

Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for Systemic Change: A New Approach to Strengthening Farmer Support Systems

Guidance for Sustainable Commodity
Production Practitioners



**GREEN
COMMODITIES
PROGRAMME**

**Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for Systemic Change:
A New Approach to Strengthening Farmer Support Systems.
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Practitioners. January 2020**

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FOREWORD

The more we work at UNDP on the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the more we feel that SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals – is at the center of achieving all goals. When the SDGs were devised there was an understandable desire to focus on the key components of sustainability, and the first 16 SDGs do an excellent job of encompassing them. But as we get closer to 2030, the need for systemic change becomes clearer and it is only by getting everybody united together around this common cause that we will find and implement the holistic solutions that we need.

Partnerships for the Goals enhance our chances of success. In the latest SDG 17 Progress Report in 2018, 51 of 114 countries reported overall progress towards strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships and the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. However, there was a need to increase the space for civil society's contribution to sustainable development and for a more inclusive and relevant dialogue between the public and private sectors.

That is the issue that this guidance seeks to address – using multi-stakeholder collaboration not only at the highest inter-organisation level to achieve systemic

change amongst government, global business and international civil society, but also to use these proven techniques on the ground, strengthening farmer support systems and effectively reinventing them for the 2030 Goals.

There is ample technical and scientific literature available on the best methodologies for training farmers, so we do not cover that here. This guidance makes recommendations on strengthening the "system" that brings farmer training into being and develops it over time. In this guidance we are concerned with the "How" of farmer support systems, the "What" of farmer training is well developed elsewhere.

UNDP's Green Commodities Programme seeks to be at the forefront of developing Multistakeholder Collaboration for Systemic Change to achieve the goal of improving the lives of commodities producers and their communities, while protecting high value forest and important vulnerable ecosystems. This is the first time we have applied these principles to a core activity such as farmer support, and I look forward to seeing the first successful examples emerge.

Haoliang Xu
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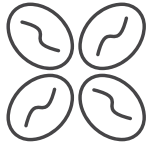
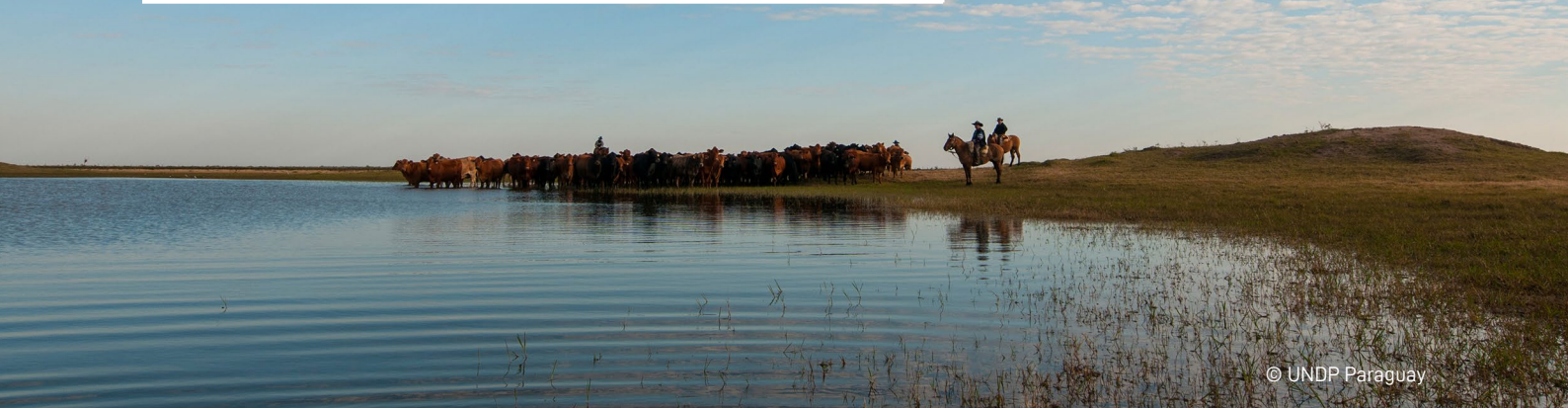


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INTRODUCTION



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Rationale

UNDP helps developing economies to accelerate their progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. Central to this is supporting systemic transformation of agriculture commodity sectors, of vital importance to many developing economies. Within this transformational vision, UNDP works alongside government leadership to strengthen its capacity to systematically support smallholder farmers within commodity supply chains. Multi-stakeholder collaboration is essential because national/subnational farmer support systems are often weak and need all stakeholders to work together to create meaningful change at scale. Since 2009 UNDP has built expertise in multi-stakeholder collaboration and institutional capacity building. Through this guidance we hope to stimulate and guide governments to develop new partnerships, encourage innovation and strengthen financing for farmer support systems for sustainable commodity production.

This will strengthen the enabling environment which in turn will enhance, empower and connect a wide range of farmer training projects delivered by a multitude of disconnected service providers. This focus and guidance is a major part of UNDP's Strategic Plan and is the culmination of 10 years of UNDP addressing the sustainability challenges of highly traded commodities around the world.

Using multi-stakeholder collaboration for systemic change, UNDP Green Commodities Programme is currently working on palm oil, cocoa, coffee, soy, pineapple, fisheries and cashmere in Costa Rica, Indonesia, Paraguay, Peru, Côte d'Ivoire, Papua New Guinea, Ghana, Liberia, Ecuador, Mongolia, Dominican Republic and the Philippines. This guidance also builds on UNDP's highly successful Scorecard for Protected Area Financing and the principles and processes used for that, which has been applied in over 50 countries worldwide.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to sustainable commodity production practitioners from government, civil society and business on how to *collaboratively* assess and strengthen farmer support systems in order to achieve the broader goal of improving the lives of commodities producers and their communities, while protecting high value forest and important vulnerable ecosystems. It is intended to:

- Facilitate multi-stakeholder collaboration for systemic change leading to joint diagnosis, investigation and agreement on systemic solutions to strengthening existing farmer support systems;
- Support the elaboration of updated collective vision, strategies and implementation plans¹ for national and sub-national farmer support systems

This all facilitates collective action to support farmers and the transformation of production.

