

Extension methods

In the previous chapter, the mass communication methods that the extension agent can employ in his work with farmers were reviewed. In this chapter, two other extension methods that the agent can employ will be examined. They are (a) the individual method, in which the agent deals with farmers on a one-to-one basis; and (b) the group method, in which the agent brings the farmers together in one form or another in order to undertake his extension work. Each of these methods demands different approaches and techniques on the part of the agent, and these will be examined later.

The two methods are suited to different purposes. It is important for the extension agent to consider the range of individual and group methods at his disposal and to select the method appropriate to the situation. It is also important to remember the educational purpose of extension work, and to ensure that the method selected is used to promote the farmers' better understanding of the technology involved. Both individual and group extension methods involve the agent in a face-to-face relationship with the farmer, and this relationship should be one of mutual confidence and respect. The agent, therefore, must think carefully about his use of individual or group extension methods and ensure that his relationship with the farmer is sensitively developed.

Three different extension methods: mass, group and individual

Individual methods of extension

Individual or face-to-face methods are probably the most universally used extension methods in both developed and developing countries. The extension agent meets the farmer at home or on the farm and discusses issues of mutual interest, giving the farmer both information and advice. The atmosphere of the meeting is usually informal and relaxed, and the farmer is able to benefit from the agent's individual attention. Individual meetings are probably the most important aspect of all extension work and invaluable for building confidence between the agent and the farmer.

Learning is very much an individual process and, although group methods enable the agent to reach a greater number of farmers, personal contact with and the individual attention of the extension agent are important supports for a farmer. The personal influence of the extension worker can be a critical factor in helping a farmer through difficult decisions, and can also be instrumental in getting the farmer to participate in extension activities. A farmer is often likely to listen to the advice given by the extension agent and will be grateful for this individual attention.

This individual contact between the extension agent and the farmer can take a number of forms, each of which will be considered below.

Farm visits

Farm visits are the most common form of personal contact between the agent and the farmer and often constitute over 50 percent of the agent's extension activities. Because they take up so much of the agent's time, it is important to be clear about the purpose of such visits and to plan them carefully.

Farm visits can:

- familiarize the extension agent with the farmer and his family;
- enable him to give specific advice or information to the farmer;
- build up the agent's knowledge of the area, and of the kinds of problems which farmers face;
- permit him to explain a new recommended practice or follow up and observe results to date;
- arouse general interest among the farmers and stimulate their involvement in extension activities.

At times, the extension agent will make a farm visit spontaneously if he happens to be passing by and it is convenient to drop in. Such informal visits may have no specific purpose but are a useful way of maintaining contact and gradually building links with farmers. Even if the agent just drops in to greet the farmer and his family, this short visit can do a lot to foster mutual respect and friendship. Usually, however, farm visits will be part of the agent's general plan of work and will be programmed into his monthly schedule of activities.

Planning the visit

First, it is important to be very clear about the purpose of the visit. Before a visit, the extension agent should review the file on the farm to be visited and consult any other information available on the farmer. He must be fully informed on the relevant details of the farm he is visiting and should summarize the situation in a few notes before setting off. He must try to avoid showing ignorance of the farmer and his farming activities, or the need to consult his file during the visit.

In addition, the visit should be planned to fit in with other local extension activities. For example, if a demonstration or meeting is planned for the morning, then it may be possible to programme a number of individual farm visits for the afternoon. Whenever possible, the agent should make an appointment at a time convenient to the farmer, to

ensure that the farmer will be there and that the journey will not be wasted. If an appointment is made in advance, the farmer will also have time to prepare for the visit and to think about the issues to be discussed with the agent.

Check list

- Make an appointment if possible.
- Decide the purpose of the visit.
- Review previous records and information.
- Prepare specialist subject matter that might be required.
- Schedule the visit into the overall work plan.

