



Conceptualization of rural poverty and explanation of extension systems' role in poverty alleviation

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Climate variability and economic crisis have made sustainable livelihood and food security difficult for rural areas. Poverty alleviation is one of the most critical duties of Iranian policy makers. However, poverty reduction programs have not been efficient enough and some rural households are still poor. Understanding the concept and nature of poverty is imperative for preparing poverty alleviation programs. Therefore, this qualitative study is conducted to conceptualize rural poverty and explain the extension systems' role in poverty alleviation. Focused group interview was used to collect data from Jihad-e- Keshavarzi experts and three different groups of rural households who resided in developed, semi-developed and less developed rural areas of Fars province. Results indicated that experts' and rural households' perceptions were different towards poverty. Experts perceived economic and structural factors as the main drivers of rural poverty, while rural families believed poverty is influenced by economic, structural, natural, social and personal factors. Since empowerment and capacity building have important roles in poverty alleviation, paradigmatic shift in extension orientation is needed. Some recommendations are provided to reduce rural poverty in Iran.

Key Words: Rural poverty, Conceptualization of poverty, Extension system, Capacity building, Fars province