

Farmers' View on Privatization of Agricultural Extension Services

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ABSTRACT

Most of the developing countries including India are experiencing paradigm shift from subsistence agriculture to commercialized agri-business under liberalization, globalization and privatization era. Therefore, to make extension services more responsive to farmers there is need for choosing between best alternative and suitable ways under Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization. Privatization of Agricultural Extension Services has become essential in our country to increase the competitiveness among service providers and in turn to give justice to our farmers. Nevertheless, at the same time, it requires great caution about problems and constraints emerging due to privatization. The extension service provided by small-scale Agri-business agencies has to be streamlined and monitored by proper legislation.

Keywords: Preference; Constraints; Privatization; Agricultural Extension Services;

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 in maintaining competitive edge. At present, the technology is developing very fast in terms of quality and quantity. The problem is not the lack of technology but its integration into farming practices by the farmers in order to convert it to production accomplishment. Research and Extension are the two founding pillars of agricultural systems. Research network has considerably stridden in the last four decade but the information and communication support is almost conventional and inadequate. Extension personnel are considered as friend and philosophers of the farmers to take the decision. In the WTO era, the problems and challenges become sharper and extension personnel will have to be equipped with a strategy to meet the challenges more promptly. There will be increasing specialization in farm technology and therefore they have to keep themselves up-to-date with respect to these trends and evolving matching technologies and methods for taking same to farmer's fields. Agricultural extension services in India are mostly funded and delivered by public systems till recently are increasingly coming under private extension services. It is due to

shift in nature of agriculture from subsistence to profit oriented public extension services and widely viewed as supply driven rather than demand driven. In existing environment experimentation or implementation of Privatization of Agricultural Extension Services, deserve prioritization.

"Privatization" means transfer of ownership from state in to private hand. According to Collin, Privatization means handling over a company a concerned that has been previously owned by state to private individual or parties (Raut and Singh, 2001).

The term Privatization has been used in three ways: (i) Reliance of private sector institutions to fulfill peoples need, (ii) Reduction of the role of government and consequently increase the role of private sectors in an activity or in the ownership of assets, (iii) Transfer of government enterprises or assets to private sectors. Privatization is emerging as an important factor to cut down government expenses, to get rid of embarrassment to public extension system to increase in efficiency, influence and involve farmers in extension activity and to increase competition among different extension service providers for quality services. Since independence till date public extension workers are not able to perform as effective diffusion agents and because of which modern technologies are not readily available for the use of the farmers. The broad objective of the

present research was to study the preference of vegetable growers and their towards privatization of agricultural extension services.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh state in the year 2005. Four villages of KashiVidyapeeth block namely Ramna, Seergoverdhanpur, Chittupur and Bhagwanpur, consisted the study area, the sample size was hundred vegetable growers. Twenty-five farmers were selected from each village using equal allocation technique. A random sampling technique (multi stage sampling techniques) was adopted for the selection of respondents. Information was collected with the help of a structured interview schedule. The interview schedule was pre-tested and modified based on suggestion, opinion made by the respondents and finally the data was collected by personal interview method. The data obtained was compiled and analyzed using simple statistical tools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Preference towards privatization of agricultural extension services: Preference of vegetable growers towards Privatization of Agricultural Extension Services (PAES) was measured in terms of vegetable crops in which respondents felt extension services can be obtained by paying something, clientele groups who can afford cost sharing concept and approaches of privatization of extension services.

