

Full Length Research Paper

Agricultural extension reforms and development in Uganda

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This study was done with the objective of contributing to the policy debate on the changing landscape of agricultural rural services in Uganda. The study examines the perception of Agricultural Extension providers on the new changes in provision of agricultural extension services. Data was collected from twenty two key informants. Result show that political interference is negatively affecting the image of the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) and undoing some of its achievements. This suggests the need to re-evaluate the current political support given to agriculture to ensure that it builds on past achievement of NAADS and addresses its weaknesses.

Key words: National agricultural advisory services, agricultural extension, political interference, Uganda.

INTRODUCTION

A number of countries have taken bold steps to modernize agriculture through enhancing agricultural extension, a sector that is key to increasing the farmer knowledge to new agricultural technologies. Uganda is one of the SSA countries that invested significantly in improving provision of agricultural extension and other agricultural development programs. Uganda has recently initiated three major rural development programs, which build on the progress of past efforts. The Prosperity for All (PFA) was Uganda ruling party's election manifesto in 2006, which implemented programs comparable to the Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (Joughin and Kjær, 2010). PFA set a goal of enabling households to earn an annual income of UGX 20 million (approximately US\$10,000 per year).

The second major agricultural program is the Africa-wide Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), which Uganda has committed to implement and has prepared its investment strategy. The major goal of the country level CAADP investment strategy is to enhance agricultural-led economic growth and to achieve the millennium development goals (MAAIF, 2010). The CAADP has set a goal of achieving a 6% agricultural annual growth and allocation of at least 10% of government budget to the agricultural sector. In 2007/08, Uganda's agricultural growth was only 2.6% (Ibid), underscoring the weak growth of the sector. The investment strategy, which Uganda has prepared, will be implemented through its Development Strategy Investment Plan (DSIP).

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The third strategy is the medium term development framework – the National Development Plan (NDP) – was initiated in 2008 following the expiration of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), which was implemented from 1997 to 2008. Evaluation of the PEAP found that one of its major weaknesses was the low agricultural productivity due to low investment in the sector, which employs 73% of the population and contributes 20% of the GDP (UBOS 2010). To address this shortcoming, the NDP gives more emphasis on the agricultural sector. To implement this focus, the Agricultural Sector Development Strategy Investment Plan (DSIP) was formulated to serve as the broader framework of the agricultural sector investment and development strategies. DSIP, which is a medium term plan running from 2010/11 to 2014/15 is designed to harmonize and consolidate all past agricultural development strategies, namely, the Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (PMA) and the Prosperity for All (PFA) (MAAIF, 2010).

It is important to reflect on the past agricultural development strategies in order to learn from their strengths and weaknesses. Of particular importance for this study are the agricultural extension services, which have seen dramatic changes under the PEAP and the new development strategies. The Government of Uganda initiated agricultural extension reforms that included the demand-driven National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) program. The main objective of the reforms is to enhance agricultural technology advisory services. This had the key strategy to implement the PMA strategy, which was Uganda's overarching poverty reduction strategy with an objective of transforming agriculture from subsistence to commercial farming. The NAADS program, whose implementation started in 2001, was PMA's main pillar, which attracted significant investment by the government and donors. NAADS targets the development and use of farmer groups, and in the process empowers them to procure advisory services, manage linkage with marketing partners. The NAADS program has been one of case studies of decentralization of agricultural services that uses the new demand-driven advisory services approach, in which private-sector agricultural extension providers are given a key role in providing agricultural advisory services in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

This study was done with an objective of contributing to the policy debate on the changing landscape of agricultural rural services in Uganda. The study focuses on the agricultural extension services, which is the major rural services under the PMA, PFA and other government programs. The present study examines the perception of Agricultural Extension (AEA) providers on the new changes in provision of agricultural extension services.

The changing landscape of provision of agricultural rural services in Uganda

As is the case in other countries, the performance of the

publicly provided and funded traditional agricultural extension services in Uganda was poor (MAAIF and MFEPD, 2000). To address this problem, the NAADS program was introduced by the Act of 2001, which gave it a mandate to develop a demand driven, farmer-led agricultural service delivery system targeting the poor subsistence farmers, with emphasis to women, youth and people with disabilities. Its development goal is to enhance rural livelihood by increasing agricultural productivity and profitability in a sustainable manner. NAADS also aims to empower farmers to participate in the decision making process of type of technologies to be promoted by the providers of advisory services in their sub-county. This demand-driven approach differed significantly from the traditional supply-driven. The first phase of NAADS (2001-2009) was introduced in 2001 in six pilot districts. The program was rolled out to 545 sub-counties or 83% of all the sub-counties in 2006/07. NAADS, a twenty five year program in 2011, had now been rolled out to 79 of the 80 districts and to 710 sub-counties in the country. In the State of Nations address on 01 June 2010, the President stated that the program had been rolled out in all 80 districts, 929 sub-counties and 137 urban councils. Hence virtually, NAADS has reached all sub-counties and the biggest challenge is whether it has reached the farmers, in other words, whether it has met its expectations.

