

Attitude and Preferences of Agricultural Scientists Towards Privatization of Agricultural Extension Service

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The fast changing trends in Indian agriculture demands the client accountable and demand-driven extension approach to provide cost-effective, bottom-up, farmer participatory extension service for clients to increase productivity and income. In the near future, privatization of agricultural extension service is an inviting proposition. Before effecting such changes, it was felt necessary to know the attitude and preferences of agricultural scientists towards privatization of agricultural extension. Measuring attitude as a psychological natural tendency provides basis for planning and also affect desirable changes in the existing system. The prime objective of the study was to know the attitude and preferences of scientists towards privatization of agricultural extension service.

Operational Definition on of Attitude Towards PAES

Attitude towards privatization of agricultural extension service refers to the “individual’s degree of favorableness or unfavorableness towards privatization of agricultural extension service.

Operational definition of privatization of agricultural extension service (PAES)

“Privatization of agricultural extension service refers to the services rendered in the area of agriculture and allied aspects by extension personnel working in the private agencies or organizations for which farmers are expected to pay

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fee and it can be viewed as supplementary or alternative to public extension service”.

METHODOLOGY

The investigation was conducted in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu state, during March and April 1999. Forty scientists representing the agricultural Social Science disciplines such as, agricultural extension, agricultural economics and who was much exposed to agricultural development and policy issues were selected from TNAU, SBI and CJCR at Coimbatore. A summated rating scale has been administered (Saravanan and Shivalinge Gowda, 1999) to collect the data from the respondents. Based on the attitude scores, the respondents were categorized into three categories considering mean and standard deviation as measure of check.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Attitude of Scientists towards PAES

Attitude Category	Attitude Score (max:105, min: 21)	Scientists (n = 40)	
		Number	Percent
Least favourable	≤ 60.43	11.00	27.50
Favourable	60.44 - 78.81	20.00	50.00
Most Favourable	≥ 78.82	9.00	22.50

The results of the study revealed that a good number of scientists had (50.00 percent) favorable and (22.50 percent) most favorable attitude. However, more than one fourth proportion of the scientists had least favorable attitude towards privatization of agricultural extension service.

Favorable attitude of higher proportion of scientists is attributed mainly by the following positive aspects of privatization. Going privatization is expected

to ease the financial burden of government, enhances the over all efficiency of agricultural extension system, private extension system provides farmers' need based advisory services, and farmers are more committed to the services and they follow advice of private extension workers. Some proportion of scientists also had least favorableness, because of private agricultural extension service not suitable to small and marginal farmers and rain fed area provides less scope for private extension.

Research results reported that (Saravanan *et al.*, 1999) scientists had great agreement with statements like privatization increases the accountability of extension personnel to farmers, enhances production of commercial crops, ensures quality extension service, increases professionalism, creates additional income to farmers and enhance the farmers commitment to extension service.

Scientists Preferences

With respect to preference towards privatization of agricultural extension service the results indicated that, nearly half proportion of the scientists (47.5 percent) preferred privatization in all the crops invariably, nearly same percent of scientists (45 percent) preferred privatization only for commercial agricultural and horticultural crops. Majority of the scientists preferred privatization for all the categories of farmers (55 percent) and nearly half of the proportion of scientists (45 percent) preferred privatization only for large farmers. Majority of the scientists (75 percent) preferred privatization in all agro-climatic regions.

The results also indicated that, scientists had two different types of responses, considerable proportion of scientists preferred privatization only for commercial agricultural and horticultural crops, only to big farmers and wet land areas only. This might be due to the fact that the commercial agencies concentrate their activities on areas having favorable environment such as fertile soil, sufficient irrigation, resourceful big farmers, and cash crop growing areas. However, majority of scientists also preferred privatization in all the categories of farmers, in all crops which might be due to the assumption that, farmers

even though poor, they will be willing to pay for the service, whose expected service value is greater than the cost, extension is an economic input and generates new income (Keynan *et al.*, 1997).

Conclusion

Results of the investigation clearly indicates that scientists had favorable attitude and also expecting desirable consequences of privatization. Considering heterogeneity in the Indian farming privatization should be experimented in a phased manner.

References

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