Making the visit

The agent must always remember the basic educational purpose of extension and his role in this process. The agent's role is not just one of transmitting new knowledge or recommendations; he must also devote time during visits to building up the farmer's confidence and interest. One of the first points to think about when making a farm visit is how to start a conversation. The first few minutes of contact are extremely important for establishing a good relationship, particularly if it is the first meeting. Methods of establishing rapport and of initiating conversation differ from culture to culture. Small talk in order to break the ice is often an important first step, and gives both sides a chance to relax and to get to know each other a little before more serious matters are discussed. Time must be spent in greeting the farmer and his family and an informal chat will not be wasted. Similarly, local customs should be followed as regards accepting hospitality. If visitors are expected to drink tea or coffee with the host, then the agent should do so, while taking care not to acquire a reputation of one who spends all his time drinking tea or coffee during visits.

The agent should then choose the moment when more formal business can be discussed. The choice of the discussion topic is also an important decision for the extension worker. If he is sensitive to the farmer's needs, he will discuss matters relevant to these needs. Moreover, he will discuss these topics at the farmer's level and in language that the farmer is accustomed to use. In this respect, the agent should be a good listener as well as a good talker, and he should encourage farmers to explain and discuss issues at their own pace and in their own words. It is important for the agent to find a reason to praise farmers for some aspect of farm management in order to encourage their involvement and make them feel that they also have knowledge to contribute.

The visit may cover a whole range of activities. The farmer may need further explanation or information about a particular new practice and it may be necessary to

demonstrate this. If further technical information is required, this can be noted and, at a later date, an appropriate information bulletin can be sent. The agent may also brief the farmer generally on government agricultural policy, or describe the range of extension activities in the area and encourage the farmer to get involved. Some visits may also be of an emergency nature when the agent will be expected to give on-the-spot advice concerning a particular problem. Finally, the agent should always be alert during farm visits for ways to promote the involvement of other family members, including spouses and young people, in other local extension activities such as a youth club or a food preparation demonstration.

If possible, it is useful to set up a system to keep a record of the content of farm visits; this could be simply a notebook in which the essential details of each visit (date, purpose, problems, decisions, etc.) are recorded. Such a farm record system is very useful in helping the agent to keep a more detailed account of each visit and it is invaluable when a new agent is taking over. The records are also very useful in evaluating farmers' progress.

Check-list

- Be punctual for the visit.
- Greet the farmer and this family.
- Praise the farmer's work.
- Encourage the farmer to explain and discuss any problems.
- Provide any technical or other information required.
- Record the details of the visit.
- Plan with the farmer the time and purpose of the next meeting.

Recording and follow-up

The purpose of any farm visit will be lost if its content and conclusion are not recorded and no follow-up action taken. During the visit, the agent will almost certainly make a series of notes and observations. On the first available office day, these notes should be neatly transcribed on an individual card kept at the extension office. After each visit, the agent should record the date, the purpose, the conclusions or recommendations arising from the visit, as well as any other additional information or observations which he feels will be helpful. The agent must not store this information in his head, since, if he is transferred, the incoming agent will be left with a gap in information and will find it difficult to catch up with the situation.

Finally, the agent should arrange for any follow-up that may have been agreed with the farmer. This could involve the sending of further specialist information, or arranging for a specialist colleague to visit the farmer concerned. Whatever the case, it

is vitally important that the agent follow up on any issues or problems that he was not able to deal with in person. Failure to do so will disappoint the farmer and lessen his confidence in the agent. It is very important to maintain the confidence and trust that can often take years to build up. He should also schedule his next visit to the farmer in his work programme.

Check-list

Record purpose of and decision resulting from visit.
Arrange for any follow-up information or advice to be sent.
Schedule the next visit to the farmer.

