
SAMQUEST-Journal of Emerging Innovations

E-ISSN 3108-1207

Vol.1, Issue 2, pp.78-101, July- Dec 25

Available online at : <https://www.samglobaluniversity.ac.in/archives/>

TEMPORAL ADAPTATION OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SYSTEMS IN INDIA

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Received: 11/July/2025; Accepted: 16/July/2025 ; Published: 7/Feb/2026

Abstract

Agricultural extension systems in India have undergone significant temporal adaptations to address the evolving needs of farmers, agricultural challenges, and socio-economic conditions. Initially, post-independence extension models focused on increasing food production through the Green Revolution, using high-yielding varieties and chemical inputs. Over time, with advancements in technology and shifts in agricultural priorities, extension systems have evolved to include sustainable farming practices, ICT-enabled services, and farmer-centric models such as Farmer Field Schools and Farmer Producer Organizations. Recent policy shifts, including the National Policy for Farmers and climate-smart agriculture initiatives, have integrated extension services with broader rural development and environmental sustainability goals. The introduction of digital platforms, mobile applications, and e-extension services has revolutionized the delivery of information, making it more accessible and timely for farmers. Additionally, decentralized models and localized solutions ensure that extension

practices are context-specific, catering to regional needs. This paper reviews the historical evolution of agricultural extension in India, highlighting key adaptations to technological, environmental, and socio-political changes, and discusses their implications for enhancing agricultural productivity, sustainability, and farmer welfare.

Keywords: *Adaptation, ATMA, extension delivery system, frontline extension system.*

INTRODUCTION

The fundamental role of agriculture has long been to ensure access to adequate and quality food, thereby contributing to the active and healthy lives of people across different socio-economic strata. At the core of agricultural development is the concept of food and nutritional security, which is intricately linked to a variety of factors including increased production, sustainable resource management, a stable environment, and even international trade. Since the 1980s, there has been a paradigm shift in development strategies, primarily due to heightened concerns about ensuring the

future well-being of generations to come. This shift is encapsulated by the concept of **sustainable development**, which advocates for the careful management of resources to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

In the context of sustainable agricultural practices, the goal is to reduce reliance on external inputs such as synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, and to encourage practices like minimal tillage that safeguard natural resources and promote long-term soil health. For developing countries like India, this approach also highlights the importance of maintaining food security while addressing environmental degradation and the inequities that persist within rural farming communities.

The Green Revolution, which significantly boosted food production in India by introducing high-yielding varieties, chemical fertilizers, and irrigation techniques, played a crucial role in enhancing food security and improving farm incomes. However, despite these advances, India still faces challenges related to poverty, malnutrition, and unequal access to agricultural benefits. While total food grain production reached an all-time high of 260 million tonnes in 2011-12, the growth rate in agriculture during the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2007–2012) remained below 4% per year. Despite efforts to increase agricultural productivity, rural poverty persists, particularly in regions affected by low and unpredictable rainfall, such as arid and semi-arid agro-ecological zones.

Furthermore, many remote farming communities continue to struggle with inadequate access to essential services such as credit, inputs, markets, and extension services. These challenges underscore the importance of **agricultural extension** as a critical component in addressing the widening gap between agricultural demand and supply. The World Development Report emphasizes the need for a renewed focus on agricultural extension as a vital tool for unlocking the growth potential of the agriculture sector, ensuring sustainable and inclusive economic development, and addressing the pressing issues of food insecurity and rural poverty. The underutilization of agricultural potential presents a serious challenge to food security, particularly in rural areas where productivity growth has been stagnating, and where access to resources and services remains limited. Agricultural extension, therefore, stands as a pivotal mechanism to address these challenges and drive future growth in the sector.

Agricultural extension in India has been a pivotal tool for promoting agricultural development and improving the livelihoods of farmers. Over the years, the approach to extension has evolved significantly, adapting to the changing dynamics of the agricultural sector, technological advancements, socio-economic transformations, and environmental challenges. The extension system in India serves as a bridge between farmers and the knowledge they need to improve productivity, adopt sustainable practices, and address emerging challenges such as climate change, market volatility, and resource depletion.

Historically, the focus of agricultural extension in India was on increasing food production, particularly through the adoption of modern inputs such as high-yielding varieties (HYVs) of seeds, chemical fertilizers, and pesticides. This was most evident during the Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, which marked a turning point in Indian agriculture. However, as the country moved into the post-Green Revolution era, the need for more sustainable, diversified, and farmer-oriented extension systems became evident. This period saw a shift towards integrated approaches that combined technological innovation with environmental sustainability, economic viability, and social equity.

The advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has also had a profound impact on agricultural extension. The rise of mobile phones, the internet, and digital platforms has enabled timely dissemination of agricultural knowledge, empowering farmers with real-time information on weather patterns, pest outbreaks, market prices, and government schemes. These technological advancements have facilitated the growth of e-extension services, making it easier to reach remote areas and marginalized communities.

In recent years, the focus of agricultural extension has expanded to encompass not only productivity enhancement but also issues related to climate change adaptation, natural resource management, and farmer welfare. The Indian government has introduced various policies and initiatives to strengthen extension services, with an

emphasis on decentralized, localized, and participatory approaches that take into account the diverse agro-climatic conditions across the country.

This paper explores the temporal adaptation of agricultural extension systems in India, tracing their evolution from traditional models to contemporary, technology-driven approaches. It highlights the role of these adaptations in addressing the challenges faced by Indian agriculture and discusses how extension services can continue to evolve in the face of ongoing changes in the agricultural landscape. The ultimate goal is to provide a comprehensive understanding of how agricultural extension can contribute to sustainable agricultural development and enhance the well-being of Indian farmers.

Evolution of agricultural extension delivery system

The evolution of agricultural extension services in India has been a dynamic process, reflecting the country's agricultural transformation and the need to address emerging challenges. In the early post-independence years, the focus was on basic rural development and agricultural modernization, with an emphasis on introducing new technologies and improving farm productivity. The establishment of extension services at the district and block levels was part of the government's effort to spread knowledge about improved agricultural practices, often focusing on increasing the adoption of technologies like high-yielding varieties and chemical fertilizers. During this time, the Community Development Programme (CDP) was launched to promote rural development

through integrated efforts, including agricultural extension, education, and health services.

