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Agricultural Extension: Worldwide Institutional Evolution and Forces for Change presents a multi-faceted view of a fundamental paradigm shift confronting agricultural extension. Large, centrally controlled, publicly funded agricultural extension services, once accepted as an essential instrument for rural change, are being forced to alter their traditional ways of doing (or not doing) business. One of the central themes of the book is the response of public sector agricultural extension organizations to the growing role of the private sector as a viable source of complementary extension services. Timely issues such as public-private collaboration, organizational restructuring, harnessing of new communication technology, and the role of farmers in technology development and extension are presented by 26 contributing authors in 22 chapters.

Emerging models of agricultural extension need to be put through the sieve of socio-economic and political realities and this volume lures such debate into the public arena. To what extent should the state subsidize agricultural producers with inexpensive information? What happens to subsistence farmers when fees are introduced for extension services? Can systems composed of multiple institutions be effectively coordinated to provide a range of services to a variety of producers? Will communication technology help to promote the democratization of information or will it have the opposite effect?

Treatment of these and other related issues forms the content of this book.

Agricultural Extension: Worldwide Institutional Evolution and Forces for Change is highly appropriate as a text for graduate level courses dealing with international agricultural extension. It is suggested reading for decision makers with responsibility for public and private non-formal education focusing on dissemination of information for economic development. It is not a "how-to" manual and may be of marginal utility to front-line practitioners of agricultural extension services in developing countries.

The book has been promoted as a source of worldwide perspectives on agricultural extension. Indeed, the table of contents reads like a Who's Who in Agricultural Extension. The 26 contributing authors provide a number of different views of agricultural extension performance under different management models. However, it is worth considering several questions. To what extent are these authors representative of extension thinkers and practitioners in both industrialized and developing countries? Is there a distinction between the views of well known names in international agricultural extension and the large pool of those involved in agricultural extension in developing countries who are less frequently heard from? Is it possible that the published thinking on agricultural extension has been inadvertently influenced by those who have easy
access to publishing outlets? Are authors from developing countries at a disadvantage in terms of sharing lessons learned from their own regions? In the case of this volume, roughly three-quarters of the authors were associated with institutions based in industrialized countries. While these views are very valuable, it is worth asking: do the perspectives presented in this book more fully represent the views and experiences of donor organizations and those authors from industrialized countries who frequently work with developing countries? Rivera and Gustafson provide needed balance to this discussion in their chapter entitled "New Roles and Responsibilities for Public Sector Agricultural Extension: The Impact of Multi-Institutional Activities."

One especially valuable aspect of the book is the access it provides to extension contacts worldwide. An example of this is found in the book's 26 page reference list.

There is little question that the price of the book (Dfl. 260 or approximately $133.50) has had a negative impact on its circulation. This cost precludes the possibility of individual ownership for many readers in industrialized countries and, as one might expect, for most individuals in developing countries. Availability through libraries will undoubtedly be the major means of access for most users. The publisher and donors may want to overcome this obstacle by contributing copies to extension policy-makers and institutions of higher agricultural education in developing countries. The recommendation that it be used as a graduate text in extension education courses still stands; the price of the book nearly insures that this won't happen.

Although this book was published two years ago it has not received the wide attention it deserves. This review was prompted to reinforce its importance as one of the best snapshots of thinking on extension in the early 1990s. William M. Rivera is to be commended for his continued effort to bring volumes on agricultural extension to the attention of practitioners, educators and policy makers. Professionals in the field are already looking forward to his next book. His collaboration with Susan G. Schramm on his previous book and with Daniel J. Gustafson on the volume under review, along with his ability to craft a cohesive presentation from disparate contributions, demonstrate a noteworthy ability to bring quality authors and their ideas into print.