Farm visits are perhaps the single most important aspect of the agent's work in terms of establishing rapport with the farmers in his area and of building the trust and confidence that are vital to the success of his work. However, farm visits take up a lot of time and only a few farmers can be reached. Farm visits are, therefore, a costly extension method and for this reason they must be carefully thought out and planned. The visits must make an impact and must lead to positive agricultural development if they are to justify their cost. Finally, the agent should beware of visiting some farmers repeatedly. This would not only severely limit the range of his activities, but could also arouse the resentment of other farmers who might feel excluded.

Office calls

Just as the extension agent visits the farmer, so he can expect that from time to time the farmer will visit him at his office. Such a visit is often a reflection of the interest which the agent may have aroused among the local farmers. The more confidence local farmers have in the extension agent, the more likely they are to visit him. Such office visits are less time consuming for the extension worker, and offer some of the advantages of a farm visit. While no extension agent would wish to be overwhelmed by such visits every day, he should encourage farmers to drop in if it is convenient for them to make the exchange of visits two-way.

As with farm visits, office visits similarly have to be prepared. Although the agent may not know when a farmer is likely to drop in, he can at least arrange the extension office in such a way that the visitor feels at ease and can understand the activities of the office. The arrangement could include:

- ensuring that access to the extension office is adequately posted and the agent's name displayed;
- having a notice-board clearly displayed upon which useful, up-to-date information can be pinned;

- having one or two chairs where visitors can wait for appointments;
- displaying any bulletins, circulars or other written extension literature that the visitor can read.

For some farmers, a visit to the extension office may be a difficult experience. The agent should, therefore, try to put the farmer at ease, asking a few questions in order to get the farmer to explain his problems. The agent should be polite but purposeful, and try to find out the reason for the visit as quickly as possible. When he feels that the matter has been adequately discussed, the agent should tactfully terminate the interview in order not to let it drift aimlessly on. The agent should always escort the visitor out, and say goodbye. A note on these office visits should also be added to the farmer's record card, and any follow-up implemented.

The layout of an extension office is important

Letters

Occasionally, the extension agent will correspond with a farmer by letter. Letters can be a follow-up inquiry resulting from an agent's farm visit, or sent because a farmer is unable to make a personal office visit. Drafting and replying to letters are very important skills for the extension worker and he should give every thought to them. Problems can arise with the use of words or complex technological language, or if the letter has been badly typed or written. In writing a letter to a farmer, the extension agent should try to put himself in the farmer's shoes. The letter should be in the local language, preferably not on impressively headed writing-paper, and should always contain some personal greeting to the farmer. Often, farmers will show such letters to their neighbours and thus it is important to create a favourable impression. The following points are important:

- letters should be clear and concise, so as not to confuse the reader;
- the information in the letter should be complete and relevant to the issues raised;
- where possible, letters should be answered promptly. If time is needed to collect information for the reply, a short letter of acknowledgement should be sent;
- a copy of the letter must always be made and entered in the office file.

Other individual methods

Telephone calls

Telephone calls and office visits serve a very similar purpose. It is improbable that the extension worker will deal with many of the farmers in his area (if at all) by telephone. If the telephone is used, however, it will not be for long discussion but for

passing on specific advice or information. Whatever the reason, it is important for the agent to speak clearly, to note the main points discussed and to enter them on the farmer's record.

Informal contacts

Informal contacts will occur continually during the agent's stay in a particular area. Market days, holiday celebrations or religious events will bring him into contact with the farmers with whom he is working who will inevitably talk about their problems. By attending such events, the agent can become well acquainted with the area where he works and with the farmers and their problems, and he will be able to pass on ideas and information on an informal basis.

Group methods of extension

The extension agent should consider the use of the group approach in his work with farmers. The use of groups in extension has become more common over the past decade, and indeed a number of new ideas have emerged about how groups may be used most effectively. For example, the widespread Small Farmer Development Programme (SFDP) in Southeast Asia was based upon group methods and it has produced two manuals which detail the approach of group extension work. Furthermore, in Latin America, work with extension groups in Brazil and Colombia has shown the usefulness to extension of the formation of extension groups, and how these groups can support extension activity.