Definitions

Multi-stakeholder Collaboration

A process of interactive learning, empowerment and participatory governance that enables stakeholders with interconnected sustainability problems and ambitions, but often differing interests, to be collectively innovative and resilient when faced with the emerging risks, crises and opportunities of a complex and changing environment.

Systemic Change²

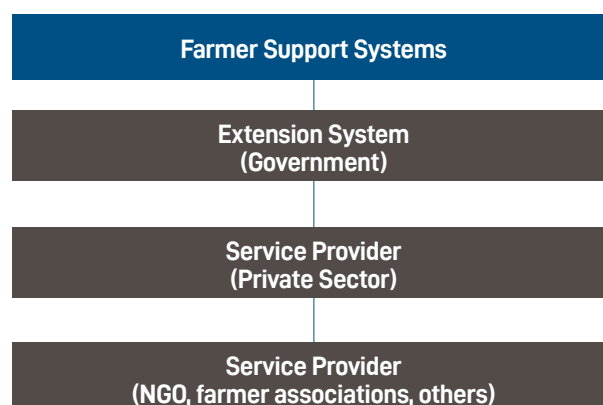
Sustainable development is characterised by complex and "messy" problems that have a multitude of interactions between all the different players and issues involved. Systemic change involves working with the complexity, to help people see the whole system, and to recognise that change will often be an unpredictable and surprising process.

Focus and Boundaries of the Guidance

- Include the **support of all providers** of farmer support (public, private sector, non-governmental/community-based organisations – see figure 1) and ensuring adequate coordination to prevent duplication of effort and ensure synergy, answering the question "How can the government, civil society and the private sector better work together to achieve stronger outcomes?"; Only together can services be transformed to be effective at scale.

- Ensure the support meets the requirements for **sustainable commodity production** (environmental, social and economic sustainability);
- **Empower farmers** in decision-making and ensure service providers are accountable to farmers and farmers accountable to service providers;
- Emphasis on the **needs of smallholders** as compared to large-scale commercial farms;
- The proposed multi-stakeholder collaboration approach is applicable for both **national or sub-national farmer support systems** in the context of decentralization;

Figure 1: Farmer Support Systems Providers



- There should be no imposed blueprints to strengthen national/sub-national farmer support systems – locally-tailored solutions are essential to maintain a locally owned perspective on broad recommendations;
- Setting up comprehensive farmer support systems in developing countries is exceedingly complicated and some elements are clearly beyond the manageable interests/sphere of influence of actors seeking to directly strengthen such a system - e.g. some political economy factors, market and civil society environment, agroecological conditions, etc.;
- This is not guidance about the best methodologies for training farmers, as there is ample technical and scientific literature available on the subject, but rather a way to provide practitioners with recommendations on how to strengthen the overall "system" and its funding. The "What" of farmer training is well developed, in this guidance we are more concerned with the "How".

¹ These updated strategies and plans might or might not be centered around specific commodities depending on the local context – in any case they need to be developed in the context of larger national/sub-national agricultural extension systems and the actors supporting them.

² These two definitions are adapted from Brouwer et al. 2016. The MSP Guide. How to design and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships. Wageningen University and Research, CDI. Practical Action Publishing.

The Value of a Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration Approach

Multi-stakeholder collaboration is, although not the easiest, certainly the most effective way forward to make sure no one is left behind when taking decisions that affect us all. Bringing about such collaboration is no simple matter. It requires deep understanding of what enables and what stops people from working together. It requires patience, time, and commitment from leaders. However, with the right mindset, and by using appropriate methodology and governance structures, much can be done to unlock people's potential to cooperate and innovate for social and environmental good.

Box 1:

Advantage and Limits of Multi-stakeholder Collaboration (Source: Brouwer et al. 2016)

ADVANTAGES

- Can address a more complex issue than you can tackle alone
- Partners can access complementary skills and resources from each other
- Results will have broader ownership (more sustainable)
- Learning and collaboration increases chance of systemic change

LIMITS

- Requires time and resources to design and implement properly
- Can only work if there is sufficient representation from stakeholders
- Will often not deliver short-term success: patience is required
- Not easy to find funding for processes that are relatively open-ended and the topics of which may evolve over time
- Success is never guaranteed

Such partnerships are usually about tackling challenges that are too difficult for an individual organisation to solve. These problems are called complex, difficult, or systemic. A systemic approach focuses on seeing the big picture, building relationships and networks, strengthening feedback mechanisms, and adapting to the unexpected. It avoids top down 'blueprint' approaches to planning and encourages flexible, entrepreneurial, and collaborative ways of working.

Institutional analyses to assess and strengthen Farmer Support Systems are often conducted by team of experts/consultants through a range of

qualitative and quantitative research methods such as surveys, key informant interviews, literature reviews, evaluations, case studies, comparative studies and so on. Assessments of existing services can be rapid or in-depth depending on the objectives of the analysis (project preparation, evaluation, or the development of a new national extension policy). While these assessments are then presented to the key national stakeholders through workshops, consultative working groups and so on, they are rarely planned and conducted jointly.

Setting up a comprehensive farmer support system requires a comprehensive foundation structure related to coordination, shared understanding, collective action and investment to be put in place. The approach proposed here is for UNDP to enable deep collaboration by facilitating an efficient multi-stakeholder dialogue throughout the diagnosis, decision-making and implementation stages.

This is critical in order to develop:

- A shared understanding and agreement of the problems that need to be addressed, supported by credible data;
- A common vision and purpose;
- A joint farmer support implementation plan that brings value to all as it ensures coherent thinking and coordinated action, avoiding gaps and overlaps;
- Shared responsibility and commitment for budget to support smallholders – efficiency gains through collaborative investment;
- Greater insight and understanding of what the full range of stakeholders need and how they perceive value from sustainable production;
- An expanded network and better relationships with organisations that work on issues of mutual concern;
- International and domestic public visibility on how farmer support systems for sustainable commodity production are addressed at a national and systemic level

The UNDP Green Commodities Programme has 10 years of expertise in multi-stakeholder collaboration for systemic change in sustainable commodity production. We accelerate change by developing, with governments, national-level policy which we connect to actions on the ground at district and landscape level. Our world is a complex system: GCP's systemic approach aims to bring together all the elements for real and lasting change.



