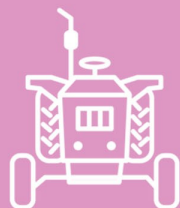


NO. \_  
APRIL  
2019



Supporting Smallholder  
Farmers in Asia and Pacific  
Islands Region through  
Strengthened Agricultural  
Advisory Services  
(SAAS Project)

# BEST PRACTICE NOTES



## AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES EXTENSION NETWORK: ESTABLISHING PARTNESHIPS TO HARMONIZE THE PLURALISTIC EXTENSION AND ADVISORY SERVICES IN THE PHILIPPINES

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### 5 Key Points

#### 1. Challenges and constraints

- Devolution of extension services
- Pluralistic and fragmented extension
- Duplication of extension services
- Confused farmers

#### 2. Objective

To establish a mechanism that harmonizes all extension and advisory services of diverse extension service providers

#### 3. Methodology

- Initial consultations
- Organization of the AFEN
- Regionalizing the AFEN
- Engaging in collaborative activities

#### 4. Highlight of Results

- Harmonization of programs, plans and reports of member agencies
- Development of extension policies, standards, and other enabling mechanisms
- Capability building of member agencies
- Sharing of good extension practices and results of extension research
- Collaborations in extension projects

#### 5. Recommendation

- Periodically review AFEN functions & relevance
- Capacitate involved personnel on network operations and management
- Sustain activities that have high impact
- Build strategic alliance with other networks
- Innovate on how to improve the operations of the network

### Introduction

- Pluralism in extension and advisory services (EAS) is a global phenomenon described as diversity of service providers in which advisory services are provided by different actors and funded from different sources. Its emergence is argued to be relevant since farmers are highly diverse, differing in resources, gender, market access, crops and livestock systems, and therefore require different types of information and services to achieve sustainable productivity growth and better livelihoods (Bitzer, et. al. 2016). Pluralistic extension is also believed to have the potential to make services more inclusive, responsive to demand, context-specific and based on multiple knowledge sources (Birner et al., 2006; Spoor, 2015).
- The devolution of EAS in the Philippines in 1991 and the call to modernize its agriculture and fisheries through the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act of 1997 (AFMA) gave rise to the emergence of multiple EAS providers from national government agencies and state universities and colleges, local government units and the private sector. The AFMA provides for the formation of these actors into National Extension System for Agriculture and Fisheries (NESAF).
- Pluralism, however, made EAS fragmented and lacked coherence due to the absence of effective coordination. EAS providers often duplicate extension programs on the same clients and at times send contradictory extension messages. This is particularly true for farmers who practice diversified farming, where farmers cultivating rice as clients of government's Rice Program are the same clients of Livestock and other commodity Programs since they too are livestock raisers and producers of high value crops and other commodities. This scenario left farmers confused.
- Recognizing the nature of Philippine EAS as pluralistic resulted in the establishment of the Agriculture and Fisheries Extension Network (AFEN), the major partnership mechanism of the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) with the journey of harmonizing EAS for a unified extension system.

## Methodology

- **Preliminary activities.** AFEN was preceded in 2002 with a formation of a Work Group called Extension Support, Education and Training Services (ESETS) under the auspices of the Planning Service of the Department of Agriculture (DA) to harmonize all its services by major final outputs (MFO). ATI was designated as Focal Agency of then MFO-ESETS Work Group. The purpose was to achieve efficiency in planning, monitoring and evaluation of ESETS.
- **Organization of national AFEN.** Through a DA special order in 2004, AFEN at the national level was organized with 28 original member agencies (all from DA) and retaining ATI as Focal Agency. Each member agency was represented by a focal person and an alternate. More than PME efficiency, AFEN aimed to harmonize EAS for unified AFE delivery.
- **Regionalization of AFEN.** Through an ATI memorandum order in 2005, ATI-Regional Training Centers were instructed to organize their regional AFENs or RAFEN. RAFENs are organized through memoranda of understanding (MOU) among member agencies, basically those from the NESAF.
- **Engaging in collaborative activities.** AFEN at the national and regional levels operate based on mutually-agreed activities, which include regular meetings and learning events and other activities aimed to strengthen and harmonize the NESAF.

## Key Findings

- As of 2018, the national AFEN sustained its active operations since its establishment in 2004. Of the 15 Regions nationwide, 10 RAFENs are active, 4 irregular and 1 inactive. One Region extended the organization of AFEN to the provinces.
- AFEN both at the national and regional/provincial levels is instrumental in the following milestones to advance the Philippine AFE:
  - Harmonization of ESETS plans and budget as well as reports of accomplishments .
  - Development of extension policies, standards, programs and other enabling mechanisms.
    - ⇒ Agriculture and Fisheries Extension Bill

- ⇒ National Extension Agenda and Programs (NEAP)
- ⇒ AFE Strategic Plan
- ⇒ AFE Operational Plans
- ⇒ Extension terminologies
- ⇒ Mechanisms for planning, monitoring and evaluation
  - Capability building of member-agencies
  - Sharing of good agricultural extension practices (GAEP) and extension research
  - Collaboration in extension projects and activities.
  - Representation as member in the Extension Service Providers Advisory Council
  - Ease of transmitting central direction from DA
- While to a relative degree, AFEN was able to fulfill its role to provide linkage and coordination within the pluralistic NESAF, it is organizationally weak enough as it failed to include all actors in the NESAF as part of the network. AFEN also still needs to build partnership with research and other functional groups. Moreover, there remains high expectation on the contribution of AFEN in the implementation of NEAP and AFE Strategic Plan 2017-2022.

## Recommendations and Conclusion

- Leveraging on its strengths and potentials, AFEN will be able to address its weaknesses and fully fulfill its functions given the following recommendations:
  - Periodically review its functions and work on its relevance;
  - Build the capacity of personnel involved in the AFEN on network operations and management;
  - Come up with concrete plan on the operations of AFEN both at the national and regional/provincial levels;
  - Sustain the activities that have high impact;
  - Build strategic alliance with other extension networks and organizations for possible knowledge exchange;
  - Continuously innovate on how to improve the operations of the network.
- The journey for harmonization of EAS in the Philippines for a unified AFE delivery is far way to go. The role of AFEN remains crucial and must be sustained.

### CONTACT DETAILS

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