

A STUDY ON INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF PARTICIPATORY AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION IN BA RIA -VUNG TAU PROVINCE

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INTRODUCTION

A participatory extension methodology, hereafter referred to the Participatory Technology Development (PTD), has been introduced in Ba Ria - Vung Tau (BR-VT) province since 2005 through Participatory Agricultural Extension Programs funded by VVOB (Flemish Association for Development Co-operation and Technical Assistance (Belgium donor organization). Though it is assessed as a new agricultural extension methodology that can meet farmers' needs, PTD has not been officialized within the BR-VT agricultural extension system. The reasons are that legal documents have not been issued, and there have no appropriate adjustments of PTD methodology in the context of BR-VT province. A research on "Institutionalization of the participatory agricultural extension methodology" in BR-VT" was carried out to make recommendations that help to encourage application of participatory agricultural extension methodology within BR-VT agricultural extension system. The research was carried out based on implemented results of the participatory agricultural extension methodology in BR-VT in the period of 2005-2010 through institutional approaches and qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and reference of relevant methodological documents.

RESULTS

The study pointed out findings as following:

- *Legal basis:* PTD methodology is highly appropriate to be applied in agricultural extension activities as this participatory extension methodology is one of four extension methods suggested by the National and Fishery and Agricultural Extension Center (NAFEC), and in line with Decree No. 02/2010/ND-CP dated 8 January, 2010 of the Government regulating on fishery and extension regulations. The article 3 of the Degree No. 02 stipulated principles of agricultural extension activities that are similar to PTD principles: (i) Be based on farmers' needs; (ii) Encourage active and voluntary participation of local people; (iii) Link scientific research institutes, enterprises with farmers and farmers with farmers; (iv) and supervise community development activities.
- *Relevance between PTD and BR-VT agricultural extension activities:* This relevance is seen in several activities, i.e. experimentation of new things (agricultural extension models), study tours, monitoring and evaluation of agricultural extension models, financial support, training and capacity building, field conference, elaboration of extension clubs, extension planning. The PTD methodology gives additional points to agricultural extension activities, i.e. (i) monitoring and evaluation of agricultural extension models; (ii) elaboration of extension clubs; (iii) needs based planning
- On the basis of research results, there are some suggestions on PTD institutionalization policies into agricultural extension activities as follows:

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(i) *Set up a network of commune extension workers*

(ii) *Set up and manage farmers/extension clubs:* In principle, the PTD methodology only works in a group of people, so an extension club is precondition for PTD implementation. In order to institutionalize PTD methodology in BR-VT, it needs to set up extension clubs at village/hamlet level (as indicated in the Decree No. 02). An extension club should be operated in a relation with

provincial agricultural activities, or with provincial agricultural development orientation. Club members should have same interests in agricultural production (Table 1).

Table 1. Opinions of farmers' participation in an agricultural extension club

Characteristics of club members	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Have same interests	41	53.2
Live in the same areas	33	42.9
Be not too rich or too poor	19	24.7
Enjoy learning and applying technical sciences	60	77.9

(Source: Survey results of opinions of members of 8 extension clubs that have been involved in PAEX, 2010).

(iii) *Needs based extension planning*

Existing extension planning is approached in a bottom-up way; however, there were a few farmers participate in this process. As

a consequence, extension plans are not really close to the farmers' needs. A model of participatory extension planning – extension plan allocation is suggested as shown in the Figure 1.

