AGRICULTURAL KNOWLEDGE INFORMATION SYSTEM: 
AN EMERGING APPROACH FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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A good number of communication approaches are available for agricultural development. Present orientations, such as Farming System Research (FSR) and Training and Visit (T & V), extension are unable to achieve synergy as they are centralized, default to wealthier rural elite, do not build farmers’ capacity and ignore informal demands. Hence system management in the knowledge system will be required to hold all formal and informal elements together, coordinate interaction build concerns and monitor outcomes of synergy. Earlier farming system, extension, agricultural technology development, research and policy making were considered as separate entities each with its own set of issues, managed by groups of researchers and professionals. There is conceptual progression from looking at various institutions and practices such as farming system development, extension and research in isolation to considering the linkages between pairs of these elements and now to looking at all the elements as an Agricultural Knowledge Information System (AKIS). If the work of research and extension is to make the maximum contribution to sustainability needs a shift from ‘imposed technologies’ to ‘demand driven’ one. Here lies the importance of adopting a systems perspective and emphasizes the changing role of extension in complex, diverse and risk prone (CDR) environment which are obliged to cope with the unanticipated consequences of new technology. This calls for a holistic, interactive and integrated system of research, extension, education and farming community. It is usually necessary to integrate the information from researchers, extensionists and farmers to be able to develop technologies which work well in a given situation. This process of integration often receives insufficient attention. Development of a network to exchange information among all relevant actors is an important aspect here. The combined contribution of these actors is more than the sum of the individual contributions. The AKIS respond to technology, knowledge and information needs of farmers helping them in decision making and management of their farms. The basic assumption of this system is that information relevant for decision-making is generated by different actors and reaches farmers in many different ways. Quite often analysis of the AKIS shows that a role other than TOT is more appropriate. AKIS could involve providing farmers with a basket of opportunities and
helping them to choose the right opportunity for their situation. Several analytical models have been developed to examine and assess AKIS.

It has been experienced by all concerned with the agricultural development process that a significant gap exists between technology generation and technology use at the field level. The dual concept of AKIS and synergy can fill this analytical gap. Within AKIS, farmers are in the central position. Farmers’ knowledge and skills are certainly an important complement to formal research and extension and such complementarity can be achieved through the institutional mechanism of AKIS. Farmers’ organizations also can play a valuable role in the process by formulating the information needs of their members and stimulating research institutes, extension services and other actors to provide this information. So, the articulated approach of AKIS is felt necessary to improve and sustain Indian Agriculture as well as to develop more effective relations with the world outside the farm, especially the markets.

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