

MANAGE Agricultural Extension "Evening4Learning (E4L)" Webinar Series

Topic: "Global Review of Good Agricultural Extension and Advisory Service Practices"

Schedule:
27-11-2022, 19:00-19:45 PM

MANAGE - Center for Agricultural Extension Innovations, Reforms and Agripreneurship (MANAGE- CAEIRA)
National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE)
Rajendranagar, Hyderabad- 500 030, INDIA



About the Program

The MANAGE Agricultural Extension "Evening4Learning" Webinar Series is aimed at enhancing knowledge and professional engagement in the field of agricultural extension. The twelve-day series is structured with each day focusing on a distinct topic under a common theme, allowing participants to gain comprehensive insights into key areas of extension. The program is intended for a diverse audience, including postgraduate and doctoral students, agricultural faculty, and industry professionals. It covers broad themes ranging from entrepreneurship and sustainability to emerging technologies in agriculture.





Speaker

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Saravanan Raj

About the Speaker

Dr. Saravanan Raj is the Director (Agricultural Extension) at MANAGE, Hyderabad. He heads the Centre for Agricultural Extension Innovations, Reforms and Agripreneurship (CAEIRA) and serves as the CEO of MANAGE–Centre for Innovation and Agripreneurship (CIA), a Centre of Excellence in Agri-Business Incubation and knowledge partner for implementing the RKVY-RAFTAAR scheme of the Government of India. He is also working as the CEO of MANAGE–Fisheries Innovation and Startup Hub (MANAGE–FISHub), a national-level incubation and innovation hub established with the support of the Department of Fisheries (DoF), Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying (MoFAHD), Government of India. He specializes in public-private extension, privatization of extension services, institutional pluralism, ICTs and digital media in agricultural extension, extension innovations, and agri-startups and policy issues. With extensive experience in agricultural extension, innovation, and entrepreneurship development, he has played a key role in promoting digital and market-oriented extension approaches and strengthening the agri-startup ecosystem in India.

Background

Agricultural extension and rural advisory services play a crucial role in disseminating agricultural technologies, strengthening farmers' capacities, facilitating knowledge exchange, and improving rural livelihoods. Over the years, extension practitioners, researchers, and academics across the world have developed and implemented diverse approaches to address farmers' needs. While some approaches have demonstrated effectiveness across multiple countries and regions, others have been successful only under specific local conditions.

Recognising the importance of identifying, documenting, and disseminating effective approaches, several international organisations and extension networks have undertaken initiatives to document good practices in agricultural extension and rural advisory services. These efforts help extension professionals understand what works, why it works, the principles underlying successful approaches, and the conditions required for effective implementation.

Understanding the Concept of Good Practices

The terms "innovation" and "good practice" are frequently used in agricultural extension. However, not every new initiative or locally successful activity can automatically be considered a good practice. A good practice should demonstrate effectiveness in achieving specific objectives and offer useful lessons that other practitioners can apply or adapt.

Drawing on different conceptualisations of good practices, the key dimensions include the following:

- **Effectiveness:** A practice should contribute to clearly defined objectives and generate positive outcomes for farmers and rural communities.
- **Efficiency:** It should improve the delivery of extension activities and ensure the appropriate use of available resources.
- **Evidence of success:** Its usefulness should be supported by practical experience, measurable results, or documented evidence.
- **Adaptability:** It should be adaptable to different agroecological, socioeconomic, and institutional settings.
- **Inclusiveness:** It should facilitate access to knowledge and advisory services, particularly for resource-constrained farmers, women farmers, and rural entrepreneurs.
- **Practical relevance:** It should provide actionable lessons that extension professionals can apply or adapt to their own working environments.

Conceptual contributions and initiatives such as Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services (MEAS) have explored effective approaches to strengthening agricultural extension and reaching different categories of farmers.

A good practice is not necessarily a universally applicable model. Its value lies in its demonstrated effectiveness, the principles underlying its success, and its suitability for adaptation to local conditions.

Global Good Practices in Rural Advisory Services

The Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) has undertaken initiatives to identify, document, and disseminate good practices in rural advisory services. These efforts have generated practical resources that help extension professionals understand successful approaches adopted across different countries and regions.

The resource What Works in Rural Advisory Services? is an important reference containing documented global good practices. It has a compilation of approximately 30 good-practice notes covering various dimensions of extension systems, including governance, advisory methods, institutional capacities, and information and communication technologies.