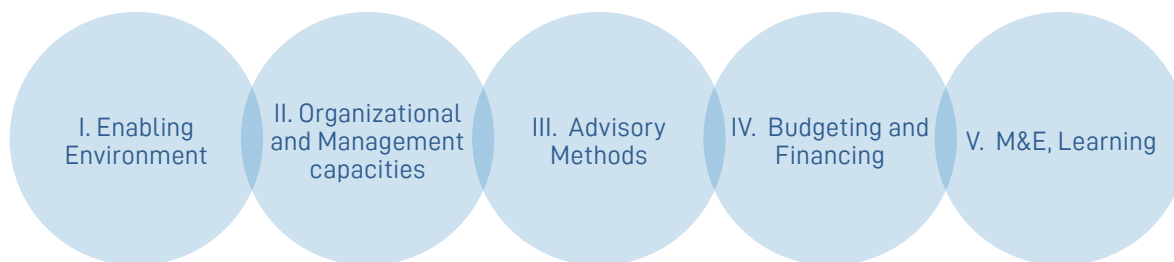
THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR FARMER SUPPORT SYSTEMS



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This analytical framework for assessing and strengthening national farmer support systems has been designed based on a systemic approach and is used to structure the different stages of the multi-stakeholder collaboration approach presented in the next section. It builds upon previous work conducted by other expert organisations on assessing and strengthening National Extension and Advisory Systems³. The analytical framework is made up of 5 components (Figure 2) and 15 elements (Figure 3 – Table 1).

Figure 2: The five components of the analytical framework for farmer support systems



Component	Description
Enabling Environment	Shaping the context of farmer support system intervention –national priorities, policies, views on what needs to be done for the agriculture sector, land-use, governance structures, level of decentralisation, partnerships, power relationships, overall strength of service providers, etc.
Organisational & Management Capacities	Availability, number and skills of advisors, training levels, experience, knowledge, management system, performance incentives, etc.
Advisory Methods	Methods used by advisors (soft and/or hard technologies) to provide information and advice to farmers or generate a learning process
Budgeting & Financing	Funding mechanisms, diversity of funding sources, level of funding and targets, financial sustainability, allocation, etc.
Monitoring & Evaluation, Learning	Measuring the performance of the Farmer Support System and promoting continuous improvement

³ See in particular Davis et al. 2017. Faure et al., 2016 and Swanson & Rajalahti, 2010.

Figure 3: The 15 elements of the analytical framework for farmer support systems

I. Enabling Environment	1. Vision 2. Diversity of service providers & partnerships 3. Producer organization	IV. Budgeting and Financing	10. Budget Levels 11. Sources of funding and sustainability 12. Allocation
II. Organizational and Management Capacity	4. Staff numbers 5. Training levels, skills and experience 6. Management systems	V. M&E, Learning	13. System level performance 14. Farm level performance 15. Continuous improvement
III. Advisory Methods	7. Substance and content 8. Delivery 9. Technologies		

Table 1: Key issues to be investigated in each element

Component 1	Enabling Environment
Element 1: Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of policy/vision/strategies/legislation for extension • Level of buy-in of stakeholders into vision, level of shared vision • Level of political will supporting the vision • Links with agricultural policy, national development strategy, sustainable use of natural resources, land-use planning, food security, improving livelihoods, etc. • Competing priorities from different sectors • Views on extension/ philosophy & principles: technology transfer versus facilitation, pluralistic system, broader set of services beyond agricultural production focus (income, market linkages, natural resources management, sustainability, food security, etc.), Inclusion of SDG objectives beyond productivity, more demand/farmer driven system, etc. • Models considered (limited to smallholders? Sourcing zones per actor? Etc.)
Element 2: Diversity of Service Providers & Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of Public/ Private (e.g. commodity traders)/NGOs in provision and financing • Objectives pursued by each service provider • Basic features of each organisation (e.g. operating level, clientele, focus, scope of services, overall financial and organizational strength) • Level of decentralisation / bottom-up or top-down • Comparative advantage of each service provider • Willingness to collaborate • Coordination mechanisms (single coordinated system or not, alignment of activities) • Innovative partnerships (e.g. plantation agronomists training smallholders) • Strength of knowledge management, Institutional linkages, support services
Element 3: Producer Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence • Role • Strength of producer organisations

Component 2	Organisational and Management Capacity
Element 4: Staff numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing numbers of staff, targets • Historical perspective (increasing/decreasing) • Current coverage, identifying geographic gaps or areas of limited support • Subcontracting arrangements • Farmer trainers/volunteer/lead farmer use
Element 5: Training levels, skills and Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiring process, educational level • Generalist/ commodity specialist • Diversity and range of knowledge (sustainable production, climate change, value chains, etc.) / areas covered by subject matter-specialists • Gender outreach, female extension workers • Adequacy of training • Capacity to innovate • Abilities of farmer extension worker • Flexibility to adapt to new challenges • Exchange of experience between advisors
Element 6: Management Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human resource management • Access to performance incentives for extension staff (salaries, bonuses based on adoption level, continuing education, etc.) • ToR - extension staff objectives • Reporting arrangements and oversight • Career advancement • Ability to remove/reallocate poor performers

Component 3	Advisory Methods
Element 7: Substance and Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National curricula on training farmers on production practices • Link to certification standards, sustainable commodity production • Training beyond production practices (farmer organisation, business skills, etc.) • Process of developing curricula: client-driven multi-stakeholder, based on best international and national practices, linked to research, etc. • Updates/reviews • Locally specific
Element 8: Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of delivery approaches/training • Frequency and intensity, refresher training • Top-down or participatory methods, adult education orientation • Number of clients (individual, group based, mass approaches, farmer organisation) • Bundling of delivery packages (integration of themes, sequencing of different types of training, links to inputs/credit) • Coordination of different delivery partners, overlapping, geographic divisions • Fit for purpose (adapted to the goal of the services and available resources)
Element 9: Technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of ICT initiatives • Scale of ICT initiatives (scattered/pilot level, national) • Focus of ICT initiatives (information sharing, capacity strengthening, performance monitoring, traceability, etc.)

