

Guidelines for Strengthening of the National Agriculture Extension System (NAES)

1. Background:

1.1 The institutional mechanism in the form of the Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) at the district level was first pilot tested under the Innovations in Technology Dissemination (ITD) component of the National Agricultural Technology Project (NATP) in 28 districts of seven States from 1998 to 2005. Based on its positive outcome, the Extension Reforms (ATMA) Programme was introduced during 2005-06 by the Ministry of Agriculture, as a major intervention in addressing the constraints as observed in the T & V and the post - T & V system by introducing an extension system that is farmer driven and farmer accountable, based on an institutional reforms mechanism.

2. Introduction:

2.1 A number of reform measures viz. decentralized decision making through institutional arrangements; convergence of line departments through a gap filling mode; encouraging multi - agency extension strategies including the private sector, Farming System Approach; promoting group approach in extension; addressing gender concerns; sustainability of extension services through beneficiary contribution and bottom-up planning with participatory approach are already being institutionalized through the ATMA model at the district level; BTTs and FACs at the block level and with the active participation of KVKs, NGOs, FOs and the private sector as per the Operational Guidelines issued to the States vide letter no. 27-1/03- NATP-TC dated 20.4.05.

2.2 Based on the Recommendations of the National Consultations on Revitalization of Agriculture Extension System held in Delhi on 15th May, 2007; the recommendations of the National Commission on Farmers (NCF) and the Planning Commission's Working Group on Extension, the ATMA programme has been strengthened by duly incorporating new provisions, strengthening of existing provisions and implementation mechanisms. The details of improvements made in the Cafeteria have been circulated to the States vide letter No. 27(27)/2007-AE dated 13th July, 2007. However, during the National Kharif Conference held in Delhi on 26th-27th February 2008 the prevailing weakness of the existing extension network at the levels below the district headquarters was clearly brought into focus. The revitalization of the extension system has thus become essential at the village and

Sub-block level in order to improve the outreach of extension to individual farmers through the group approach in all the 29 States/ 6 UTs.

2.3 In this background, a revitalization strategy based on introduction of extension support at two levels – the Village and the Sub-block level placing a specialist at the Sub-block level, and requisite ICT support at these two levels has been conceived by the Ministry of Agriculture and the new structure is elaborated below.

3. Specialist & Extension Support

3.1 Village Level:

- Extension Support at the village level would be provided to the farmers through a Farmer Friend (FF) for every 500 farmers or one FF in every village, whichever is higher. This would be very useful in extending the reach of the agriculture extension system up to the farmer level. [Many states have since institutionalized the system of FF with different nomenclature suited to local usage and acceptability.];
- The FF should be given a suitable designation in the local language e.g. '*Kisan Mitra*', etc.
- The FF shall be a practicing local progressive farmer with following qualifications and functions:-

Qualification:	He must be a resident of the village and a progressive farmer. Preference will be given to a graduate in Agriculture/ Horticulture/ Animal Husbandry/ Fisheries or with a Diploma in Agriculture or a simple Graduate or 10+2 (with Agriculture) with computer literacy.
How to be appointed	The FF will be engaged by the BTT Convener on the resolution of the Gram Panchayat or the Farmer Interest Groups (FIGs).

Functions:	<p>The FF will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mobilize farmers to form new farmer interest groups and provide handholding support to the old groups existing in the village. • facilitate holding of field demonstrations, Kisan Goshties and preparation of Village Research and Extension Action Plan. • working in close contact with Focal Point (FP) for two-way exchange of information related to Agriculture & allied activities and report his progress to FP. • attending meetings of Gram Sabha, maintaining a diary of activities and ensure dissemination of information through multi-media.
Honorarium/ Remuneration:	<p>Monthly honorarium of Rs. 1,000 – 1200 per month or as considered appropriate by the State Government. The entire expenditure may be borne by the State Government or the Gram Panchayat.</p> <p>A performance based incentive could be introduced with contributions from Farmer Interest Groups @ of Rs.50 per FIG per month which can be subsequently enhanced by Rs. 25 per FIG per month on an annual basis.</p>

3.2 Sub-Block Level or Focal Point (FP):

- 3.2.1 The FP should have a team of minimum two Subject Matter Specialists (SMS) covering an area of 10 villages.
- 3.2.2 The States must reorganize their extension system at the sub-block level to ensure placement of the SMSs at the Focal Point from their existing functionaries of Agriculture, Horticulture and other allied departments to have better coordination, integration and focus on the extension activities.
- 3.2.3 If State Governments feel that the existing number of personnel is not sufficient to fulfill the requirement of providing two SMSs at the FPs, and additional manpower is required, then they may consider submitting proposals for engagement of one of the two SMSs at the sub-block level under the RKVY Scheme or the "Innovative Component" of the Macro Management of Agriculture Scheme. But one SMS would have to be provided out of the existing State personnel. It may, however, be noted that once State Governments make a commitment, they will have to sustain

it. It must be noted that for any such proposal submitted by State Governments, the Central Government assistance will be limited to only Rs. 5,000/- per month for the S.M.S. as remuneration and Rs.3500 per month for operational support as mentioned in Para 5.4

3.2.4 The SMS to be engaged under the RKVY/ MMA Scheme should be a resident of the block where the FP is situated. However, if a person with necessary qualification is not available in the block, he could be from the adjacent blocks of the same district. He will have following qualifications and functions.

