

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION WORLDWIDE

William M. Rivera and Susan G. Schram, eds. 1987. London, New York, Sydney: Croom Helm Ltd.

This publication is a set of 16 papers presented at a colloquium series organised by the Centre for International Extension Development at the University of Maryland, U.S.A. It looks it, too, with word-processed papers with weak to non-existent continuity from one to another, no illustrations and few readable charts and tables. Reading a conference proceedings is, in my experience, a far cry from attending a conference, in person. This book, nevertheless, captures several interesting points that would be of interest to those involved in agricultural extension projects in developing countries and those studying international agricultural extension.

The text is divided into three sections dealing with (1) issues, (2) practices, and (3) emerging priorities. The issues section raises several interesting questions such as "Does agricultural extension really make a difference in a country's ability to produce food?: and, "What is the role the growing private sector extension activities vis-a-vis government sponsored and financially supported agricultural extension?" Other chapters in the issues section deal with questions relating to administrative decentralization, policy environments and research-extension linkages. The latter area emphasizes the need to have strong research programs as a basis for extension. Without such research, there is not much to extend - a particular important from the technology transfer perspective. In several cases, the extension agent does not emphasize the research-extension linkage but rather is lead into becoming a government bureaucrat helping farmers complete subsidy application forms! The emphasis on research-extension linkages is a particularly strong aspect of this text.

The second section on "Practices" looks at several case studies of extension activities in various countries and relates what seemed to be the chief factors in success. Several references are made to the Training and Visit (T & V) system of agricultural extension, a system refined by the World Bank and now being used in at least 40 countries. It is a well integrated technique that relies on the basic principles of agricultural extension that were typical of Canada 50 years ago. It implies a strong problem solving, research-extension linkage with an emphasis on individualized, face-to-face communication - a contrast to the mass media, technological and business-oriented agricultural extension of many developed countries. Chapter 9 on Training & Visit Extension

provides a particularly good description of the various components of this extension technique.

The third section of the book focuses on emerging priorities; the best chapter in this section, deals with designing agricultural extension for women farmers in developing countries. Since, in many of these countries, most of the food production is the primary activity of women, then the extension agents should also be women. Anyone who has seen agricultural extension in practice in developing countries knows this is not the case. The chapter raises several questions and suggests possible revisions to extension systems to make them more used by and useful to women.

While this book uses the word "Worldwide" in its title, it really is a misnomer since little reference is made to South and Central America or to Western developed countries. A better title would have been "International Agricultural Extension - Some Issues, Programs and Priorities. Many of the papers in the book are written by World Bank staff from a World Bank perspective. A broader perspective could have included at least one Canadian presentation since Canadian leadership in human resources development at the international level is now becoming a priority.

Despite the misnomer of the title, and despite the boring book design, this text raises several interesting questions about the development of agricultural extension at the international level. Its emphasis on research-extension linkages, its description of the T & V system and its raising the question of the nature of extension services to women farmers are particularly valuable. Each chapter also has a comprehensive bibliography. This text is not going to hit number one on the non-fiction best seller list but it does provide some useful gems of issues and program ideas for those involved in international agriculture. As such, it fills a gap in the literature in the fields of agricultural extension and adult education.

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