

Comparative analysis of agricultural extension situation in individual countries <Part 5>

Cooperation between extension department and external organizations

(1) Cooperation with the research center

In this series we have focused on Agricultural extension officers (AEOs) and Extension Departments (EDs), but agricultural development is not realized only through the work of AEOs and EDs. Therefore, in this issue, we would like to focus on external organizations that the EDs cooperate with. When we consider the cases of cooperation between the EDs and external organizations that we have seen in developing countries, they could be broadly divided into research centers such as research institutes and universities, the private sector, for example, buyers and suppliers, and donors such as governments, international organizations and NGOs. As a first step in addressing this topic, this issue will look at cooperation with Research Centers (RCs).

It is generally agreed that the ideal structure of agricultural technology dissemination is as follows; the AEOs identify problems in the farmers' field, the research sector develop techniques to solve the problems, and the AEOs disseminate the techniques for farmers. In this regard, a relationship between EDs and the RCs is close in Japan, but this is not the case in many developing countries. In those countries, there is often neither interaction nor regular information exchange. In order to identify reasons for this absence of communication and interaction we compared some cases in Japan and other countries.

For example, Ibaraki Prefecture in Japan has an Agricultural Center operating under the Prefectural Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. The Agricultural Center works on extension service, research, and in the education sector comprehensively with a view to furthering agricultural development in the prefecture. In other words, EDs, RDs, and Agricultural College belong to the same organization. Additionally, because there is personnel exchange between these sections, each section understands its respective duties, and the officers of each can work closely together. However, in many developing

countries, RCs are often established only at the national or regional level, but not in the actual local government to which the AEOs belong. As a result there is no personnel exchange between the RCs and EDs, and their cooperation is, as a result, insufficient. By contrast in the case of Sudan, both the RCs and the EDs belong to the state government, so they have some cooperation. In Nepal, both the RCs and EDs used to belong to the central government (Ministry of Agriculture), so there seemed to be more coordination than in other developing countries¹. Considering these cases, it seems that the organizational structure has a noticeable effect on inter-organizational cooperation.

In Japan, AEOs and researchers share equal positions in their duties, but in many developing countries where we have worked, a large gap between them was noticeable. In some countries, researchers and AEOs were classified based on their university grades. Naturally, some AEOs felt an inferiority complex or a distance from the researchers. It seemed to be a cause of the gap between them. In addition, as most researchers have Masters or Doctoral degrees and often have a strong elitist mentality, they tend to have more interest in advanced research themes than the with problems faced by farmers in their own country. In this regard, an interesting change could be observed in the JICA project of capacity development for extension service providers in Pakistan. In the project, the lecturers of the AEO's training were researchers belonging to the National and Provincial Research Centers/Institute. After the training, many participating AEOs said "it was good to establish a connection with researchers". Simultaneously, the researchers who had been asked many questions by the AEOs said "we need to know the real situation in the farmers' fields." This is a case where AEOs and researchers, extension sites and the research field, which had been separated, were connected.

It is difficult for us, as outsiders coming from Japan, to change an organizational structure. However, it may be possible for outsiders to break through institutional barriers, bridge awareness gaps, and to promote human interaction and collaboration.

1. The structure of Agricultural Extension Services in Nepal was changed in 2015, and the extension and research sectors were separated.