Advantages of group methods

It has been seen that individual extension methods can be costly in both terms of time and scarce extension resources, and that they reach only a limited number of people. There is also the danger that too much emphasis upon individuals can lead to undue concentration on progressive farmers to the detriment of the poorer farmers.

Coverage

The group method offers the possibility of greater extension coverage, and is therefore more cost-effective. Using the group method, the extension worker can reach more farmers and in this way make contact with many more farmers who have had no previous contact with extension activities.

Learning environment

Extension groups offer a more reflective learning environment in which the farmer can listen, discuss and decide upon his involvement in the extension activity. The support of the group helps an individual farmer to make decisions and determine a course of action. The group creates a supportive atmosphere, and individual farmers can gain greater self-confidence by joining others to discuss new ideas and try out new practices.

Action

The group method brings together farmers with similar problems. Often, these problems demand concerted action (tackling the erosion of a hillside, for example), and such action can be taken more effectively by a group rather than by an individual, who may be overwhelmed by the enormity of certain problems.

Important issues in group extension

Before considering in detail a number of different group methods of extension, it is necessary to look at some of the more important issues concerning the extension group. To form, structure and develop a group of farmers for extension purposes is a complex process, and such groups do not appear overnight. It is not sufficient for the extension agent merely to bring the farmers together for a particular activity. He must give time and thought to the fact that the farmers will constitute a group, will function as a group and will display characteristics associated with groups. Experience in different parts of the world has shown that there are four sets of important issues that the agent will have to bear in mind:

Purpose

The agent should be aware of two main purposes in his work with groups. First, he should try to develop the group, to encourage its members to continue to meet and to establish the group on a permanent basis. In this way, the agent will be developing a base from which group members can continue their development efforts. Second, the agent should use the group to transmit new ideas, information and knowledge that will assist the farmers in their agricultural activities. While the second use of groups is more common, it is important that the agent consider the initial development of the group as an equally vital extension activity.

Size

The most suitable size for groups in rural extension is between 20 and 40 members. If the group is too large, it becomes unwieldy and many farmers may feel lost and bewildered. Smaller groups allow closer contact, a better chance of involvement and more opportunity for strengthening bonds of friendship and support among members. One common determinant of group size is geographical location: its membership will be restricted to those living within a particular area.

Membership

Since the extension agent's job is to help farmers identify and tackle problems, it is better to have groups of farmers with common problems. If the agent is working with a group made up of different types of farmers, ranging, for example, from big landowners to small, tenant farmers, it may be difficult for him to achieve a common purpose within the group. The agent, therefore, should pay careful attention to group membership and try to ensure that its members share a common interest and problems.

Agent's relationship with group

The agent should give considerable thought to his relationship with the group. Ideally, he will want to encourage the group's formation and help to strengthen it. If his extension work takes him to another area, it is hoped that he will leave behind a structure that can function with a minimum of extension support. The agent should try to avoid being directly responsible for setting up the groups and should try to ensure that they are based, where possible, upon existing social or cultural community groups. In all of his activities with groups, the agent should beware of the group becoming too dependent upon him and of creating a structure that needs him for survival. Instead, the agent should strive to encourage an element of independence in the group, by encouraging the group to take the initiative in extension activities and to decide for itself in what way the agent can be of assistance.

These four issues, then, should be borne in mind by the agent as he pursues his work with extension groups. His main concern will be to do his work well and to ensure that, through the group approach, more farmers come into contact with new ideas and practices. In the long run, group work might be even more productive and effective if he gave some thought to the development of the group itself in his extension work.

Types of group extension methods

Group meetings

Calling the members of a group or the inhabitants of a local community together for a meeting is the commonest group extension method. Although there may be an air of informality about such meetings, they will nevertheless need to be carefully thought out and planned. The group or community meeting is a useful educational forum where the agent and farmers can come together, and ideas can be openly discussed and analysed. The agent will probably have information about a new government policy, or agricultural idea or practice. He will want to introduce this new information, to seek the opinions of community members and gain their support for extension activities. Indeed, there are a whole range of purposes for such community or group meetings:

Information meetings. The agent calls the group or community together to communicate a specific piece of new information which he feels will benefit them and upon which he seeks their advice.

