

National framework

FOR

Extension Recovery Plan



agriculture,
forestry & fisheries

Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

National framework

FOR

Extension Recovery Plan

CONTENT

1.	Rationale for Extension Recovery Plan (ERP).....	1
2.	Strategic objectives/pillars of ERP.....	1
2.1	Pillar 1: Ensuring visibility and accountability of Extension.....	2
2.2	Pillar 2: Promoting professionalism and improving image of Extension.....	2
2.3	Pillar 3: Recruitment of extension personnel.....	2
2.4	Pillar 4: Reskilling and reorientation.....	3
2.5	Pillar 5: Provision of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and other resources.....	3
3.	Institutional arrangement in implementing ERP.....	3
3.1	Responsibilities of DAFF in terms of DORA.....	4
3.2	Responsibilities of PDA in terms of DORA.....	4
4.	ERP administration.....	4
4.1	Criteria for the allocation of ERP funds to provinces.....	4
4.2	Business plan submission and approval.....	4
4.3	Disbursement of funds to provinces for ERP implementation.....	5
5.	Monitoring of ERP implementation.....	5
5.1	Reporting.....	5
5.2	Quarterly review meetings.....	5
5.3	Provincial visits.....	5
6.	Conclusion.....	6

2011

Printed and published by
Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
Directorate: Communication Services
Private Bag X144, Pretoria 0001

1. RATIONALE FOR EXTENSION RECOVERY PLAN

Extension is an admittedly amorphous umbrella term for all activities that provide information and advisory services that are needed and demanded by farmers and other actors in the agrifood systems and rural development. It includes technical knowledge, facilitation, brokering, coaching of different actors to improve market access, dealing with changing patterns of risk and protecting the environment (Christoplos, 2010). Extension is an integral component in ensuring efficient service delivery of the government programmes aimed at alleviating poverty, improving livelihoods and a sustained environment.

Since 1994, a number of government programmes aimed at improving the livelihoods of the former underprivileged have been implemented. The success rate of such programmes was very low. Beneficiaries of government interventions invariably identified extension and advisory services as the weak link militating against the full impact of government agricultural programmes. In response, the South African government sourced funding from the Royal Dutch Government to search for an appropriate extension model. The results indicated that there was no single model suitable for the entire country; hence the process resulted in the development of minimum criteria for agricultural extension and advisory services. The criteria, called norms and standards, covered aspects such as qualifications, support for extension, information generation and dissemination linkages, the officer: farmer ratio, training interventions and career pathing (Report on the profiling of the current government-employed extension and advisory service officers, 2007).

In order for the norms and standards to be implemented, it was necessary to profile all government employed extension officers in the country. The study was conducted in October 2006, to obtain a demographic profile of extension officers in terms of: name, location, gender, race, age, job level, designation, qualification, scope of work and to identify training needs. The report outlined the existing capacity of extension and an existing gap in order to comply with the norms and standards. The department needed this information to gain a sense of expertise and capacity levels at its disposal as it developed interventions to develop the agricultural sector. Based on the findings of the study, the requirements of the norms and standards, the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) recognised a need to revitalise the state of extension and advisory services in the country. DAFF therefore organised the Minister's extension indaba in 2008, with the purpose of creating a platform for information sharing as a mechanism to develop a turnaround strategy for extension and advisory services. The Extension Recovery Plan (ERP) which was conceptualised in 2007 as a strategy to revamp extension and advisory services was adopted in 2008 during the Minister's indaba.

The ERP is a programme aimed at revitalisation of extension and advisory services in South Africa. The consolidated recommendations of the Extension indaba, norms and standards document and a profile report on agricultural extension formed the basis for the development of the framework for the implementation of ERP. As such, (5) five pillars were drawn from the three documents to form the focus for ERP. The (5) five pillars are as follows: ensuring visibility and accountability of extension, promoting professionalism and improving image, recruitment of extension personnel, reskilling and reorientation of extension and provision of information communication technology (ICT) and other resources.

The ERP framework provides a snapshot of the strategic objective of the programme, mode of implementation, institutional mechanisms and monitoring and evaluation.

2. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES/PILLARS OF ERP

The ERP is a government strategy to capacitate or revitalise extension and advisory services in the country. The strategic objectives (as termed pillars) of the ERP are to:

- (i) Ensure visibility and accountability of extension
- (ii) Promote professionalism and improve the image of extension
- (iii) Recruit extension personnel
- (iv) Reskill and reorientate extension workers
- (v) Provide ICT infrastructure and other resources



2.1 Pillar 1: Ensuring visibility and accountability of extension

The beneficiaries of government interventions identified extension and advisory services as the weak link militating against the full impact of government agricultural programmes in the past. This pillar seeks to discard this perception by creating an environment whereby farmers know who their extension officers or advisors are, where to find them and how to relate/communicate with them. Provinces should provide the farmers with the Farmer's green book which serves the purpose of recording the daily interaction of the farmer with the advisor, it also serves as a farm management tool which resides in the hands of the farmer. With this tool, extension officers can account for the advice given to farmers and can be there for farmers when they need advice. The extension officers can also own a management diary which would assist in planning their work accordingly. The public cry is, extension officers cannot be identified in a group of people, hence provinces may provide a uniform for extension officers.


Another method used to ensure visibility of extension officers to farmers is to utilise the digital pen system. The system is a management tool used to monitor and record the work done by extension officers in the field. The digital pen resides with the extension officer, and whenever an extension officer visits the farmer, he/she writes with the pen in the digitised form and the data are there and there transmitted to the main server and can be accessed by managers. The system requires a digital pen itself, a digitised form, a cellphone matching with the pen for transmission of data. It is an internet based system and therefore requires a network connection. In this way the managers are able to know about the progress on every project, how many farmers or projects were visited by an extension officer, the location of projects and the information shared between the extension officer and the farmer. The system allows for the attachment of pictures which helps in capturing the actual condition of the farm.

2.2 Pillar 2: Promoting professionalism and improving image of extension



The role of extension and advisory services in the agricultural sector has silently always been the main determinant of improved livelihoods for the farming community (subsistence to smallholder farmers). With the increasing number of government programmes aiming at rural development, food security, land reform (restitution and redistribution) and natural resource management, there is a growing need for dedicated professionals to support these programmes. Extension and advisory services are rising to the standard to meet these demands and for the entire public to recognise and regain confidence in the sector. It depends upon the sector to portray a good image and enhance professionalism to clients and the broader public.

This pillar focuses on the affiliation of extension officers with professional bodies and participation of extension officers in those bodies as active members. The pillar also encourages the hosting of extension conferences by provinces. As conferences would be held, it should be in conjunction with recognising outstanding performance by extension officers and rewarding them accordingly by the MEC for Agriculture in the province. The national framework for introduction of the award system in recognition of excellent service in government extension and advisory service was developed by DAFF to guide provinces when they engage in the award system.

2.3 Pillar 3: Recruitment of extension personnel



The Norms and standards for extension and advisory service prescribes the extension official to farmer ratio. This is dependent on the nature of dominating commodity (enterprise) within a specific area. For the purpose of implementing norms and standards in this regard the point of departure was to establish a clear baseline, hence a study was conducted in October 2006 with the aim to profile the government-employed extension personnel. The results of the study assisted the department in developing interventions to develop the agricultural sector.



The findings indicated that there were 2 210 extension personnel in the country versus the unknown number of clients (extension personnel did not have a database of their clients). Nevertheless there is an indication of the number of beneficiaries of the programmes that extension personnel support per province even though their line of farming is not clear. The demand for advisory and/ extension service varies according to the nature of the farming practices, that is crop farming, livestock farming or mixed farming systems involving both crop and livestock and farm size. The extension-to-

farmer ratios often depend on the specifics of an operation and its state of advancement and the intensity of support programmes.

Through the ERP government aims at ensuring that there is enough extension and advisory service personnel on the ground to comply with the recommended extension-to-farmer ratios of 1:400 in crop farming, 1:500 in livestock and 1:500 in mixed farming. Provinces are expected to engage in an extension recruitment and capacity-building drive to move closer to the targeted 9 000 extension personnel to serve the sector. Recruitment should be aligned to the provinces' growth and development strategies.

