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Constraints faced by farmers towards use of private agricultural extension services in Chhindwara district (M.P.)

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Abstract

The present study was an effort to analyze the constraints faced by farmers towards use of private agricultural extension services and suggestions to overcome it in Chhindwara, Amarwara, Chourai and Sausar blocks of Chhindwara district (M.P.). A sample of 174 respondents was selected by using proportionate random sampling from 5 villages from each block. In the study, the constraints faced by farmers towards use of PAES was assessed i.e. the most serious constraints were "Marketing is the utmost priority of PAESs" confronted by 75.86 per cent farmers, (ranked 1st) and the least serious constraints was less credibility of PAES among farmers" confronted by 24.71 per cent farmers (ranked 11th). The major suggestions offered by the farmers to overcome the problems associated with use of private extension services were: government should fix the prices for PAES Providers, timely technical guidance should be provided to farmers, collaboration of Gram Sevaks with PAES Providers needs to be improved, refreshment training should be provided to PAES Providers etc.

Keywords: Private agricultural extension services, constraints and suggestions

Introduction

Extension is a system of service and education designed to meet the needs of the people. Modern extension systems have existed since the early years of nineteenth century. In many developed countries, the private sector became an important segment in the delivery of some of the extension services (Singh *et al.*, 2017). The word "privatization" broadly refers to a process by which the government reduces its role in an activity and encourages private sector to take up these roles. Privatization can take place broadly in two ways. One is dismantling, as the word indicates, staffs are released and structures are abandoned. The other is controlled privatization, which is the conscious and managed transformation of public organizations into, or their targeted replacement by private organizations (Sulaiman, 2003) [8]. Many countries are now in the process of modifying the existing public extension approach, so as to meet current challenges such as globalization and liberalization. It is therefore imperative that discussions are triggered on issues relating to alternative approaches such as privatization. Privatization of agricultural extension can be viewed as supplementary or alternative to public extension services (Saravanan and Gowda, 1999) [7]. The public extension is not enough to support the entire farming community in one hand, the privatization of agricultural extension cannot be substitute of public extension on the other hand. But private extension service providers have to play a more active role in providing extension services. However, to promote privatization of agricultural extension service some prospects need to be considered (Uddin and Qijie, 2013) [10] such as formation of viable farmers' organization, extension services provided by agro-input companies, establishment of public private partnership, individual consultancy, making extension service demand- driven, increasing the use of ICTs and easy and quick extension service delivery. As Indian extension is more of an information delivery system than an information acquisition system, the scope of privatization and cost recovery are very limited. The public extension system is make earnest effort to organize farmer's groups and motivate and direct them to that they can demand appropriate and better extension services on a cost sharing basis (Singh *et al.*, 2017). Madhya Pradesh became the first state in the country and perhaps the only state in India to have a private extension policy. The policy states that "the private extension would aim for cost reduction, improving the efficiency of extension system and inculcating accountability in extension services. In the first phase, focus is on introduction of partial private extension services through building up private-public partnership in agricultural extension.

During the second phase, which will take place gradually in long term, the focus would be on substitution of public extension by private extension” (Government of Madhya Pradesh, 2001) [6]. Many private extension players are providing agricultural extension services in different parts of India since the later part of 1990s (Saravanan and Gowda, 1999) [7]. Among them individual agricultural consultants, progressive farmers, farmers organizations, NGOs, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), Bhuvu Care Private Ltd., Mahindra Krishi Vibar, agribusiness companies, input dealers, newspaper etc. are important (Sulaiman *et al.*, 2005) [9]. Hence, the present study has been undertaken to delineate the constraints faced by farmers towards use of Private Agricultural Extension Services and suggest to overcome the problems faced by them.

Methodology

The investigation was conducted in the Chhindwara district of Madhya Pradesh. The district comprises eleven blocks. Out of

which, Chhindwara, Amarwara, Chourai and Sausar blocks were selected purposively for the study as these blocks have different types of crops are growing hence number of PAESs services are available. A sample of 174 respondents was selected by using proportionate random sampling from 5 villages from each block. Data were collected through personal interviews using the pretested structured schedule to elicit both qualitative and quantitative data on the constraints faced by farmers towards use of private agricultural extension services. The household interview was conducted with the principal decision maker of the family, especially related to various services provided by Private agricultural extension service providers. An *ex-post facto* research design was used to carry out the research. Collected data were classified, tabulated and analyzed by using statistical methods like frequency and percentage.

