COUNTRY PROFILE: SRI LANKA

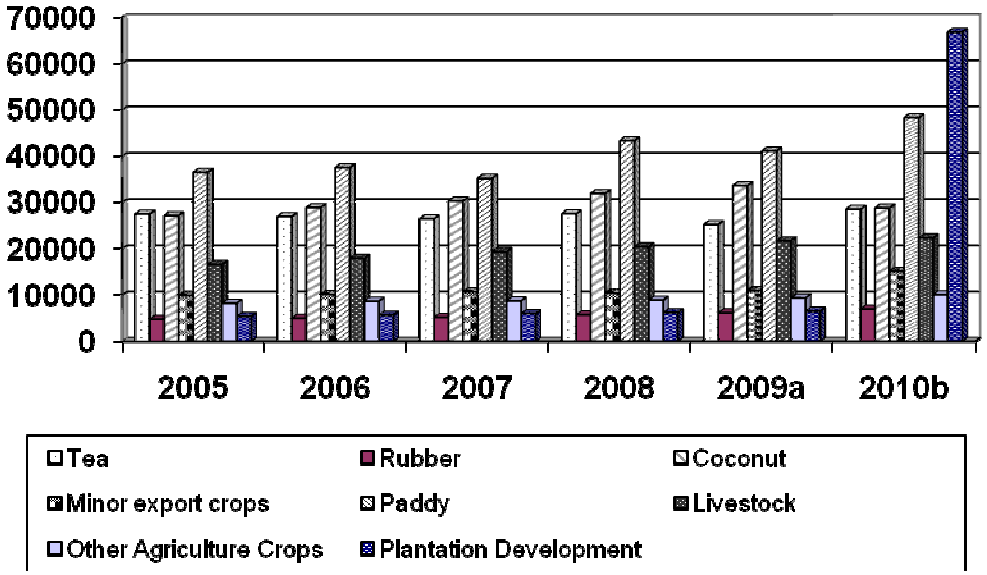
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION: Sri Lanka is a small island in the Indian Ocean, situated to the south-east of India. It has total land area of sixty four thousand square kilometers and a population of 19.5 million people (Annual report of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2010)

Sri Lanka has traditionally been an agricultural country, as such its economic situation depends heavily on the trends and the growth in the agriculture sector. Of the total cultivable land (2.9 mn ha), 65%(1.9 mn ha)is cultivated with agricultural crops. Paddy the staple, occupies 40%, coconut 20%, tea 12%, rubber 7% and the remainder 21% is accounted for all other crops (other field crops, horticultural crops and other export crops).

Table 01 :

Gross National Product by Origin at constant (2002) Prices of Major Economic Activities 2005-2010



Source: Report of Central Bank of Sri Lanka (2010)

Agriculture continues to be an important sector of the Sri Lankan economy in terms of contribution to GDP, employment and income. Presently agriculture contributes 12 % to the country's GDP. 33% of the work force is employed in agriculture sector. In the Sri Lankan rural sector 60% of its population depends on agriculture for their livelihood. The production of food crops like paddy the staple diet, the other field crops has been extremely important in terms of both employment and income of the rural population. The export oriented plantation crops tea , coconut and rubber are the other important crops

in the country's economy. Spices, sugarcane, cashew and floriculture at present play a significant role and have been recognized as crops of great future potential. Animal husbandry and livestock production and inland fisheries are two important sectors in agriculture of Sri Lanka. Mahaweli river development programme commenced in 1976 contributed to the expansion of cultivated land extent.(Annual report of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2010, Sri Lanka State of the Economy 2011, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, September 2011)

IMPLEMENTATION MACHINERY :

Table 02: Agricultural Extension Units and the Ministries

Please see the annexure. Seven ministries are involved in implementing agricultural extension programmes.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The extension activities of each unit is presented in detail in the annexure. Although extension units are established in different ministries, there is uniformity in the organizational structure of the units. Each structure is headed by a Director General. There are directors within the structure (technical and non technical). Each director is supported by deputy directors and assistant directors handling different technical subject matter. Based on the requirement of the profession some managerial level personnel are stationed in different geographical locations. They monitor the extension activities of each location and responsible for the mother organization. There exist one or more layers of officials at ground level under one command of guidance. In all the extension units ground level technical staff is directly linked with the farming communities in implementing extension activities. They also bridge the farming community with the mother organization. Each mother organization maintains formal and informal linkages and networks with relevant stakeholders to strengthen their services to the targeted audience. It is an area to be further strengthened to expand sustainable partnerships locally and globally.