NAADS operates through farmer groups at village level. The farmer groups in a given sub-county form the farmer forums. Each farmer group prioritizes three enterprises and the advisory service needs. The priority enterprises and advisory service needs are sent to the farmer forum, which determines three priority enterprises in the sub-county. NAADS supports the selected priority enterprises and the required advisory services needed to address the identified constraints and advisory service needs. Following selection of the three enterprises, NAADS provides technologies for demonstration on a member of a farmer group's (or host farmers) field-technology development site (TDS). The host farmer is chosen by fellow members of the group, and private service providers are contracted to carry out the demonstrations and advise farmers at these TDSs.

Until early 2008, advisory services were provided by private providers, who included non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private extension agents with no affiliation to NGOs. In the sub-counties where NAADS was not operating, the public extension agents continued to provide agricultural extension services. In the sub-counties where NAADS was operating, the public extension agents regulated and facilitated private extension service providers. NAADS changes in 2008 reinstated the public extension service provision. The government directed the districts to stop contracting private extension workers. This change meant that the public extension workers now provide most of the advisory services with the private extension workers

contracted to provide only specialized services. A circular from the Ministry of public services dated 14th January 2010 directed that all agricultural extension staff at the sub-county level be converted to NAADS. The conversion exercise was to cover all extension staff based at the sub-county level on permanent and pensionable terms. The public extension workers contracted under NAADS were to be well enumerated and facilitated under the NAADS program. This directive set a goal of achieving the conversion by April 2010. However, this directive was not fully implemented.

Like NAADS phase I, NAADS phase II (under DSIP) provides advisory services in conjunction with the specialized export crop authorities (coffee, cotton, and tea), dairy development authority, and the genetic information resource center and data bank. Additionally, cooperatives and NGO will continue to provide advisory services under the supervision of public extension services.

Under NAADS phase II, four major areas show the similarities and differences with the first phase. NAADS phase II plans to provide advisory services by:

1. Empowering farmers to make and implement decisions on farm management and livelihoods. This component is meant to consolidate the achievement under NAADS phase I, under which a large number of farmer groups were formed. One of the strategies for enhancing farmers' capacity to make and implement decisions is formation of the high level farmer organizations, which will help farmers groups to enhance their capacity to make and implement decisions and to have vertical and horizontal linkage along the value chain. This will also help farmers to have greater voice in marketing and bargaining power.
2. Improving access to new agricultural technologies and information: Unlike the major thrust of NAADS phase I, this component will form a stronger research-extension linkage through formation of adaptive research support teams (DARST) in each district, under which the linkage of extension service providers and farmer groups with the zonal agricultural research and development institutions will be strengthened. Under DARST, participation of extension and farmer groups in decision making of type of research at zonal research and development institutions will increase. The DARST will also organize technology demonstration in villages in order to enhance farmer access to new technologies. Enhancing access to new technologies and information will also involve linking farmers to credit institutions for farmers willing to take up credit.
3. Delivering appropriate advisory services and information. This component aims to strengthen the farmer groups formed under NAADS phase I and to form new ones. Like NAADS phase I, this program will be implemented using the public-private partnership of providing advisory services. However, the public extension service providers will take a greater role. Unlike

NAADS phase I however, delivery of advisory services will use a variety of methods including Farmer Field Schools (FFS). Different advisory services will also be used including extension services through mobile phones, films and radio programs. Instead of using the farmer groups, the TDS will be located at farms of model farmers.

4. A component which shows a significant departure from NAADS phase I is the agribusiness development and value addition. This component is a significant departure from the NAADS phase one, which largely focused on agricultural production. Under this component, NAADS will enhance provision of marketing services and value addition. DSIP states that the private sector will play a leading role in implementing agribusiness and value addition. Secondly, NAADS phase II has a particular emphasis on advisory services of sustainable land management (SLM) technologies. Benin et al. (2010) and Nkonya (2008) identified weak advisory services on SLM as one of NAADS weaknesses. This appears to be a step towards addressing this weakness.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Qualitative approach is used to achieve the objective of examining the perception of Agricultural Extension (AEA) providers on the new changes in provision of agricultural extension services. Respondents were selected from five districts, namely Kabale, Ntungamo, Nakasongola, Sironko and Lira. The districts selected were based on the period of implementation of the NAADS program in the districts. The respondents included District Agricultural Officers, farmer associations, NGO agricultural extension workers, NAADS coordinators and rural service providers who were knowledgeable on the changes in the agricultural extension reforms in Uganda. A total of 22 key informants were interviewed. The farmer associations accounted for 27% of interviewees while the NAADS coordinators and districts agricultural officers each contributed 18% of the participants. The results presented in this paper represent the interpretation of the personal opinions of the respondents. This is noted as a weakness which limits the generalization of the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Strengths of the current agricultural extension system

The current agricultural advisory services are mainly provided by public extension services and by NGOs and private providers. The NGO and private providers provide specialized advisory services while the public AEA's provide the traditional advisory services. The key informants who participated in this study identified six strengths of the current system and we discuss them below.

Wider coverage was the most frequently cited strength of the current agricultural extension system (Table 1). Public AEA's are more available where they are recruited in the sub-counties and in terms of coverage they are

Table 1. Strengths and weaknesses of the current agricultural extension system.

