

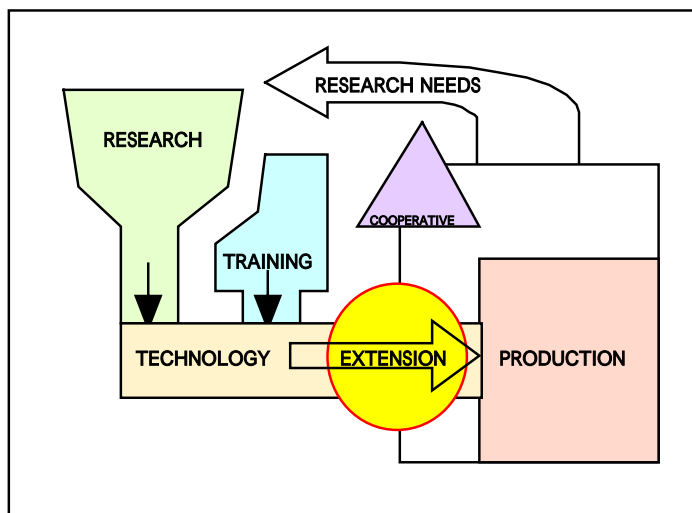
# Agricultural extension and training for agricultural extension agents in Syria

## Part 1: Why agricultural extension today?

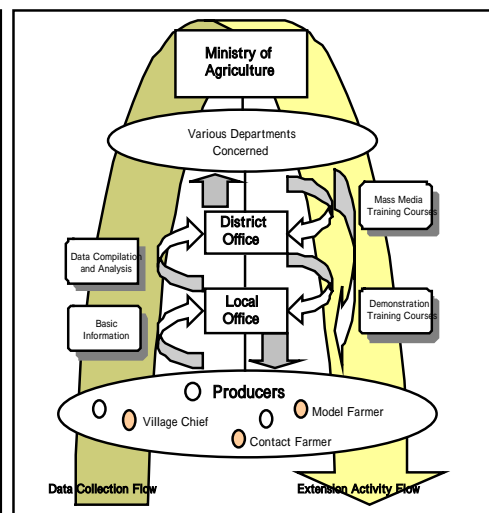
"The goal of technical assistance for development may be summarized in a phrase: "To build up people, the country and heart-felt communication." As thus stated, the fundamental objective of any technical assistance project is to foster the local manpower that should become the main actor for building up their own respective developing countries. So far, certain types of technical assistance, such as the dispatch of experts or Project-type technical cooperation, have spent a great deal of time and energy in developing appropriate technologies which could be adopted and used in the recipient country on a permanent basis. Also effort has been made to transfer technologies to relevant government officials. However, such efforts do not always produce visible outcomes, and recently more "visible" results are starting to be expected from recipient developing countries. In this context, it seems the importance of extension activities is being recognized, in order to make compatible both activities for "building up people" to facilitate people's self-support in developing countries and for producing "visible results". Moreover, while in recent years, cases for software projects are becoming priority subject of development study, the role of those experts working on agricultural extension and farmer's support is becoming increasingly significant. This is because agricultural extension activities to transfer appropriate technologies, information and knowledge to small-scale farmers play a very important role in raising their income level, which normally forms the basic priority in planning rural agricultural development.

Looking at the specific role of agricultural extension agents, their role as promoters of rural development activities by means of organizing farmers is becoming more important than their role simply as conventional technical instructors. This was also evident in the history of Japan's agricultural development. In such agricultural extension activities it is necessary to be comprehensive as well as systematic in working on the improvement of agricultural productivity and the living environment, and in the training of local human resources. For this purpose, today, agricultural extension agents often form an instruction team in accordance with the conditions and needs of the respective locality. At the same time, the importance of the participatory approach in development has been recognized in the field of technical assistance, making it important for agricultural extension agents to master such an approach. Moreover, they are expected to play a role not only as specialists conducting technical transfer but also as co-coordinators for organizing farmers. In turn, it is becoming more and more important for us to develop such multi-talented and capable specialists.

Through our development study experiences in Pakistan, Laos, Brazil etc. we have learned about various forms of agricultural extension in developing countries. There are some problems observed in agricultural extension activities in all these countries, such as organizational difficulties and the capacity and capability of agricultural extension agents engaged there. In addition, it has been pointed out in many countries that "facilities are not sufficient for the extension activities", "collaboration between the extension organization and research organization is poor", or "basic information needed for efficient agricultural extension is not provided at the ground level". Meanwhile, AAI has sent a expert to work on the project of agricultural extension and improvement in Syria on a long-term basis. This was followed by the dispatch of another specialist to work on the education and training plan for agricultural extension. In the following issues we would like to report on our agricultural extension activities and training for extension agents in Syria, and discuss the future tasks in this field.



Conceptual map of agricultural extension in Syria -



Proposed flow of agricultural extension activities in Laos -