Component 4	Financing
Element 10: Sources of Funding and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who pays for what – cost sharing between public and private sectors and beneficiaries (government, companies, donors, farmers) • Investment coordination • Financing instruments (national budget, taxes and charges, export tax, commodity funds, etc.) • Dependency on donors • Long term financial planning – constant and sustainable income stream
Element 11: Budget Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current levels and targets • Historical perspective (increasing, decreasing) • Training cost per farmer at programme/project level • Services providers budgets (government, private sector, etc.)
Element 12: Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For target commodities • For programme and operational expenses versus salaries and personal emoluments • For capital costs • Between levels of government • Between geographic areas

Component 5	Monitoring & Evaluation, Learning
Element 13: System Level Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access (timeliness, inclusion, scale) • Quality of services provided (feedback, relevance) • Sustainability • Effectiveness (achievement of objectives) • Efficiency (results obtained compared to resources invested)
Element 14: Farm Level Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uptake and adoption (data capture at farm level, centralised data management) • Change of attitudes, knowledge, behavior, understanding drivers/barriers to adoption • Decision making capacity • Accountability and ability to exercise voice
Element 15: Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeding lessons into strategy • Lessons sharing between training programmes • Application of monitoring data • Measuring impact (yield, productivity, income, environmental effects, etc.)



ACTIVATING THE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION APPROACH

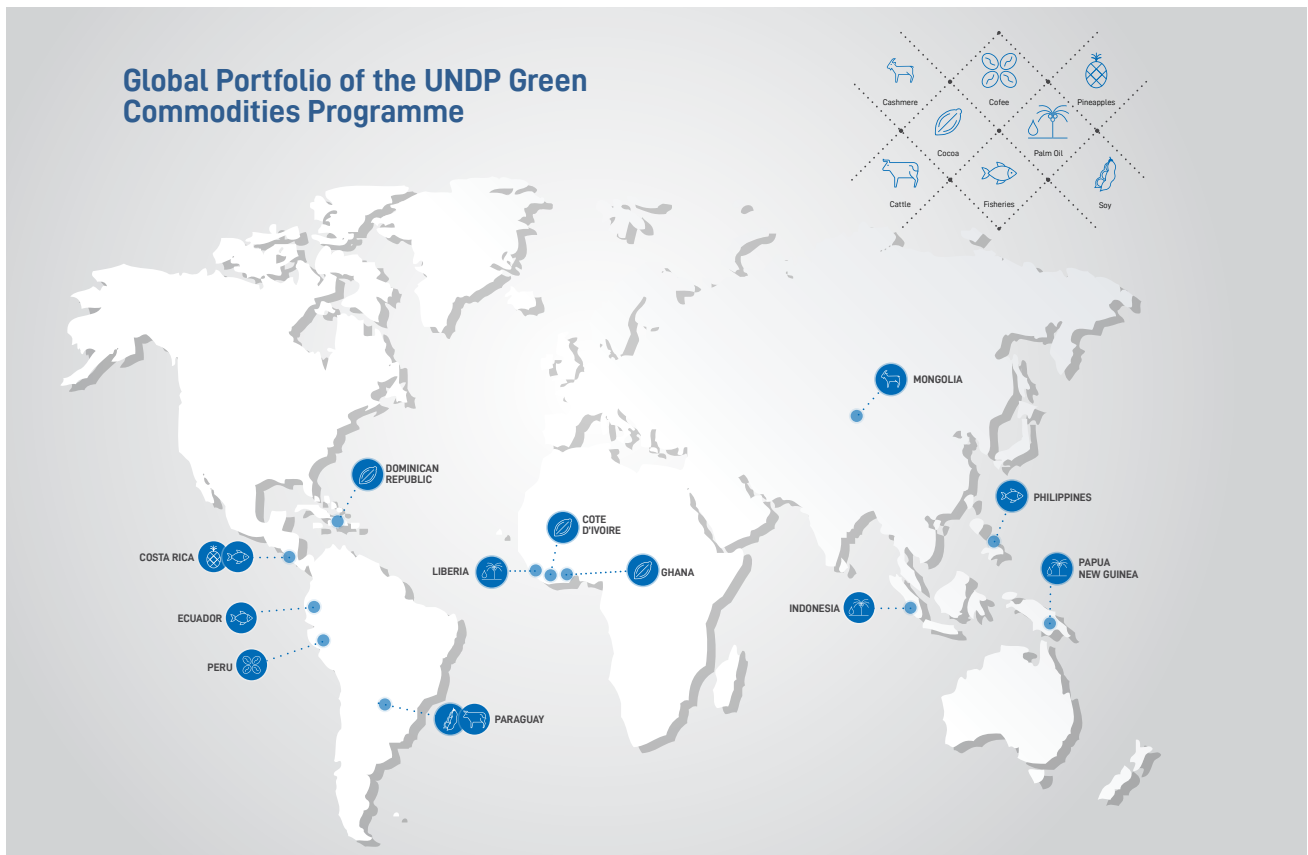


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Farmer Support Forum

The existing commodities and landscape multi-stakeholder platforms such as the ones currently supported by the UNDP Green Commodities Programme provide an ideal vehicle to conduct the multi-stakeholder collaboration approach proposed in this document. In countries with an existing platform, as shown in the box below, there is usually an established Technical Working Group on Farmer Support Systems that could conduct such a process.

Box 2: National Commodity Platforms



For more information on National Commodity Platforms facilitated by UNDP:
<https://www.greencommodities.org/content/gcp/en/home/countries-and-commodities.html>

In countries without a relevant platform, a specific multi-stakeholder *Farmer Support Forum* would be set up to conduct the dialogue process⁴. The organisations to be convened need to represent the various stakeholders involved in or benefitting from farmer support systems such as the different service providers, farmer organisations and their APEX institutions, universities, etc.