Results

Table 1: Constraints faced by farmers towards use of PAESs

S.no	Statements	Frequency	Percentage	Rank Order
1.	Marketing is the utmost priority of PAESs .	132	75.86*	I
2.	Services provided by PAES required high cost.	120	68.96*	II
3.	Purchasing barriers for farm inputs.	115	66.09*	III
4.	Lack of government regulations on PAES	102	58.62*	IV
5.	Price Fluctuations of farm produce in market rate	98	56.32*	V
6.	Lack of planning of sufficient meeting to solve farmers' day-to-day problems	93	53.44*	VI
7.	Non-availability of credit in time	85	48.85	VII
8.	Lack of timely technical advice	78	44.82	VIII
9.	Lack of infrastructure facilities like transportation, office storage etc.	69	39.65	IX
10.	Irresponsiveness of extension services provides to clients "need"	58	33.33	X
11.	Less credibility of PAES among farmers	43	24.71	XI
	Overall average	90.27	51.87	

* higher than average value

The data illustrated in table 1 revealed the various constraints perceived by farmers in privatization of agricultural extension services. The opinions of farmers regarding constraints have been obtained and divided into two part i.e. most serious problem (higher value than average) and least serious problem (lower value than average). The most serious constraints was “Marketing is the utmost priority of PAESs” confronted by 75.86 per cent farmers, (ranked 1st) followed by “Services provided by PAES required high cost.” confronted by 68.96 per cent farmers (ranked 2nd), " Purchasing barriers for farm inputs " confronted by 66.09 per cent farmers (ranked 3rd), " Lack of government regulations on PAES " confronted by 58.62 per cent farmers (ranked 4th), " Price Fluctuations of farm produce in market rate " confronted by 56.32 per cent farmers (ranked 5th), " Lack of planning of sufficient meeting to solve farmers' day-to-day problems " confronted by 53.44 per cent farmers (ranked 6th) respectively.

The least serious constraints was “Non-availability of credit in time” confronted by 48.85 per cent farmers, (ranked 7th) followed by " Lack of timely technical advice " confronted by 44.82 per cent farmers (ranked 8th), " Lack of infrastructure facilities like transportation, office storage etc." confronted by 39.65 per cent farmers (ranked 9th), " Irresponsiveness of extension services provides to clients "need"" confronted by 33.33 per cent farmers (ranked 10th), and "Less credibility of PAES among farmers" confronted by 24.71 per cent farmers (ranked 11th) respectively. The present finding finds support with the works of Jiyawan *et al.* (2009) [4] and KrishnaKumar

(2012) [5].

Suggestions offered by the farmers to overcome the problems faced by them:

The major suggestions offered by the farmers to overcome the problems associated with adoption of private extension services in sequential order were: government should fix the prices for PAES Providers, timely technical guidance should be provided to farmers, collaboration of Gram sevaks with PAES Providers needs to be improved, refreshment training should be provided to PAES Providers, provision of subsidy for users of private extension services, provision of regular supervision of government on PAES Providers.

The farmers in study confronted so many problems in adoption of privatization in agricultural extension services. Hence, it is recommended that these constraints should be given consideration by policy-makers and relevant government authority before final decision is taken on whether or not to privatize and commercialize agricultural extension services.

Results of this investigation provide a basis for planning future extension approach. It is recommended that a balanced approach to take advantage of PAES and counteract disadvantages is essential. Privatization of agricultural extension service should be experimented and implemented in a phased manner with utmost caution. Privatization for agricultural extension service will facilitate to meet the present needs and future challenges of the farming

community. The present finding finds support with the works of Ajieh *et al.* (2008)^[2] and Darandale (2010)^[3].

Conclusion

In the light of the above facts and observations the study concludes that marketing is the utmost priority of PAESs, services provided by PAES required high cost, purchasing barriers for farm inputs, lack of government regulations on PAES, price fluctuations of farm produce in market rate, lack of planning of sufficient meeting to solve farmers' day-to-day problems were the most serious constraints faced by farmers. Further, the study also recommended that to overcome the problems faced by the farmer to use PAES were government should fix the prices for PAES Providers, timely technical guidance should be provided to farmers, collaboration of Gram Sevaks with PAES Providers needs to be improved, refreshment training should be provided to PAES Providers, provision of subsidy for users of private extension services, provision of regular supervision of government on PAES Providers.

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