Variable	Public AEA	Private AEA	Total
Strengths			
Wider coverage by public AEA	5	2	7
Well trained & Higher qualification of public AEA	5		5
Private AEA capacity to offer specialized services	2	3	5
Timely provision of extension services and better payments by private AEA	2	3	5
Better monitoring and supervision by public AEA	2	2	4
Trainings	1		1
Weaknesses			
Low salary and poor facilitation of public AEA	5	1	6
Poor monitoring and supervision	3	3	6
Private AEA profit oriented	3	2	5
Inadequate staffing	4	1	5
Lack of skills on modern farming methods	2	1	3
Inefficiency in recruitment and procurement process	1	1	2
Costly provision of extension services	2		2
Political interference	1		1
Misappropriation of funds	1		1
Weak linkage between MAAIF and district as result of decentralization	1		1
Limited sanctions	1		1
Few enterprise selection	1		1
Model farmer approach limiting wider impact	1		1
Non cooperation from farmers	1		1

more able to cover wider operational areas even though they may not be as efficient as the NGOs and private extension providers. The public extension workers are based in the sub-counties and are more in touch with the farmers, and the farmers can approach them at any time when their services are needed. Distribution of AEA and accessibility however differs. Access to agricultural extension services across districts shows that the central region has the highest density of AEAs per 100,000 rural households. A hundred thousand rural people in the central region are served by 15 AEAs while the corresponding number for the northern region is only 8, which is 86% smaller than the case in the central region¹.

Other strengths of the agriculture extension system reported by the key respondents was that, the public AEAs are available to do follow up after trainings or provision of services if they are well facilitated. They are salaried workers who are stationed in the districts and sub-counties and available for monitoring projects. Unlike the contracted NGO/private extension workers who do not continue with follow ups when their contracts end. On-the-job trainings of public AEA was also reported as one of the strengths of the agriculture extension system.

Figure 1 also shows a similar trend - with districts closer to Kampala having fewer rural people served by

one AEA. Kalangala in the central region reported the highest density of AEAs (58 AEAs per 100,000 rural people) while Kaabong - a new district in the northern region - reported the lowest density (1.8 AEAs per 100,000 rural people). This demonstrates the poor agricultural extension services in the remote areas. This is consistent with findings of Jagger and Pender (2006), who observed that access to programs and organizations is concentrated in areas with high market access.

Well trained and higher qualification of public AEAs, private AEAs capacity to offer specialized services, and timely provision of extension services by private AEAs was each reported five times by the key informants (Table 1). The Public AEAs are well trained from recognized institutions at University or Diploma level. They are skilled experienced professionals who know their duties well and follow their professional ethics.

This is consistent with Nkonya et al. (2012) and Swanson (2008) who find share of government affiliated AEA with degree or post-graduate education highest compared to other private or NGO AEAs, reflecting positive results of governments investment in government AEA when it was the major service provider of agricultural extension.

The key informants observed that using NGO/private service providers for specialized activities is better since they possess specialized skill which the government

¹ Equivalent density for east and western regions is 10 and 8.4 respectively.

