

Water saving irrigation extension tools in Syria <Part 6>

In this series, we have introduced water saving irrigation extension tools which were developed through the Project on Development of Efficient Irrigation Techniques and Extension (DEITEX). Extension tools are distributed to farmers by extension workers when they visit the farmers, with instructions on usage. DEITEX is aimed at enhancing knowledge and awareness about water saving irrigation through the use of the extension tools in daily farming work by farmers.

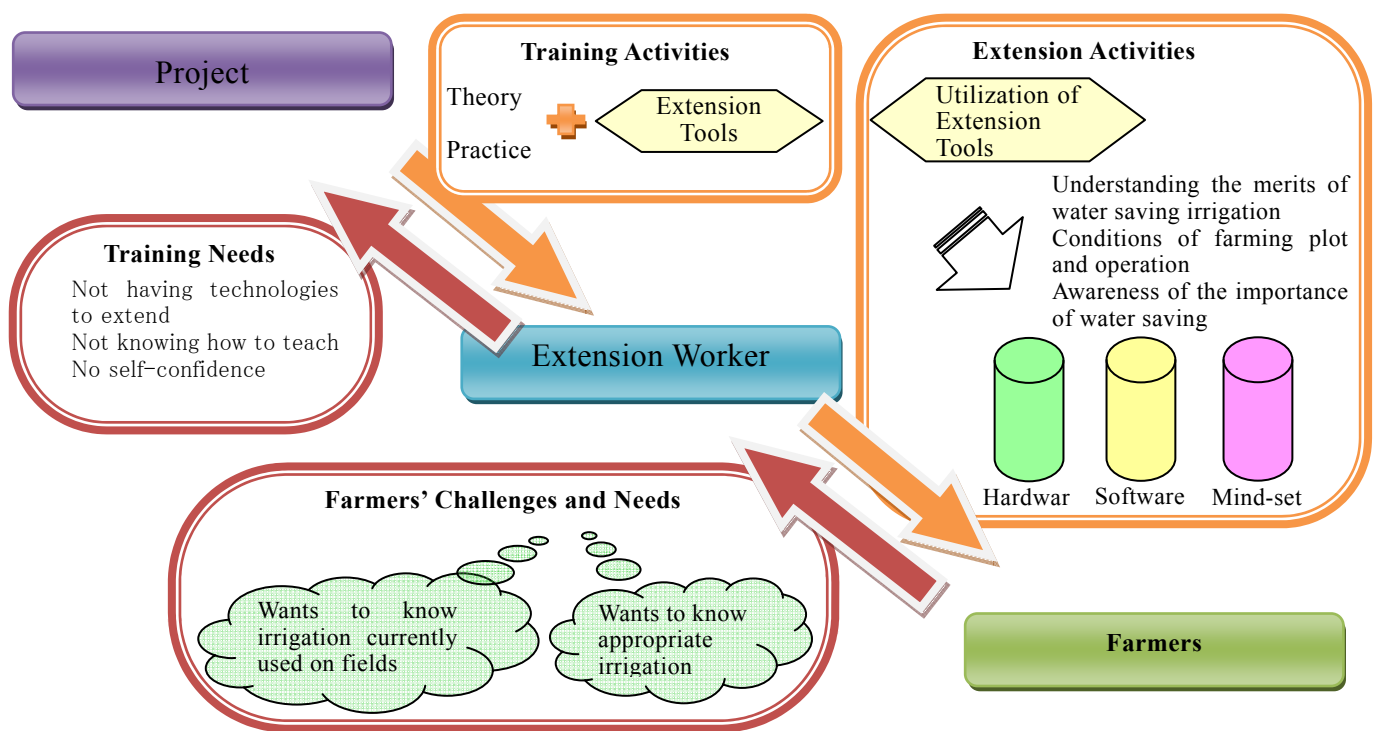
In the DEITEX project we believed that in order to achieve uptake of water saving irrigation practices, it is necessary for farmers themselves to work proactively on it. Therefore we thought extension work has to change the mind-set of farmers rather than simply enhance their understanding of irrigation systems and crop water requirements. We placed hardware, software and mind-set as the 3 pillars of this extension work. In addition, we conducted training of extension workers using themes that directly respond to the needs and issues which farmers face on a daily basis. An integrated Results-Oriented Training and Extension Method (ROTEM) was employed, whereby extension workers go out for extension activities based on the training. (See AAINews No. 68).

By introducing the water saving irrigation extension tools in extension activities, it became easier to conduct extension in terms of “software provision” and “mind-set change”, which had proved very difficult in the past. This also resulted in enhanced understanding and awareness by farmers on water saving irrigation. The farmers who used the discharge measurement kit could understand better the irrigation amount on their farming plots, which made them start fixing emitters’ blockage and purchasing appropriate emitters. Those who used the irrigation calendar and irrigation notebook conducted watering experimentation on their own farm plots and enhanced their understanding on appropriate irrigation amounts. Working with extension workers, some farmers even conducted farming diagnosis based on the records they compiled in their irrigation notebooks.

It was felt that by using tools that enable us to respond directly to farmers’ needs, we could raise farmers’ awareness and proactiveness. These extension tools are also effective as a medium of communication to connect farmers and extension workers. By concretizing issues farmers face through recording information in the irrigation notebook, extension workers’ advice can also become more accurate and relevant, which leads to a higher possibility for solving the problems. This will also result in establishment of trusting relationships between farmers and extension workers. By actively employing tools which farmers and extension workers can actually use on their farms in extension activities, rather than passive tools such as posters and leaflets, we feel that we could contribute to improving contents of extension activities and enhanced understanding and awareness on water saving irrigation technologies.

The three pillars of extension activities and their relationship with the extension tools

Extension tool	Three pillars of extension activities		
	Hardware	Software	Mind-set
Discharge measurement kit	○	○	
Irrigation calendar		○	
Irrigation notebook			○
Digital irrigation note		○	○



Results-Oriented Training and Extension Methods