



## **Scenario of Private Extension Services**

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### **Introduction**

Privatization is a concept which is currently spreading faster and faster in India with the motive of absorbing majority of the sectors into it. Agriculture is not an exception. Already majority of the agricultural services were provided by private companies especially seeds, fertilizers and mechanization. It is astonishment to know that private sector proved to provide extension services to farming community which was fully under the control of the government before few years. Here we may have the question of “Is private sector give extension services for free?”. This is a remarkable question to be answered. Most of the Indian farmers are really new to the concept of privatization of extension services. Indian farmers are aware of and utilizing traditional methods of extension services especially from agricultural department officials, kisan call centre, television, radio. As world changes everything started to cope up with the changing environment. Likewise agriculture also undergoing many changes in terms of modern agriculture, precision farming, use of information technology in farming, robots in agriculture, etc. This makes agriculture bit costly but effective and efficient.

### ***Private Extension Services***

Indian extension system is primarily state centered extension system and it is less concerned with provision of extension education to farmers in terms of teaching and motivating to adopt initiative but for services more attention is being paid. Extension service in India is concerned with transfer of technology to the farmers and advisory services.

In India many of the experts have positive attitude towards privatization of extension services. They think that rapid development of efficient advisory service system and meeting the needs of the farming community is highly possible through privatization (shivalinge and Saravanan, 2001). Knowledge level, education qualification, work experience of the experts is positively affecting the attitude of the experts towards privatization of extension services.

Privatization of extension can be defined as the cost based approach which is taken up by the private sector extension agents to deliver the required services/advisory to farmers (Hanchinal *et al.*, 2001). Privatization of extension is a term which is used by many scientists to describe corporate involvement in the provision of information or advisory services to needy farmers. Privatization is an innovative approach done by the private companies to deliver right information to right people at the right time. They give information or advisory



based on the demand. Due to more involvement specialized services can be given to farming community.

## **Need for privatization**

- Many countries like Germany, England, Sweden, France, Chile are already implementing private extension services in the agriculture sector to deliver advisory services (Lashgarara and Hosseini, 2011).
- Managerial limitations, complexity in the information dissemination structure, slow decision making, lack of technical efficiency, etc. are the factors which influences the farmers to take up private advisory services (Rivera *et al.*, 2000).
- Demand driven needs of the farmers can be quickly satisfied through privatization (Labarthe and Moumouni, 2008).
- Modern technologies/equipments are readily available to serve farmers.
- Privatization takes our traditional agriculture into commercialization

## ***Types of private extension services***

**Type 1:** Direct involvement of private company in to agriculture through agricultural consultancies, agriculture input manufacturers and sellers, agripreneurs, etc.

**Type 2:** Farmer Producer Organizations, NGO are highly influenced by government subsidies.

## ***Private sector involvement in information dissemination***

Ten years ago, the farmers have to be completely depending on the agriculture department for advisory services. Agriculture department was disseminating the information using KVK professionals, agriculture officers, assistant agriculture officers, etc. the current situation of agriculture needs more than that which is available to them. Agriculture became more competitive. So many private sectors started to concentrate on agriculture and allied sectors where they can be a successor.

## ***ITC's e-Choupal***

Indian Tobacco Company Pvt. Ltd. developed a largest internet based intervention called e –choupal model to service the Indian agriculture sector with the motive of strengthening the infrastructure and complete eradication of intermediaries. Real time information regarding all the aspects of agriculture (weather, price, market condition, package of practices) was given by e-choupal which helps the farmers to take correct decisions based on the demand of the produce required by the consumers. E-choupal works on reducing the transaction costs and improves the quality of the produce (Deepali, 2009).

## ***Key intervention of e-choupal***

***e-choupal village internet kiosks:*** These internet kiosks provides informations on latest agronomic practices, marketing information, weather informations, package of practices by the ITC's dedicated website. Sanchalaks are the trained farmers who help the fellow farmers by providing information for free. Each kiosk will cover 10 villages with 5km radius.



***Choupal saagar procurement cum retailer hubs:*** Retail hubs established by ITC company to help the farmers in procurement and storing their produces. It provides retail space for the agricultural equipments.

***Swasthya Choupal:*** Healthcare services like family planning, menstrual hygiene, diarrhoea prevention, sanitation and general nutrition are taken care by this forum. Swasthya Choupal executed through partnerships with credible and quality organisations. Village Health Champions (VHCs) is an initiative in which local women are trained to provide these health services. VHCs earn additional income and encourage positive behaviour transformation in their communities.

### ***Tata Kisan Sansar***

TKS is an 'one stop solution' initiative of TATA chemicals Ltd. which act as a resource centre for farmers. Tata Kisan Sansar initiative has nearly 130 qualified agronomists who interact with farmers and provide solutions to their queries. Approximately 2.8 million farmers are benefited by Tata Kisan Sansar through 820 outlets. Trainings are provided to farmers regarding latest technologies, modern farming ideas, etc, TKS provides following services to farming community.

1. Farmers training centre
2. Warehouse of produces
3. Soil testing laboratory
4. Demonstration farm

### ***Samridhi centres***

Samridhi centres help the rural farming community by providing education on latest inputs, technologies and also act as an advisory centre. Farmers can hire the farm equipments in minimum cost. There are 155 Samridhi centres are located across India. [www.mahindrakisanmitra.com](http://www.mahindrakisanmitra.com) is a website dedicated to agriculture information. Farmers can locate warehouse and cold storage facilities using this website and also they can know global level events and farmers success stories.

### ***Major function other than above mentioned:***

- Provision of insurance
- Demonstration farms
- Soil and water testing laboratory

### ***Consequences of privatization of extension services***

Private extension services created a new dimension in information dissemination. Many of the experts and farmers had positive attitude toward privatization of extension. Farmers those who are involved in cultivation of commercial horticultural crops are ready to pay for the proper and continuous guidance of experts. Privatization leads to few direct consequences and many indirect consequences.



- Cost involvement
- Privatization may leads to profit oriented system
- Social engagement
- Social difference (rich and poor)
- Exclusiveness of technologies for adoption
- Scarcity if vital food grain required at rural village level.
- With inducement to turn as middleman rather than food producers.

### *Constraints in privatization of extension services*

- Job insecurity fear
- Lack of farmer's interest in participating extension programmes
- High risk and uncertainty in agriculture
- Fear of cheating by extension service providers

### *Conclusion*

Privatization may assist the public extension system but cannot replace it. Many areas of agriculture can be completely privatized but not agricultural information dissemination. Public extension providers can improve their capacity to reach the client through proper trainings on new technologies. We can say public extension is the only means of getting advisory for free of cost. Private sectors will try to charge more for the services for their profit motive. So farmers have to be careful with the utilization of private services for information.