Planning meetings. The main purpose is to review a particular problem, suggest a number of solutions and decide upon a course of action.

Special interest meetings. Topics of specific interest to a particular group of people (e.g., horticulture, bee keeping, or dairy farming) are presented and discussed in detail at a level relevant to those participating.

General community meetings. Men, women and young people of a community are invited to attend to discuss issues of general community interest. It is important to hold such general meetings occasionally so as to avoid any community group feeling that it is excluded from extension activities.

Whatever the case, however, the agent should only call a meeting if he thinks that it can be useful. If farmers feel that their time has been wasted in coming to a meeting, they may refuse to come to subsequent meetings and thus frustrate the agent's work. Once he decides to hold a meeting, the agent should make careful preparations and check a number of important arrangements which will be necessary to ensure a successful meeting.

The basic purpose of the meeting should be agreed and to determine this the agent should consult community or group leaders. Only then can the agent and community leaders consider the content and the best approach to the meeting. It may be useful to write down in a few words what the purpose is, and then to see what are the important

aspects to be considered. If it is to be a meeting for providing information, the agent must structure his material in a coherent form and decide in what sequence he is going to present it. If it is to be a general community meeting, then, similarly, he must decide how he will structure the meeting and introduce discussion on the issues he has in mind.

Form of the meeting

Depending upon the nature and purpose of the meeting, the agent must decide the most appropriate form for the meeting and how it can best be conducted. The agent should consider the appropriateness of the different forms the meeting could take and, in consultation with community members, decide accordingly. Ideally, the ingredients should be mixed to suit the occasion.

Smaller meetings are more likely to meet the specific needs of those who attend. When plans are to be made or decisions taken, a small number of representatives will usually achieve more than a large gathering of all community members. On other occasions, it will be important for the meeting to be open to as many people as possible.

A formal meeting, with chairman, agenda and written record of proceedings, is appropriate when specific business has to be dealt with or decisions reached. The chairman keeps the meeting to the central issues, and the decisions of the meeting are recorded accurately so that they cannot be disputed later. In an informal meeting, people feel more able to express their own point of view and less dominated by the structure and formality of the proceedings. However, an open, unstructured discussion, although it allows all to participate, may result in a few people dominating the proceedings.

A lecture or talk allows the agent (or other speaker) to convey a detailed, well-prepared message to his audience on a specific issue; for example, a new piece of technology can be presented in this way, and illustrated by visual aids. It should be remembered, however, that the lecture is a particularly tedious approach to meetings and care must be taken to ensure that people will not get bored. Alternatively, in a discussion, many people are able to express points of view and ask questions. Discussions may be completely open and unstructured, or based on a prepared agenda of discussion points.

Planning the meeting

There are two important decisions to make regarding the time and location. A date and time for the meeting must be decided and announced. The time should be

convenient to all concerned and should avoid clashes with other events or activities. The meeting-place should be well-known, easy to get to and appropriate for the form of meeting. The meeting-place should also be comfortable and have the facilities necessary for the meeting. An extension agent would never hold a meeting at midday, on a very hot day, in the open sun. Such a meeting could be disastrous, as well as cause considerable discomfort.

After the above two issues have been considered, it may be useful for the agent to draw up a list of other arrangements to be made in preparation for the meeting. Such a check-list could include:

Check-list

- Publicity for the meeting
- Seating arrangements
- Audio-visual equipment and material, or other educational aids
- Agenda, and order of events
- Guest speakers or other specialists who will contribute to the meeting
- Chairman to take charge of the meeting, who should be elected by the community
- Refreshments for speakers and, where necessary, other participants.