2.4 Pillar 4: Reskilling and reorientation of extension

It is of utmost importance to enhance the skills and knowledge capacity of the current crop of extension personnel through training, capacity building and qualifications upgrading. In terms of the norms and standards document, the minimum academic qualification for an Agricultural Advisor is a Bachelor's degree in Agriculture. Any person with lower qualifications can only function as an Agricultural Development Officer. Norms and standards again advocate that the extension personnel should be competent in the following areas: client orientation and customer focus, communication, project management, knowledge management, service delivery orientation, problem-solving analysis, people management and empowerment. In this regard, the extension personnel will undergo targeted accredited generic training programmes in project management, communications and ICT. Many of the extension personnel who do not possess appropriated qualification levels as recommended in the norms and standards will be encouraged to study either on a part-time or on a full-time basis through sabbaticals. National and international technical exchange programmes will be organised to ensure cross-pollination of ideas, knowledge and experiences.

Furthermore, collaboration with institutions of higher learning will be intensified to ensure that the newly registered unit standard qualifications in extension are incorporated into the curricula of these institutions. In some instances these institutions of higher learning will have to review their existing curricula on extension. Through formalised cooperation those institutions of higher learning with appropriated qualifications programmes for extension officers will be incentivised while punitive measures may be considered for those with underrated programmes.

2.5 Pillar 5: Provision of ICT infrastructure and other resources

The extension personnel have been declared as inefficient and ineffective by the beneficiaries of the government programmes. This was caused by inequalities that existed in the extension services sector of the past, whereby the support was much more intensified towards the white farmers (served by white extension personnel) and which left the black community in the dark. The government of democracy has addressed these issues and therefore calls for the sector to transform and service their clients to their full potential. In the extension sector, personnel need to be equipped/supported with the working tools that will assist them in meeting the demands of their clients.

In order to create an enabling environment, provinces are required to make provision of required ICT tools to the extension personnel. Resources have been made available for the strengthening of extension information management and dissemination through state-of-the-art information and communication technology. Provinces should in this regard, provide extension officers with ICT packages (laptop, printer, cell-phone, memory stick—as determined by the province), provide an enabling environment for the adaptation of the Extension Suite Online (ESO) and procure other useful resources in consultation with the national department. The ESO is an internet-based system designed for extension officers to access information relating to agriculture in broad on the spot, in order to assist the officers in decision making during contact sessions with clients.

3. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENT IN IMPLEMENTING ERP

The implementation of ERP is a provincial mandate, with the national department playing a coordinating and monitoring role. ERP falls under the Technical and Advisory Service pillar



of the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP). CASP is a programme aimed at providing comprehensive post- settlement support to beneficiaries of government's interventions such as land reform. As CASP, ERP sources funding from the National Treasury as a schedule 4 grant. The grant is administered through the Division of Revenue Act.

3.1 Responsibilities of DAFF in terms of DORA

- compile a grant framework and submit to National Treasury;
- ensure that transfers to all provinces are:
 - (i) deposited only into the primary bank account of a province
 - (ii) made in accordance with the payment schedule approved in terms of section 21, unless allocations are withheld or stopped in terms of section **16 or 17**;
- monitor expenditure and non-financial performance information on programmes funded by an allocation, in accordance with subsections (2) and (3) and the requirements of the applicable framework;
- comply with the requirements of the applicable framework;
- evaluate the performance of programmes funded or partially funded by the allocation and the submission of such evaluations to the National Treasury, within four months in respect of a province after the end of the financial year;
- provide reporting template to the provinces.

3.2 Responsibilities of Provincial Departments of Agriculture in terms of DORA

- comply with the framework for a Schedule 4 allocation as published in terms of section 14;
- submit, as part of the report required in section 40(4)(c) of the Public Finance Management Act, reports to the relevant provincial treasury on spending and performance against programmes;
- submit a quarterly performance report within 30 days after the end of each quarter to the relevant provincial treasury, and the National Treasury;
- report against programmes funded or partially funded by a Schedule 4 allocation against the relevant framework in its annual financial statements and annual report;
 - evaluate the performance of the province within two months after the end of the financial year in respect of programmes funded or partially funded by an allocation and submit such evaluation to the transferring national officer.

