Farmer –Led Extension: An International Perspective of Experiences and Challenges

Kibiby Jabir Mtenga
University of Florida
kibiby@ufl.edu

Nick T. Place
University of Florida
nplace@mail.ifas.ufl.edu

The need to increase world agricultural productivity is great, as food production in many countries cannot keep pace with the rapid growth of population (Nigel, 1989). Agricultural extension is among the major players facilitating the increase in agricultural production in the world. Many extension approaches have emerged and are being utilized in various parts of the world (Seevers et al., 1997; van Veldhuizen et al., 1997; Bagchee, 1994).

However, some of these extension systems, such as Training and Visit (T & V), Transfer of Technology (TOT), Ministry and Commodity-based systems have been accused of being unsustainable, ineffective, and inefficient in meeting farmers’ demands. Recently, farmer-led extension approaches have come to be considered as appropriate for farmers’ needs (Farrington et al., 1997).

Consequently, this paper intends to share the practices of farmer-led extension approaches. The paper is based on review of various sources of literature on how the practices are conducted, key players involved, lessons learned, challenges faced, and prospects for wider dissemination. Farmer-led extension approaches are feasible and appropriate particularly with small farmers. These approaches increase farmer’s skills, knowledge and ability to make their own choices and decisions on particular technologies. Farmers assume a central role and become key players in technology identification, generation, adaptation and dissemination. Besides these advantages, farmer-led extension approaches also face typical challenges inherent from farmers themselves, community members they live with, the extension performance and accountability methods, and from monitoring and evaluation procedures. There are prospects for wider dissemination of the farmer-led extension approaches by providing more training opportunities, particularly among key players.