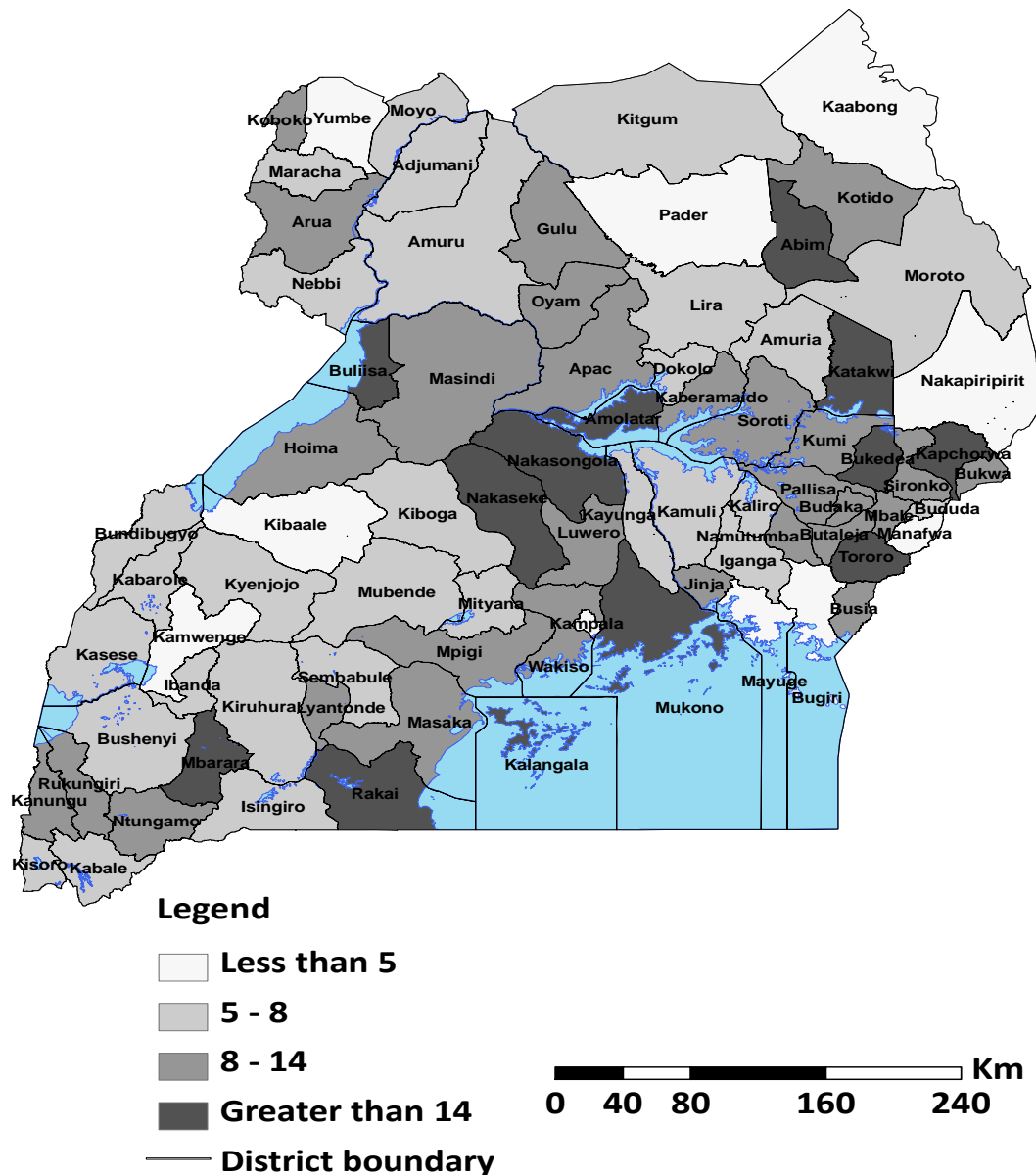


Figure 1. Number of agricultural extension agents per 100,000 rural people.

extension worker may not have. Farmers demand specialized services which can better be provided by the NGO/private extension providers and monitoring can be done effectively by the farmers themselves. The key informants also reported that the NGO/private extension providers are able to complete their work on time according to their terms of contract. If NGO/private AEAs are contracted through NAADS, there are very specific outputs required which makes them more able to provide expected deliverables according to their terms of reference. NGO/private Service providers provide better services since they receive good payments which are higher than that of the public extension workers.

The key informants also observed that private

extension workers are easier to use in mobilizing farmers. Additionally, key informants observed that AEA affiliated with NGOs work more closely with farmers in their area of jurisdiction than is the case with the public AEAs. However, their coverage is always limited with budget. For example, Rutatora and Mattee (2001) observed that NGOs have become a major provider of agricultural extension services in Tanzania but their coverage is limited and always closer to urban areas. Jagger and Pender (2006) also observed lower concentration of NGOs in remote areas in Uganda. The NGO affiliated AEAs have done well in improving the fruit and vegetable sector, capacity building, building farmer groups and forming higher level organization.

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Weaknesses of the current agricultural extension system

One of the most frequently cited weaknesses by both the public and private AEs were low salary payments and poor facilitation of public AEs (Table 1). The key informants reported that the contracted private extension workers earn more money than the public extension workers. This creates a disincentive to the public AEs who in some cases have to supervise the private NGO/AEs who earn more than they do. The public AEs also have poorer working facilities than NGO/private AEs.

Poor monitoring and supervision was also frequently cited by key informants as a major weakness (Table 1). Monitoring of the activities of the private extension workers is poorly done and this leads to poor advisory services from private providers who may not be committed to providing quality advisory services. The problem is compounded by corruption, which the key informants observed to be common due to the competitive nature of awarding contracts. The key informants also observed that there are no consistent follow ups after the contracts of the NGO/private extension workers are signed. This has been due to the limited capacity of the districts production department and the NAADS secretariat.

The private AEs contracted are profit oriented and are not concerned much about the successful impact of the services they provide (Table 1). The key informants observed that, unlike the public AEs who are committed to their work, the private AEs look out for their personally monetary benefits. Inadequate staffing at the districts and sub-counties was also reported by the key informants. This had resulted in a few AEs serving a large number of farmers. The key informants noted that with limited staff poorly facilitated only a few farmers were reached.

The implementation of the NAADS approach of contracting NGO and private extension workers to provide specialized services has been faced with a number of challenges. The selection process of the NGOs and private AEA for provision of specialized services starts with, identification of the specialized services needed in the selected enterprises. This is done at the NAADS sub-county farmer forum. The district then

places an advertisement, which states the kind of advisory services required and the professional qualification of the providers. Interested applicants pick up application forms and apply for the position to the sub-county. The sub-county farmer's forums are involved in the selection process. They are supported by a technical team composing of the staff from the production department, financing department, audit department, NAADS coordinator and sub-county chief. A suitable qualified applicant is selected and awarded the contract. Payments are made in phases with an initial payment to begin the work and other payments upon provision of reports and after approval of the Subject Matter Specialist (SMS) that the assigned task was well performed. The farmers' forum has members with low level of education, limited capacity to evaluate and select the advisory service applicants properly. Selection therefore is sometimes biased and may not necessarily be based on merit. Once the farmer's forum rejects an individual, the technical advisors cannot guarantee the selection of suitable candidate even if that applicant is highly qualified. Corruption is also a major problem in the selection process. As it will be seen in the discussion below, there is also lot of political interference and nepotism in the selection process. Aside the biases in the selection process, the selection process takes a long period of time. The selection committee after selecting the preferred candidate, sends the information to district NAADS coordinator and then to the NAADS secretariat for approval. The process takes a period of time before the extension worker is contracted. In some sub-counties that are very remote, NAADS had failed to recruit staff as there were few applicants out of whom there were no qualified applicants or in some cases, no applicant submitted application. This is consistent with Jagger and Pender (2006) and Rutatora and Mattee (2001). NAADS may not have full knowledge of the background of the NGO/private extension agents bidding for service provision. Applicants sometimes falsify documents submitted and the NAADS selection committee may not be able to verify the documents. This may result in awarding contracts to non-qualified persons. The corruption problem in NAADS recruitment process has been widely cited as a major problem (Parkinson, 2008; Feder et al., 2010).

