-up with the traders for the marketing of farm produce. Continuous failure of the government to meet the needs of the farming community and the inefficiency of NGOs resulted to ponder for the inculcating of private extension services in rural areas. The study also supports the idea of having legal control over the private extension service providers for maintaining a sustainable service. Here it also comes out that independent variables like the size of the farm and annual income have a positive effect on need of private extension services.

Policy implications: So at this juncture, Private

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Extension Services (PES) is a much important alternative way to serve the farmers, which the government agencies are not effectively delivering the goods because of, financial and human resource constraints. Government agricultural extension policy development and execution should involve input from every relevant stakeholder. Additionally, it should outline the operational relationships and collaborations between extension and other pertinent service organizations, including those involved in marketing, research, and the environment, as well as agricultural education and training, farmer's associations, and information technology. By doing this, a conducive setting for complete private participation will be ensured. Moreover, there is a necessity to create a pluralistic extension approach to meet the needs of the farmers.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest.

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