Conducting the meeting

Even the most carefully prepared meeting can fail if it is not conducted in the right manner. While the above arrangements are important, the way the actual meeting proceeds will determine whether it will be a success or not. The agent must be conscious that he is dealing with adults who do not want to sit for hours listening to a speaker talk endlessly. The agent should try to vary the agenda of the meeting: for example, a short talk, accompanied by visual aids, followed by comments and questions.

Variety of content, as well as a chance for the farmers to participate, will be important. In addition, the meeting must not go on too long. One-and-a-half hours are probably sufficient for a group or community meeting. It is better to have a highly productive, short meeting than one which rambles on and loses effect.

The agent's role in the meeting should also respond to the circumstances. He should encourage the community to appoint a chairman and should allow the chairman to conduct business. The agent's role should basically be to inform and support, and he should not dominate the meeting. Furthermore, the meeting should not resemble a class-room with the agent as teacher and the farmers as pupils. The agent should make

every effort to ensure that during the proceedings the community members feel that it is their meeting and that they have a part to play.

As a guide to the proceedings of the meeting, the agent should keep the following points in mind. He should start the meeting on time. Then he should welcome community members and special guests, explain the purpose of the meeting and the programme to be followed, and begin the programme. Later, the agent should encourage questions and discussion, and be prepared to summarize the main points and note important decisions. The meeting should be closed with thanks to all concerned.

As the most commonly used form of group extension method, the group or community meeting will be most effective if carefully thought out and planned. After each meeting, the agent should make a brief record of the proceedings and the principal decisions taken. He should also take any prompt follow-up action that has been decided.

Demonstrations

Farmers like to see how a new idea works, and also what effect it can have on increasing their crop production. Both purposes can be achieved by means of a farm demonstration. A good, practical demonstration is an invaluable method in extension work. The demonstration is a particularly powerful method to use with farmers who do not read easily. A demonstration will give such farmers the opportunity to observe, at first hand, the differences between a recommended new crop practice and traditional practices. The strength of the demonstration should lie in its simplicity and its ability to present the farmers with concrete results.

There are two principal types of demonstration used by extension agents - method demonstration and result demonstration.

Method demonstration

Method demonstrations basically show farmers how to do something. In the method demonstration, the farmer is shown step by step how, for example, to plant seeds in line, to use a mechanical duster to control insects, or to top tobacco. The agent will probably be dealing with farmers who have already accepted the particular practice being demonstrated, but who now want to know how to do it themselves.

The main advantage of the method demonstration is that the extension agent can explain simple farming skills to a large number of people, thus increasing the impact of his extension work. Moreover, as farmers are able to participate, there is a greater

chance that they will benefit from the demonstration than if they were passively hearing it in a lecture.

The main limitation of a method demonstration is that, if there are too many farmers present, only a few get a chance to see, hear and do. The agent must be conscious that the demonstration is a learning experience and prepare the event accordingly. It is also vital that the demonstration be well thought out and competently conducted.

Result demonstration

The main purpose of a result demonstration is to show local farmers that a particular new recommendation is practicable under local conditions. Comparison is the important element in a result demonstration: comparison between compost and no compost, between poor seed and selected seed, or between use of fertilizer and no fertilizer. "Seeing is believing" is an age-old expression, but one appropriate to a result demonstration. Until a farmer has actually seen the results of, for example, the application of a fertilizer, he will not be convinced by the agent's recommendation. By showing tangible results of a new practice recommended by the extension service, the agent can help to create confidence among the farmers and can greatly encourage them to try the practice themselves.

A result demonstration is an ideal way to present to farmers a comparison between traditional and new practices. It can also help to establish confidence in more scientific farming methods and increase the farmers' confidence in ideas originating from research stations. It shows proof of the value of a new practice. A result demonstration is also a useful tool that an agent can use to establish confidence among farmers in a new area.

