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## **THE FARM AND HOME MANAGEMENT APPROACH TO CARIBBEAN AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Recently at an in-service training course for the Windward Islands' Extension officers in Dominica, June 1991, the officers were asked to identify the extension system in which they worked back in their respective countries. Those identified included:

- The Traditional Approach
- The Training and Visit Method (T & V)
- The Saturated Approach (Presently being used by CARDATS)
- The Farm and Home Management Approach
- The Task Force Approach (used for a specific commodity, example in Montserrat)
- The Research and Development Approach (used by the French Mission)
- The Integrated Approach (eg. Integrated Rural Development Programme - IRDP)

It was felt that in any one country more than one of the identified systems were being used and that there were most likely others that are not identified in this list.

In discussing each method it was recognized that they all consist of the basic steps of the traditional method, that is:

- a. Farm needs assessments
- b. Programme planning
- c. Programme implementation
- d. Reporting and consultation with supervisor
- e. Evaluation
- f. Programme adjustments

However, emphasis, concentration of resources and points of linkages vary, thus making each one different and carrying its own trade mark. In order to determine which is the most appropriate method one has to examine the specific situation and the organizational structure within which the methodology is to be implemented.

## THE FARM AND HOME MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The Farm and Home Management concept began with researchers from North America who were concerned with why some farms consistently performed better than others. As a result, they began studying how better farms were organized and operated. This concept has since been developed and can be considered as one of the newest paradigms in Caribbean Extension.

The five phases of the Farm and Home Management Approach (Descriptive, Analytical, Planning, Implementation, Evaluation and Reporting) are similar to those of the traditional and other Extension Approaches. However, many important differences are evident. For example, the Farm and Home Management Approach refutes the belief that some farmers are laggards and others innovators. Instead the Farm and Home Management Approach believes that while other research/extension systems may bring the technology close to the farmer, unless the farmer is versed in the management of investment and credit use, it is unlikely that the farmer would be able to make use of the technology. F&HM, therefore, places great emphasis on dealing with management as a necessary precursor to any "technology transfer" programme.

To do this a multidisciplinary approach is used to strengthen the Research-Extension linkage. The constant economic appraisal of Farm and Home Management enables the identification of important problems associated with the farm business. These are then passed by extension directly to research.

F&HM also links extension with socio-economic research as it deals with economic and social issues associated with the farm business, including those related to the farm household. This approach is increasingly being widened to encompass studies of the home and its inter-relationship to the farm. Hence, the approach is referred to as Farm and Home Management.

As mentioned before, there are five phases in the Farm and Home Management Approach.

### Phase 1. The Descriptive Phase.

One of the aims in the F&HM Approach is to formulate a F&HM Work Programme that is best suited to each individual state in the Caribbean Region. As a result, in the first step of the first phase of F&HM is to get an understanding of the farming systems of the specific target area. Some type of survey or needs assessment is therefore required.

Hence, Phase 1 or the Descriptive Phase is divided into two steps:

Step (1) involves a Situational Analysis which is used by the Extension Worker to understand his/her constituency. Data are collected for the Physical, Social, and Agricultural Environment.

Step (2) focuses on the clientele and is known as a Needs Assessment. Under the Farm and Home Management Approach the Rapid Rural Appraisal information gathering technique or Sondeo is recommended. It is a multidisciplinary method and can be conducted at the start of every programme cycle. It allows for the identification of constraints and opportunities from which recommendations both for extension and research are made.

### Phase 2. Analysis.

Phase 2 involves both the socio-economic analysis of identified technologies and selection of target farmers.

First, data are used to characterize farming systems and to also identify constraints and opportunities for extension and research to develop their work programmes. The Farm and Home Management Approach stresses the importance for extension and research to remain a team and it therefore encourages researchers to be involved in the analysis of the data.

To ensure that programmes developed using this approach will reflect farmers needs, farmers are also consulted in the socio-economic analysis.