Table 3: Example of organisations to take part of the Farmer Support Forum

Government	Supply Chain Actors
Ministry of Agriculture and related ministries (e.g. environment, labour, climate change, etc.) Department of agricultural extension National Land agency Department in charge of budget National Planning Sub-national department based on level of decentralization Commodity Board	Service providers Input suppliers Aggregators, processors, exporters, etc. Commodity Industry association Companies owning concessions in targeted area Consumer Goods companies Producer Organisations/Growers Representatives/ farmer cooperatives
Development Partners	Civil Society Organisations
Development agencies funding extension services Technical and financial partners working on sustainable agriculture	Service Providers Advocacy and research NGOs Private agricultural research organization/universities linked to farmer support systems

Defining who participates from each organisation is also key and an appropriate balance between technical people (e.g. field practitioners, subject matter specialists, ICT support staff, etc.) and decision-makers (e.g. ministers, head of extension department, etc.) based on country specifics and stages of the process will have to be found. The Forum would need to be facilitated by an experienced independent facilitator (see section on team required) and the need for a decision-making governance structure such as a "Steering Committee" would need to be assessed on a country by country basis (e.g. the National Commodity Platforms established by the UNDP Green Commodities Programme already have established Platform Steering Committees). A template Terms of Reference for the Forum is available in the guidance notes.

Stages

We envisage four stages in the process of engaging multiple stakeholders to collaborate on Farmer Support Systems (see Figure 4 below):

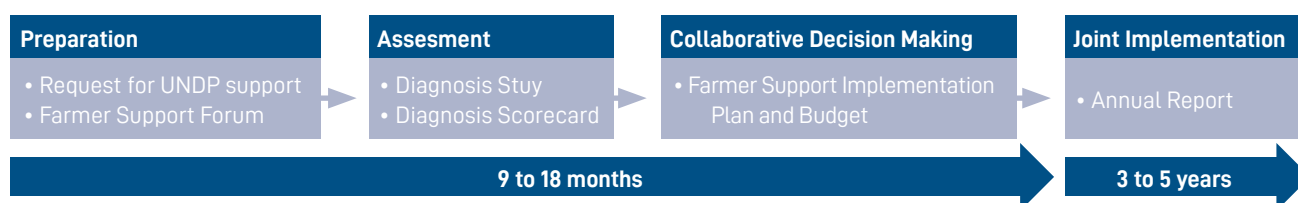
- **Preparation:** consisting of establishing the multi-stakeholder dialogue (building on existing forums/platforms where they exist);
- **Assessment:** of the existing farmer support system's performance as it relates to a specific commodity; this consists of a quantitative exercise (diagnosis study) followed by a qualitative one (diagnosis scorecard);
- **Collaborative inputs into decision-making** to provide key recommendations for strengthening existing systems leading to concrete outcomes (e.g. farmer support implementation plan and budget);
- **Joint implementation and monitoring** of the farmer support implementation plan.

The time needed from initial preparation to having an approved farmer support implementation plan and budget by the farmer support forum is estimated to be around 9 to 18 months. This timeline will depend on the willingness of the different actors to collaborate and each organisation's commitment to support the process. The implementation stage duration is 3 to 5 years depending on each country and associated project requirement.

The guidance for these stages is based upon the analytical framework introduced in the previous section covering the key elements to take into consideration for assessing and strengthening Farmer Support Systems. This is complemented by specific guidance notes for practitioners (e.g. Template ToR for the Farmer Support Country Forum, ToR for diagnosis study, guidance on how to reach consensus/how to conduct effective facilitation, innovative financing mechanisms, etc.)

⁴ The Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) has also established multi-stakeholder Country Forums in some countries and it would be essential to build on such platforms where they exist. <http://www.g-fras.org/en/community/country-fora.html>

Figure 4: Multi-stakeholder process stages and key milestones



STAGE 1: PREPARATION

Figure 5: Preparation stage overview

Estimated Duration	Number of Meetings	Key Outcomes
3 Month	One Farmer Support Forum Meeting (1 day)	Establishment of Farmer Support Forum

A number of preparatory activities are required to establish the multi-stakeholder collaboration approach at a national or subnational level:

1. *Scoping meetings* with key service providers responsible for sustainable commodity production, presenting the approach to assess and strengthen the Farmer Support System (e.g. discussions on proposed multi-stakeholder dialogue, potential benefits for service providers, current status of existing system, background work to take into account, tailoring the process to local conditions, etc.).
2. *Confirmation of interest* from the government (or other key service provider in charge of supporting farmers) for assistance to strengthen their farmer support system; determining the boundaries of the farmer support system to be analysed (e.g. national or subnational, commodity specific or broader agricultural sector). While a formal written request is not necessarily required, it is essential that following initial scoping/buy-in discussions, key service providers indicate their interest to actively participate in the process.
3. *Explore the possibility of a "sponsor" at the highest level* (e.g. President's office, international organisations, etc.) supporting the process publicly and incentivizing stakeholders to collaborate more closely. This is required as many of the stakeholders proposed to be part in the Farmer Support Forum may not be engaged in continuous dialogue.
4. *Preparation for initial Farmer Support Forum meeting (or Working Group if part of existing National Commodity Platform)*
 - a. Mapping and selection of stakeholders to participate in the Farmer Support Forum (the forum can be at either national or subnational level depending on the scope of work agreed with service provider).
 - b. Draft ToR for Farmer Support Forum tailored to local context
 - c. Agenda, objectives, invitation, logistics, etc.
5. *First meeting of the Farmer Support Forum*
 - a. Formal presentation of the general process, timelines, work plan
 - b. Presentation of background work that would need to be taken into account
 - c. Approval of ToR for the forum
 - d. Assess the need to conduct a "diagnosis study" (see assessment phase) based on previous studies and their results, country information gaps.
 - e. Agreement on country-specific timelines and process for delivery of final outcomes (farmer support implementation plan).
6. *Development of ToR and selection of the consultant for the diagnosis study (if required)*

STAGE 2: ASSESSMENT

Figure 6: Assessment stage overview

Estimated Duration	Number of Meetings	Key Outcomes
3 Month	One Farmer Support Forum Meeting (2 days)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosis Study (if needed) • Signed scorecard by Chair of Farmer Support Forum

This stage aims to assess the performance of the existing national/subnational farmer support system for sustainable commodity production. It consists of a quantitative exercise (diagnosis study) followed by a qualitative one (diagnosis scorecard). The 2nd meeting of the farmer support forum is conducted during this stage with the following key objectives:

- Stimulate initial discussion around the key elements of the analytical framework through presentation of the draft report from the diagnosis study
- Undertake the scorecard completion exercise
- Develop a shared understanding of the key strengths and weaknesses of the different service providers that are affecting each organization's performance;
- Explore what needs to be improved
- Record baseline situation (Year 0)

This meeting should run over 2 days to allow for sufficient time for discussion, completion of the scorecard and the definition of the initial recommendations for the next phase.

