



## MY MEETING NOTES

Webinar on  
MANAGE Agricultural Extension 'Evening for Learning' Webinar Series,  
19-30 November 2022.



This meeting note by Akshita Chadda and Deepak Chand Meena summarizes the 12-day MANAGE Agricultural Extension 'Evening for Learning' webinar series, conducted by the National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management, Hyderabad, India (MANAGE) from 19–30 November 2022.

### CONTEXT

Agricultural extension, a powerful and effective system of sharing information, knowledge, technology, and skills across agricultural sub-sectors and along all the stages of the agricultural supply chain, plays a pivotal role in boosting agricultural productivity, ensuring food security, improving rural livelihoods, and promoting agriculture as an engine of pro-poor economic growth.

The poster features the MANAGE logo on the left. The main text reads: 'MANAGE Agricultural Extension Webinar Series (Online) 19-30 November 2022 19.00-20.30 pm (IST)'. Below this, it lists 'Agricultural Extension' with the goal 'To meet the new challenges in the agri-food systems', 'MANAGE Agricultural Extension Webinar Series' with '12 topics that covers the multidimensional aspects of evolving extension', and 'Inviting Registrations' for 'From the agricultural extension students, faculty, scientists, subject matter specialists and extension professionals of public- private and civil society organisations.' The right side of the poster is a circular graphic containing a word cloud of terms such as 'Agro Tourism', 'FPO', 'Natural Farming', 'Social Media', 'ICT', 'Value Chain Extension', 'Startups', 'New Extensionists', 'Global Good Practices', 'Agripreneurship', 'Research in Extension', 'ToT', 'Startups IC', 'agricultural extension', and 'Climate Resilient Agriculture'.

MANAGE, a top-tier organization under the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare of India, successfully completed a 12-day Webinar Series on “MANAGE Agricultural Extension 'Evening for Learning'” from 19-30 November 2022. The series was aimed at drawing attention to emerging concerns around agricultural extension and highlighting innovative strategies and technological advancements in

it. Around 2025 participants comprising M.Sc. and Ph.D. students, scientists, university faculty, subject matter specialists and others from all over India participated in the webinar series.

## SESSIONS

### Webinar 1: Agricultural Extension: An Exciting Profession for the Future

This session was conducted by Saravanan Raj, Director (Agricultural Extension), MANAGE, who presented an overview of the evolving prospects in agricultural extension, underlining the emerging challenges in extension and how it is evolving globally. Among the topics discussed were new competencies required by Extension and Advisory Service (EAS) providers, recent trends in communication and innovation studies, the implications of extension reforms, emerging global extension paradigms, and the policy challenges associated with managing a pluralistic extension system.



Other areas discussed were emerging career opportunities for extension professionals, such as in applied behaviour change, capacity building, research methodology in extension, organizational behaviour and development, enabling innovation, ICT for agricultural extension, managing extension organizations, evaluation and impact assessment, risk management and climate change adaptation, livelihood development, and gender mainstreaming.



The significance of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in extension services as well as the professional opportunities in it were emphasized by P V K Sasidhar, Professor, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). The discussion also covered the relevance of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) fund for Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs). CSR supports government initiatives to involve the corporate sector in inclusive and sustainable development as well as to equitably distribute the rewards of growth. He stressed the enormous potential of CSR in agriculture to support the goals of sustainable development.

### Webinar 2: Research Priorities in Agricultural Extension

The session's keynote presenters were P Sethuraman Sivakumar, Principal Scientist, Central Tuber Crops Research Institute (CTCRI) and P.V.K. Sasidhar (Professor, IGNOU). The agricultural extension research priorities as well as employment prospects in innovation, gender, organizational development, ICTs, research, incubation and innovation centres, and monitoring and evaluation were comprehensively explored in this session. The skills and competencies needed for each role, strategies to ingrain new competencies, and the kinds of organizations that recruit for such positions were also covered during the session.



### Webinar 3: New Extensionist: Better Capacities to Strengthen the Agricultural Extension System

An illuminating session by Kristin Davis, Senior Research Fellow, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Rasheed Sulaiman V, Director, Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy (CRISP), and P.V.K. Sasidhar, Professor (IGNOU) focussed on new competencies to elevate the agricultural extension system. Kristin elaborated on the GFRAS-New Extensionist Learning Kit (NELK) modules useful for individual extension field staff, managers, lecturers, non-governmental organizations, and other training institutions, to address the current challenges in agriculture and to contribute better to agricultural innovation. Sulaiman provided insights on the GFRAS New Extensionist position paper, and the new competencies required at the individual and organizational levels to boost EAS. Sasidhar emphasized the core technical and process competencies needed by undergraduates and extension professionals.



