

# AGRICULTURE, EXTENSION & EXTENSION COORDINATION

POLICY BRIEF | MARCH 2018



The critical role that the agricultural sector plays in providing food security, reducing poverty and creating employment for the Kenyan population is undisputed. And agricultural extension/advisory services have a critically important role to play in supporting these functions. Extension/advisory service delivery is the cog that connects farmers with information, skills, knowledge and technologies necessary for increased and sustainable agricultural production. Each policy objective pursued for the agricultural sector, whether economic, social or environmental in character, is supported through extension. This holds true for not only county-level programmes, or national level policy objectives – like the big four, in particular food security; but also for international commitments Kenya has made, whether under Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) or the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations.

Hence, while the key importance of extension services cannot be underestimated, their current set-up is not suitable to living up to the high expectations. A key driver for unlocking the potential of public extension services lies in improving coordination across departments, sectors and organizations. The National Agricultural Sector Extension Policy (NASEP 2012) provides for pluralistic extension service provision to leverage on

the diversity of funding, staffing and expertise available across public and private actors. The public sector, specifically Ministry of Agriculture retains the mandate to coordinate and regulate the playing field for extension pluralism.

However, success in execution of this crucial function has been elusive. Some key challenges include, among others, lack of a structured and distinct coordination function within the national and county agricultural sector policies, limited interest and weakness of coordination, potentially because it is perceived as a loss of authority/independence, difficulties in coordination of activities by organizations that have vastly different cultures of working and mutual suspicion amongst service providers. The results of ineffective coordination are manifold and include lack of mutually agreed set of sector performance indicators and joint performance review mechanisms, duplication, inconsistencies in the quality of service delivery, inefficient use of resources and sub-optimal attainment of objectives. Past national initiatives on agricultural sector coordination, attempted by the National Agricultural and Livestock Extension Programme (NALEP) as well as the Agricultural Sector Development Support Programme (ASDSP) through the Agricultural Sector Coordination Unit (ASCU) have not been sustained as they lacked systemic institutionalization.



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## County Governments role in Agricultural Sector Coordination

The new Constitution that was enacted in 2010 obligates counties to implement policies on “crop and animal husbandry, livestock sale yards, county abattoirs, plant and animal diseases control, fisheries... and cooperative societies”. In addition, the counties are expected to spearhead implementation of national policies on natural resources and environmental conservation; soil and water conservation as well as forestry. County Integrated Development Programmes (CIDPs) (2013–2017) already recognised the role the broader “Agriculture and Rural Development” (ARD) plays in food security and livelihood improvement of their citizens. The CIDPs also noted that the goal of ARD sector, of improving livelihoods, would depend on the work of multiple players, across ministries, non-state actors and development partners. However, the challenges of agricultural sector coordination have entangled the county governments too.

## Findings and policy recommendations from multi-stakeholder action research

Action research bringing together governmental stakeholders (MoALF – Bungoma, Kakamega & Siaya, KALRO, Bukura Agricultural College), private sector and development partners – NGOs, GIZ, facilitated by TMG Research gGmbH has co-identified numerous coordination gaps from a sector-wide perspective: **across directorates** of ministries of agriculture – agriculture, livestock, fisheries, cooperatives, veterinary services, irrigation; **across ministries** and parastatals – Lands, Water, Environment and Natural Resources, Social Services; Water Resource Management; Kenya Rural Roads Authority; **across the many non-state actors** especially NGOs and development partners working in the counties.

In the three counties of Bungoma, Kakamega and Siaya, there exists no structured coordination mechanism to harness the expertise and resources available across the players. All three counties explicitly point to a need for agricultural sector coordination in their draft agricultural policy documents. **However so far, there is no strategy on how to avoid past failures and attract broad-based participation in coordination units by stakeholder.**

This policy brief shares the outcome recommendations of the aforementioned multi-stakeholder process. The recommendations aim to provide a guideline on county agriculture sector coordination along the following lines:

- There is need to put in place a policy that institutionalizes a County Agricultural Sector Coordination Unit (CASCU), that reports to the County Executive Committee (CEC) member..
- The overall purpose of this unit would be to provide a platform for coordination of sector players with the objective of:
  - i. Setting sector performance targets and indicators in a joint work plan
  - ii. Leading planning, monitoring and reporting on sector performance
  - iii. Drawing on synergies between players e.g. sharing common/pool resources
  - iv. Vetting new projects and players to ensure harmony in approaches and spatial coverage
  - v. Setting standards in extension service provision – and hence avoiding cases where players give contradicting messages
  - vi. Ensuring equitable coverage of themes (e.g. soil protection, pro-poor reach, nutrition etc) and spatial areas (all wards)
  - vii. Ensuring themes that go beyond farm level operations are planned for and monitored e.g. a coordination theme covering Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and pest and disease outbreaks at several levels – County, Inter-County and national level.
  - viii. Providing linkage between Ministries and agricultural education and research institutions – e.g. on upgrade of curriculum or provision of refresher courses for ministry staff.
  - ix. Resource mobilization
  - x. Innovation exhibitions and outreach
  - xi. Knowledge management – standardized reporting formats

## Opportunity for Implementation

The incoming Agricultural Sector Development Support Programme (ASDSP) Phase II (2018-2022) has committed financial resources to support national and county level agricultural sector coordination. Given the autonomy of counties, ASDSP II is seeking leadership from the counties, on how best to support agricultural sector coordination. There cannot have been a more opportune time!

Having a County coordination unit anchored in the County’s Agricultural Sector Plan, Agricultural Policy and County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) will provide a robust foundation for steering investments towards agricultural sector coordination in general and agricultural extension services delivery in particular.

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