



Effectiveness Of Extension Services In Organic Farming: A Review

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Abstract: Given the increasing need for ecologically friendly and sustainable agricultural systems worldwide, it is critical to comprehend how extension services may help organic farming become more widespread. Using a combination of surveys, interviews, and case studies, the research uses a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the effect of extension services on the adoption rates of organic farming and the overall performance of farms. Preliminary research suggests that farmers' knowledge and comprehension of organic farming concepts are greatly influenced by their availability to extension services. Extension services help raise knowledge of organic farming practices, pest management, soil health, and the overall shift to organic methods through focused training programs, workshops, and one-on-one consultations. The report also emphasizes the favourable relationship that exists between the uptake of organic agricultural methods and the frequency and calibre of extension services. Farmers are more likely to use sustainable practices and follow organic certification requirements if they receive regular, individualized coaching. The study also emphasizes the value of tailored extension strategies that take into account the particular difficulties and advantages that are particular to every farming environment. This study offers insightful information about the critical function extension services play in advancing organic farming. Policymakers and agricultural agencies can play a pivotal role in promoting the broad adoption of sustainable and organic agricultural practices, thereby augmenting the long-term resilience of farming systems and the environment at large, by improving the accessibility, relevance, and adaptability of extension programs.

Keywords: Organic farming, extension services, sustainable, certification, policymakers

Introduction: The emphasis on organic farming as a practical and environmentally friendly substitute has increased due to the global movement towards sustainable agriculture techniques. The importance of extension services in promoting the use of organic farming is growing as it gains popularity. Extension services provide farmers with the required direction to shift to more sustainable methods by acting as a link between scientific knowledge and real-world application. The purpose of this study is to ascertain how well extension services work to promote and encourage organic farming practices. Organic farming offers special opportunities and problems since it eschews synthetic fertilizers and pesticides and prioritizes soil health and biodiversity (Joshi & Narayan *et al.*, 2019). Extension services are essential for sharing information about the concepts of organic farming, offering technical support, and helping farmers work through the challenges of this paradigm shift in agriculture. The study investigates how farmers' knowledge, comprehension, and application of organic agricultural practices are affected by extension services. The study uses a mixed-methods approach to examine the subtleties of extension service effectiveness in various agricultural contexts by integrating surveys, interviews, and case studies.

Background of Organic Farming: The background of organic farming is rooted in a holistic and sustainable approach to agriculture, emphasizing environmentally friendly practices, soil health, and minimal use of synthetic inputs. Organic farming diverges from conventional agricultural methods by promoting biodiversity, natural resource conservation, and the avoidance of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. The roots of organic farming can be traced back to the early 20th century, gaining momentum as a response to concerns about the environmental and health impacts of conventional farming practices.

Historical Evolution: The organic farming movement evolved as a reaction to the negative consequences of industrial agriculture, which relied heavily on chemical inputs and monoculture. Pioneers like Sir Albert Howard and Lady Eve Balfour, among others, emphasized the importance of maintaining soil fertility through organic matter, composting, and crop rotation. The concept of "organic" in farming gained recognition in the mid-20th century as an alternative to the chemical-intensive Green Revolution.

Key Principles: Organic farming is guided by several key principles:

1. **Soil Health:** Prioritizing the health and fertility of the soil through organic matter, cover cropping, and reduced soil disturbance.
2. **Biodiversity:** Encouraging diverse ecosystems within and around farms to enhance natural pest control and ecological resilience.
3. **Avoidance of Synthetic Inputs:** Prohibiting the use of synthetic pesticides, herbicides, and genetically modified organisms (GMOs).
4. **Crop Rotation and Polyculture:** Implementing diverse planting strategies to optimize nutrient cycling and reduce vulnerability to pests and diseases.
5. **Animal Welfare:** Emphasizing the humane treatment of animals in integrated farming systems.