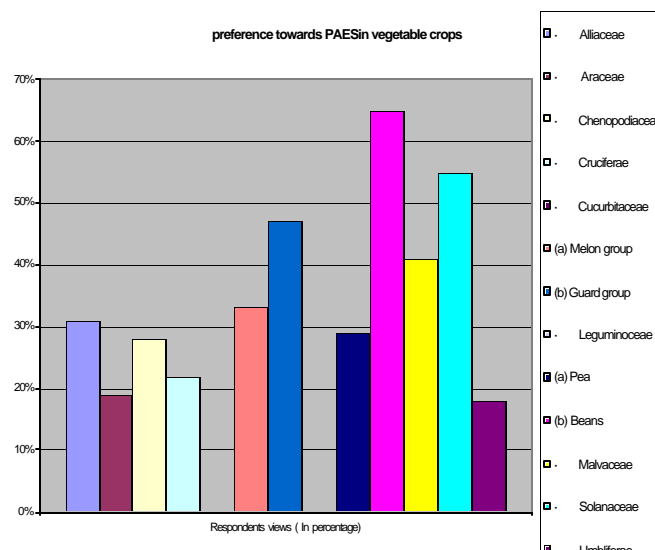
(A) *Vegetable crops:* In case of vegetable crops, nine prominent families of vegetables crops were selected namely, Alliaceae, Araceae, chenopodiaceae, Cruciferae, Cucurbitaceae, (a) Melon group, (b) Guard group, Leguminosae, Malvaceae, Solanaceae and Umblifereae. Based on the score obtained by the respondents the frequency and percentage were calculated.

It is evident from Table-1 that majority of the farmers (65%) have preferred to growing of Indian bean, Solanaceous crops (Tomato, Potato, Chilli, Brinjal) and Gourd crops as first, second, and third choice respectively because these crops occupied larger area under cultivation and more profit making crops of this block.

Beans were the most preferred vegetable in Varanasi region and adjoining areas. The climate and

Table 1. Farmers' Preferences of crops for privatization

S. No	Crops	Farmers' Preferences (%)
1.	Alliaceae (Onion, Garlic etc.)	31%
2.	Araceae (arvi etc.)	19%
3.	Chenopodiaceae(Palak,Spinach etc.)	28%
4.	Cruciferae (Cauliflower, Cabbage, Knolkhol, Raddish etc.)	22 %
Cucurbitaceae		
5.	Melon group (Watermelon Muskmelon Pumpkin etc.)	33%
6.	Guard group(Bottle, Bitter, Pointed guard, others)	47%
Leguminosae		
7.	Pea	29%
8.	Beans (Indian bean, Lobia, others)	65 %
9.	Malvaceae (Okra, others)	41%
10.	Solanaceae (Tomato, Potato, Chilli, Brinjal others)	55%
11.	Umbliferae(carrot others)	18%



edaphic factors favours its growth and yield levels are more than satisfactory. Under this condition, the producer is desirous of higher productivity and assured market price for the produce. These are the two driving factors for the producer to pay for the economic information. Hence, they expressed their opinion that Beans is the most preferred crop in this region for private extension services. Next in the order are solanaceous crops. These crops are required to be in the market round the year barring season and are essential components of kitchen. Under such circumstances producer need quality information on

cultivation. The existing extension delivery systems are general and open to all. The system is not able to provide crop specific in-depth information to farmers. Hence, they expressed their willingness to pay and get the information of their need. The melon groups of Cucurbitaceae family are seasonal and highly remunerative crops. Timely supply of information input on these crops can fetch high profits and the same was expressed by farmers.

A similar results was reported by Venkata kumar *et al.* (2000) in which farmers preferred privatization of commercial crops (28.29% of the total farmers) whereas 13.30% of them preferred privatization of Horticultural crops and only 11.11% of the total respondents preferred privatization of all the field crops. Nearly one-third (31.11%) of the respondents had opinion that based on categorizing the farmers and socio-economic status.

(B) *Clientele groups*: Table 2 reflects that progressive farmers one accept privatized extension services since they want new quality information which interns should yield expected results. Progressive farmers have high risk bearing ability and they take up task on challenging basis. Next in the order were horticultural farmers, obviously they need specific information at right time. Large farmers, because of their resource richness ready to pay for private extension services, nearly half of the commercial farmers are ready to accept a privatized extension service shows the encouraging scope of private extension services peri-urban areas. The approach of privatized extension services shows the pathway to the farmers, how to contribute for getting quality information. It is the method of sharing the cost, which is largely taken care of by public agencies till now. Privatization is more suitable for progressive because they are innovative and can bear the expanses of privatization followed by horticultural and large farmers. This may due to fact that changing of the agriculture sector from subsistence to profit oriented.