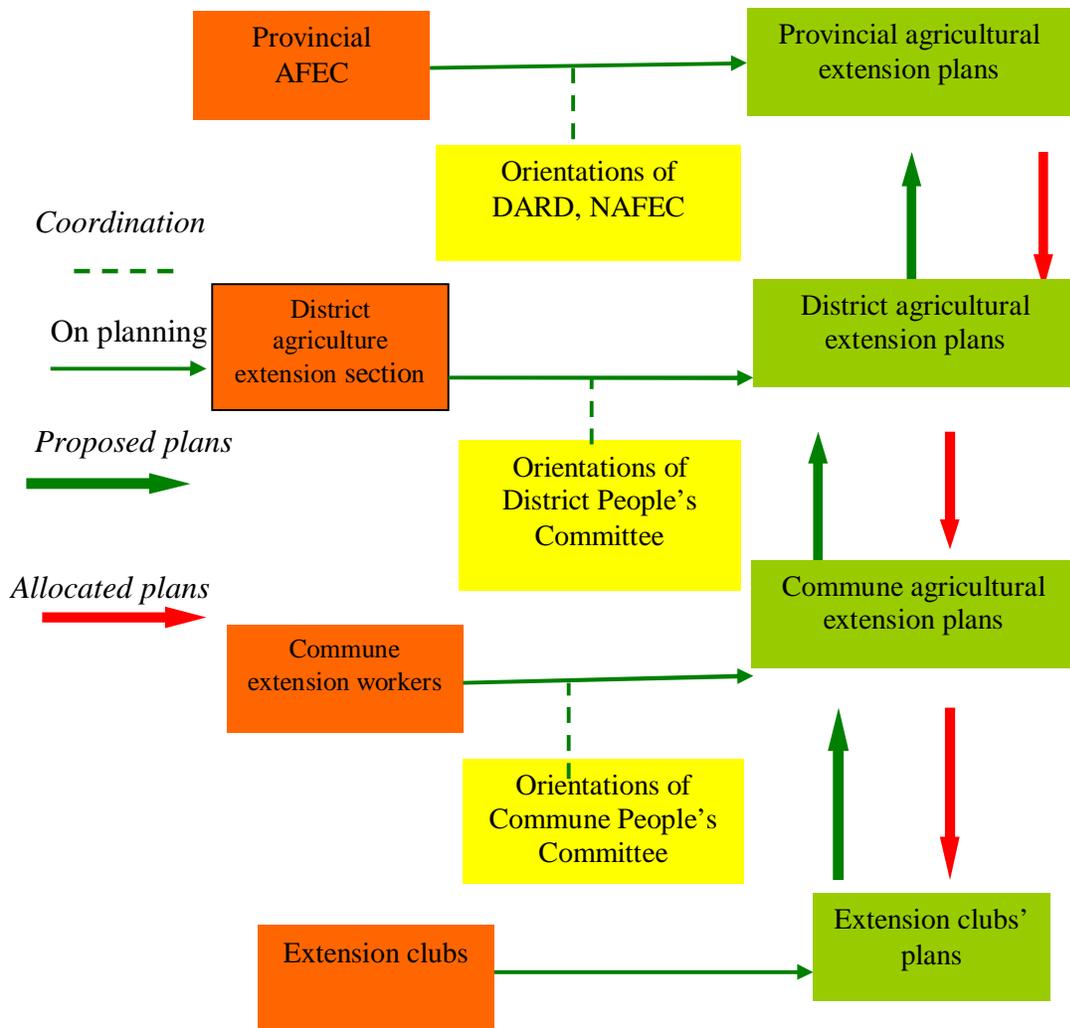


Figure 1. A model of participatory agricultural extension planning

(iv) Coordination mechanism with researchers, scientists

With regard to the PTD process, it needs to get a linkage among 3 stakeholders: farmers – extension workers – researchers/scientists. To achieve this, it reveals that Agriculture and Fishery Extension Center (AFEC) should develop long-term extension projects, including PTD application. In that case,

researchers/scientists can be directly involved in/work with extension workers as indicated in the PTD process. This proposal is relatively feasible because it is clearly indicated in the project “Agriculture and Fishery Extension Development in the period of 2010 – 2015 and vision 2020: “Create conditions for research institutes/agencies to be involved in key agricultural extension programs of the basis of annual projects (MARD, 2008).



Competition of farmers on knowledge of participatory extension method



Village mapping of farmer club - hamlet 1, Hoa Binh commune, Xuyen Moc district, BR-VT extension method



Study tours of farmer clubs to Mekong Delta Region



Evaluation workshop of Training of Trainer (ToT) on participatory agricultural extension methods