### Webinar 4: Innovative Agricultural Extension Approaches for Climate-resilient Farming



A smart response by farmers to the changing climate is undoubtedly key to sustaining agricultural yields and farm profitability. Safeguarding the livelihoods of small and marginal farmers demands top priority be given to enhancing resilience to climate risk. Sreenath Dixit (Principal Scientist and IDC Head, International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)) and Mr. Vijay Kolekar (Agronomist, Project on Climate Resilient Agriculture (PoCRA)) were the session presenters. Their discussions focussed on the numerous extension approaches aiding climate-resilient farming. The discussion showcased how a farmer-centric model can make climate-resilient farming sustainable and feasible by empowering all actors, including villagers, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), and Farmer Field Schools (FFS). Implementing personalized district-level Strategic Research and Extension Plan (SREP) and ICT advancements through Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) were acknowledged as effective extension strategies.

### Webinar 5: Role of Agricultural Extension in Sustainable FPOs

P. Alageshan (Senior Scientist and Head, ICAR-KVK MYRADA, Erode, Tamil Nadu), Saju George (Scientist, ICAR-CMFRI) and Sangappa (Scientist, ICAR-IIMR), spoke on the relevance of extension agents in the Indian FPO movement and the models of FPO activities focusing on KVKs and specific commodities. In the context of the value chain approach, the session also underlined the need for the extension advisory system to focus on raising the farmer's share in the consumer price. Among the other topics discussed were the need for extension agents to upgrade their knowledge on financial accessibility of FPOs, resource mobilization, and creating business plans. The session speaker concluded that the farmers' typical land holdings of less than 1 hectare distances them from deriving benefits from economies of scale, afford



farm mechanization to improve agricultural production, or efficiently obtain inputs or directly access customers. In this context aggregation through FPOs remains their only realistic option to raise their negotiating power and farm-related value accruals.

#### **Webinar 6: Extension for Ecological Agriculture**



Modern high input agriculture is a cause of great concern, calling for more ecologically friendly alternatives. G.V. Ramanjaneyulu, Executive Director, Centre for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA), spoke on the importance of ecological agriculture, an alternative system. He underlined the importance of bringing together community members and gathering resources for the relief of struggling farming households and opined that the evolution from conventional methods to natural farming requires that farmers have knowledge,

access to resources, and diagnostic assistance. According to him, the key reason for the success of the ecological model of the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA) is that it is "not just about the production of crops in fields, but the household as a whole."

#### **Webinar 7: Extension: From Transfer of Technology (ToT) to Value Chain Extension**

The functionality of EAS has evolved beyond Transfer of Technology to value chain extension. Explaining how, Mr. M. Nagana Gouda, Founder, Eco-Agripreneurs and Mr. Venkataswami Reddy Surasani, Founder, Kissan Agri Mall Pvt Ltd shared their perspectives on how start-up models can improve the farmer's share in the consumer rupee by intensifying the value chain. Mr. Gouda described how their business strategy is adding value to the products of farmers and consumers' expectations as well as bridging the gap in the agricultural value chain by providing a holistic platform for agri-retail chains, providing farmers with backward linkages to reliable inputs and forward linkages to the market through consultancy services. By showcasing current technology that enriches each step of the value chain, the session helped participants acknowledge the potential of agri-startups and the significance of agritech players in transforming the Indian agriculture industry.

#### **Webinar 8: Agricultural Extension for Agri-tourism**

Agri-tourism provides a wide range of opportunities for farmers to diversify and augment their revenue, wherein extension agents can play the role of mediators between farmers and potential clients. In this session, Mr. Pandurang Taware (Managing Director, Agri Tourism India), innovator and father of agri-tourism in India, shared his expertise with examples of the creative perspectives and models used in Maharashtra state. The public extension system can create a region-specific agri-tourism farm model that would help farmers accept local traditions while at the same time preserving them. The discussion created greater awareness on opportunities in agri-tourism, and emphasized that with more government initiatives and the active involvement of local entrepreneurs and farmers, agri-tourism could boost India's tourism industry.