These resources provide concise, practical information on individual approaches, including their underlying principles, implementation mechanisms, strengths, limitations, and the conditions under which they are likely to be effective. They can be used by extension professionals, researchers, trainers, and students as reference materials for programme planning, training, research, and institutional learning.

Contextual Factors Influencing the Success of Good Practices

The success of a good practice depends on the context in which it is implemented. An approach that works effectively in one region may require considerable adaptation before it can be applied successfully elsewhere. The major contextual factors to be considered includes:

Policy and Institutional Environment

Government policies, development priorities, institutional arrangements, and the broader policy environment influence the adoption and sustainability of extension approaches. The effectiveness of a practice may also depend on coordination among government departments, research institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), private-sector organisations, and community-based institutions.

Capacity of Extension Service Providers

The capabilities of extension personnel and organisations are critical to successful implementation. Whether advisory services are delivered through public-sector institutions, private organisations, or civil society organisations, their performance is influenced by the availability of trained personnel, technical expertise, management capacity, and adequate resources.

Production Systems and Market Infrastructure

The suitability of an extension practice depends on local agricultural conditions, including crop and livestock systems, agroecological potential, access to agricultural inputs, transport and communication infrastructure, and the availability of output markets. Linkages with input suppliers, buyers, and other value-chain stakeholders can further influence outcomes.

Community and Socioeconomic Characteristics

Farm size, educational levels, gender roles, access to information and communication technologies, community participation, and local infrastructure can affect the effectiveness of a practice. Approaches should therefore be adapted to the needs, capacities, and circumstances of the intended beneficiaries.

Governance, Management, and Financial Sustainability

Decentralised governance, community participation, accountability, institutional partnerships, and financial sustainability are also important factors. The relevance of community-managed extension systems, collaborative institutional arrangements, and locally responsive governance mechanisms should be emphasized.

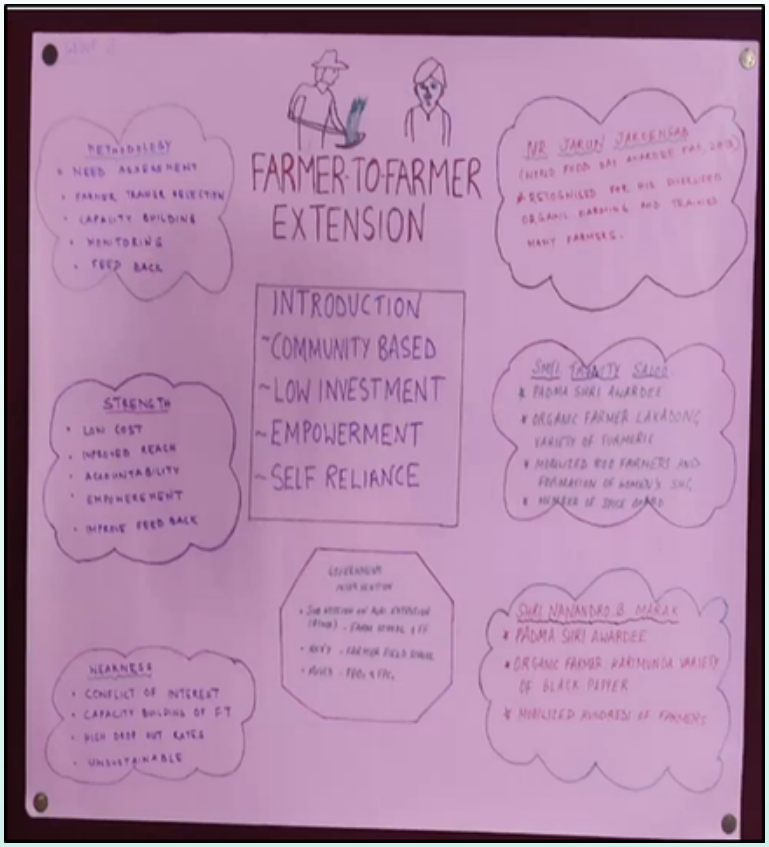
These contextual factors should be carefully considered before a practice is transferred from one location to another.

Examples of Global Good Practices in Agricultural Extension

Several approaches have been implemented in different countries and regions and documented as useful practices in agricultural extension and rural advisory services. Some of these approaches are discussed below.

Farmer-to-Farmer Extension

Farmer-to-farmer extension involves the exchange of agricultural knowledge, skills, and experiences among farmers. Experienced or trained farmers share information and demonstrate practices to their peers, facilitating peer learning and the dissemination of locally relevant knowledge.



