



THE UGANDA FORUM FOR AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY SERVICES (UFAAS)

UFAAS CASE STUDY # 4: UFAAS' ENGAGEMENT IN THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION POLICY REFORMS AND PROCESSES IN UGANDA

Introduction

The Uganda Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (UFAAS), under the advocacy and lobbying component of its strategic plan, committed to contributing to creation of an enabling environment for efficient and effective provision of Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS). UFAAS also set itself to promote professionalism, and ethical conduct in AEAS system in Uganda. The Forum endeavours to support policy and practice in AEAS, through evidence based lobbying and advocacy, as well as sensitization and engagement with all relevant stakeholders. It is always convinced of need to address some fundamental issues that affect the actors and the farmers who are the ultimate beneficiaries. It is against this background therefore, that UFAAS has contributed to and participated in a number of policy issues that impact on the AEAS in Uganda.

Participating in the Agricultural Extension Reforms

The Government of Uganda decided to restructure the public agricultural extension services with a goal of enhancing effectiveness so as to achieve agricultural transformation and rural poverty eradication. Key aspects of the restructuring agenda include; (i) Mainstreaming of the NAADS extension functions into MAAF (Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry & Fisheries) at national level and the local governments at district and lower levels to eliminate the existing parallel extension systems, (ii) Restructuring of the National Agricultural Advisory services (NAADS), that was the mandated national extension programme into a lean unit whose role will be limited to procurement of value addition equipment to support strategic interventions in agriculture such as seedlings and breeding stock, (iii) Deployment of army personnel at constituency level to distribute agricultural inputs, monitor and ensure that government interventions reach the beneficiaries.

Since the beginning of these reforms in 2003 up to date, UFAAS has been actively involved in advocating and advising on the extension direction. Below are some of the remarkable experiences from participating in the agricultural extension reform processes:

Bringing together actors to discuss and dialogue on critical issues at hand: UFAAS has organized several fora in partnership with other actors, to discuss and dialogue on the reform critical issue at hand. The key ones have been:

- In April 2013, UFAAS in partnership with the National Planning Authority (NPA) and Makerere University (School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences), UFAAS organized a meeting to dialogue with stakeholders on agricultural reforms with a special focus on the Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS) policy in Uganda. Over 70 participants drawn from the donor community, civil society, private sector, state house, farmers, academia, media, MAAIF, NAADS, local government attended. They recommended: an analysis of the various models of extension; to review policy, harmonization of the parallel structures in the government extension approach; professionalising the extension services; increasing the agriculture budget; strengthening accountability and monitoring systems; reorienting people's mind-sets/attitudes towards NAADS. Two articles were produced in relation (one before and one after) and a policy brief written, published and sent to all the stakeholders.

- In line with its vision and mission UFAAS, has so far organized two national events bringing together 171 and 126 AEAS actors in 2013 and 2014, respectively, to discuss pertinent issues including the ongoing reforms. In the first one for example, the proposed reforms in Uganda's Agricultural Extension System were presented by a representative of the Ministry's review task force, and after which participants gave their inputs. The second one in October 2014, under the theme of "Uganda's Agriculture at Crossroads: Critical issues in the Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS) System", culminated into a declaration by all the actors who participated.

Dissemination of critical issues to relevant stakeholders:

All the inputs of the AEAS actors during the various interactions have always been consolidated into position papers and declarations below, which have been continuously shared with various stakeholders including the Ministry of Agriculture and published in the local press. The main ones have been:

- An article on "Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services at Crossroads: Policy Dilemma and what Lessons for Uganda" by *Kisamba Mugerwa, Dr. Silim Nahdy and Dr. Margaret Mangeni.*-April 2013
- *Position papers* on the "Proposed Reforms to Mainstream Extension into MAAIF and restructure NAADS into the National Agribusiness Promotion Agency (NAPA)"-May 2014; "Involvement of the Army in Agricultural Service Delivery" –August 2014 and the "Immediate Implications and Effects of the Current Agricultural Extension Reforms at Field Level"- October 2014.
- A *Declaration* by over 100 AEAS actors on "The Agricultural Extension Reforms in Uganda"- October 2014

UFAAS Mileage in the Reform Process

Though bringing together actors to discuss relevant policy issues, providing feedback and evidence to policy makers and share through published position papers, policy briefs and declarations, UFAAS has made commendable strides towards influencing and supporting the agricultural extension direction in Uganda. The remarkable ones have been:

- The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal industries and Fisheries (MAAIF) acting upon some of the AEAS actors' recommendations from the various fora



The Minister of State, Animal Resources (Hon. Rwamirama), with the chairperson-UFAAS and legislators at the 2013 conference

highlighted above, the key ones being: the formation of the Agricultural extension directorate to provide much needed leadership to agricultural extension services at national level; comes up with a concrete policy and strategy document clearly stipulating the modalities of the reform process including roles of the agricultural extension actors/institutions, and approaches in the proposed single spine structure. This should aim at streamlining actors for harmonized and well-coordinated action; and consulting the different stakeholders including farmers on all processes

- UFAAS being recognised and a key player in the national agricultural extension system by the MAAIF and as a result, the forum was : consulted and gave inputs on the "Plant Variety Protection Bill No. 2" and "Plant Protection and Health Bill No. 3" ; selected to led the Extension Committee during the Agriculture Sector Development Strategy and Investment Planning process for 2016-2020; requested to draft the guiding ethics and standards for extension; invited to participate in the framework implementation plan for the new single spine extension system; and is currently participating in the Technical Working Group (TWG) charged with the formulation of the new National Agricultural Extension Policy (NAEP) and strategy.

Although, there are several issues raised by the actor that have not yet been addressed, UFAAS commends MAAIF for its current efforts aimed at streamlining and operationalising the extension system. The forum will remain committed to promoting and contributing to an efficient and effective AEAS system in Uganda.

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