The second step of this phase is the selection by extension of target farmers who will be the focus of activities. Extension will be expected to work with these farmers in two ways to bring about an improvement in their Farm and Home Management:

- Training of the farmers in F&HM.
- Identification of problems and solutions to enable the farmers to achieve the goals of their households.

### Phase 3. Planning.

This is the Planning or Programme Development Phase. Most other approaches do not take into consideration farm family goals and the resources available to achieve these goals. Profit maximization, usually perceived as being achieved through increase in production levels, is deemed most relevant; as such, other farm family concerns are ignored. The Farm and Home Management Planning Phase is geared towards overcoming this weakness.

Farm and Home Management planning provides a tool for extensionists to help farm families describe their goals clearly, prioritize them and then develop a plan with them to achieve these goals. It is in the development of this plan that technology utilization becomes important.

At this stage, the Farm and Home Management Methodology stresses the importance of record keeping and where Record Books are used. The Extension Worker in planning with the farmer develops crop/livestock production schedules, costing the proposed activities. Home planning and costing are

also done. The cost/revenue for the Home and Farm can then be used to develop projected cash flow for the farm family.

In this approach, the farm situation may be viewed as an Extension Research Laboratory providing feedback on the usefulness of technological packages under different farm conditions. As a result, modified 'tech packs' with the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems are developed.

The plans therefore should involve measures that are necessary to bring about the solution of problems and the achievement of family goals.

#### Phase 4. Implementation.

In this phase Extension creates learning situations for farmers through:

- Workshops
- Farm visits (one to one)
- Demonstrations (methods)
- Field tours
- Farmer exchange
- Others

Farmers are taught how to use the farm and home record book. The recording of information is a major aspect of the F&HM Programme. It also puts at the disposal of extension a large store of data which can be used as the basis of socioeconomic analysis. To date, a record book has been published for use by participating farmers. This record book has been designed to plan and record both farm and home activities. A computer analysis system has also been developed to analyze the record books.

Farm management skills are developed at periodic meetings and/or periodic analysis of data. The main objective in this phase is to ensure that the farmer's effort succeeds.

#### Phase 5. Evaluation.

This last phase in the F&HM has three steps, one deals with monitoring the farmers adoptive effort, the other with periodic evaluation and the third with feedback and reporting.

Extension monitors the performance of the farm families in carrying out their plans for farm and home activities. Several constraints both in the farm and the home may crop up which may limit the achievement of goals. These problems will have to be dealt with and overcome. Where these problems stem from family conflicts, Extension may become involved in a wider range of social issues than is typically the case in the Caribbean at present.

The farmer is also taught to analyze his business record book with the help of Extensionists, Agricultural Economists or Farm Management Specialists. The results of the analysis are used in the next year's

farmer planning schedule and as a means of validating the technology used by the farmer.

Evaluation will highlight weaknesses and strengthens, making suggestions for changes in the Calendar of Activities for the next production season.

These five phases may require a reorganization of the Extension Service to allow at least some of the Extension staff to dedicate their efforts to this 'new' approach. Another requirement is the training of extension officers in F&HM, especially in the area of home management and record keeping.

A third requirement is the establishment of close rapport and trust between the target farm population and Extension. This is necessary for the farm population to have the confidence to divulge information, for the successful formulation and implementation of plans for farm and home activities.

#### SUMMARY

To sum up, F&HM brings about a change in the approach to the "technology transfer" process in that it promotes a greater role/involvement for the farmer and the strengthening of the research-extension linkage. The Approach also sees an expanded role for Extension in the areas of enlightenment and empowerment of farmers. Extension would awaken farm families to the opportunities that exist in their traditional systems and in systems being generated by the results of research and development activities worldwide. Extension would also be involved in education and training of farmers in management and rational resource use so that farmers can use their resources, or acquire more, to be able to utilize the best combinations of opportunities to achieve their individual goals.