

History and Evolution of Agricultural Extension

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Key phases, milestones, and emerging trends

1. Foundations (Late 19th–Early 20th Century)

Period	Drivers	Main Activities	Institutional Forms
1880–1910	• Industrial Revolution • Need for higher farm productivity; spread of scientific agriculture.	• Demonstrations of new crop varieties and fertilizers. • Publication of pamphlets and bulletins.	• Private societies (e.g., American Society of Agronomy).
1910–1930	• Progressive Era reforms; World I food security concerns.	• “Farmers’ clubs” and “field days.” • Early radio broadcasts of weather & market info.	• State-run agricultural colleges begin outreach missions.
1930–1945	• Great Depression & Dust Bowl • Massive farm losses. • New Deal policies.	• Cooperative Extension Service created (U.S., 1935) to deliver research-based advice. • Extension agents placed in counties.	• Federal-state-land-grant university partnership (Land-Grant system).

2. Institutional Consolidation (1940s–1960s)

Aspect	Development
Extension Model	• “ Three-Way Link ” – federal research (USDA/ARS), state land-grant universities, and county extension agents. • In-person farm visits (on-farm trials).
Core Methods	• Group workshops and demonstration plots. • Printed newsletters, bulletins, and “bulletin boards.”
Global Spread	• Post-World War II reconstruction programs export the U.S. model to Asia, Africa, and Latin America (e.g., USAID, FAO projects).

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Aspect	Development
Key Achievements	• Adoption of high-yielding wheat and rice varieties (Green Revolution precursors). • Introduction of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and mechanization.

3. The Green Revolution Era (1960s-1980s)

Feature	Description
Scientific Advances	• Hybrid seeds, dwarf wheat, IRRI's IR8 rice. • Chemical inputs and irrigation schemes.
Extension Shift	• Emphasis on technology transfer: "push" of new inputs to farmers. • Large-scale training programs (e.g., Farmer Field Schools in the 1980s).
Critiques & Lessons	• Over-reliance on external inputs. • Environmental degradation and equity concerns sparked participatory approaches.
Institutional Innovations	• Establishment of National Extension Services in many developing countries (e.g., India's Krishi Vigyan Kendras).

4. Participatory & Farmer-Centered Extension (1990s-2000s)

Concept	Core Idea
Participatory Extension	Farmers co-design research agendas; knowledge flows bidirectionally.
Farmer Field Schools (FFS)	Small groups meet weekly on the farm to experiment, observe, and discuss.
Community-Based Extension	NGOs, farmer organizations, and local cooperatives become primary knowledge brokers.
ICT Beginnings	• Early use of mobile SMS for weather alerts (early 2000s). • Email newsletters and simple websites.

Key Outcomes

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- Higher adoption of