This approach can reduce dependence on external extension personnel, strengthen farmers' confidence, and encourage community participation. Its relatively low-cost and participatory nature makes it particularly relevant in areas where formal extension services have limited reach and has a potential to promote farmer empowerment and self-reliance.

Farmer Field Schools

Farmer Field Schools (FFS) provide a participatory learning environment in which farmers learn through observation, experimentation, discussion, and reflection. Farmers examine field conditions, compare practices, analyse results, and make informed decisions based on their observations and experiences.

The approach has been used in different countries and cropping systems, including rice, cotton, and sugarcane. Its effectiveness depends on active farmer participation, appropriate facilitation, and adaptation to local production conditions. The principles of Farmer Field Schools can be applied to different crops and farming situations in India.

Information and Communication Technologies in Extension

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have significantly expanded the scope of agricultural advisory services. Its evolution can be traced from internet-based information dissemination and SMS services to mobile applications, digital videos, social media, to emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT).

Mobile phones have become important tools for providing farmers with timely agricultural information. Platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube can facilitate communication, knowledge sharing, and interaction among farmers, extension professionals, and other stakeholders.

However, the effective use of ICTs requires attention to digital literacy, connectivity, language, accessibility, and the needs of different categories of farmers. Digital tools should complement, rather than automatically replace, interpersonal extension and field-based advisory services.

Community-Managed Resource Centres and Extension Systems

Community-managed resource centres and extension systems enable local communities to participate in organising and delivering advisory services. These arrangements can improve the relevance and accessibility of agricultural information by drawing on local knowledge, institutions, and resources.

Their effectiveness depends on community ownership, appropriate technical support, organisational capacity, accountability, and financial sustainability.

Plant Health Clinics and Extension Campaigns

Plant health clinics provide opportunities for farmers to seek advice on crop health problems, pests, diseases, and related management practices. They can strengthen diagnostic support and facilitate connections between farmers and technical experts.

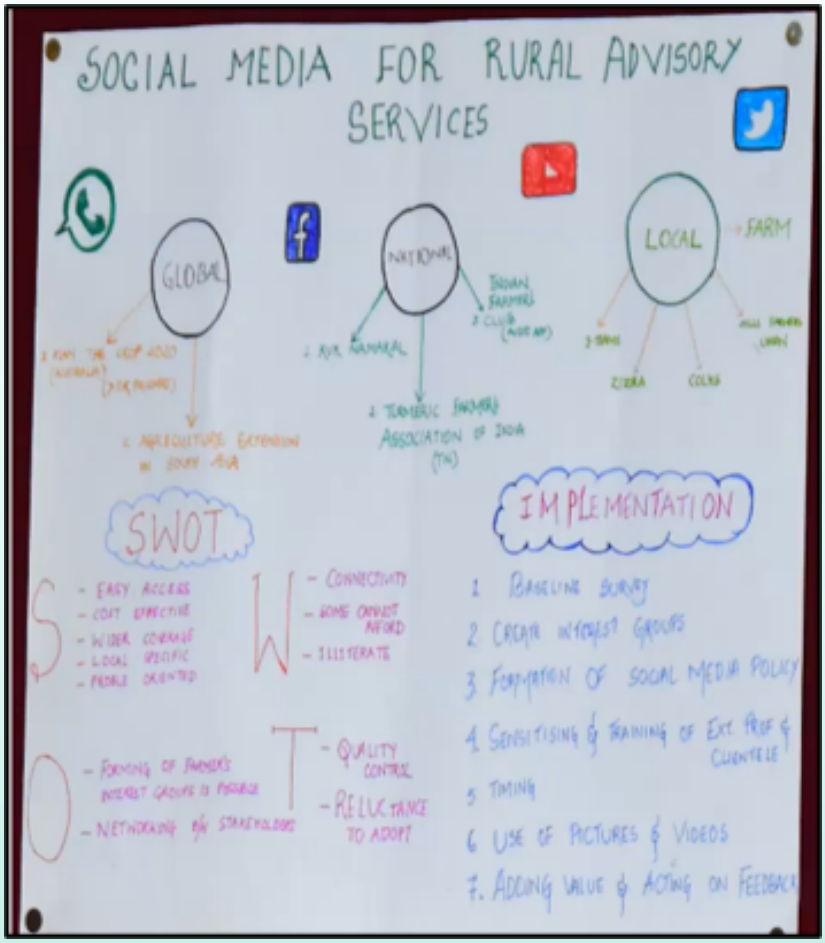
Extension campaigns are another established approach for disseminating information and mobilising farmers around specific agricultural activities or development objectives. Their effectiveness can be enhanced through careful planning, appropriate timing, local coordination, and follow-up support.