The key informants also mentioned that it was costly for the government to pay both the private and public extension workers. However, this weakness is contrary to the strength discussed above that pluralistic extension services creates potential for providing specialized advisory services. The Private AEs also provide advisory services on technologies and/or services prescribed in the terms of reference. So if farmers ask for other advisory services on technologies or services, the private provide would always decline providing them even if they are able to do so. This suggests a considerably large number of private providers to give specialized services.

Other weakness of the current extension system (Table 1) each mentioned included the political interference which will be discussed below, misappropriation of funds, weak linkage between the Ministry of Agriculture (MAAIF) and districts since decentralization of powers. Supervision of the district staff by the central government has been weakened since the district officials are answerable to the district and not the ministry. Also included in the weakness is the limited sanction for public AEA. One key informant observed that public extension workers are permanent and pensionable and even in case of mismanagement it takes a long time for a public extension officer to be disciplined and even during investigations he/she still may receive salary.

In addition, it was noted the NAADS program (phase 1) looked at only a few selected enterprises leaving out other important services. Advisory services on other enterprises which farmers are engaged in but not selected under the NAADS program are not given. This approach has however been revised under NAADS phase II - as discussed earlier – through prioritization by Village Farmer Forum (VFF) increasing the number of selected enterprises per sub-county.

NAADS approach of using selected host farmers (or model farmers) and technology development sites to carry out demonstrations and advisory services were noted by one key informant to have the weakness of not reaching out to a large number of farmers. Another key informant also cited non-cooperation from farmers. Overall, the key informants showed key strengths and weaknesses of the new extension services.

Enhancing advantages and address disadvantages of the current extension approach

In addressing the issue on what needs to be done to enhance the advantages of the current extension approach and who should be responsible for each of the action, the following suggestions were made (Table 2):

There is the need to build the skills of the new public AEAs to provide services on agro-business enterprise and other specialized skills which farmers may need. This was the most frequently cited measure by the key informants. Training of AEAs could be done by providing refresher courses and trainings for the extension workers to update their knowledge on modern farming methods. The key informants also suggested that the salary payments of public AEAs be increased to motivate them in providing quality services. The public AEAs should be well facilitated and should have access to transport facilities. Also, key informants noted that, monitoring and supervision of the activities of the AEAs should be properly monitored.

Currently, there are farmers in NAADS sub-county communities who do not participate in NAADS since they do not belong to farmer groups. To address this shortcoming, key informants suggested more vigorous

sensitization of farmers to join farmers - an aspect, which is consistent with the RDS policy. The sensitization should also promote PMA's prime objective of commercializing agriculture such that the farmers manage their farms as business rather than simple way of life.

Key informants also suggested that the recruitment process of NGO/private AEAs should be strengthened to address the corruption and low capacity of farmer forum to vet the applicants. NAADS should also re-examine the hiring process to ensure a competitive recruitment process in order to appoint competent service providers. Members selected to sit on the farmer's forum should have a certain minimum level of education. They should be able to understand the qualification of the applicant and use the right criteria in selecting the most qualified applicant.

Additionally, key informants suggested the need to increase the agricultural extension budget as the government implements the DSIP plan, which aims to achieve the Maputo Declaration of allocating at least 10% of government budget to agriculture. With an increase in budget, the number of staff could be increased to serve more farmers.

The current political interference and the rapidly changing agricultural policy landscape have created confusion on the NAADS approach. Hence there is need for clarifying the NAADS approach. Farmers should be well informed on the NAADS program, its objectives and implementation strategies and how the farmers can benefit from the program. Extension workers together with other stakeholders like politicians and religious leaders should all be involved in educating farmers on the NAADS program. There is also the need to increase the Technology Development Sites and consequently model farmers in order to increase access to new technologies.

Other suggestion to enhance the agriculture extension program and address its problems included the need to give NGO/private extension workers long term contracts and to better coordinate and supervise their work. Current short-term contracts compromise the propensity of NGO/private AEAs to invest in improving their advisory services. There is also the need to increase the enterprises selected per subcounty and increase the number of farmers benefiting per subcounty. The Ministry of Agriculture (MAAIF) should restructure programs to ensure that enterprises not covered under NAADS program are either integrated or create a separate program to support those enterprises. Also suggested was the need to increase the number of beneficiaries from the program and encourage farmers co-funding.

Successes and failures of NAADS program in selected districts

Successes of NAADS in selected districts

The most frequently cited success of NAADS was

Table 2. Measures to enhance advantages and address disadvantage of the current agricultural extension system.

Parameter	Public AEA	Private AEA	Total
Capacity building	7	4	11
Increase salary and facilitation of public AEAs	7	1	8
Improve monitoring and supervision	3	3	6
Sensitization of farmers	4	2	6
Selection of competent private AEAs	1	4	5
Increase funding	4		4
Increase staffing	3		3
Limit political interference	1		1
Increase TDS		1	1
Long term contracts for Private AEAs		1	1
Increase enterprise selection	1		1
Farmer to co-fund	1		1
Increase number of beneficiaries	1		1
Improve quality of services	1		1

Table 3. Successes of NAADS programs in selected districts.

