**Additional reading for topic 1**

**The term Extension and its functions**

The use of the word "extension" derives from an educational development in England during the second half of the nineteenth century. Extension, in general terms, is a function that can be applied to various areas of society. It operates in the industrial, health and education sectors, as well as agricultural and rural development. Originally derived from university extension, the term extension is therefore applicable to various areas of development.

 **Agricultural and rural extension**

When agricultural extension is combined with rural extension goals, the extension function ranges even more widely in its purposes. Rural extension, for instance, includes non-agricultural activities such as microenterprise development.

**Non-farm Rural Microenterprise Development**. Most rural people depend upon multiple sources of income, such as petty trade, primary production, remittances, and casual employment. In short, rural people are not dependent solely on agriculture or natural resources for their livelihoods. As Carney (1998) points out, these might provide the basis for their survival but it may well be that the best prospects for significant livelihood improvement lie outside the natural resources sector in the generation of off-farm income». In addition to microenterprise development there is also the option of reaching the poor through rural public employment, i.e., labour-intensive rural public works projects (Ravallion 1990).

Since the AKIS/RD document combines rural with agricultural goals, and since rural development involves both farm-related and non-farm-related activities, it seems appropriate for certain extension programs to be engaged in activities beyond those already mentioned. FAO could promote the development of agriculture- related micro-enterprises in rural areas where such a priority would make sense for extension programs, and in this regard it might launch a special alliance with relevant organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank.

**Technical Extension**. Agricultural and rural extension is the responsibility of various technical and service units, and serves many purposes. The various technical units within FAO indicate that agricultural extension is a function pursuing many different purposes: livestock development, forest use and conservation, fisheries engineering and capture, food and nutrition education, as well as well as crop development. Even in programs designed to foster agricultural crop production, extension may be concerned with providing information on other crucial issues such as food storage development, processing, farm management, and marketing. FAO has advocated and pursued all the above purposes of agricultural and rural extension at some time or another.

**Marketing Extension**. Other purposes of agricultural and rural extension include marketing extension. Marketing extension provides information on the post-harvest treatment of special crops and provides an important service in countries trading in food crops, including such fragile products such as bananas and cocoa. Other different types of marketing information services referred to as «market extension» also exist; these services provide information on variations in commodity prices; knowledge about where to sell some products; information on problems to do with the quality, availability and prices of inputs, and on the actual level of competition in the markets. These market information services should not be confused with marketing extension services that aim at improving the preparation and process of moving agricultural goods to market.

**Farmers’ Associations**. Agricultural and rural extension services can also help farmers and produce processors to organize themselves to meet their mutual agricultural interests. One of the Organization’s many ways of promoting people’s participation in development is through independent agricultural and rural development group associations). Financing economic self-reliance and the participation of the members in their organization’s activities is of central importance in such efforts to promote farmers’ organizations.

Some argue that extension can most effectively carry out its mandate, not by working directly with individual farmers but by working indirectly with and through farmers’ groups or organizations.

**Emerging purposes**. As populations grow and rural peoples flock to the cities, extension may (and already does in some countries) have to deal with urban and suburban clients (FAO 2000). What is currently considered «agricultural and rural extension» may eventually become «food and agriculture, rural and urban extension ». In fact, extension in high-income countries is already providing information and education services in urban areas, extending beyond technical agriculture and rural development alone.

Urban extension is a potential growth area for information transfer. As such, it addresses new audiences and new programs, and reflects the world’s rapid urbanization. This process will involve socio-economic and demographic changes that will affect food and nutrition, as well as epidemiological, institutional and socio-demographic changes. Food security, the employability of youth in the food industry, environmentally sound practices by small urban businesses, and other food and agriculture-related programs are likely to demand the attention of governments which are currently dismantling extension programs. Conceiving of extension purely as an agricultural production, rather than an educational service is short-sighted and limited.