Over the years, agricultural organizations have developed and trialed several extension approaches for working with farmers. Below, we summarize 10 of the most common extension approaches.

**The Extension approaches considered are:**

1. **Commodity-based**
2. **Cost-Sharing**
3. **Educational Institution**
4. **Farmer Field Schools**
5. **Farmer Participatory**
6. **Farming Systems**
7. **Centralized**
8. **Land Grant (US)**
9. **Project**
10. **Training and Visit**

**How do these relate to the "ASK ME" extension framework?** "ASK ME" (Bell et al., 2015) provides a framework for the different extension methods to be implemented:

1. **Audience** - understand and engage the audience,
2. **Solutions** - find appropriate solutions,
3. **Key message** – identify the key message
4. **Message form and delivery** - package and deliver the needed information in forms appropriate to the audience and,
5. **Evaluation** - improve the overall process.



**Agricultural extension aims to improve farmer access to helpful information.**

**The Commodity-Based Approach** focuses on a single crop or on only one aspect of farming. The approach generally addresses everything from extension and research to input supply, marketing and prices to increase production in the selected crop.

**Possible issues**. Planning is often controlled by a commodity organization whose interests might not match others and the approach typically does not provide support on other aspects of farming.

**The Cost-Sharing Approach** assumes that cost-sharing with local people (who do not have the means to pay the full cost) will more likely result in a program that can 1) better meet local situations and 2) be more accountable to local interests.

**Possible issues:** Success is dependent on farmer willingness to pay. Financial management and other aspects of administration tend to be complex and difficult.

**The Educational Institution Approach** relies on educational institutions with the technical knowledge and research ability to meet extension service demands.

**Possible issues.** The effectiveness of implementation is often dependent on those who determine overall school curricula and thus determine the extent of the focus on extension. Funding directions and issues of staff promotion and institutional mandates can often push people to do work that does not focus on farmers' needs.

**The Farmer Field Schools Approach** is a form of participatory research that uses a season-long group-based learning process. The method initially focused primarily on Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

**Possible issues**. High costs and high time requirements can affect sustainability of the system.

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**The Farmer Participatory Approach** involves active participation of farmers in planning and execution of the various research-extension activities. Program planning is typically controlled and implemented locally by farmers' associations and community organizations. Implementation is often decentralized and flexible.

> **Possible issues**: High time, participatory skills and cost required.

**Each agricultural extension method has different strengths.**

**The Farming Systems Development Approach** focuses on bringing appropriate technology to small-scale farmers with farmers engaged in the technology development and delivery process. A key characteristic of the approach is the farm being viewed as a system using a holistic approach at the local level. The approach requires close ties between research, extension and farmers with technology developed locally through an iterative process.

> **Possible issues**. Expensive and time consuming (given the broad range of issues to consider).

**The Centralized Extension Approach** works on the assumption that the technology and knowledge needed by farmers exist but are simply not being used.

> **Possible issues**. The approach and thus information flow tends to be top-down, fairly centralized and controlled.

**The Land Grant Extension Approach** as implemented in the United States involves strong links between specialists on university campuses with county advisors and farmers. The system has grown to bring in industry and other community groups. The system is highly effective.

> **Possible issues**: Requires highly trained personnel (costly) associated with a clear mandate and strong funding commitment. As university mandates expand, the commitment to agriculture can decline.

**The Project Approach** concentrates efforts on a particular location, for a specific time period, and is usually supported by outside resources. Part of its purpose is to demonstrate techniques and methods to farmers with the expectation that adoption will continue farmer to farmer after the project ends.

> **Possible issues**. Project targets can add pressure to make non-relevant changes in the short term and there can be issues of sustainability once a project withdraws.

**The Training and Visit Approach** is fairly centralized and involves a series of tightly planned visits to farmers. The system results in greater farmer contact and entails better trained extension agents.

> **Possible issues.** The system is quite costly and somewhat inflexible in its timing of scheduled visits. As a result at times it can be more procedural than message oriented.

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