Successes of NAADS	Kabale	Lira	Nakasongola	Ntungamo	Sironko	Total
Group formation	x		x	x	x	4
Higher adoption rates of technologies	x	x		x		3
More commercialized	x				x	2
New enterprises	x		x			2
Empowered to demand advisory services	x					1
Linked to SACCOS			x			1
Better food security			x			1

formation of farmer groups. Four of the five districts reported that NAADS enhanced farmer group formation (Table 3). For example, in Nakasongola three farmer cooperatives for milk and poultry were established and are operating successfully. This is consistent with the design of NAADS, which provides advisory service through farmer groups. Provision of rural services through community groups is increasingly becoming popular in community-driven development (CDD) and other participatory development programs (Mansuri and Rao, 2004). Working in groups has helped farmers to exchange information and pool production and marketing resources.

The second most cited NAADS success was higher adoption of agricultural technologies – a success that was reported by three of the five districts visited for the study (Table 3). This is consistent with Benin et al. (2010) who observed higher adoption rates of NAADS beneficiaries. In Kabale for example, key informants reported that a lot of farmers were now using improved seeds and breeds.

Introduction of new enterprises were reported in two districts. In Nakasongola, key informants reported that

the introduction of improved dairy breeds has recorded much success. Dairy which was the sixth priority enterprise of farmers in Nakasongola but now it is the second priority enterprise after cassava. Other priority crops in the districts are poultry, mangoes and oranges.

Consistent with the PMA objective, two districts also reported commercialization as a success story of NAADS. Introduction of new enterprises was also reported as a NAADS success in two districts. Benin et al. (2010) also found a significant increase in new enterprises for farmers in NAADS sub-counties (Figure 2).

Other success stories of NAADS – each reported by only one district – include: improved food security, farmer empowerment, and linking farmers to microfinance (SACCOS) institutions. The qualitative results show that the successes perceived by key informants were consistent with NAADS structure of providing advisory services through groups, advising farmers on new technologies, introducing new technologies and commercialization of agriculture. The small number of farmers reporting empowerment is a problem which raises concern about how NAADS achieved its prime

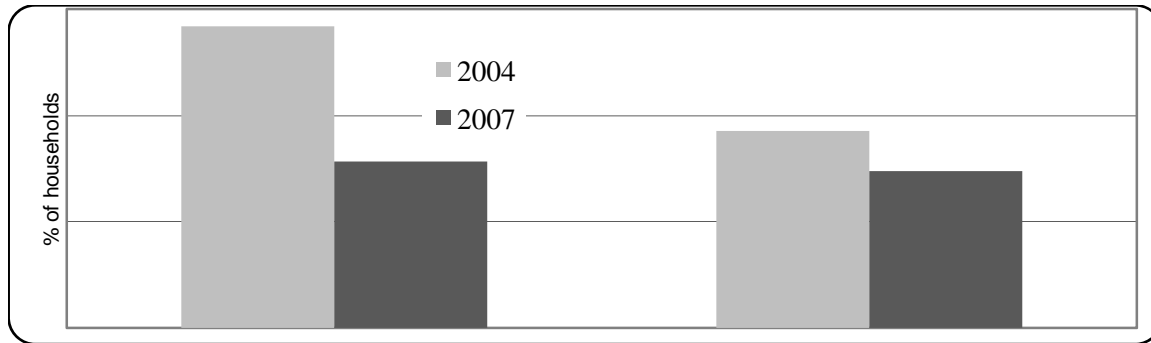


Figure 2. New enterprises adopted by NAADS and non-NAADS farmers in 2004 and 2007. Source: Benin et al. (2010).

objective of empowering farmers. As it will be seen below, some of the factors which led to limited empowerment include corruption, political interference and procurement loopholes, all of which are likely to dampen empowerment efforts.

Failures of NAADS in selected districts

Political interference was the most cited failure of the NAADS program. All of the five districts mentioned political interference as NAADS weaknesses (Table 4). This is consistent with the Joughin and Kjær (2010), who observed an increased political interference which increased after the introduction of the PFA program. Given that the PFA was contained in an election manifesto, it took a political tone and approach. NAADS was meant to be an implementing instrument of PFA. Consequently, it attracted significant political attention from the president. The PFA was initiated with an objective of working within the existing government programs - especially PMA and NAADS, which serve the major sector. Technically, it was supposed to harmonize the rural development programs but it took a different approach. Unlike PMA which gave the private sector a leading role in its implementation, the PFA approach gave the government a leading role in provision of extension services, credit provision and agricultural input distribution.

As seen in Table 5, the frequency of President Yoweri Museveni's speeches criticizing NAADS after formation of PFA (2007 - 2011) was quite high. On average, the president mentioned NAADS in public speeches reported in the *New Vision* newspaper once in every two months. This is quite a high frequency for one agricultural program to attract such high profile attention. Worse still, most of the president's comments were negative. The tone of the president's speeches seem to ignore NAADS achievements discussed above and cited by other studies (Benin et al., 2010; Scanagri, 2005; OPM, 2005; Benin et al., 2007). Such political interference has

tarnished NAADS' image among farmers. Given that NAADS is still charged with implementation of NAADS phase II under DSIP, there is need for restoring NAADS' image by addressing its past weaknesses discussed earlier. This requires an unbiased political attention which builds on NAADS strengths and addressing its weaknesses. There is also need on NAADS part to clarify its approach in order to clarify the changes precipitated by the rapidly changing agricultural policy landscape.