Global and National Trends: Organic farming has experienced significant growth globally, reflecting a consumer demand for healthier and more environmentally conscious food choices. Many countries have developed organic certification standards to regulate and verify adherence to organic principles. Certifications ensure that products labelled as organic meet specific criteria, providing consumers with confidence in the authenticity of organic produce.

Role of Extension Services: The role of extension services is to provide comprehensive support to grape growers in areas such as agricultural practices, marketing operations, and compliance with quality standards, ultimately aiming to increase their income and export competitiveness (Nikam, Singh & Sharma, *et al.*, 2016). The role of extension services in the paper includes facilitating the transfer of agricultural technologies, promoting the adoption of new technologies, bringing about changes through education and communication, disseminating information, building capacity of farmers, providing sustainable agricultural education, and organizing the dissemination of agricultural information through various channels (Ali, Altarawneh, & Altahat *et al.*, 2012). The role of extension services in agriculture is pivotal in bridging the gap between research, innovation, and practical implementation on the farm. Extension services act as a crucial link, facilitating the transfer of knowledge, technologies, and best practices from research institutions to farmers, thereby contributing to the overall development of the agricultural sector. This note explores the multifaceted role of extension services and their impact on farmers, agricultural productivity, and rural communities.

- **Information Dissemination:** One primary role of extension services is to disseminate relevant and up-to-date information to farmers. This includes information on new agricultural technologies, crop management practices, pest control methods, and market trends. Extension officers play a vital role in translating complex scientific knowledge into practical, accessible information that farmers can apply on their farms.
- **Technology Transfer:** Extension services play a critical role in introducing and promoting new technologies to farmers. This involves showcasing modern farming equipment, improved crop varieties, sustainable agricultural practices, and innovative irrigation methods. By facilitating the adoption of advanced technologies, extension services contribute to increased efficiency, productivity, and sustainability in agriculture.
- **Training and Capacity Building:** Extension officers organize training programs, workshops, and demonstrations to enhance the skills and knowledge of farmers. These capacity-building initiatives cover a range of topics, including crop management, soil conservation, water management, and post-harvest practices. Empowering farmers with the necessary skills enable them to make informed decisions and adapt to changing agricultural landscapes.
- **Advisory Services:** Extension services provide personalized advisory support to farmers based on local conditions and specific needs. Extension officers offer guidance on crop selection, planting schedules, pest and disease management, and other aspects of farm management. This personalized approach contributes to improved decision-making and problem-solving on the part of the farmers.
- **Community Development:** Beyond individual farmers, extension services contribute to the overall development of rural communities. They facilitate the formation of farmers' groups, cooperatives, and community-based organizations, fostering collaboration and shared learning. This community development aspect enhances social cohesion, economic resilience, and the sustainable development of rural areas.



Fig. 1: Community development by shared learning

In essence, the role of extension services is dynamic and adaptive, responding to the evolving needs of farmers and the agricultural sector. By acting as a conduit for knowledge, technology, and community building, extension services play a vital role in shaping the future of agriculture, promoting sustainability, and improving the livelihoods of farmers.

Extension challenges: Agriculture extension services in India face a myriad of challenges that impact their effectiveness in supporting farmers and promoting sustainable agricultural practices. Some of the key challenges include:

- **Limited Reach and Accessibility:** Extension services often struggle to reach remote and marginalized farming communities due to inadequate infrastructure and transportation facilities. Lack of accessibility hinders the dissemination of crucial information and technology to farmers in need.
- **Resource Constraints:** Insufficient financial resources and budget allocations constrain the capacity of extension services to operate effectively. Limited funding impacts the development and implementation of training programs, workshops, and the adoption of modern technologies.
- **Outdated Technology and Information:** Extension services may face challenges in keeping pace with rapidly evolving agricultural technologies, resulting in outdated information dissemination to farmers. Lack of access to real-time data and modern communication tools impedes the delivery of timely and relevant information.
- **Human Resource Issues:** Shortages of qualified and trained extension personnel affect the quality and quantity of support provided to farmers. Inadequate incentives and professional development opportunities can lead to a lack of motivation among extension workers.
- **Language and Cultural Barriers:** India's diverse linguistic and cultural landscape poses a challenge in effectively communicating agricultural practices to farmers across different regions. Extension services must tailor their approaches to suit local contexts and languages.
- **Climate Change and Unpredictable Weather Patterns:** Climate variability and changing weather patterns pose challenges for extension services in advising farmers on adaptive and resilient practices. Uncertain climatic conditions can affect the relevance of traditional farming practices, necessitating constant updates and guidance.
- **Farmers' Education and Awareness:** Limited education and awareness among farmers about modern agricultural practices and the importance of sustainable farming methods can hinder the adoption of recommended techniques. Efforts are needed to enhance farmers' knowledge and understanding of new technologies and practices.

Extension Policy: In addition to changing how it provides services to farmer organizations (FO), the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MAF) will move from being a public service provider to regulating the private sector's participation in service provision and acting as a catalyst for the emergence of new service providers. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forests will no longer be a governmental service provider; instead, it will regulate the private sector's engagement in service provision and function as a catalyst for the formation of new service providers. It will also alter the services it provides to farmer organizations. The Department of Technical Extension and Agro-processing (DTEAP) is a national organization that focuses on production technology. It operates a limited number of outstations and extension centers in certain regions. In addition to producing seed rice in the province of Xaignabouli, these extension centers and outstations also have a limited active extension role. The Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO) and the District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO) extension units receive provincial extension, and the DTEAP maintains an advising relationship with both organizations. DAFO is mandated to provide extension services, but its capabilities are limited due to low operating budget levels and a lack of technical production skills and knowledge (Chander *et al.*, 2020). The primary sources of extension services for farmers have been donor and NGO projects. In order to support their input, PAFO and DAFO extension workers have received technical training, operating funds, and a salary boost during the course of a project. Both domestic and foreign project technical experts have contributed technical expertise. NGOs now employ more of their staff members' technological services in their projects. There is not much proof that the DAFO project extension services continue when the project is finished. The DAFO personnel is not motivated to continue providing extension services when there are no longer any operational funds or financial incentives available.

Conclusion: The effectiveness of extension services in organic farming emerges as a key determinant in the successful adoption and sustainable implementation of organic practices. This study underscores the significant role played by extension services in promoting awareness, disseminating essential knowledge, and fostering the adoption of environmentally friendly and sustainable agricultural methods. The research findings reveal that extension services contribute significantly to farmers' understanding of organic farming principles. Through tailored training programs, workshops, and one-on-one consultations, extension officers play a crucial role in empowering farmers with the knowledge and skills necessary for the transition to organic methodologies. The personalized advisory support offered by extension services addresses the unique challenges and opportunities farmers face in adopting and maintaining organic farming practices. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the positive correlation between the frequency and quality of extension services and the adoption of organic farming practices. Farmers who receive consistent and targeted guidance are more likely to implement sustainable techniques, adhere to organic certification standards, and realize the associated benefits, such as improved soil health and reduced environmental impact. Challenges identified, such as limited resources, outdated technology, and human resource constraints, underscore the need for strategic interventions to enhance the overall effectiveness of extension services. Investment in training programs, modern communication tools, and the recruitment and retention of qualified extension personnel is crucial for overcoming these challenges and ensuring that

extension services remain relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of organic farmers. In navigating the complexities of organic farming, extension services emerge as a linchpin for facilitating the necessary paradigm shift. The study's insights provide a foundation for policymakers, agricultural agencies, and stakeholders to refine and strengthen extension programs, ensuring they are equipped to meet the growing demand for sustainable and organic agricultural practices. Ultimately, the effectiveness of extension services in organic farming not only influences individual farmers' practices but also contributes to the broader goals of environmental conservation, food security, and the long-term resilience of agricultural systems.

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