### Webinar 9: Global Good Practices in Agricultural Extension



This session presided over by Mahesh Chander, Joint Director, Extension Education, ICAR-Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) and Saravanan Raj (MANAGE), provided the participants with in-depth insights on global good practices in extension. Good agricultural practices are key to conserving soil and water resources, maintaining the natural equilibrium, preventing environmental pollution, management of crop residue, improving productivity, and ensuring sustainable return on investment. The discussion

emphasized how EAS enables farmers to develop a successful and sustainable farming system. The strategies employed vary depending on the availability of resources and the demands of the local community. The session emphasized that any strategy and technique employed for the benefit of farmers could be categorized as global good practices. The session concluded by stressing that every entity involved in the food production chain needs to be aware of their roles and responsibilities in fully implementing and supporting good practices. By putting good practices into operation, producers' livelihoods and the local economy as a whole can be developed, contributing to the achievement of SDGs.

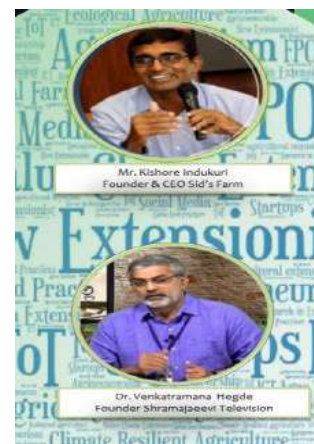
### Webinar 10: Reinventing Extension for Natural Farming

Natural farming is recognized as a form of regenerative agriculture, a well-known approach of preserving the environment. Food insecurity, farmer despair, health issues spurred on by pesticide and fertilizer residue in food and water, global warming, climate change, and natural disasters are a handful of issues that natural farming seeks to address. The session's speaker, Ms. Swati Renduchintala, (Associate Scientist, World Agroforestry) underlined the necessity for a coherent strategy for embracing technology, building social capital, and receiving assistance from the government and community organizations in order to scale up natural farming. Women's inclusion, the use of community resource persons, and the use of ICT in advisory services are all deemed to be effective extension tactics to promote natural farming.



### Webinar 11: MANAGE Dialogue: Evolving Agricultural Extension with Agri-startups

Venkatramana Hegde, founder, Shramajeevi Television Pvt Ltd and Mr. Kishore Indukuri, Founder & CEO, Sids Farm Pvt Ltd., shared their experiences, and helped participants understand how startups are efficiently providing farmers with extension consultancy services. The discussion revealed that through educational-technical agricultural documentaries and corporate videos, Shramajeevi Television Pvt Ltd. delivers free advisory services to farmers. It was discussed how, by ensuring prompt input services and guaranteed market prices, Sids Farm Pvt Ltd was able to win farmers' trust and, and ultimately ensure the quality of its products. The discussion led to the conclusion that agri-startups are



bridging gaps in the agri-value chain and supplying farmers and consumers with efficient commodities, technologies, and services.

### **Webinar 12: Navigating with New Generation Tools for Agricultural Extension**

Agricultural extension and advisory services are confronted with a host of new and complicated challenges, necessitating the development of new capacities. The last session of the webinar series provided insights into the new generation tools for agricultural extension. The discussion emphasized the potential of new generation tools like social media, artificial intelligence, internet of things, etc. in significantly improving communication and information exchange between various players in agricultural innovation.

Following the webinar series, forms seeking feedback on the effectiveness of the series and suggestions for improvements in upcoming events were shared with the participants on the WebEx chat box as well as on a WhatsApp group. The webinar series concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Saravanan Raj. Participants who had attended at least 10 of the 12 webinars were eligible to obtain certificates.

### **OUR LEARNINGS**

The webinar series was a great learning opportunity for us. The sessions provided deep insights into emerging concerns in agricultural extension, as well as cutting-edge strategies and technical innovations. The core skills and research priorities discussed fleshed out the relevance of new competencies at the individual and organizational levels in strengthening EAS. The discussions enlightened us on the potential of a farmer-centric model in sustainable climate-resilient farming and the role of extension specialists in the FPO movement. The discussions on value chain extension, agri-startups, and agri-tourism gave us a wider perspective on these topics. The role of good practices in meeting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), natural farming in protecting the environment, and the use of new generation tools in promoting communication and information sharing were also very insightful. Overall, the knowledge and expertise shared by the presenters were instrumental in guiding participants in enhancing their professional competencies and knowledge.

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