Corruption was reported by two of the five districts. This is consistent with other studies which have reported corruption in contracting service providers (Parkinson, 2008; Feder et al., 2010). Corruption was also one of the reasons of reinstating the old public extension services. Other weaknesses reported by at least two districts include low capacity of farmer forum to recruit competent service providers, weak or lack of advisory services on marketing and inadequate inputs.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATION

This study was done with the objective of contributing to the policy debate on the changing landscape of agricultural rural services in Uganda. The study examines the perception of Agricultural Extension (AEA) providers on the new changes in provision of agricultural extension services. Most studies focus on the perspectives of the beneficiaries, that is, farmers and not the service providers, that is, AEA who are the implementers and administrators of the program. Our findings provided timely in-depth information on the AEA's perspectives of the programme and how to improve on the program and achieve better results. Evidence show that the NAADS program has wider coverage even though distribution of agricultural extension agents differs across regions with the central region having the highest density of agricultural extension agents per 100,000 rural households. NAADS has enhanced the formation of farmer groups. This is consistent with the design of NAADS, which provides advisory service through farmer

Table 4. Failures of NAADS programs in selected districts.

Failures of NAADS	Kabale	Lira	Nakasongola	Ntungamo	Sironko	Total
Political interference	x	x	x	x	x	5
Corruption	x			x		2
No market advisory services	x			x		2
Low capacity of farmer forums to recruit providers	x		x			2
Inadequate inputs			x		x	2
Covers only priority enterprises				x		1
No benefit to large scale farmers & youth	x					1
Poor enterprise selection		x				1
Inadequate staffing			x			1
Procurement loopholes			x			1
Farmer high expectation					x	1
Low quality inputs					x	1
Late delivery of inputs	x					1
Weak monitoring of advisory service providers			x			1
Paying matching farmers for farmers with no direct benefit is problematic		x				1

Table 5. Frequency of President Yoweri Museveni's speech mentioning NAADS, 2007-2011.

Date	Key message of speech	President's speech mentioning NAADS
14.01.07	Museveni orders NAADS to be investigated following complaints that its impact on modernizing the farming community is not felt.	<i>"I am going to study, investigate, engage NAADS in a dialogue and come up with a stand on its future activities. I have not been aware about the way they have been implementing their programs. We should find an appropriate policy towards modernizing agriculture since it is the backbone of our economy,"</i>
05.09.07 10.09.07	Government spends lot of money on NAADS program but has achieved little impact due to misuse of funds by officials. Museveni suspends NAADS funds until cabinet sits and reviews the program aimed at improving service delivery and accountability of donor funds. NAADS officials to be probed	<i>"We want to have a change so that the money benefits the people instead of being spent on things you do not see" "Imagine all that money has been coming to one sub-county. Many officials have been misusing this money, organizing one seminar where one person talks and he gives an accountability of sh2m,"</i>

Table 5. Contd.

17.09.07	Museveni advises more funds from the NAADS program should be allocated for the purchase of farm inputs	<i>... the President suggested that the funds be used to buy farm implements. Museveni asked MPs to spearhead the campaign against poverty by actively training the 'wananchi' using NAADS materials and local extension workers</i>
23.09.07 07.10.07 08.10.07	NAADS program will not be stopped since it is a good program introduced by the NRM government. The program has been halted to undergo a review process of its performance and impact. Legal actions to be taken against officials who mismanaged funds.	<i>"...since it was the NRM government that introduced the program to help modernize agriculture and enhance production, it could not simply close it". "...the Government would audit the utilization of funds..., including taking legal action against those involved in swindling the funds".</i>
06.04.08 14.08.08 22.08.08	President's poverty tours to promote government's PFA program.	<i>"The crusade we have now is to change the living situation of our people so that they can use their small pieces of land to earn high incomes," "... poverty was still a problem because "people are sleeping and even NAADS that we sent to wake them up joined them in sleep." "I am happy that you have woken up and are engaging in commercial agriculture. I have seen the projects and I have instructed NAADS to construct dams in places where these projects are so that you can do some irrigation during the dry seasons,"</i>
08.09.08	Museveni tells NAADS to support farmers move from subsistence farming to commercial farming.	<i>"NAADS should do more work by moving into the villages to help farmers who are currently engaging in subsistence farming... We need to stop producing for home consumption only. "I am going to talk to the people managing NAADS to strengthen their monitoring and advisory roles. I will ask them to increase the number of model farmers in the district," he said. "Don't get scared of telling me the truth about the performance of NAADS. We need to find out how they are working so that we advise them to improve,"</i>
10.02.09	The president warned the agriculture minister, Hillary Onek, against mishandling the implementation of the NAADS program.	<i>Museveni said he was writing to "clarify one point one more last time." He instructed Onek to stick to the six homesteads per parish, instead of scattering resources to many homesteads. "This is not acceptable to me. NAADS are again bringing confusion with 'demonstration' farmers, 'model' farmers, 'lead' farmers, etc,"... Resources should only be spent on six homesteads... Any NAADS official that fails to implement this or any other provision in the NAADS program will face severe sanctions"</i>

Table 5. Contd.