Its major limitation is that it takes a long time to mature and is thus a costly use of extension resources. If, in the end, for whatever reason, the new practice should fail, it could have disastrous consequences. Often such failures (for example, because of lack of rain) are outside the control of the agent.

Both method and result demonstrations are extension activities that require a lot of thought, careful planning and efficient execution. Although the two demonstrations differ somewhat in their purposes, they share a lot of common points and, in terms of their preparation and execution, they can be considered together.

Basic principles for demonstrations

Before the agent begins to plan and prepare for a demonstration, he should be clear about a number of key points that will guide his preparation and handling of the demonstration.

Participation. Where possible, demonstrations should be carried out on local farms with farmers' participation rather than on an extension plot or research station. Farmers will have more confidence if a demonstration is held on a neighbour's land, or if a new practice is shown by a fellow farmer, than if it is carried out by agents on extension land. The more the local farmers can be involved in the whole process of a demonstration, the greater will be their self-confidence and readiness to learn.

Simplicity. Simple, clear-cut demonstrations of a single practice or new idea will be far more effective than ambitious and over-complex demonstrations that demand too much of the farmer. It is better to proceed step by step with a number of demonstrations than to try to do everything at once.

Learning. The demonstration is a learning environment and should be run in such a way that the farmers do in fact learn something. A demonstration is a type of classroom, and the agent must be conscious of classroom requirements in terms of space, time, equipment and the teaching method to use.

Preparation. An extension agent should never contemplate holding a demonstration without careful planning and preparation. A demonstration hastily given could have disastrous consequences.

Planning the demonstration

When the agent decides that a demonstration would be useful at a particular time, he must then dedicate some time to planning and preparing for it. In this respect, he must ask himself a number of questions.

- What is the objective of the demonstration?
- Why is the demonstration the most suitable extension method, and what would be the usefulness of the new idea to be demonstrated?
- When should the demonstration be held? When is the most convenient date and time both for the farmers and in terms of the application of the new idea?
- Where is the demonstration to be held? Which suitable location is the most convenient for the farmers.

The agent should work out in some detail his answers to the above questions before proceeding any further. It is very important that the reasons for the demonstration be appropriate and clearly understood and that there is a realistic expectation that the demonstration will be of benefit to the farmers involved.

Preparing the demonstration

The more carefully the agent can prepare all the details of the demonstration, the more chance he will have of it running smoothly. The following are the key areas of preparation.

- Consult the local people and seek their help and advice in the preparation of the demonstration.
- Prepare a detailed plan of the demonstration, the main issues to be covered, the sequence of events, the resources needed and the contributions required from other people.
- Collect information and material available on the new idea or practice to be demonstrated, and make sure that the topic is familiar and that questions can be answered.
- Check that all the support material is ready (e.g., audio-visual aids, implements).
- Select those farmers who will take part in the demonstration and brief them on the outline of events.
- Ensure that the demonstration has been publicized and that the farmers know exactly when and where it is to take place.
- Visit the demonstration site beforehand to make sure that all is in order and that the site is appropriate.

Supervising the demonstration

During the demonstration, the agent's role should be to supervise but not to dominate. He should actively support the farmer who may be assisting in the demonstration, and encourage the others to participate as much as they can. The agent should be keen to ensure that all those present benefit from the demonstration. During the demonstration, therefore, the agent should:

Welcome the participants, make them feel at ease and ensure that they have all they require to benefit fully from the demonstration.

Explain the purpose of the demonstration, what it is hoped to achieve and what the various stages are that will be followed. Distribute any literature or other material which may have been prepared as a guide for the participants.

Conduct the demonstration in person or be ready to help the demonstrator farmer. Proceed at a pace the farmers can follow, and be prepared to explain again or answer

questions from participants. Emphasize key points and explain the practice step by step in simple words. In a method demonstration, ensure that all those who wish to do so have a chance to practice the demonstration themselves.

