

Farm Transition Network (FTN) - A Participatory Approach to Reinvent University Agricultural Extension in India

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ABSTRACT Most of the agricultural universities in India continue to be dominated by top-down, monolithic structures that follow limited extension mandate. None of the post-T&V (Training and Visit System) extension reforms could revitalize it to meet the demands of changed agricultural context. The profusion of uncensored information through mass media and cyber sources has long term consequences of generating public distrust and alienation from agriculture. This is attributed to the lack of a proper mechanism for verification regarding the accuracy and viability of information transmitted. Farm Transition Network (FTN) is aimed at addressing this gap in a demand driven participatory learning mode. It is conceptualized as a highly technical lateral entry intervention by the agricultural university aimed at opinion leaders of agricultural development system. It enables the *hypodermic needle effect* of information by providing a platform for verification of information and utilizing it for evolving alternate options and optimal packages at agro-ecosystem level. It involves integrating research knowledge and local innovations for promoting sustainable livelihood functions into agro-ecosystem management. It identifies agricultural development system as a function of innovation assessment and facilitation sub-system, innovation adaptation and dissemination sub-system and innovation enabling sub-system. Functional processes involved in each subsystem are facilitated through partnerships spread over different levels ranging from agro-ecosystem level of farmer designates to institutional level of SAU. This is further strengthened through the use of satellite farmer groups (SFG) that scale up successful field models into entrepreneurship modules. Major partners and the functional roles performed by each subsystem with characterizing features have been discussed.