Table 2. Categories of farmers who preferred privatization

S.No	Clientele groups	Responces (%)
1.	All the farmers.	22 %
2.	Only Horticultural farmers	65%
3.	Only large farmers	61%
4.	Commercial farmers	47 %
5.	Progressive farmers	72%

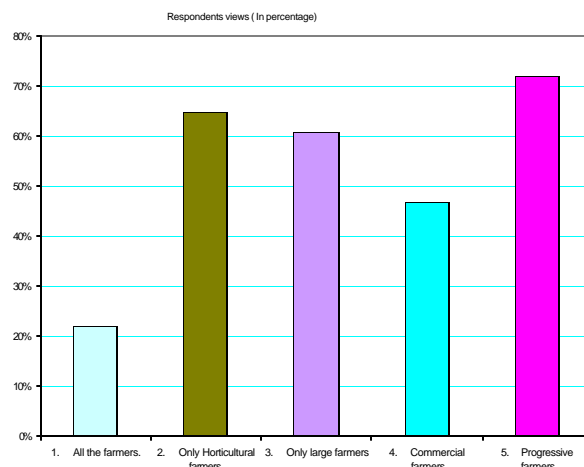


Table 3. Approaches adopted by public extension system

Approaches	Responces (%)
Contract farming	57%
Joint funding(Private+ Public)	65%
Consultancy firm	32%
Agri-Business companies	31%
NGO's	21%
Co-operative	44%

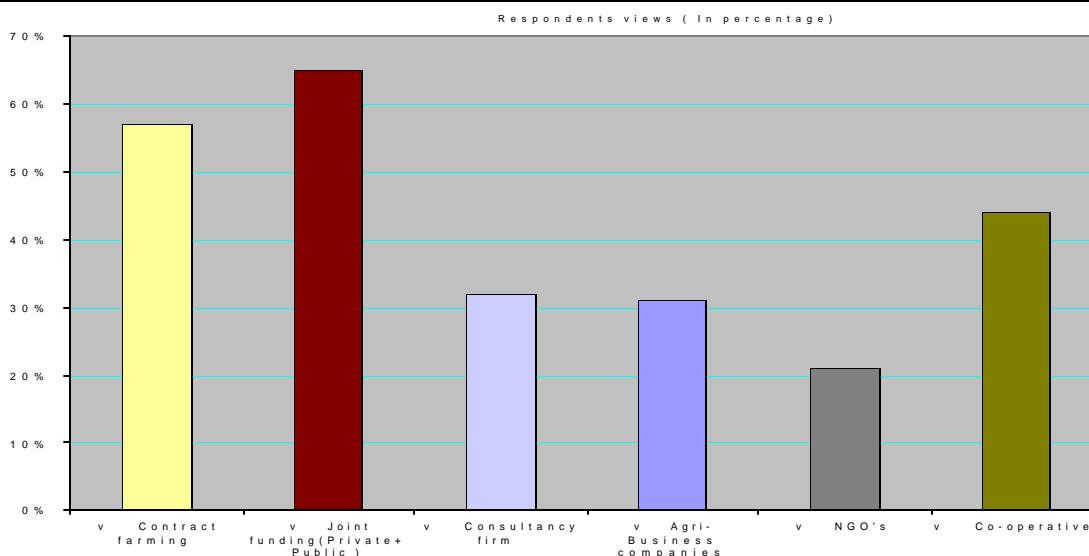
(C) *Approaches*: It is obvious from the Table 3 that, still the farmers is under the impression that, public extension system should share that cost and give with benefit, but looking in to the present system they are arguing private partnership alone with public system efforts, in the ultimate analysis it can be said that farming community is shifting the paradigm slowly. Next approach in the order was contract farming, even though there are different types of contract a farmer can be interested but he is assumed of market in this system, hence they expressed their willingness in this direction. The biggest drawback in Indian agricultural system is lack of market infrastructure for farmers and buyers determine price of produce rather than producers. These issues are addressed in contract farming and farmer are assumed of what price is going to get for his produce in advance and he can concentrate on his farm operations. Cooperative farming is another promising approach for ensuring income of farmers, where in the group of farmers sharing the operational expenses and have control over the cost of cultivation. Now it is not the individual but the group who is interested in quality extension services. From the above table it is reflected that large number of farmers (65%) have preferred the joint funding followed by contract and co-operative farming. These approaches can give an opportunity to farmers work in groups.

