

## **IFA International Workshop on Effective Last-Mile Delivery 10-12 February 2010, New Delhi, India**

### Main findings and recommendations

#### **Background**

- Agriculture is a source of livelihood for billions, but is also a reservoir of poverty.
- There is significant variation in political, social, cultural, language, legal and administrative systems, technology adoption across and even within countries.
- Productivity is stagnating in many regions, and the gap between potential and actual yields is very wide, even with existing technologies. There is a need to produce more from increasingly scarce natural resources.
- The Green Revolution required less knowledge-intensive solutions than today.
- There is a decreasing interest in farming as full-time occupation.

#### **Characteristics of current last-mile delivery systems in developing countries**

- Mostly centralized top-down delivery (training and visits) systems, developed during the Green Revolution era, primarily driven by the government agencies.
- Focus on production targets of specific crops resulting in change in traditional cropping systems.
- Government extension agencies lack resources and motivated staff to perform as expected.
- Private sector extension is mostly driven by product sales rather than by development of long-term relationship based on trust and reciprocal benefit.
- Demonstration-based approaches are hardly scalable.

#### **Concern areas**

- Weakness of the knowledge transfer content (poor quality) and methodologies (poor efficiency) in developing countries.
- Absence of site-specific and customized knowledge, and widespread inability to deliver real-time knowledge to farmers.
- Lack of user-friendly decision-making support tools that are interactive and tailored to local needs.
- Multiple stakeholders involved in extension (government agencies, private companies, multi-lateral institutions, NGOs, etc.) with little coordination and often inconsistent messages.
- Lack of solution packages (inputs, credit, procurement...). Contract farming is still little practiced.
- Few solutions for small and marginal farmers. Little attention is paid to female farmers.
- Lack of accountability in delivery of information and services.
- Lack of continued and long-term engagement of the private sector with the farmers: mostly transactional approach.
- Expected role of the government is not clear: is it to supply extension infrastructure, or to supplement or support efforts by the other stakeholders? Varying role probably depending on the countries and regions within countries.

#### **Key learning from the workshop**

- Efficient knowledge transfer requires the right information at the right time in the right format from the right (trusted) source with the right feedback.
- Effective last-mile delivery requires demand-driven extension, participatory interactions and win-win solutions that help build trust and long-term relationship.

- Only multi-stakeholder partnerships can make a sizeable difference in developing-agriculture countries. Stakeholders shall share common goals and messages.
- It is possible to make a difference, if the needs are clearly understood and the delivery system is accountable.
- Farmers are more receptive to the delivery of package of information/solutions. Technology has to be accessible and make application simple.
- Services are more difficult to sell than products. Farmers are more inclined towards services when their knowledge level increases.
- Consistent simple-to-understand messages, and interactive real-time delivery make more sense. Messages have to be adapted to local language and culture.
- ICT can supplement, not supplant physical interface, hence the need to scale-up, diversify and decentralize extension workforce.
- Peer-farmer behaviour is and remains a major change driver.
- One-size-fits-all model cannot work in diverse farming systems → models have to be tailored to local context.
- A more comprehensive approach is required in Africa as access to input and output markets is the number one constraint. Knowledge transfer should be considered in close connection with market access. Never promote solutions that are not available. Solutions are more complicated in Africa because of more diverse cropping systems.

#### **Action areas for moving forward**

- Evolve collaborative models and quickly scale-up successful ones. Involve new players like telecom operators, IT providers, NGOs, farmers' organizations with traditional government agencies, private sector and research institutions.
- Creation of common pools of knowledge which are customized and localized along the Wikipedia model.
- Stakeholders to agree on a few common and simple messages.
- Creation of a trained pool of certified knowledge extension workers. Foster accountability in last-mile-delivery of knowledge. Extension should lead to targeted and measurable improvements.
- Involve agro dealers to exponentially increase extension reach. Mandatory certification programmes for opening/continuing dealership would be desirable. Might be useful to extend certification programmes to NGOs.
- Strengthen capacity of farmers' associations/cooperatives.
- Leveraging ICT infrastructure and developments to deliver interactive, site-specific, real-time information. How to measure outcome of ICT investments?
- Packaging end-to-end and comprehensive information from seed to market.
- Need to continuously have similar kind of discussions, and also within companies and national associations.
- Develop inter-industry interactions (all inputs, ICT, credit/insurance, etc.).