Diagnosis Study

The objective of the diagnosis study is to provide a baseline (i.e. the current situation of the existing farmer support system) as well as the necessary information needed for the scorecard exercise and future decision making. The study needs to be comprehensive and is expected to gather information on each of the 5 elements of the analytical framework presented in the previous section.

The scope for the analysis can be at national or subnational level depending on the initial request for support made by the service provider. The study needs to describe the farmer support system in the context of the specific commodity targeted in the country while bearing in mind that some elements of the system may be common to all farmers (not just small scale or commodity farmers) or applying to all crops.

In some countries, such an assessment might already have been conducted by the service provider or a development partner and the farmer support forum would need to decide if another study is needed (depending on existing information gaps and the date of the previous study).

A ToR template for the diagnosis study including consultant profile will be made available to practitioners in the guidance notes.

Diagnosis Scorecard

The farmer support system diagnosis scorecard (presented in a stand-alone Annex) is a qualitative exercise complementing the diagnosis study to be conducted by the Farmer Support Forum during a specific meeting. It proposes a set of **60 questions** structured around the farmer support system analytical framework. The scorecard is applicable at both national and subnational level.

While the answers might be at times subjective, the idea is to have a shared understanding by the key stakeholders involved of where we stand in terms of performance of the existing system. As there will be different views and debate on what is good or not (e.g. vision, pluralistic system, focus beyond production, delivery methods, etc.), discussion should be conducted by the facilitator about why there are divergent views and the scorecard will record this in the comments section. Similarly, the scorecard is also an opportunity to present initial recommendations for strengthening

the existing system as described in the example below (see the Diagnosis Scorecard document for the full list of questions):

2. Level of buy-in of stakeholders into the vision (level of shared vision)	None/Weak (0)	Limited (1)	Good (2)	Very Good (3)
		X		
Comments	<i>Ministry of Agriculture thinks that buy-in is high while private sector does not fully support vision. Overall group agree that the level of buy-in is 'limited'.</i>			
Recommendations for strengthening	<i>New vision needs to be developed as part of the next medium-term Development planning.</i>			

27. National curricula to train farmers on sustainable commodity production practices (e.g. client driven, based on international and national best practices, etc.)	No (0)	Under development (0)	Yes, but need improvement (1)	Yes Satisfactory (2)
		X		
Comments	<i>A national curriculum on sustainable production is being developed but without adequate consultation with other service providers training farmers (private sector and civil society)</i>			
Recommendations for strengthening	<i>Organise an inclusive review meeting within the next 3 months to present draft of National Curriculum</i>			

On a yearly basis, the scorecard can be refilled by the Farmer Support Forum to see how the score is progressing from one year to the next with the implementation of the recommendations proposed by the group.

Based on the experience of in-country piloting prior to conducting the scorecard exercise, the meeting organisers have the following options:

- Update the list of questions to better fit⁵ with the local context based on:
 - o Agreed scope of work (national or subnational level /commodity specific or broader agricultural sector)
 - o Locally specific sustainability issues
 - o Other locally specific considerations
- Translate the scorecard in local language

The local context should also be taken into account for deciding how the scorecard exercise will be conducted in order to obtain optimum information. Based on the experience of in-country piloting, 3 different options are proposed below.

⁵ If the scorecard is adapted, the different components/elements of the analytical framework should be maintained to ensure a systemic approach is followed. Similarly, the number of questions should be kept to a maximum of 60.

Options for conducting the scorecard exercise

One day multi-stakeholder meeting (visual exercise)	Facilitator go through questions one by one and stimulate discussion among the group ensuring all voices are heard as much as possible. Use of participatory visual exercise is recommended where participants put on a wall a post-it with their answer (no, limited, good, very good) in order for all to see visually where the majority stands.
One day multi-stakeholder meeting (use of interactive real time software such as mentimeter)	Requires internet connection in the room – and participants' access to smartphones. By using such software, the answer to the different questions can be provided anonymously by participants which could increase the rate of participation. In this case, it is important to ensure that we know participant's categorization to better understand the different perspectives (government, private sector, farmer organisation, civil society, etc.). The results are provided on screen in real time in order to trigger discussion. The software also calculates automatically where the majority stands.
Online questionnaire (e.g. Survey Monkey) in advance of the meeting + Multi-stakeholder meeting to discuss results	It is also possible to run the questionnaire online in advance of the meeting in order to ensure answers are provided anonymously and potentially get data from stakeholders who are not available for the meeting – results are then presented in the multi-stakeholder meeting to generate discussion (presenting both where the majority stand and the different perspectives of service providers). However, the response rate to such online questionnaire is likely to be low without 121 meetings with stakeholders in advance explaining the process in detail.

STAGE 3: COLLABORATIVE INPUTS INTO DECISION-MAKING

Figure 7: Collaborative inputs into decision-making stage overview

Estimated Duration	Number of Meetings	Key Outcomes
6 to 12 months	3 Farmer Support Forum meeting + task force and retreat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farmer support implementation plan and budget Individual service provider implementation plan

Developing the Farmer Support Implementation Plan and Budget

On the basis of the diagnosis study report and the scorecard exercise, this stage focuses on the development of a specific farmer support implementation plan and budget at national or subnational level. The entire process is conducted through the Farmer Support Forum and the key objective is to define together collective action and investment. This stage allows discussion about country specific optimal numbers (e.g. staff numbers, budget levels, budget allocations, etc.), ideal scenario/targets, as well as the roles and responsibilities to be determined in each component between main stakeholders. The template for the plan and budget is presented in the Guidance Notes.

Financing the Farmer Support Implementation Plan

The Farmer Support Implementation Plan should be considered as an investment framework that all stakeholders commit to work within. It is essential to ensure that actions are costed and assigned to a specific organisation in terms of leadership. Financing of the plan can come from many different sources: funding in existing budgets that is realigned so that it contributes to the plan objectives, or new funding that is committed to new activities. It can be public funding or private for-profit or not-for-profit investments. It can be cash, it can be in-kind and it can be loan financing. It can be national funding, international donor funding or foreign investment.