The 1960s and 1970s brought about the Green Revolution, which revolutionized India's agriculture by increasing food production in select regions. The introduction of high-yielding varieties (HYVs) of crops, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and modern irrigation systems became central to agricultural policy. Extension services, particularly through the Training and Visit (T&V) system, played a vital role in disseminating this new technology to farmers. However, while the Green Revolution resulted in significant increases in food production, it also raised concerns about the sustainability of these practices, soil degradation, and the overuse of chemical inputs. These concerns prompted a shift toward more diversified and sustainable agricultural practices in the 1980s and 1990s.

During this period, agricultural extension services began to focus on **Integrated Pest Management (IPM)**, **organic farming**, and **water conservation**, recognizing the need to reduce dependency on chemical inputs and protect natural resources. The involvement of farmers in decision-making processes became more prominent, with programs such as **Farmer Field Schools (FFS)** facilitating hands-on learning. These initiatives empowered farmers to experiment with new technologies while considering local agro-climatic conditions. Additionally, the concept of **participatory extension** emerged, wherein farmers actively participated in the design, implementation,

and evaluation of extension programs, moving away from the traditional top-down approach.

The 1990s saw a shift toward market-oriented agriculture, particularly after economic liberalization. This period emphasized market linkages, rural entrepreneurship, and post-harvest management as key components of extension services. The rise of **privatization** and **NGO-led initiatives** contributed to a more diverse and fragmented extension system, which included a mix of government services, private sector involvement, and non-governmental organizations working in the agricultural field. The introduction of **Kisan Call Centers** and the growing use of **telecommunication** tools marked an attempt to overcome the geographic limitations of traditional extension services, allowing farmers to access information on-demand.

In the 2000s and beyond, the integration of **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)** into agricultural extension services revolutionized the delivery of knowledge to farmers. Mobile applications, SMS services, and online platforms such as **mKisan** and **Kisan Suvidha** allowed for the real-time dissemination of critical information on weather, market prices, pest management, and crop care. **E-extension portals** and digital literacy programs have played an important role in reaching remote and underserved communities. This digital shift has enhanced accessibility to information and services, making agricultural extension more inclusive and efficient.

In recent years, the focus of agricultural extension has increasingly aligned with the broader goal of **sustainable development** and climate change adaptation. Extension systems are now promoting **climate-smart agriculture (CSA)**, which includes practices designed to increase resilience to climate variability while minimizing environmental impacts. This includes water-saving technologies, organic farming, and integrated crop-livestock systems that foster soil health and biodiversity. Additionally, **precision agriculture** using tools like **drones, satellite imagery, and Artificial Intelligence (AI)** is gradually transforming how extension services deliver personalized solutions for farmers. These technologies help optimize the use of inputs, improve crop management, and increase productivity, ensuring that resources are used efficiently.

The rise of **Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)** has also played a crucial role in modernizing agricultural extension. These organizations enable farmers to collectively access resources, improve bargaining power, and ensure better market linkages. Extension services have integrated support for the formation and strengthening of FPOs, recognizing their potential to enhance rural livelihoods and foster collective decision-making.

Public-private partnerships (PPP) are becoming more common in extending services, with the private sector contributing to innovation, technology deployment, and market facilitation, while the government provides policy support and infrastructure. This collaboration has helped create a more diverse extension system that caters to both

large and smallholder farmers, ensuring that extension services are more tailored and responsive to the needs of different farming communities.

Looking ahead, the future of agricultural extension in India will likely involve continued **technological integration**, with **big data** and **IoT (Internet of Things)** further revolutionizing farming practices. Digital platforms, coupled with **artificial intelligence** and **machine learning**, will help create more accurate predictions for crop health, yield, and market conditions, further enhancing the efficiency of extension services. Moreover, the focus on **gender-sensitive extension** will be crucial to ensure that women farmers, who play a significant role in agriculture but often face challenges in accessing extension services, are included in these innovations.

In conclusion, the agricultural extension delivery system in India has evolved from a centralized, government-led approach to a more diversified and inclusive model that incorporates technology, farmer participation, and market-driven strategies. The system continues to adapt to the changing needs of farmers, with a focus on sustainability, climate resilience, and the integration of modern tools to enhance productivity and rural livelihoods. As agriculture faces new challenges in the 21st century, agricultural extension will remain an essential component in achieving sustainable food security, reducing poverty, and promoting inclusive rural development.

Adaptation of Frontier Technology Transfer Systems in Agriculture

The adaptation of frontier technology transfer systems in agriculture refers to the process of introducing and integrating advanced, cutting-edge technologies into the agricultural sector to increase productivity, sustainability, and resilience. This adaptation involves the careful translation of scientific innovations into practical, accessible, and effective tools for farmers, especially those in developing countries. The integration of frontier technologies can lead to transformative changes in agricultural practices and productivity, particularly in regions where conventional methods have reached their limits or are unsustainable.

Emerging Frontier Technologies in Agriculture

Recent advancements in frontier technologies have revolutionized the way agriculture is practiced globally. These technologies, which include digital tools, remote sensing, artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, and genomics, offer solutions to numerous challenges faced by the agricultural sector, including climate change, food security, resource constraints, and market access.

Precision Agriculture: The use of technologies such as **GPS, drones, satellite imagery, and sensor-based tools** enables farmers to monitor their crops and soil conditions in real-time. This allows for targeted interventions, optimizing resource use (e.g., water, fertilizers, and pesticides), and improving yields while minimizing environmental impact. These technologies can also help farmers make data-driven decisions for better crop management and timely actions.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML): AI and ML can be used to predict weather patterns, detect crop diseases, and analyze soil health. These technologies help farmers adapt to changing climate conditions by providing insights into the most suitable farming practices and crop varieties. AI-powered systems can also enhance decision-making by analyzing large volumes of data from multiple sources, improving overall farm management.