Perceived constraints in Privatization of Agricultural Extension Services. Perceived constraints are referred as the problems, hindrances barriers or factors, which comes in the way of acceptance and adoption of any technology. It is a danger signal to privatization of agricultural extension services. The Table 4 shows that majority of the farmers perceived constraints in Priva-

tization of Agricultural Extension Services (PAES). This might be because there is no governmental procedure for checking / controlling the Private extension service provider, Private extension service provider (PESP) lead to monopoly in spreading of innovations, they will concentrate only on larger farmers and they may give the information to those who provide money .

Table 4. Distribution of the respondents according to Perceived constraints

S.No.	Perceived Constraints	Yes		No	
		F	%	F	%
1	Private extension service provider (PESP) will cheat the farmers.	64	64	36	36
2	Private extension service provider will give the information to those who provide money.	82	82	18	18
3	Private extension service provider will exploit the farmers	48	48	52	52
4	Private extension service provider will concentrate on highly remunerative crops.	78	78	22	22
5	Private extension service provider may give the false information for achieving his target.	39	39	61	61
6	Private extension service provider will concentrate only on larger farmers.	85	85	15	15
7	The technology provided by them may be substandard because of lack of regulatory authority.	73	73	27	27
8	There is no Governmental procedure for checking / controlling the Private extension service provider.	91	91	9	9
9.	Because of competition between PESP, the companies come out with good advertisement rather than good technology.	71	71	29	29
10	Private extension service provider (PESP) lead to monopoly in spreading of innovations.	86	86	14	14



Out of 10 statements, only two-statement i.e., Private extension service provider may give the false information for achieving his target and Private extension service provider will exploit the farmers perceived as less severe constraints. Except those two all other listed constraints received attention of more than 70% of respondents. Such behaviour indicates alarming situation of privatization of extension services.

A similar study was conducted in Srilanka by Rohana (2005), and reported that the majority of the

farmers agreed that commercialization is not desirable in the interest of poor farmers, big population of small and marginal farmers and will lead to socio-economic inequality and regional imbalances.

Privatization of Agricultural Extension Services has become essential in our country to increase the competitiveness among service providers and in turn to give justice to our farmers. Nevertheless, at the same time, it requires great caution about problems and constraints emerging due to privatization. The extension

service provided by small-scale Agri-business agencies to be streamlined and monitored by proper legislation. The public extension system is overburdened with numerous activities and phase wise shifting some of them to the private sector for effective implementation of essential extension services. While extension services cannot be totally privatized, there is room for both public and private extension. The ideal policy should be to have better mix of public, private, voluntary and co-operative extension efforts.

CONCLUSION

Privatization of Agricultural Extension Services has various advantages like providing demand driven services, increasing voice of the farmers in the extension

services, more cost effective with efficient and quality services, more clientele accountable, complement or supplement to the effort of public extension and increased staff professionalism. But side by side it has some disadvantages such as, more concentrate on big and progressive farmers, it may lead to promotion of own benefit with less attention to improve the farmer's condition, relatively good for higher value crops / commercial crops, restricts the flow of information and increases social disparity.

From the study, it is clear that Privatization of Agricultural Extension Services has become essential in our country to increase the competitiveness in the world and give justice to our farmers. Nevertheless, at the same time, it requires great caution about problems and constraints emerged in privatization.

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