The work to cost out the actions should start at the beginning of the decision-making stage and the cost estimates should be one of the central decision-making parameters. The budget should be ambitious but realistic at the same time – striking a balance so that it presents a bold vision and ambition for a strengthened farmer support system, yet at

the same time remains a practical and achievable plan. No-one is helped by a wish-list that looks impressive on paper, but which cannot be carried out by the stakeholders, either for lack of willingness or because the actions in it cannot be funded. A key part of elaborating a Farmer Support Implementation plan is therefore to understand the cost of the proposed action, and how it will be financed over time. Estimating the cost of the action has several outcomes:

- Determine **who will pay**. Not surprisingly, an action will often seem much more attractive and necessary if someone else pays for it. Without estimating and assigning cost to their action, stakeholders may unwisely assume that someone else will pay. Careful budgeting helps avoid fantasy and wishful thinking in action planning. It should also show how partners will share costs and contribute in-kind resources such as staff time.
- **Bring stakeholders on the same page** as to size and ambition of each action. Without budget estimates, different stakeholders can have wildly different perceptions of the scope – and the cost – of action. Estimating cost will help make sure people are discussing the same thing.
- **Dedication to cost-effectiveness**. Often stakeholders will be weighing different solution models against one another. Forcing stakeholders to attach a cost to their proposals helps avoid them being carried away with seemingly awesome solutions, without concern for their high cost.
- **Identify gaps**. When determining the cost and who will finance a proposed action (it can be multiple parties financing the same action line), it will quickly be obvious where there might be funding gaps that need to be met for the action to be realistic. Understanding the gaps will allow the stakeholders to take targeted action to eliminate them – or find a more realistic alternative.
- Finally, costing the action adds **transparency in decision-making**, which is invaluable both for public and private sectors, and a hallmark of UNDP's support to countries.

Due to the central importance of financing, a specific **financing task force** should be set up during the decision-making stage in order to:

- Conduct a reality check on the initial budget proposed by the Farmer Support Forum;
- Further prioritise activities as needed;
- Develop a financing strategy exploring innovative revenue generation mechanisms and who can pay what;
- Report back to the group to adjust targets based on financial reality;
- Ensure that the organisations who must pay for the proposed actions are adequately represented in the Farmer Support Forum in order to secure their commitment before the plan is finalised.

Figure 8: Steps required for the development of the Farmer Support Implementation Plan and Budget (number of meetings and topics of discussion)

Forum Meeting 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review recommendations from scorecard workshop and background study • Presentation of decision making process, implementation plan template and timelines • Prioritisation exercise about key elements of the analytical framework to focus on based on country specificity • Setting up of specific task force based on priorities identified (on needs basis only)
Task Force Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start up of the development of the National Farmer Support System Implementation Plan identification of initial activities and budget for the priorities identified • First draft consolidated
Meeting 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task force report back in plenary on draft activities and budget need • Opportunity for comments - more debate on controversial issues • Set-up of financing task force
Financing Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct reality check on budget need proposed - further prioritisation as needed • Develop financing strategy exploring innovative revenue generation mechanisms and who can pay what • Report back to the group to adjust target based on financial reality
Retreat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-3 days meeting with selected key actors to consolidate implementation plan and budget • Farmer Support Implementation and Budget finalised
Meeting 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of final draft and official agreement • Request for each service provider to prepare their own individual implementation plan and agree on budgeting (based on the national/subnational plan)

STAGE 4: JOINT IMPLEMENTATION

Figure 9: Joint implementation stage overview

Estimated Duration	Number of Meetings	Key Outcomes
3 to 5 years (depend on funding / planning cycles of service providers)	3 per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual scorecard review Annual monitoring report

This stage focuses on the joint implementation and monitoring of the farmer support implementation plan. During this stage UNDP (or other organisations), who will have facilitated the process so far, hand over the responsibility for implementation to the government/'monitoring committee'⁶ with a remit to lead the process forward after a careful transition period. It is essential that the dialogue leads to concrete decisions and actions and during the transition, the following will require special attention:

- Preparing participants for their new roles (e.g. from Farmer Support Forum to Monitoring Committee)
- Maintaining momentum
- Ensuring long lasting political support to the process
- Financing mechanisms to secure operation of the Monitoring Committee
- Capacity and interest of stakeholders to oversee joint implementation activities
- Linking individual service providers' plans to the collective farmer support implementation plan
- Identifying multiple scenarios of what implementation and coordination look like.

During this phase, it is proposed that the 'Monitoring Committee' conduct 3 meetings per year:

- Q1 planning for year ahead and annual review of progress made on scorecard and agreement on monitoring mechanisms during year 1 (M&E framework, indicators, and measurement protocol)
- End of Q2: Review of progress made
- Q4: Review of progress made and planning for next year

RESOURCES REQUIRED

Team

The success of the multi-stakeholder collaboration approach to strengthen existing farmer support systems will depend mostly on the team of people managing it. The team as a collective need to provide farmer support expertise, process and relationship building skills as well as financing expertise – ideally, a team of 3 individuals supporting and accompanying the Farmer Support Forum during the various stages of the process before handing-over the process to the government/monitoring committee. Template ToRs for each role will be made available in the guidance notes.

- Farmer Support Advisor/Specialist (full time)
- Independent Facilitator (consultancy)
- Financing Expert (consultancy)

Farmer Support Advisor/Specialist

The farmer support advisor would need to have a strong existing network in the sector, in depth knowledge of farmer support (i.e. the different elements and elements of the analytical framework) and sustainability issues associated

⁶ In Countries with an existing UNDP National Commodity Platform, Monitoring Committees led by government are officially established at the end of the dialogue stage to lead on the implementation of the National Action Plan (see ToR for Monitoring Committee in the Guidance Notes).

with commodity production with strong analytical skills. His/her scope of work includes the following:

- Developing strong and trusting relationships with multiple stakeholders who have an interest in strengthening farmer support systems; Stakeholder mapping and engagement (e.g. scoping meetings with key service providers, follow-up meeting to strengthen buy-in, etc.),
- Developing a work plan for the various stages of the Multistakeholder collaboration approach;
- Delivering Farmer Support Forum meetings in collaboration with independent facilitator and with multiple stakeholders;
- Procuring and overseeing the work of project consultants to deliver quality outputs within time and financial expectations (e.g. consultant for diagnosis study);
- Overseeing the development of a high-quality Farmer Support Implementation Plan and budget.

