Agricultural Advisors’ Understanding of the Work of the GGAVATT Program in
Veracruz, Mexico

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Abstract
The Mexican GGAVATT (Livestock Groups for Technology Validation and Transference) is an Extension model characterized by the voluntary participation of farmers and the use of participatory methods. It was developed in Veracruz, Mexico at the end of the 1970s by researchers from the INIFAP (National Institute of Forestry, Agriculture and Livestock Research) with the purpose of increasing animal production and productivity through the adoption of technologies generated in the research centers (INIFAP & SAGARPA, 2003). Almost every state in Mexico and some Central American countries have adopted the GGAVATT model (Mora Alfaro, 2002; Roman Ponce, 2001), and some of these groups have been operating for more than 15 years. The GGAVATT represents today the best communication channel with farmers in many regions of Mexico. Each group has an advisor (Extensionist) who provides them with information, training, keeps track of their progress, and participates in the evaluation process.

To understand how the agricultural advisors conceptualize the GGAVATT program, a qualitative study was conducted during the spring of 2006; this poster presents its results. The theoretical standpoint followed in this research was Hermeneutics and its epistemology and ontology were constructivism and idealism, respectively. The Institutional Review Board approved the protocol for this study. The data was collected from archival material and focus group interviews. A Hermeneutical analysis was conducted to achieve a new understanding of the GGAVATT. The results are presented in the form of a narrative that illustrates the Hermeneutical spiral of discernment.

The value of the use of qualitative methods to gain new and deeper knowledge of the effects of social programs (as the ones related with agricultural and rural Extension) has been
widely acknowledged in the literature. This study shows some of the potentialities of this type of research in Extension.

**Keywords:** GGAVATT, group Extension, Extension in Mexico, qualitative research, hermeneutics