



Rethinking in Missions of agricultural extension, in the process of agricultural sustainable development

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It is necessary to rethink the missions of Iranian agricultural extension and shift from a supply-driven to a demand-driven approach, if it is to be played role in increasing rural income and employment and eventually pro-poor development. As a supply-driven system and on the basis of top-down agricultural planning, Iranian agricultural extension often has focused on production of food staples and providing food security. Hence, in many cases not only it has not led to agricultural and rural sustainable development, but also has had adverse effects because of its encouragement to growing food staples especially in fragile ecosystems. In addition, although there is a wide literature about farmers' indigenous knowledge, the agricultural extension system could not protect them by developing entrepreneurial and win-win strategies. This system also could not realize indigenous knowledge as one of the livelihood sources of deprived farmers, on the basis of culture economy approach. Iranian agricultural extension has not a comprehensive and specific agenda for pro-poor development and improvement of progress and justice conjointly and it repeats procedures of several decades ago. This research aims to assess agricultural extension approaches and investigate successful experiences in countries such as India, China and Vietnam. Then it suggests effective solutions for a dynamic and learning agricultural extension. Rethinking in the missions of agricultural extension and its shifting from being a 'supply-driven' system to a 'market-driven' one, requires at least three institutional changes. First, the agricultural extension must allocate higher priority for growing of high-value, labor-intensive crops/products, on the basis of land-use planning. Second it must play an active role in organizing small-scale farmers for achieving to economies of scale and entering them into value chains. Third, extension planning system must become decentralized and extension agents facilitate farmer's capacity building for community-based monitoring and evaluation of agriculture and rural development projects.

Keywords: Institutional change, Community- based monitoring and evaluation, pro-poor development.