Genomics and Biotechnology: Advances in genomics and biotechnology enable the development of genetically modified (GM) crops that are resistant to pests, diseases, and extreme weather conditions. Technologies like CRISPR gene-editing have the potential to create crops with improved nutritional content, drought tolerance, and faster growth cycles, enhancing food security and reducing dependence on chemical inputs.

Blockchain Technology: Blockchain offers a transparent, secure, and efficient system for tracking agricultural produce from farm to market. It ensures fair trade, reduces fraud, and increases the efficiency of supply chains by providing real-time data on product quality, prices, and logistics.

Challenges in Adapting Frontier Technologies

While frontier technologies hold immense potential for transforming agriculture, their adoption and adaptation present several challenges, especially in developing countries like India.

Infrastructure and Accessibility: Many frontier technologies, especially those relying on digital tools, require robust

infrastructure, including reliable internet access, electricity, and technological literacy. In rural areas, especially in remote regions, these resources may be lacking, hindering the effective use of advanced technologies.

Cost of Technology: Many frontier technologies are expensive to develop, maintain, and implement. Smallholder farmers, who make up a significant portion of the agricultural workforce in developing countries, may struggle to afford the initial investment required to adopt these technologies. Financial support mechanisms, such as subsidies, credit facilities, and insurance, are necessary to facilitate technology adoption.

Knowledge and Skill Gaps: Successful technology adoption relies on farmers' understanding of how to use and maintain new tools. There is a need for training programs, extension services, and knowledge-sharing platforms to help farmers acquire the skills necessary to use frontier technologies effectively.

Cultural and Behavioral Barriers: In some regions, farmers may be resistant to change due to cultural beliefs, traditional farming practices, or a lack of trust in new technologies. Overcoming these behavioral barriers requires careful communication, awareness campaigns, and demonstration of the benefits of technology adoption through real-life examples.

Policy and Regulatory Support: Governments play a critical role in creating an enabling environment for technology adoption. This includes policies that support innovation, protect intellectual property

rights, provide funding for research and development, and ensure fair access to new technologies. Regulations around data privacy, safety, and environmental impact also need to be updated to accommodate new agricultural technologies.

Strategies for Effective Technology Transfer

To successfully transfer frontier technologies to farmers, it is essential to adapt and contextualize these innovations to the local agricultural systems, ensuring that they meet the specific needs and challenges of the target population. Several strategies can be employed to enhance technology transfer in agriculture:

Farmer-Centric Approach: Agricultural extension services must be adapted to the needs of farmers, focusing on practical, on-the-ground applications of technologies. Training and workshops should be designed to demonstrate how technologies can be integrated into farmers' existing practices to enhance productivity and sustainability.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPP): Collaboration between governments, research institutions, the private sector, and NGOs can facilitate the development, scaling, and diffusion of frontier technologies. PPPs can provide the necessary resources, knowledge, and infrastructure to support the adoption of new technologies, especially for smallholder farmers.

ICT Platforms for Knowledge Sharing: Digital platforms such as **e-extension services, mobile applications, and online learning resources** are valuable tools for

delivering information on new technologies. These platforms allow for real-time dissemination of knowledge and enable farmers to interact with experts, share experiences, and access personalized advice.

Farmer Field Schools (FFS): Practical, hands-on training in farmer field schools helps farmers directly experience the benefits of new technologies in their local conditions. These schools provide a platform for farmer-to-farmer learning and encourage the adoption of new practices in a supportive and collaborative environment.

Inclusive and Gender-Sensitive Approaches: Ensuring that both male and female farmers, as well as marginalized communities, have access to technology transfer is critical. Gender-sensitive extension services and outreach programs can help reduce disparities in technology adoption, ensuring that all stakeholders benefit equally.

The Role of Extension Systems in Technology Transfer

Agricultural extension services play a vital role in the adaptation of frontier technology transfer systems. Extension officers serve as intermediaries between farmers and the scientific community, helping to bridge the gap between research and practice. The integration of new technologies into extension systems can help:

Foster Knowledge Exchange: Extension officers can disseminate information about new technologies and their benefits, while also collecting feedback from farmers about local challenges and needs. This feedback loop helps in refining technologies and

making them more adaptable to local contexts.

Facilitate Adoption: Extension services can assist in creating awareness, organizing demonstrations, and providing training on new technologies, thus improving adoption rates. Their presence on the ground ensures that farmers receive continuous support throughout the adoption process.

Promote Sustainability: Extension officers can help ensure that technologies are used sustainably, emphasizing best practices and efficient resource use. This can lead to long-term improvements in productivity and environmental conservation.

Global Adjustment in Public Agricultural Extension Systems

Public agricultural extension systems play a crucial role in disseminating agricultural knowledge and innovations to farmers. Over time, these systems have had to adapt to the evolving needs of farmers, technological advancements, and the growing challenges related to food security, climate change, and rural development. This adjustment has been particularly evident in countries like China, the USA, Bangladesh, India, and Nepal. Below are case studies of these countries' agricultural extension systems and how they have adjusted over time.

Case of China

Evolution and Adjustment of Agricultural Extension in China: China's agricultural extension system has undergone significant changes, particularly since the late 20th century. In the 1950s, China's agricultural extension services were largely state-run and

focused on disseminating information from government agencies. However, in response to the challenges of rural poverty and the need for more efficient agricultural practices, China began adapting its extension system to be more market-oriented and decentralized.

Technological Integration: China has made extensive use of modern technology in agricultural extension. The incorporation of information and communication technology (ICT) has allowed extension services to reach remote areas more effectively. The use of mobile phones and online platforms has facilitated communication between farmers and extension workers.

Decentralization and Rural Development: Since the early 2000s, China has focused on empowering local governments and community-based organizations to play a larger role in agricultural extension. This decentralized approach has helped cater to the specific needs of different regions, allowing for more context-specific interventions.

Private Sector Involvement: The government has encouraged partnerships between public agricultural extension systems and private enterprises. This includes collaborations with agri-businesses for the supply of inputs, marketing, and technology transfer.

Challenges: Despite these adjustments, challenges like the uneven distribution of resources between urban and rural areas, the aging farmer population, and the limited involvement of women in agricultural

activities continue to affect the efficiency of agricultural extension services.