4. ERP ADMINISTRATION

4.1 Criteria for the allocation of ERP funds to provinces

Based on the recommendations and findings outlined in the report on profiling of extension and advisory services, the DAFF developed criteria for allocating funds to provinces. The following were the criteria for allocation to the provinces:

- Provinces that were found to have acute human resource capacity gaps received substantial funding. These included the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Mpumalanga.
- Provinces that had healthier extension and advisory services received minimal funding. These included the Free State, Northern Cape, North West and Western Cape.

4.2 Business plan submission and approval

Provinces should submit their business plans to the national department for the succeeding year on 30 September of the current year. Each year they submit a business plan focusing on the specific deliverables for that particular year. The delivery focus areas, funding range per pillar as well as the budget per province are communicated to provinces by the national department prior to the

compilation of business plans. The DAFF analyses the business plans and verifies them with the provinces before consolidating them into a national ERP plan.

The National Assessment Panel (NAP) meeting is held with provinces prior to the approval of their plans in order to assess the viability of their plans and for establishing the state of readiness to implement submitted plans for the following financial year. NAP takes place in November to allow provinces to effect the recommendations of the panel in their plans, and the final business plans are submitted to the national department on 31 January. In February, the consolidated business plan is presented to the Director-General for approval, and then the National Treasury is informed of the approval in writing by March. The funding agreements are sent to provinces for the signature of the Head of Department, the Provincial Treasury and CASP coordinator before any funds could be transferred.

4.3 Disbursement of funds to provinces for ERP implementation

The funds disbursement to provinces occurs at the beginning of each quarter, i.e. April, July, October and January. The percentage of the fund disbursed may vary year after year, depending on the spending pattern by provinces. For an example, at the beginning of the first quarter provinces may be allocated 20% of the total allocation and fail to spend it owing to challenges with procurement processes or lack of human resources and so forth.

If this remains a trend, that quarter 1 encounters challenges, then the allocated percentage can be lowered to 10%. In a nutshell, the percentage of funds disbursed each quarter of the financial year is gazetted in the grant framework which is informed by the expenditure trend of the previous financial years.

5. MONITORING OF ERP IMPLEMENTATION

Monitoring of ERP implementation would be conducted/ensured by the national department in the form of reviewed reports, quarterly review meetings and provincial visits.

5.1 Reporting

Because ERP is administered under the Division of Revenue Act as a Schedule 4 grant, the Act stipulates clearly the periods under review and what should be reported. The programmes under Schedule 4 should be reported on every quarter and reports must be submitted within 30 days of the end of the quarter. The quarterly reports are forwarded by the provinces to the CASP office with the aid of a template designed by the National Treasury.

For the purpose of collecting more information, a template termed: ERP Supplementary Reporting Template was developed by the DAFF. Provinces should compile their quarterly reports on both templates and forward these to the CASP office and to the Directorate: National Extension Support office. For every reported output, provinces should provide a portfolio of evidence. Provincial quarterly reports are consolidated every quarter to give a national picture on the progress on ERP implementation, an annual report is compiled by the DAFF two months after the financial year has lapsed.

5.2 Quarterly review meetings

The quarterly review meetings organised by the DAFF would be held with all provinces forty-five (45) days after the end of the quarter. The purpose of the review meeting is to verify what provinces had reported on, to monitor if provinces are delivering as planned in their approved business plans and to learn of the challenges provinces encounter in implementing ERP. It also presents a platform for sharing of information in the area of extension and advisory services.

5.3 Provincial visits

During the review meeting, provinces would present their challenges which requires the national department's intervention. Hence the national department would conduct such visits to provinces to provide support and assistance in planning for the following financial year.



6. CONCLUSION

The ERP framework seeks to address challenges which were experienced with the extension and advisory services in the country owing to inequality of the past. It displays pillars of ERP and what informed their formation. It also outlines (under each pillar) the expected outcome of the programme, which is to alleviate extension and advisory services by improving human capital of extension personnel who, in turn, will realise the true meaning of agricultural extension and advisory services.



