

A systemic evaluation of Advisory Services to Family Farms in West Africa

Authors: Guy Faure, Pierre Rebuffel, Dominique Violas

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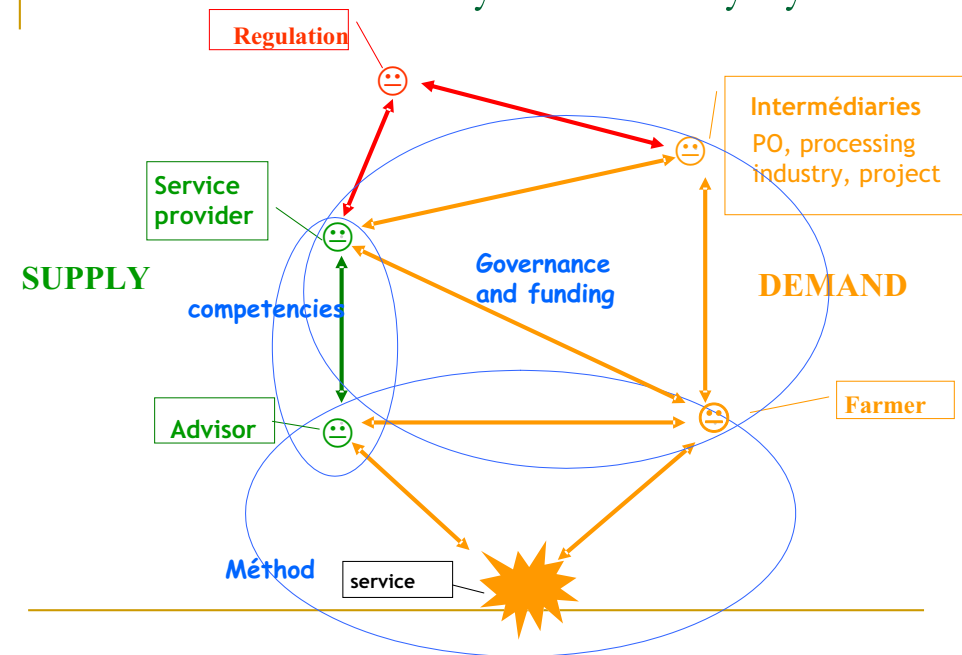
From agricultural extension to family farm advice

- Withdrawal of state from public extension
- Emergence of initiatives supported by NGO, PO, processing industry, etc.
- Development of Advisory Services to Family Farms initially supported by French Cooperation
- Based on participatory methods providing
 - (i) self-analyses to modify farmers' and advisers' perception
 - (ii) decision aid tools based on technical and economic records (book-keeping)

Objective of the communication

- Showing that the characteristics of the advisory system is the result of a balance between
 - its source of financing,
 - its governance mechanisms,
 - the quality of field staff,
 - and the method used to deliver advice.
- The study is based on the analysis of two situations (Benin and Burkina Faso)

Framework to analyze advisory system



Advisory Services in Benin : a success ?

- 1995 : An experimental phase to design and test the method
- 1997 : The enrollment of NGOs to involve more farmers and to better adapt the method to farmers' needs
- 2000 : The involvement of farmer-advisors and FOs to extent the advisory services with two levels of advice
- A deadlock due to funding but with some perspectives (cotton interprofessional body)
- 4 NGOs, 2 FOs, 50 advisors, 500 farmer-advisors, 5000 farmers

Advisory Services in Burkina : a permanent battle ?

- 1993 : An experimental phase with the National Agricultural Extension Service to design and test the method
- 1998 : an attempt of the National Union of Cotton Producers (UNPCB) to develop ASFF to support members in all their agricultural activities
- 2000 : a willingness of the cotton company (SOFITEX) to promote ASFF in order to support sustainable cotton production
- A progressive co-piloting of the AS between SOFITEX and UNPCB with a permanent battle on the orientation of the advisory service and the monitoring of the advisors

Result 1 : Interactions between method and other components

- Farmers' needs are not the key driver of the evolution
- Permanent need to adapt the method taking into account
 - the evolution of the profile and skills of the advisors,
 - the progressive implication of NGO and FO, and the availability of financing
 - Ex : in Benin, adaptation of the method to the farmer-advisor skills

Result 2 : Interactions between advisor and other components

- The initial training level and the origin of the advisor have a strong influence on
 - the content and quality of advice,
 - the type of relationship established with farmers
 - Ex : in Burkina the high level of advisors enable them to easily address strategic issues at farm level
- Stakeholders make a choices about the profile of advisors depending on
 - The method to be promoted
 - The availability of financing
 - The governance structure

Result 3 : Interactions between governance and other components

- The governance mechanisms are aimed to monitor the AS at village level, regional level or national level by addressing programming, monitoring, evaluation
- But they reveal the social relationships between stakeholders (power relationships)
- They deeply influence :
 - the content of the advice
 - the management of the advisors
 - ex : in Benin, the NGOs control the advisory service and do not support the idea of steering mechanisms at regional or national level in order to avoid strong POs' participation in the monitoring process

ASFF construction is not a linear model.

- We showed strong interactions between the different components of an AS (methods, staff skills, governance, and financing)
- These components interact over time with alternating phases of balance, expansion and lock-up
- The complexity of the dynamics highlight that promotion ASFF does not follow a single pattern
- The ASFF is socially constructed and reflects the stakeholders' strategies in a specific context.

How to support ASFF?

- Supporting the implementation or the strengthening of ASFF requires
 - to take into account interactions between the different components of the system
 - to avoid standard solutions.
 - To design rules to facilitate and monitor not only the current AS but also the future and unavoidable evolution of the ASFF
 - To strengthen the key stakeholder (service providers, POs, etc.) capacity to anticipate blocking situations

Thank you