Case of the USA

Evolution and Adjustment of Agricultural Extension in the USA: In the United States, agricultural extension has historically been an integral part of the land-grant university system, initiated in the late 19th century. This system was designed to bridge the gap between agricultural research and practice. Over time, however, the U.S. agricultural extension system has adjusted to meet the changing needs of farmers and society.

The Role of Land-Grant Universities: Land-grant universities, funded by federal and state governments, have continued to serve as the backbone of extension services. These institutions conduct research and transfer knowledge to farmers through outreach programs, demonstrations, and educational materials.

Technology Transfer: The extension system has adopted new technologies such as precision agriculture, data-driven farming, and sustainable agricultural practices. Extension workers assist farmers in adopting these innovations to increase productivity, reduce environmental impact, and enhance resilience to climate change.

Diverse Stakeholder Engagement: In recent decades, the extension system has expanded its focus to include a broader range of stakeholders, including environmental groups, food safety experts, and urban gardeners. The scope of the extension service now encompasses a variety of agricultural topics, such as agribusiness development, water

conservation, and food systems sustainability.

Challenges: Despite its success, challenges include funding constraints, limited outreach to small-scale farmers, and the changing dynamics of rural economies. Additionally, the rising urban-rural divide and the declining number of young people entering agriculture present obstacles for extension services.

Case of Bangladesh

Evolution and Adjustment of Agricultural Extension in Bangladesh: Bangladesh's agricultural extension system has undergone significant transformation over the past few decades. Initially, the country relied heavily on public extension services, which were mainly top-down, government-driven, and focused on agricultural productivity. However, the need for a more responsive and participatory approach led to major reforms.

Decentralization and Participatory Approach: The Bangladesh Agricultural Extension System (BAES) adopted a decentralized approach, with the introduction of **Farmer Field Schools (FFS)** and community-driven programs. This has allowed farmers to engage more actively in decision-making and technology adoption.

Gender Sensitivity: Recognizing the significant role of women in agriculture, extension services have focused on empowering female farmers through specialized programs. These include training

on sustainable farming practices and access to credit facilities.

ICT for Rural Outreach: Bangladesh has made notable efforts to introduce ICT tools for agricultural extension. Mobile phone-based services, such as the **Krishi Call Center**, have allowed farmers to access agricultural information and advice in real-time.

Challenges: Despite positive developments, Bangladesh's agricultural extension system still faces challenges like resource limitations, a lack of trained extension personnel, and the need for better coordination between various government agencies and NGOs.

Case of India

Evolution and Adjustment of Agricultural Extension in India: India's agricultural extension system has witnessed considerable changes, especially since the Green Revolution. Initially, extension services were centralized, and the government played a dominant role in technology transfer. However, in recent decades, the system has evolved to address the growing complexity of farming challenges.

Technological Integration: India's extension services have increasingly embraced ICT to enhance their reach and effectiveness. Programs like **e-Choupal** and **m-Krishi** leverage mobile technology and the internet to provide farmers with timely information on weather, crop management, and market prices.

Decentralization and Participatory Extension: India's extension system has

shifted toward a more decentralized and participatory model, where local farmers, agricultural universities, and private sector actors collaborate to disseminate knowledge.

Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs): These centers, set up across the country, have become the focal points for extension services. They offer farmers practical training and exposure to new agricultural technologies.

Challenges: Despite these advancements, challenges such as insufficient funding, a shortage of trained extension agents, fragmented services, and inadequate infrastructure persist. There is also a need for better integration of extension services with market linkages.

Case of Nepal

Evolution and Adjustment of Agricultural Extension in Nepal: Nepal's agricultural extension system has been shaped by its diverse geography, with varying agricultural practices in the hilly, terai, and mountain regions. Over the years, Nepal has moved from a purely government-run extension model to one that emphasizes community-based, participatory approaches.

Community-Based Extension: Nepal has promoted the **Farmer Field School (FFS)** model and participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques to involve farmers in the decision-making process. This approach has been particularly successful in addressing issues related to crop diversification, soil fertility, and sustainable agriculture.

Integration of Gender and Social Equity: Extension services in Nepal have

increasingly focused on reaching marginalized communities, including women, indigenous groups, and landless farmers. Gender-sensitive extension programs have been implemented to ensure equal access to resources and knowledge for both men and women.

ICT and Extension Services: Mobile-based extension services have gained popularity in Nepal, particularly in remote areas where traditional extension services are difficult to deliver. These services provide farmers with up-to-date information on crop management, pest control, and weather forecasts.

Challenges: Nepal faces challenges in terms of the fragmentation of extension services, inadequate training for extension workers, and lack of infrastructure in remote areas. The need for more effective coordination among government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector is also a key issue.

In conclusion, public agricultural extension systems in countries like China, the USA, Bangladesh, India, and Nepal have evolved in response to changing agricultural challenges, technological advancements, and the need for more inclusive and sustainable agricultural practices. Each country's adaptation is shaped by its unique socio-economic and environmental context, but common themes include the integration of ICT, decentralization, participatory models, and a focus on sustainability and gender equality. Despite progress, challenges remain, including resource limitations, infrastructure gaps, and the need for better coordination, highlighting the need for ongoing innovation and investment in agricultural extension services.

Transitions in Indian agricultural extension system

The agricultural extension system in India has undergone significant transitions over the decades, evolving from a centralized, top-down approach to a more decentralized, participatory, and technology-driven model. Initially, in the post-independence era, the system was heavily government-controlled, focusing primarily on increasing food production to address food insecurity. The Green Revolution in the 1960s introduced high-yielding varieties (HYVs), chemical fertilizers, and irrigation techniques, which required an expanded extension network to disseminate these innovations. During this period, the extension model was largely based on the Transfer of Technology (TOT) approach, with farmers seen as passive recipients of knowledge.

However, by the 1990s, the limitations of this centralized system became evident. The need for localized and participatory methods in agricultural extension became apparent, as the challenges faced by farmers were not being effectively addressed by a one-size-fits-all model. The shift toward decentralization allowed for more regional decision-making and the involvement of farmer groups, cooperatives, and NGOs, which played a crucial role in improving communication between farmers and extension workers. During this phase, extension services started emphasizing farmer participation, moving away from the traditional top-down approach.