Summarize the main issues or points which have arisen, encourage questions from the farmers and make sure that the participants have had every opportunity to try out or examine the practice being demonstrated.

Conclude the demonstration with a vote of thanks to all concerned, and with a few comments about any follow-up activities planned.

Follow-up

It is important that any interest generated by, or decisions taken at, the demonstration be followed up. Farmers will feel let down if the agent does not do so. This follow-up will be useful for the agent as well. Demonstrations can often result in good contacts with local farmers, and the agent may be able to enlist their support for future activities. It is also important that the agent reflect upon the demonstration and evaluate its effectiveness. The agent should, therefore, write a report and prepare a record of the demonstration, noting the names of the participants, the effect achieved and personal impressions of the usefulness of the demonstration.

Field days

Field days are usually opportunities to hold method or result demonstrations on a slightly larger scale, and are usually run in a more informal and less highly structured manner. The purpose is often to introduce a new idea and a new crop, and to stimulate the interest of as many farmers as possible. Experimental stations or other government centres may be used for field days, but it is more usual and profitable for them to be held on the land of a local farmer. There is a greater chance of making an impact if the field day is held on a farmer's land, and if the farmer plays a part in running it and explaining the purpose.

Field days can range in size from a small group to annual events attracting hundreds of farmers. Since the aim is a general introduction to some new idea, there is less need to be concerned about limiting the numbers. The extension agent's role on the field day is to support the farmer on whose land it is being held, to offer general guidance to ensure that things run smoothly and to be available to answer questions and queries.

It is probably better not to over organize the field day but to try to create an atmosphere in which visiting farmers can inspect, inquire, question and generally get to know what is available.

Although the agent will try to encourage an open and informal atmosphere for the field day, there is still a considerable amount of preparation needed to ensure that it runs well. The issues which the agent must consider are very similar to those noted under demonstrations and will not be repeated here. It may be useful, however, to bear a few additional points in mind.

Limit the numbers to the capacity of the field, to avoid overcrowding.

Ensure a good layout of field-day activities, with easy access and facility of movement around the field.

Encourage the demonstrator farmer to take most of the initiative; give him support but do not take over the field day from him.

Provide suitably large visual material and also, if necessary, a loudspeaker, to ensure that all can hear. Check that extension literature and other material are available for consultation.

Conclude the field day by bringing all the participants together, reviewing the day's proceedings and the main items seen and discussed, and explain any future relevant extension activities.

A field day is a day out for farmers and is often a welcome relief from their daily hard work. The agent should, therefore, provide an interesting and well-presented exhibition, suitable refreshments and points of rest, and generally create an atmosphere in which the farmers will feel at ease and will be eager to know what is going on.

Tours

Farmers like to visit farms in other districts to see how they work, what they grow and what kinds of problems the farmers there are facing. A tour is a series of field demonstrations on different farms, or at different centres, and can often attract a lot of interest from local farmers. The tour should give local farmers a chance to see how other farmers cultivate their land, and to exchange ideas and experiences with them. It is important, therefore, that the area to be visited be in some way similar agriculturally to that of the visiting farmers.

As with all other forms of extension, tours have to be well thought out, planned, prepared and conducted. The five stages of determining the objective, planning the content, preparing the arrangements, conducting the tour and arranging for appropriate follow-up will be a guide to the extension agent. However, it may be useful to add these points:

Visit the area first to become familiar with local conditions, the farms to be visited, the route and road conditions.

Limit the tour to what is possible. It is better to do a short tour in which visitors can have a good look at local farms than to arrange an ambitious tour and be pushed for time. Don't tire the visitors out.

Encourage the host farmers to do all the explaining and to take charge of the tour.

Arrange for food and drink during the tour.

Conclude the tour with a short summary of the main events and note any comments or conclusions.

A field tour is an ideal method of involving farmers and of stimulating genuine interest in extension activities. It is also very useful in bringing farmers together to discuss common problems, and to gain useful experience of other areas.