Each structure has its own monitoring and evaluation mechanism in its unique way based on the expected output of the organization. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is another area to be well defined and focused for each stratum. Establishment of a transparent, systematic, proportionate, rewarding system for each stratum of the organizational structure specially for those who work at grass root level was a vision of many as an annual evaluation mechanism.

Method of recruitment of the staff and the educational qualifications required for recruitment are inline with the national policies. Direct recruitment for managerial level positions command a recognized

university degree and the middle level technical officers require a two year diploma in the identified fields by the mother organization. Applicants who fulfill the basic educational qualifications are to sit for a written examination conducted by an independent body, the department of examination of Sri Lanka. The successful candidates are to face an interview. Within each mother organization promotion schemes are been regularised with timely adjustments approved by the government of Sri Lanka.

COMMON FEATURES OF EXTENSION APPROACHES

Sri Lanka's current development efforts initiated by the state towards agriculture sector to solve the food security problem is a positive sign. All the stakeholders who contribute to production of food is proposed to work as a team to this newly introduced national programme of making the homestead an economic unit. The present drive to improve rural road network although not a direct input to agriculture, national level home garden programme, promotion of animal husbandary at cottage level and assistance to commence home based enterprises hold a significant potential to promote rural agricultural growth. Agricultural research and extension which were ignored for sometime have to be revived with the dual objectives of enhancing domestic food production (to substitute food imports and attain self sufficiency) and developing an export-oriented agriculture sector. (Sri Lanka, The emerging wonder of Asia, Ministry of Finance and Planning, 2011, Institute of Policy Studies, September,2011)

Farmer group approach is widely used as the most effective tool of extension at present. Mother organizations develop constitutions to register farmer groups who fulfill the constitutional requirements within their organizations. In this approach many strategies are adopted to obtain expected results by each extension unit. The fertilizers are given at a subsidized rate for all the crops. The highest subsidy rate is given, for paddy the staple. The plantation crop (tea, coconut and rubber) sector, cashew and spices implement subsidy schemes to expand the production and improve productivity. These subsidy schemes are revised and readjusted by the relevant mother organisations (Please see the annexed reports)

CONCLUSION:

The agricultural extensionists are not merely transferring technology to the farming community but on behalf of their clientele they coordinate with multiple, diversed groups of stakeholders who have their own agendas but are involved in agricultural development.

In Sri Lankan context the agricultural extension worker is challenged by the increasing population (1.1% annual growth) who demands for food and nutrition security, the state policies on food imports and exports and frequently changing agricultural technologies and markets. Therefore the vision of the extensionist has to be in line with the global scenario in agriculture to meet the present and the future challenges successfully.

The following are recognized as prime constraints in Sri Lankan extension.

1.The absence of a national policy on agricultural extension is a constraint to make this service duly recognized.

2. The extensionists have to communicate effectively and efficiently with a wide spectrum of audience in his/her carrier. Therefore a school to train agricultural extensionists (induction and in-service) seems to be a prime necessity.

3. This school also should be used to conduct research on agricultural extension continuously for the sustainability of this service.

4. At present in Sri Lanka all the prime state development programmes are focused on the family unit or homestead to make it an economic unit. Therefore it is a worthy cause to annalyse to obtain true hard data to be convinced whether building of one extension department excluding the plantation and sugar cane sectors is the most beneficial to the farming community of Sri Lanka, assuming that linking with one extension worker at grass root level for multitude of crops and services could be easier and simple for the farmer

REFERENCES:

1. All the annexed reports of agricultural extension units of Sri Lanka, 2011

2. Ag-stat (2010) Scio-economic and Planning Centre, Department of Agriculture, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

3.Anual report (2010), Central Bank of Sri Lanka.

4.Sri Lanka State of the Economy 2011 (2011) Institute of Policy Studies Of Sri Lanka: pp 84 - 96

5.Sri Lanka The Emerging Wonder of Asia (2011),The Development Policy Framework, Government of Sri Lanka, Department of National planning, Ministry of Finance and Planning.