In the 2000s, the Indian agricultural extension system saw the integration of modern technologies, particularly

Information and Communication Technology (ICT), into its structure. The use of mobile phones, internet, and radio became widespread, enabling farmers to access real-time information on weather, crop management, market prices, and pest control. This technological push, combined with the establishment of platforms like **e-Choupal** and **m-Krishi**, further democratized agricultural knowledge by allowing two-way communication between farmers and extension agents. The National Agricultural Extension Policy (2000) laid the foundation for a more pluralistic and decentralized system, encouraging public-private partnerships and greater participation of marginalized groups.

By the 2010s, the focus of agricultural extension shifted to a more integrated, farmer-centric model that aimed to provide holistic support, addressing not only productivity but also market access, credit, and post-harvest technologies. The introduction of climate-smart and sustainable agricultural practices became a priority, with extension systems promoting resource-efficient and environmentally friendly farming methods. Initiatives like the **National e-Governance Plan in Agriculture (NeGP-A)** further enhanced the accessibility of agricultural services through online platforms, providing farmers with easier access to government schemes and advisory services.

Despite these advancements, the agricultural extension system in India still faces several challenges. These include a shortage of trained extension workers, particularly in rural and remote areas, inadequate funding,

and infrastructure gaps. Additionally, not all farmers have access to ICT, limiting the effectiveness of technology-based services in underserved regions. The aging agricultural workforce and a growing disconnect between youth and agriculture also present challenges for the future. Moving forward, strengthening public-private partnerships, improving market linkages, and fostering capacity-building programs will be crucial to addressing the evolving needs of farmers and ensuring sustainable rural development in India.

Major Indian initiatives

India has launched several major initiatives over the years to enhance agricultural extension systems, promote sustainable farming practices, and improve the livelihoods of farmers. These initiatives are aimed at addressing the evolving needs of the agricultural sector, such as improving productivity, promoting sustainability, and ensuring food security. Some of the key initiatives are as follows:

National Agricultural Extension Project (NAEP): Launched in 1975, the NAEP aimed to improve the efficiency of agricultural extension systems in India. The project focused on building capacity in the extension services, enhancing the role of farmers in the development process, and promoting the use of new technologies. It laid the foundation for subsequent changes in the extension system, including the adoption of the Participatory Approach.

Training and Visit (T&V) System: Introduced in 1979, the T&V system was a significant shift in agricultural extension,

moving from a top-down approach to a more farmer-oriented model. It focused on regular visits by extension workers, improved training for them, and close coordination between research and extension agencies. Though it had some limitations, the T&V system played an important role in improving outreach and the quality of extension services.

National Policy for Farmers (2007): The National Policy for Farmers aims to address the multifaceted needs of farmers by focusing on increasing agricultural productivity, ensuring a sustainable farming environment, and improving the income and welfare of farmers. The policy emphasizes the provision of extension services, the use of modern technologies, and the protection of farmers' interests.

National e-Governance Plan in Agriculture (NeGP-A): Launched in 2006, NeGP-A focuses on integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into the agricultural sector. It aims to provide farmers with timely and accurate information related to weather, market prices, pest control, crop management, and government schemes. The initiative seeks to improve the accessibility of government services and make the agricultural extension system more transparent and efficient.

e-Choupal: An innovative initiative by ITC Limited, **e-Choupal** was launched in 2000 with the goal of empowering farmers by providing them with access to information and resources through the internet. e-Choupal has helped farmers make informed decisions about crop management, market prices, and technology adoption. This model

has been successful in creating a direct link between farmers and markets, reducing the role of intermediaries, and increasing farmers' incomes.

m-Krishi: **m-Krishi** is a mobile-based initiative developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in collaboration with the private sector. The initiative aims to provide personalized agricultural advice to farmers via mobile phones. By sending regular SMS updates, m-Krishi provides information on weather forecasts, pest management, and crop protection, helping farmers make informed decisions about their farming practices.

Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY): Launched in 2015, PMKSY aims to promote efficient use of water for irrigation and increase the coverage of irrigation across India. The scheme focuses on micro-irrigation techniques like drip irrigation and sprinkler systems to conserve water while increasing crop productivity. This initiative seeks to reduce the dependence on monsoons and improve water-use efficiency in agriculture.

Soil Health Management (SHM): The Soil Health Management initiative, launched under the **National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)**, focuses on improving soil health and fertility. The program promotes organic farming, balanced fertilizer use, and soil testing to ensure that farmers can maintain soil productivity while minimizing the use of chemical fertilizers.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY): Launched in 2016, PMFBY aims to provide financial support to farmers in

case of crop loss due to natural calamities, pests, or diseases. The scheme seeks to reduce the financial burden on farmers and promote risk management in agriculture. The initiative is seen as an important step in safeguarding farmers' income and ensuring food security.

Atmanirbhar Krishi: As part of India's post-pandemic recovery plan, the **Atmanirbhar Krishi** initiative focuses on making the agricultural sector self-reliant by encouraging the use of indigenous technologies, promoting organic farming, strengthening market linkages, and improving post-harvest infrastructure. The program emphasizes innovation and sustainability in farming practices.

Kisan Call Center (KCC): The Kisan Call Center initiative was launched in 2004 to provide farmers with easy access to agricultural information. Farmers can call the toll-free number to get advice on crop production, pest management, weather forecasts, and government schemes. The KCC has helped bridge the information gap for farmers, especially in remote areas.

Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY): Launched in 2015, PKVY aims to promote organic farming and enhance the adoption of eco-friendly agricultural practices. The initiative provides financial support for farmers adopting organic farming methods, including organic certification and market linkage support. PKVY seeks to increase the availability of organic produce and reduce the environmental impact of conventional agriculture.

Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA): ATMA was established in 2005 to support the decentralized delivery of agricultural extension services at the district level. The program provides financial assistance to state governments for the implementation of extension activities and encourages the use of ICT to deliver services. It focuses on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of agricultural extension systems.

