

Comparative analysis of the state of agricultural extension in different countries <Extra issue>

Comparison with history

In this series, we have discussed and provided examples of Agricultural Extension Officers (AEOs) and extension situations in various countries with which we have been involved in our projects. The series consisted of a total of 7 parts and concluded with the previous issue (No. 115). However, in December 2021, we had the opportunity to present this topic as a case of agricultural extension in the brush-up training for JICA experts, entitled "Agricultural Extension Activities in Overseas Technical Cooperation - Considering Future Extension Activities," at the JICA Tsukuba Center. After the presentation, we received many comments expressing empathy with the topic of "Psychological Distance between farmers and AEOs," which was introduced in AAINews No. 111. We were also honored to receive comments acknowledging the "importance of building relationships with extension workers and research stations or administrative personnel," as introduced in the 5th and 6th parts of the series (No. 113, 114).

As participants, we also learned a lot from this training. In particular, the lecture on "The history of agricultural extension in Japan and the world" was very interesting. For example, while we have been promoting "market-oriented vegetable cultivation" and "improvement of quality of life" as a Livelihood Improvement approach in Northern Uganda, Japan Agricultural Cooperatives have been involved not only in agricultural improvement extension but also in livelihood improvement extension since the beginning of the Cooperative Agricultural Improvement Extension Project in 1948. This fact was intriguing because it seemed as if history and the present overlapped. By delving deeper into the extension activities at that time, we may be able to obtain information that will contribute to future activities.

Another interesting aspect was the transformation of extension methods in Japan, from the "top-down" approach based on the needs of farmers to the "advisory and guidance" approach where expert AEOs provide advice and guidance, and then the "facilitation" approach that supports farmers' practical learning process. We believe that this change was not merely an evolution of

extension methods in Japan into a better form, but rather a response to the needs of the field and the technical level of the farmers at the time. In developing countries, the "top-down" approach is still important in technical extension, but at the same time, extension activities that address challenges in the field and the development of "thinking farmers" are also required simultaneously. Therefore, we believe that it is an important process to develop "thinking farmers", involving AEOs instructing farmers on technologies, practice them in the field, and address challenges together. Technical dissemination by AEOs who do not understand the principles and purposes of the technology tend to impose textbook-like procedures. Similarly, "facilitation" by AEOs who have only superficial knowledge about the technology are unlikely to develop thinking farmers. Above all, as mentioned in Part 3 (No. 111), the acquisition of technology is one of the conditions for gaining farmers' trust in AEOs.

In this training, we learned about the history of agricultural extension worldwide. A lecturer explained the case of the "Green Revolution," where some technologies that showed good performance in experimental fields were not successfully applied in the farmers' fields. He introduced the phrase "knowledge is born in experimental fields, but technology is only born in farmers' fields." Part 5 (No. 113) of this series also discussed the problem of the separation between research and extension in developing countries, and we strongly sympathized with the lecturer's emphasis on the importance of practicing in the field. We were able to reaffirm the importance of going out into the field in agricultural extension.

The training at JICA Tsukuba Center provided an excellent opportunity to go beyond AAINews and engage in discussions. Technical extension is a topic that is expected to remain relevant in future international technical cooperation, and above all, "technology dissemination" is a crucial pillar for Appropriate Agriculture International Co., Ltd. It would be greatly appreciated to have the chance to learn from various perspectives and practical experiences, and exchange opinions.