

EXPECTED CONSEQUENCES OF PRIVATISATION OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE AS PERCEIVED BY SOCIAL SCIENTISTS

TO increase the effectiveness of extension service through cost-effective, demand-driven, participatory and farmers focused approaches and reducing the financial burden of government due to public extension system is the main priority in this era. Around the world most of the developing countries including India are considering issues like privatisation of agricultural extension service. In the coming decades, privatisation might be next step in most of the countries. Before effecting any change it is necessary to assess advantages and disadvantages of privatisation.

To elicit the expected consequences of privatisation as perceived by social scientists, 11 statements (6 desirable consequences and 5 undesirable consequences) were developed through judges relevancy rating and also tested for reliability and validity. These statements were administered to 40 scientists representing social science disciplines like agricultural extension, agricultural economics and who were much exposed to agricultural development issues; Social scientists working in Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), Sugarcane Breeding Institute (SBI) and Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR) were included as respondents. The responses were obtained on a five point continuum viz., Strongly agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree and Strongly disagree. The consequences score for each individual was computed by summing up of the scores of all the responses. The maximum possible score, an individual could obtain was 55 and minimum score was 5.

Based on the scores obtained, the respondents were categorised into three categories taking mean and standard deviation as measures of check. The agreement, undecidedness and disagreement responses were also expressed into frequency and percentage for each of the consequence statement.

The analysis revealed that in Table I, two-fifth of the scientists expected desirable consequences and

TABLE I
Expected consequences of privatisation of Agricultural Extension Service

Category	Score	Scientists (n = 40)	
		Number	Per cent
Least desirable	< 39.02	11	27.50
Desirable	39.02 - 44.18	16	40.00
Most desirable	> 44.18	13	32.50

nearly one-third of scientists expected most desirable consequences. Whereas, more than one fourth of scientists opined least desirable consequences through privatisation of agricultural extension service.

Table II indicated that, scientists had great agreement with statements like privatisation increases the accountability of extension personnel to farmers, enhances production of commercial crops, ensures quality extension service, increases professionalism, creates additional income to farmers and enhance the farmers commitment to extension service. These findings were in conformity with assumptions and rationale given by Keynan *et al.* (1997).

Great proportion of scientists had disagreement with undesirable consequences like, privatization reduces food grain production, education role, HRD will be sidelined, leads to lesser contact between extension personnel and farmers, feedback to public extension system will be reduced. These findings are in contradiction with reports of Baxter (1987), Bloome (1993), Sulaiman and Gadewar (1994).

Considerable proportion of scientists also agreed while nearly the same proportion also disagreed about effect of privatisation leading to increased client

TABLE II

*Statement-wise analysis of expected consequences of privatisation
of Agricultural Extension Service as perceived by scientists*

Expected Consequences	Response categories (%) (n = 40)		
	A	UD	DA
Increases extension workers professionalism	90.00	2.50	7.50
Decreases the food grain production	17.50	10.00	72.50
Extension service creates additional income to farmers	82.50	7.50	10.00
Enhances farmers commitment to extension service	75.00	12.50	12.50
Increases accountability of extension personnel to farmers	100.00	0.00	0.00
Education role, HRD will be sidelined	25.00	20.00	55.00
Increases production of commercial crops which inturn increases foreign exchange	92.50	5.00	2.50
Ensures quality extension service	92.50	5.00	2.50
Increases client imbalance	40.00	25.00	35.00
It leads to lesser contact between farmers and extension personnel	10.00	12.50	77.50
Feedback to public research system will be reduced	32.50	15.00	52.50

imbalance. Private people may concentrate only on big farmers, they are not bothered about small and marginal farmers. They only concentrate on those who are able to pay bills. This finding is in conformity with the report of Harter and Hass (1992).

The results clearly indicated that the privatisation of agricultural extension service creates more desirable consequences than undesirable consequences.

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