Defining Priorities of the National Extension Service

Define priorities clearly is essential for structuring, resourcing and training the extension service and for monitoring and evaluating its performance. The focus may change over time depending on circumstances, e.g., natural disasters, new industry, service development by NGOs and private sector.

**Farmers must have an effective voice in determining national research and extension priorities—through regular meetings, workshops or farmer advisory groups, or a centrally managed survey.**

**Below is an example of a priority setting tool that can be used with stakeholders to determine priorities for the extension service.**

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| **Potential policy priorities for agricultural and rural extension services**   * **[Specify: national/regional/agricultural industry focus--** | **Priority rating**  **1 = low; 10 = high** |
| **Poverty alleviation** – working with NGOs to provide information and facilitative support to individuals and communities, so that they can break out of the poverty cycle and develop new enterprises. |  |
| **Reaching vulnerable groups** – providing targeted support for building capacity in women, youth or disadvantaged groups to enable them to better thrive within the broader community. |  |
| **Maximizing productivity and economic benefits**  – providing technical and business information and support to farms and rural business to allow them to maximize output and efficiency, and thus returns. |  |
| **Ensuring biosecurity** – raising awareness of the need for biosecurity, regulations and guidelines and how people can protect the nation and its industries and environment. |  |
| **Protecting the environment** – ensuring that people have the awareness, knowledge and motivation to minimize environmental damage and protect biodiversity. |  |
| **Adapting to climate change** – working with communities and industries to understand ways to better manage climate variability and put in place means of addressing and adapting to longer term climate change. |  |
| **Developing value chains** – working with stakeholders from across the value chain, including farmers, agribusiness, NGOs, and processing and marketing organizations to ensure maximum efficiencies and benefits to each sector and the broader community. |  |

Source: Policy Brief 12/2010: Developing a Policy Framework for Extension Systems. Secretariat of the Pacific Communities. www.spc.int