These initiatives reflect India's commitment to improving agricultural productivity, ensuring food security, and supporting the well-being of farmers. They address key challenges such as market access, information dissemination, sustainability, and climate change adaptation, making agricultural extension systems more inclusive and responsive to farmers' needs.

Shifting the operational paradigm

Shifting the operational paradigm in agricultural extension refers to a fundamental change in how agricultural services and knowledge are delivered to farmers, with a focus on more efficient, participatory, and technology-driven approaches. Over the years, the operational paradigm in agricultural extension systems has evolved from a centralized, top-down model to a more decentralized, demand-driven, and farmer-centric model. This shift has been driven by the recognition that effective agricultural extension must be adaptive to the needs of farmers, harness modern technologies, and promote sustainable practices. Below are the key components involved in shifting the

operational paradigm of agricultural extension systems:

From Top-Down to Bottom-Up Approach

In the past, agricultural extension in India largely followed a top-down approach, where extension workers were viewed as the primary source of knowledge, and farmers were seen as passive recipients. However, this model had its limitations as it failed to account for the diverse needs and local contexts of farmers. Today, the operational paradigm is shifting toward a bottom-up approach, where farmers play an active role in decision-making, and extension services are tailored to local needs and conditions. This participatory approach encourages dialogue between farmers, extension workers, researchers, and policymakers, promoting co-learning and co-development.

Emphasis on Farmer-Centric Models

Modern agricultural extension systems focus on farmers as active stakeholders rather than passive recipients of information. The shift towards a farmer-centric model recognizes the importance of empowering farmers with the knowledge, tools, and resources they need to make informed decisions about crop management, input use, and market access. Farmers' preferences, experiences, and indigenous knowledge are integrated into the extension process, ensuring that the services provided are relevant and practical. Extension services now aim to improve the livelihoods of farmers by offering holistic support, including training, market linkages, and financial services.

Decentralization and Localized Delivery

The operational paradigm is also shifting from a centralized model to a more decentralized approach, where extension services are delivered at the local or regional level. This allows for better adaptation to the specific agro-ecological conditions and socio-economic contexts of different regions. Decentralization enables better access to extension services for farmers in remote and underserved areas and ensures that extension workers have a closer connection to the farming communities they serve. This localized delivery system enhances the relevance and effectiveness of the services provided.

Integration of Technology and Innovation

The integration of modern technologies, particularly Information and Communication Technology (ICT), has revolutionized agricultural extension. The operational shift includes the use of mobile phones, internet-based platforms, and digital tools to deliver extension services. Farmers can now access real-time information on weather, pest outbreaks, crop management practices, and market prices, often through SMS, mobile apps, or online platforms. This use of technology helps bridge the information gap, improve access to knowledge, and facilitate two-way communication between farmers and extension agents. ICT also enables the provision of services in remote areas where traditional extension systems may not reach.

Public-Private Partnerships

Another important shift in the operational paradigm is the increased involvement of the private sector in agricultural extension. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are being

fostered to improve the efficiency and sustainability of extension systems. Private companies, NGOs, and cooperatives are playing a greater role in providing extension services, offering innovative solutions, and creating market linkages. PPPs also help leverage private sector investments, technologies, and expertise to address the complex challenges faced by farmers.

Promotion of Sustainable Agricultural Practices

Sustainability is a key focus in the evolving operational paradigm. Agricultural extension systems are now emphasizing the promotion of environmentally friendly and resource-efficient farming practices, such as organic farming, agroforestry, and conservation agriculture. The shift towards sustainability also involves promoting practices that reduce the overuse of chemical inputs, enhance soil fertility, conserve water, and adapt to climate change. Extension services are now geared toward educating farmers about the long-term benefits of sustainable farming and providing them with the knowledge and support needed to adopt these practices.

Use of Farmer-to-Farmer Learning and Peer Networks

Recognizing that farmers often learn best from their peers, the operational paradigm is increasingly incorporating farmer-to-farmer learning and the use of peer networks. Farmer groups, cooperatives, and farmer producer organizations (FPOs) are being utilized as platforms for knowledge exchange and capacity building. These networks facilitate sharing of best practices,

experiences, and innovations, which enhances the collective learning of farming communities. Peer learning helps build trust and ensures that the knowledge shared is practical and relevant to the local context.

Strengthening Extension and Research Linkages

The shift in the operational paradigm also emphasizes stronger linkages between extension services and agricultural research. This collaborative approach ensures that farmers have access to the latest research findings and technologies that are suitable for their local conditions. Extension workers are being trained to disseminate research outcomes effectively, and research institutions are increasingly involved in providing feedback from farmers to improve the relevance of their studies. Strengthening these linkages helps ensure that extension services are based on sound scientific knowledge and that farmers are informed about the latest innovations.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Feedback

The operational paradigm is now placing greater emphasis on monitoring, evaluation, and feedback mechanisms to ensure that extension services are effective and responsive. The use of data and performance indicators allows for real-time tracking of extension activities, assessment of outcomes, and identification of areas that require improvement. This feedback loop ensures continuous improvement in extension programs and helps tailor services to meet the evolving needs of farmers.

Increased Focus on Inclusivity and Equity

Another important shift in the operational paradigm is the focus on inclusivity and equity. Agricultural extension systems are now designed to ensure that marginalized groups, including women, smallholder farmers, and tribal communities, have access to the same level of extension services as other farmers. The shift towards inclusivity involves addressing the unique challenges faced by these groups, such as lack of access to information, credit, and markets, and ensuring that extension programs are tailored to their needs.

Potential alternatives

In the context of agricultural extension, potential alternatives to the traditional methods of knowledge transfer and support can help address the evolving challenges of the agricultural sector. These alternatives are crucial for enhancing the reach, effectiveness, and sustainability of agricultural practices, particularly in regions like India, where farming is deeply impacted by changing climatic conditions, limited resources, and socio-economic challenges. Below are some potential alternatives to conventional agricultural extension systems:

Digital Agricultural Extension

Digital agricultural extension is an emerging alternative that leverages Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to improve the accessibility and delivery of agricultural knowledge. Through mobile applications, SMS-based services, online platforms, and social media, farmers can access real-time information on weather forecasts, pest management, market prices, and best practices for crop management.