14.09.09 01.10.09 04.10.09 23.12.09 17.01.10	Museveni sets up special taskforce to investigate, cause arrest and prosecute people involved in theft and misuse of funds meant for NAADS. This follows accusation by the President of NAADS official misappropriating public funds and inflating agricultural inputs.	<i>"The special committee attached to the President's office will verify the standards of government projects to ensure they conform to stipulated goals,"</i> <i>"NAADS officials approve companies to tender cow dung and grass, just to steal money. What sort of officer can approve this? Is this person fit to be in public service? Why should such a person be on the payroll of the Government?"</i> <i>"I am going to send my spies to verify the authenticity of the list (lists of beneficiaries submitted to him during his tours of Prosperity-for-All projects). If the listed beneficiaries are non-existent or the figures attached to the names of farmers don't match, the Police will take the NAADS officials to the university of understanding (Luzira prison)". "If you see Police detectives combing the villages, don't get alarmed. They would be carrying out investigations on my instructions."</i>
22.12.09 30.12.09	Museveni announced that NAADS program will be reformed in 2010 to benefit more farmers. More farmers were to receive inputs	<i>"Next financial year we are going to transform NAADS into a poverty alleviation program. We are going to spread wealth so that at least each family gets two or three goats or pigs or sizeable number of poultry ... This will cure the envy and arguments that the NAADS program had benefited only the rich farmers and a few people"</i>
23.06.10 07.07.10 09.08.10	Museveni again stopped the releasing of NAADS funds pending a review of the program.	<i>"I have been thinking of ways of sending this money to the poor. I will continue withholding sh120b NAADS funds unless I am satisfied that it will now reach the poor,"</i> <i>"Those who have not yet got NAADs money should not worry. The program is not ending tomorrow. I will make changes to ensure funds reach as many farmers as possible...I have told them, hold on, don't distribute it. Let me go round the country. When I come back, I will tell you how to use it."</i>
22.07.10 18.08.10	Museveni decides to stop NAADS tendering system. The award of tenders to supply inputs to farmers under NAADS is was not cost-effective. Funds to be channeled directly to farmer to make their own procurement	<i>"We started NAADS to make poor Ugandans rich, but they are supplied inputs at high prices which they cannot afford. I am going to stop the system such that farmers can buy inputs for themselves...These farmers only lack the money, but they can buy the farm inputs from their villages,"</i>
04.10.10 10.12.10 10.01.11	Museveni Lifts Ban on NAADS Money Disbursement for the scheme to facilitate the PFA program. Funds will directly be sent to villages or zones.	<i>"I have moved across the whole country assessing the implementation of Naadsprogramme and I am closing my tour in Kampala District. I have identified the problems in Naads and together with other stakeholders, we have resolved on how to go about them," he said adding "So now , the funds I had blocked are going to be released but this time round all those implementing the programme must religiously follow the set new guidelines ,"</i>

Source: The New Vision Online (Archives January 2007 - March 2011).

groups. Provision of rural services through community groups is increasingly becoming popular in community-driven development (CDD) and other participatory development programs (Mansuri and Rao, 2004). Working in groups has helped farmers to exchange information and pool production and marketing resources. The NAADS program has also promoted the adoption of agricultural technologies.

However, political interference is negatively affecting the image of the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) and undoing some of its achievements. This shows a clear case example of how a well structured agricultural program could fail to achieve the desired results due to politicization of the program. NAADS was used as one of the major implementation strategies of the prosperity for all (PFA), a political manifesto of the ruling party in the 2006 election. After formation of PFA in 2005/06, the frequency of the president speeches on NAADS increased tremendously. Between January 1, 2007 to March 2011, frequency of president's NAADS speeches reported in *New Vision* was once in every two months. Most of the comments on NAADS were negative. The tone of the president's speeches seem to ignore NAADS achievements discussed above and cited by other studies (Benin et al., 2010; Scanagri, 2005; OPM, 2005; Benin et al., 2007). Such political interference has tarnished NAADS' image among farmers. Funding for NAADS from the government was also suspended several times in an attempt to coarsen the program to implement some of the president's agendas. The political nature of the PFA program and its emphasis on the greater role of government involvement in provision of agricultural services and subsidies was contrary to the pluralistic and demand-driven approach under NAADS. There is need of re-evaluating the current political support given to agriculture to ensure that it builds on past achievement of NAADS and addresses its weaknesses. There is also need for clarifying the NAADS approach. The political interference and the rapidly changing agricultural policy landscape have created confusion on the NAADS approach, which in itself was still not well-understood. Farmers should be well informed on the new NAADS implementation strategies and how the farmers can benefit from the program. Particularly, the role of the private sector in provision of advisory services and access to input program all need to be well-articulated to ensure that they do not compromise the potential of private AEA's to offer specialized advisory services required under DSIP and involvement of the private sector in agricultural processing and marketing.

Abbreviations

AEA, Agricultural Extension Provider; **CAADP**, Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program; **CDD**, Community Driven Development; **DSIP**, Development Strategy Investment Plan; **NAADS**, National Agriculture Advisory Program; **NDP**, National Development Plan; **NGO**, Non-Governmental

Organization; **PEAP**, Poverty Eradication Action Plan; **PFA**, Prosperity for All; **SACCO**, Savings and Credit Cooperative; **TDS**, Technology Development Site.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have not declared any conflict of interest.

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