Independent Facilitator

Having an independent facilitator to support the multi-stakeholder collaboration approach is essential. They underpin the neutral space that the UNDP offers to national/subnational dialogue on strengthening farmer support system. They will bring process expertise to the work, support the design of the various Farmer Support Forum meetings required during the process, to make the best use of all stakeholders' time – which they are giving for free. His/her scope of work includes the following:

- To understand the relationships between the different members of the Farmer Support Forum; power dynamics; the social, political and cultural context; and the historical background;
- To use tools to build consensus and generate trust between participants;
- Deliver independent process facilitation of Farmer Support Forum meetings to support meeting stated objectives
 - To guide participants by generating curiosity and asking respectful questions, without siding with any of the groups.
 - To listen, understand and return to the group what is being said in order to promote reflection.
 - To keep the group focused on the subject at hand in order to keep momentum.
 - To summarize and emphasize agreements and disagreements.
- To prepare facilitation notes and design of agendas for Farmer Support Forum meetings to support the logical flow of content and group process dynamics;
- To record what happens during the different stage.

The facilitator does not need to be an expert on farmer support system/extension services but rather someone with a proven track record in facilitating multi-stakeholder processes for sustainable development.

Financing Expert

Facilitating the meetings of the financing task force and ensuring the costing of the actions for the Farmer Support Implementation Plan is likely to require specific skills that might not be available from the existing team (e.g. farmer support coordinator and/or independent facilitator). Some of the specific skills required for the financing expert include the following

- **Budget insights** - needs to understand numbers and talk the language of the people who are responsible for paying for the action. Without it, it will be hard to build trust and rapport with stakeholders.
- **Understanding public budgeting and decision-making processes.** It will be hard to steer public institutions towards commitment to action without an intimate understanding of how government agencies and public decision-making works.
- **Fundraising skills.** Fundraising is a special talent, and here it is meant in the broadest sense of the word: to convince everyone to fund everything in the implementation plan, and to be able to package it attractively and convincingly.
- **Negotiation skills** with companies and public agencies. While ideally the actors should see their own benefit in developing collective investment for farmer support, active facilitation will often be required. This requires ability to sell interventions as attractive opportunities for companies and public agencies alike. For public decision making

the expert must be able to lay out the political rationale for the investments, along with the more technical merits of the interventions. With companies, hard-driving and bold negotiation, as opposed to timid requests, will sometimes be required. The expert must understand how to use the leverage that each investor will invest alongside other actors, and thereby may derive synergies from joint investment.

- **Understanding of best practices and innovative financing mechanisms for farmer support systems.**

Budget

A generic 18-month budget which is the estimated time required for the first 3 stages of the process (before reaching implementation and handing over the process to the government/monitoring committee) is available on request. This budget is amounting to around **USD 200,000** and would need to be adapted during project design according to UNDP Country Office specificities.



CONCLUSION

Improved farmer support systems are key to the work of UNDP. We support governments in taking the lead to create national environments where sustainable commodity sectors can grow. Through multi-stakeholder National Commodity Platforms, GCP works to strengthen the national enabling environments of key agricultural commodity sectors by promoting: 1) Improved extension systems; 2) Policy/legislation reform and enforcement in agricultural land use; 3) Improved economic incentives for sustainable production; and 4) Intra- and inter-sector coordination. By bringing our multi-stakeholder expertise to farmer support systems, we aim to create lasting improvements in smallholders' productivity and ecological impacts. We look forward to feedback from practitioners who will pilot this approach in their respective countries in 2020.

GUIDANCE NOTES

These guidance notes will be developed in phases in 2020-2021 and presented to practitioners through [UNDP GCP's Community of Practice](#) and partner organisations:

- Farmer Support Implementation Plan and Budget;
- Generic 18 months budget to conduct the process;
- ToR for Farmer Support Forum;
- ToR for Diagnosis Study;
- Importance of facilitation and how to ensure quality of debate;
- Guidance on how to develop a common vision for the future;
- ToR for Farmer Support Advisor, Independent Facilitator and Financing Expert;
- Example of Innovative Financing Mechanisms for Farmer Support Systems/ Best Practices;
- Discussion papers on experience of country piloting;
- ToR for Monitoring Committee.

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GFRAS BEST PRACTICES

The Global Good Practices Initiative was initiated by the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) to provide a knowledge platform for practitioners, in which theoretical and practical know-how on extension and practical experiences is collected and systematized in an easily accessible and usable form as a public good. All global good practice notes are available here <http://www.g-fras.org/en/ggp-home.html> and include information on the following:

Policy Environment/ Governance Structure

Agricultural Innovation Systems

Private Sector Provision of Rural Advisory Services

The Role of Producer Organisations in RAS

Innovative Financing Mechanisms for Demand Driven Agricultural Advisory Services

Organisational & Management Capacities

Management Advice for Family Farms to Strengthen Entrepreneurial Skills

Professionalisation of Rural Advisory Services

Rural Advisory Services for Agripreneurship Development

Advisory Methods

Rural Advisory Services Curriculum Development

Community Knowledge Workers for Rural Advisory Services

Edutainment TV for disseminating information about agriculture

Enabling Rural Innovation

Extension campaigns

Farmer Field Schools

Farmer Study Circles

Farmer-to-farmer Extension

Innovation Platforms

Navigating ICTs for Extension and Advisory Services

Extension - Mobile Phones for Agricultural Advisory Services

Mobile Based Bundled Services

Plant Health Clinics

Rural Resource Centres: A Community Approach to Agricultural Extension

Service Provision by Agri-Cooperatives Engaged in High Value Markets

Social Media for Rural Advisory Services

Using Radio in Agricultural Extension

Videos for Agricultural Extension

Web Portals for Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services



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