ICT-Specific Good Practices and Emerging Technologies

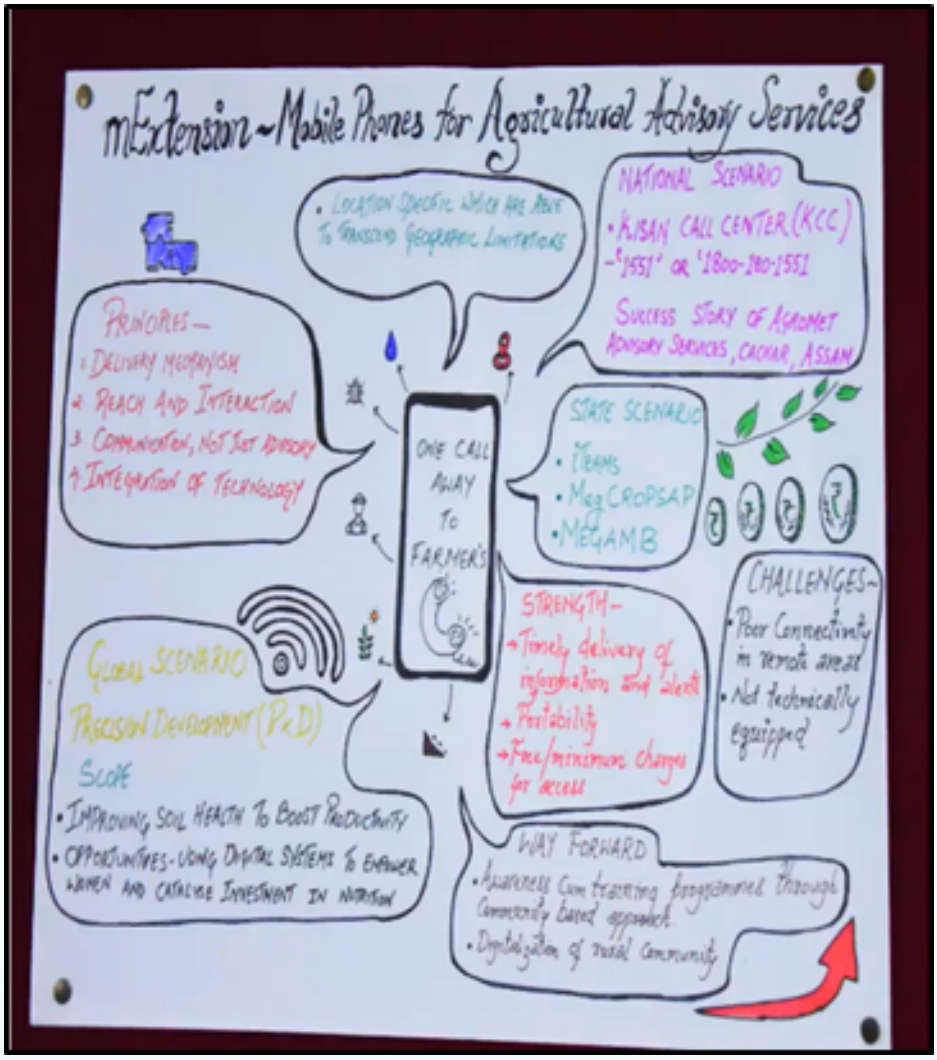
The rapid development of ICTs has created new opportunities to improve the reach, timeliness, and responsiveness of agricultural extension services. Dedicated good-practice resources are available on the use of various communication channels and digital tools.

Examples of ICT-Based Practices

- **Social media:** Using digital platforms to disseminate information, facilitate interaction, and connect farmers with extension professionals and other stakeholders.
- **Mobile phone-based advisory services:** Providing timely information and agricultural advisories through mobile applications, text messages, and other mobile-enabled services.
- **Digital videos**: Demonstrating agricultural practices visually and supporting learning through accessible, practical content.
- **Web portals:** Providing access to agricultural information, technical resources, advisories, and knowledge repositories.
- **Radio:** Delivering agricultural information to geographically dispersed and digitally underserved farming communities.
- **Emerging digital technologies:** Exploring the use of AI, IoT, and other digital tools to strengthen advisory services and agricultural decision-making.