Qualification:	B.Sc Agriculture/ Horticulture, Animal Husbandry or Fisheries as per the local requirement. Preference shall be given to the holders of Diploma/ Degree in Computer Applications
Functions:	<p>The SMSs will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be responsible for management of National Agriculture Extension System up to village level in the villages falling under the area of FPs • provide information on latest technologies and best farming practices to FFs and the farmers. • ensure mobilization and capacity building of FIGs and their Group Leaders. • assist the Gram Panchayat in selection of beneficiaries for implementation of extension as well as other programmes. • be responsible for operationalization of Farm Schools; Front Line Demonstrations; Training & Exposure visits. • supervise and guide the preparation of village level Research Extension and Action Plan. • maintain a close liaison with Block Technology Team at the block level and FF/ FIGs/ CIGs at the village level. The SMS will report his progress to the BTT Convener.
Honorarium/ Remuneration:	The support to SMS from Government of India would be to the extent of Rs. 5000/ month. Additional amount required, if any, would be met from the States.

3.2.5 The FP should be located adjacent to or as close to the Common Service Centres (CSCs) as possible to enable SMS to utilize the infrastructure of CSC and popularize the FP.

- 3.2.6 The SMS to be supported under the RKVY/ MMA Scheme as detailed in para 3.2.3, should be engaged by the Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA) by outsourcing through an NGO or an agency on contract basis for a maximum period of 2 years at a time. Their engagement could be renewed if their performance is found to be satisfactory. The terms of engagement should clearly state that they could be disengaged at any time if their performance is not satisfactory.
- 3.2.7 The FP should be named in the local language so as to popularize these and adequately convey their purpose.
- 3.2.8 Since the availability of funds under the States allocation under RKVY/ MMA Scheme may be limited and may not suffice for covering each FP, in case the States have to appoint one SMS under these schemes, it may be desirable to prioritise the FPs where this new support system is introduced. For example, in the States covered by the National Food Security Mission (NFSM) it might be beneficial to introduce SMSs in the FPs of the NFSM districts to maximize benefits, as consultants would have been engaged under the NFSM at the district level. Adding SMS at the FP and FF at the village level would derive maximum synergy.

4. Support for Information Communication Technology (ICT):

- 4.1 The extensive use of ICT and its infrastructure would be a critical component of the strategy to revitalize the NAES. The infrastructure being developed under the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) to link all the blocks by a wide area network and provide connectivity upto the village level through Common Service Centres (CSCs) would provide important support at all levels in the extension set up. The ICT infrastructure available in the private sector, for example, e-Choupals and agri-clinics in the villages, should also be used and integrated into the public extension system to increase its effectiveness, quality and outreach.
- 4.2 A comprehensive Kisan knowledge Management Systems (KKMS) shall be developed to provide and disseminate information related to the modern technology, modern farm implements, best agricultural practices and post-harvest management including market information. The KKMS would

contain area specific information in respect of individual districts and agro-ecological situations. This should be regularly updated on the basis of new researches, technologies, emerging challenges and opportunities and problems and feedback provided by the farmers. Support provided under AGRISNET can be utilized, to attain this objective. ATMA may take the services of KVKs and SAUs to develop suitable content with local inputs which would be readily available at the CSCs and websites of Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA)/Department of Agriculture and allied Departments.

- 4.3 The main ICT equipments have been provided to SAMETI and ATMA under the Extension Reforms Scheme in the Cafeteria. Some districts have also been provided equipments under AGRISNET and other schemes. These equipments should be fully utilized for extension related activities. The office of BTT and Focal Point would utilize the equipments available locally for which they have been provided monthly expenses.
- 4.4 The field specific and village specific database should be developed which would provide information about the soil health status, the cropping pattern, production and productivity, irrigation facilities, weather data, the cost of inputs and market information.
- 4.5 The experts of SAUs/KVKs, BTMs and SMSs of Focal Point would be available on mobile phone to provide information of immediate importance to the Farmer Friend, FIGs and farmers. Alerts on weather, incidence of pest and diseases and other crop related important matters would be sent through the mobile network.

5. Financial Norms:

5.1 The financial norms are suggestive and States may modify these according to state specific needs. However, the support by Government of India through the RKVY/ MMA Scheme referred to in para 3.2.3 would be limited to the extent indicated here-in-under.

5.2 No posts should be created and no permanent liability should be undertaken in respect of the engagement with the NGO/ agency or persons.

5.3 Norms for Specialist and Extension Support

Level	Position	Honorarium/Operational support
Village	Farmers Friend	Fully State Government/ Gram Panchayat/ FIG supported
Sub- Block Level(Focal Point)	Subject Matter Specialist	Support under RKVY/MMA Scheme will be limited to an extent of Rs.5000/- month for only one SMS provided that State submit a proposal under RKVY or MMA as referred to in para 3.2.3.

5.4 Norms for Operational Expenses

Level	Support for	Operational Support
Sub- Block Level(Focal Point)	(i)Monthly Expense (ii)Mobility	Rs. 3000/ month including Rs. 300/- for use of mobile phones Rs. 500/ month/ SMS for POL <u>Note:</u> This will be available for only one SMS under RKVY/ MMA Scheme provided the State Government submits a proposal for engagement of one of the two SMSs at the sub-block level under RKVY Scheme or the 'Innovative Component' of MMA as referred to in para 3.2.3.

6. Evaluation & Monitoring:

- 6.1 The progress of the extension work done by the SMSs at the Focal Points and Farmers Friends should be closely monitored using ICT infrastructure and by regular monitoring & meetings by BTT and Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA) at the district level and IDWG at the State level.
- 6.2 Impact Assessment Studies of the extension work done by FPs and FFs should be got conducted by the expert agencies and corrective action shall be taken timely to attain the objectives of the extension system.