This method allows for personalized, on-demand information delivery and reaches farmers in remote areas who might not have easy access to traditional extension services.

Example: Initiatives like e-Extension and the use of agricultural apps (e.g., Kisan Suvidha, IFFCO Kisan) are examples of digital platforms helping farmers stay informed.

Farmer Field Schools (FFS)

Farmer Field Schools are a participatory learning approach where farmers gather in small groups to learn directly from hands-on experience in the field. Instead of conventional classroom learning, FFS promotes experiential learning where farmers actively participate in discussions, observe crop practices, and test various methods to solve agricultural problems. This approach empowers farmers by making them decision-makers in their own agricultural practices.

Example: The Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Farmer Field School has been successful in many countries, including India, to educate farmers about sustainable pest management practices.

Farmer-to-Farmer Knowledge Transfer

Farmer-to-farmer knowledge transfer is a model that encourages peer-to-peer learning. Farmers with more experience or knowledge in specific areas (such as soil management, pest control, or irrigation techniques) share their expertise with others in their community. This system is cost-effective, as it taps into existing knowledge networks and emphasizes local solutions.

Example: Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and farmer cooperatives are often platforms where farmers can exchange knowledge and experiences.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)

Public-private partnerships (PPP) have gained importance in providing innovative agricultural extension services. These partnerships involve the government, private companies, and NGOs working together to deliver services, improve market access, and enhance agricultural productivity. Private sector companies can bring in technological innovations, financial resources, and expertise, while public bodies provide policy support and reach out to larger communities of farmers.

Example: Companies like Monsanto, Syngenta, and other agri-tech companies are partnering with local governments and NGOs to offer extension services related to the use of bio-inputs, high-quality seeds, and crop management techniques.

Community-Based Extension Models

Community-based extension models involve empowering local communities to take charge of their own agricultural development. In this model, extension services are decentralized and community members, including farmers, women, and youth, take active roles in the design and implementation of agricultural practices. This model ensures that extension services are tailored to the local socio-economic and cultural context, and it encourages greater community ownership.

Example: In many rural areas, NGOs like PRADAN (Professional Assistance for Development Action) work with communities to improve agricultural practices through a bottom-up approach.

Agri-Entrepreneurship and Self-Help Groups (SHGs)

Self-help groups (SHGs) and agri-entrepreneurship initiatives can provide farmers with access to both knowledge and financial resources. These groups often pool their resources for collective agricultural activities, such as joint marketing, seed purchases, and sharing of agricultural equipment. These cooperatives also serve as a platform for training and mentoring farmers on new technologies and sustainable practices.

Example: The success of dairy cooperatives (e.g., Amul) and SHGs in improving agricultural outcomes, especially for small farmers, demonstrates the potential of collective action.

Agri-Tech Innovations

Agri-tech innovations, including precision farming, Internet of Things (IoT) applications, and remote sensing technologies, offer great potential to enhance the efficiency and productivity of farming. These technologies enable farmers to optimize inputs (water, fertilizers, pesticides), monitor crop health, and make data-driven decisions. This approach can be a game-changer, especially for farmers in areas with limited resources.

Example: Startups and companies like AgroStar and CropIn Technology are

leveraging IoT, drones, and big data analytics to provide real-time insights to farmers, improving yield and reducing costs.

Extension through Media

Media (both traditional and digital) can be a powerful tool for reaching large numbers of farmers. Radio, television, and even social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp are being used to spread agricultural knowledge. These platforms can provide farmers with timely information on various farming practices, weather updates, government schemes, and market trends.

Example: Programs like Krishi Darshan on Doordarshan or Kisan Radio, which offer extension services through television and radio broadcasts, have a widespread reach in rural areas.

Contract Farming and Outgrower Schemes

Contract farming and outgrower schemes are increasingly being used to connect farmers with agribusinesses and corporate buyers. Under these schemes, extension services are often integrated into the contract to ensure that farmers are equipped with the necessary knowledge to meet the production standards required by the buyer. These schemes can help small farmers access high-value markets while receiving technical assistance and inputs.

Example: Contract farming models used by companies like ITC in India provide extension services as part of the contract, improving both yields and quality of the produce.

Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA)

Given the increasing threat of climate change, Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) focuses on building resilience in farming communities and enhancing productivity through sustainable methods. CSA practices include water conservation techniques, crop diversification, agroforestry, and improved soil management practices. Extension systems that promote CSA help farmers adapt to changing weather patterns while maintaining or improving their agricultural output.

Example: The use of drought-resistant crops, soil conservation techniques, and the promotion of agroecological farming systems are examples of CSA being promoted in various regions.

Integrated Approach to Extension

An integrated extension system combines various approaches and involves the use of diverse delivery methods—combining farmer field schools, mobile platforms, peer networks, and participatory action research. By integrating different methods, the system ensures that extension services are accessible to a larger and more diverse group of farmers, addressing both local and broader agricultural issues.

Example: The Integrated Agriculture Extension System (IAES) in India integrates the extension system with other agricultural services like market information, financial assistance, and input supply.

Future options

The future of agricultural extension systems will likely involve a combination of innovative strategies, emerging

technologies, and adaptive methods designed to meet the evolving needs of farmers and the agricultural sector. These systems will need to be more flexible, inclusive, and accessible, integrating modern tools with traditional knowledge while addressing critical issues like climate change, food security, rural poverty, and sustainable development. Below are some potential future options for agricultural extension:

Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in Extension

As artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) technologies evolve, they hold immense potential for transforming agricultural extension. AI can be used to analyze vast amounts of data to provide personalized recommendations for farmers, optimize resource use, and predict weather patterns, pest outbreaks, and crop diseases. ML algorithms can help detect patterns in crop growth, allowing for precision agriculture practices that are both sustainable and cost-efficient.

Example: AI-driven apps could provide real-time information on crop health, enabling farmers to act quickly, reducing input costs, and increasing yields.