The adoption of technology should be guided by farmers' needs and the local communication environment. The selection of tools should take into account accessibility, usability, cost, and the capacity of extension organisations to maintain and deliver services effectively.



Transition from Technology Transfer to Value Chain-Based Extension

The role of agricultural extension is expanding beyond the dissemination of production technologies. Contemporary extension services increasingly need to support agribusiness development, entrepreneurship, market access, and improved farm incomes.

Value chain-based extension integrates production-related advice with information and services concerning agricultural inputs, aggregation, processing, storage, logistics, market information, and financial services. This broader approach can help farmers establish stronger market linkages, increase the value of their produce, and pursue more remunerative livelihood opportunities.

These approaches are particularly relevant to agricultural development in India, where extension professionals are increasingly expected to facilitate enterprise development, collective action, and market-oriented agriculture alongside technology adoption.

Important Knowledge Resources for Extension Professionals

Several platforms and networks provide access to documented good practices, case studies, discussion papers, and other learning resources.

- **Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS):** Provides resources on global good practices, rural advisory services, and extension systems.
- **What Works in Rural Advisory Services?:** Offers practical notes documenting different approaches, their underlying principles, and the conditions influencing their effectiveness.
- **Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services (MEAS):** Provides resources, country studies, and discussion papers on strengthening extension and advisory services.
- **Agricultural Extension in South Asia (AESA):** Shares blogs, experiences, and good practices from extension professionals, researchers, and institutions, particularly in South Asia.
- **Asia-Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services Network (APIRAS):** Facilitates knowledge exchange and the sharing of rural advisory service experiences across the Asia-Pacific region.
- **GFRAS regional networks:** Provide region-specific resources and facilitate learning and exchange among extension practitioners and organisations.

These platforms can help extension professionals identify relevant approaches, compare experiences across regions, and obtain practical guidance for programme implementation. The availability of concise, practice-oriented documentation makes these resources useful for both professional development and academic purposes.

Application of Global Good Practices in Training and Field Programmes

Global good-practice resources can be integrated into agricultural extension training programmes. At MANAGE, such resources are used to familiarise participants with approaches adopted internationally and encourage them to compare these approaches with those implemented in their own regions and institutions.

Participants can examine a documented practice, identify its underlying principles, assess its strengths and limitations, and determine its suitability for their local context. This process can help extension professionals critically evaluate existing practices and identify opportunities for improvement.

These resources can also support the documentation of successful field experiences. Extension professionals who implement effective approaches in their respective areas can document their experiences and share them through appropriate professional networks. Such documentation can contribute to institutional learning, knowledge dissemination, and wider recognition of effective extension initiatives.

Participants can use global good-practice notes as reference materials when designing training programmes, planning extension interventions, and addressing practical challenges in their respective working areas.

Key Highlights

- **Understanding Good Practices in Agricultural Extension:** Good practices are characterised by effectiveness, efficiency, evidence of success, adaptability, inclusiveness, and practical relevance, providing valuable lessons for improving agricultural extension and rural advisory services.
- **Global Knowledge Sharing and Documentation:** Resources developed by GFRAS, including What Works in Rural Advisory Services?, provide practical insights into successful extension approaches, their implementation mechanisms, and the conditions influencing their effectiveness.
- **Context-Specific Adaptation of Good Practices:** The success of extension approaches depends on policy and institutional environments, the capacity of extension service providers, production systems, market infrastructure, socioeconomic characteristics, governance, and financial sustainability.
- **Participatory and Community-Based Extension Approaches:** Farmer-to-farmer extension, Farmer Field Schools, community-managed resource centres, plant health clinics, and extension campaigns strengthen farmer participation, peer learning, local knowledge exchange, and access to advisory services.
- **Leveraging ICTs and Emerging Technologies**: Mobile-based advisory services, social media, digital videos, web portals, radio, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things offer opportunities to improve the reach and timeliness of agricultural information, while requiring attention to digital inclusion and accessibility.
- **Transition Towards Value Chain-Based Extension:** Agricultural extension is evolving beyond technology transfer to encompass agribusiness development, entrepreneurship, market linkages, value addition, and improved farm incomes. Global good-practice resources can support training, field-level innovation, institutional learning, and the adaptation of effective approaches to local conditions.

YouTube Link:
https://youtu.be/a3u4GbaNxDk?t=1

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