Blockchain for Transparency and Market Linkages

Blockchain technology could be used to create transparent supply chains in agriculture. By ensuring that every transaction—from production to consumer—can be tracked, farmers will be able to access fair prices for their produce. This technology can also enhance access to

agricultural extension services, ensuring that farmers get paid fairly and efficiently for their products, while preventing fraud and promoting trust between farmers, traders, and consumers.

Example: Blockchain could help in contract farming agreements, ensuring that farmers receive fair compensation and timely payments.

Internet of Things (IoT) and Smart Agriculture

The integration of IoT with agriculture will allow for more efficient monitoring and management of crops, livestock, and farming practices. IoT-enabled sensors and devices can track soil moisture levels, weather conditions, and crop health in real-time, providing farmers with valuable insights to make informed decisions. This would lead to improved efficiency in water usage, fertilizer application, pest management, and overall resource conservation.

Example: Smart irrigation systems connected through IoT can deliver water to crops based on real-time weather data and soil moisture levels, optimizing water use in drought-prone areas.

Precision Agriculture and Data-Driven Decision Making

Precision agriculture involves using technologies like drones, GPS, sensors, and satellite imagery to monitor and manage crops more efficiently. The data generated from these tools can inform decisions on planting, fertilization, irrigation, and pest control, allowing farmers to optimize input

usage, improve crop yields, and reduce environmental impacts. Extension services could play a crucial role in training farmers to use these technologies effectively.

Example: Drones could be used to assess the health of crops, detect early signs of pests, and even apply fertilizers or pesticides precisely where they are needed.

Climate-Smart and Resilient Agricultural Practices

As climate change continues to pose significant challenges to agriculture, extension systems will need to focus on promoting climate-smart agricultural practices. These practices will involve strategies to reduce emissions, increase resilience to extreme weather events, and ensure sustainable productivity. Extension services will need to be well-equipped to advise farmers on adapting their practices to changing climatic conditions, such as using drought-resistant crops or adopting conservation agriculture techniques.

Example: Agroforestry, water harvesting, and soil conservation techniques will need to be integrated into extension services to help farmers adapt to changing environmental conditions.

Incorporating Agro-Ecology and Biodiversity in Extension

The future of agricultural extension systems will also require a shift toward more ecologically sustainable practices. Agro-ecology, which emphasizes the integration of ecological principles into farming systems, will be promoted as a way to increase productivity while protecting the

environment. Extension services will focus on encouraging biodiversity, organic farming, integrated pest management, and agroforestry systems to ensure that farming practices are sustainable in the long term.

Example: Extension programs could promote organic farming practices, the use of biological pest control, and the inclusion of cover crops to enhance soil fertility and biodiversity.

Farmer-to-Farmer Learning Networks

As more farmers become digitally connected, peer-to-peer knowledge sharing will likely expand. Digital platforms and social networks can allow farmers to collaborate, share best practices, and learn from each other's experiences. This farmer-to-farmer extension model can complement formal agricultural extension services by making knowledge exchange more dynamic, localized, and practical.

Example: Social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, or specific agricultural apps could enable farmers to create groups where they can share updates, discuss challenges, and offer solutions to each other.

Customized Extension Services for Women and Youth

To ensure that agricultural extension services are inclusive, a focus on gender-sensitive and youth-targeted initiatives will be critical. Female farmers and youth often face unique challenges, such as limited access to resources, education, and decision-making power. Future extension services will need to provide tailored support to these

groups, encouraging their active participation in farming and agricultural entrepreneurship.

Example: Youth-focused agri-tech programs and women's cooperatives could be developed to provide specialized training and access to markets for young people and women.

Public-Private-Community Partnerships (PPCPs)

A future option for improving agricultural extension could involve strengthening partnerships between public institutions, private companies, and local communities. These partnerships can provide a more comprehensive extension service, bringing together expertise, technology, and financial resources.

Public-private-community partnerships can be instrumental in enhancing service delivery, improving market linkages, and building capacity among local farmers.

Example: Collaborations between agribusinesses, local governments, and NGOs can create innovative solutions to enhance agricultural productivity while ensuring fair compensation for farmers.

Sustainability and Circular Economy in Agriculture

Sustainability will continue to be a key theme in agricultural extension systems. Future extension models will likely focus on promoting circular economy principles, where waste is minimized, and resources are reused or recycled. This could involve the promotion of organic waste recycling, sustainable irrigation techniques, and

integrated waste management systems, thereby reducing the environmental footprint of agricultural practices.

Example: Training farmers to compost agricultural residues, reuse irrigation water, or adopt agro-processing units that use organic waste can promote circular economy practices.

Agri-Tourism and Diversification

As traditional agricultural income sources become increasingly uncertain, diversification into agri-tourism and other related activities will become a viable option. Extension services could provide guidance on integrating tourism into farming operations, allowing farmers to generate additional income through hosting visitors, offering farm stays, or showcasing local agricultural heritage.

Example: Establishing farm tours, organic product markets, or offering cooking classes using farm produce can provide alternative income streams for farmers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the future of agricultural extension systems is poised to undergo a profound transformation, driven by advancements in technology, innovative practices, and a greater emphasis on sustainability and inclusivity. As the global agricultural landscape faces challenges such as climate change, food security, and rural poverty, agricultural extension must adapt to address these issues effectively.

The integration of cutting-edge technologies such as AI, machine learning, IoT, and blockchain will empower farmers with real-

time data, personalized recommendations, and transparent market linkages. Furthermore, adopting precision agriculture, climate-smart practices, and agro-ecology will help enhance productivity while safeguarding the environment.

Inclusive approaches, particularly those targeting women, youth, and marginalized groups, will be crucial for ensuring equitable access to extension services. Additionally, fostering peer-to-peer learning networks and strengthening public-private-community partnerships will create a more collaborative and dynamic extension system that is responsive to the diverse needs of farmers.

Ultimately, the future of agricultural extension will revolve around creating adaptable, knowledge-driven, and resilient farming systems that can thrive in the face of changing environmental, economic, and social conditions. By focusing on innovation, sustainability, and inclusivity, agricultural extension can play a vital role in ensuring food security, improving livelihoods, and promoting rural development globally.

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