



UGANDA FORUM FOR AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY SERVICES (UFAAS)

P. O. Box 34624, Kampala, Tel: +256 312 313400, Mobile: +256 776 801091 / +256 772 483803
Email: ufaas2013@gmail.com , Website: www.ufaas-uganda.org

REF: UFAAS/ADV/07

Dated 19th August 2014

POSITION PAPER OF THE UGANDA FORUM FOR AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY SERVICES (UFAAS) ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE ARMY IN AGRICULTURAL SERVICE DELIVERY

Preamble

The Government of Uganda decided to restructure the public agricultural extension services with a goal of enhancing effectiveness so as to achieve agricultural transformation and rural poverty eradication. Key aspects of the restructuring agenda include; (i) Mainstreaming of the NAADS extension functions into MAAF at national level and the local governments at district and lower levels to eliminate the existing parallel extension systems, (ii) Restructuring of the NAADS secretariat into a lean unit whose role will be limited to procurement of value addition equipment to support strategic interventions in agriculture such as seedlings and breeding stock, (iii) Deployment of army personnel at constituency level to distribute agricultural inputs, monitor and ensure that government interventions reach the beneficiaries.

Makerere University College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences has been instructed to develop the capacity the army to undertake this new task. The arrangement is being implemented under the framework of “Operation Wealth Creation”, an initiative that was started to support retired army officers and men to engage in agricultural production and productivity, improve their incomes and better their standards of living.

Although UFAAS notes the idea of using the army to strengthen the service delivery system, we are concerned about the processes of operationalizing the army’s involvement in the wider context of agricultural extension reform implementation.

It is envisaged that the restructured National Agricultural Extension Service will embrace actors from both public and private sectors to participate in the delivery of agricultural extension services in a more organized and coordinated manner. This means all the key actors need to be brought on board and move in tandem. However, we note that the component of the army is being fast tracked ahead of the other components. MAAIF which has the mandate to formulate policies, guidelines and regulations for the sector is yet to formulate policies and guidelines to guide operationalization of the Cabinet decisions on the reform. Therefore, the specific roles of actors, and the institutional framework are not yet clear.

1. In the absence of clear operational framework, the roles of actors in the agricultural extension system haven't been clearly spelt out. For example, what strategic interventions/inputs will NAADS procure, what will be left to the private sector, how will the UPDF be involved in distribution of inputs, how will the local government extension staff be involved to ensure that technical advice complements the distribution of inputs, what approach will be used to select input beneficiaries and monitor the processes. There is need for a clear articulation of approach, strategies, roles and implementation guidelines to avoid conflict.
2. There is also need for legal and operational framework for the army's involvement in agricultural service delivery. This calls for expediting of the review of the NAADS Act 2001. In the interim, however, it is important that MAAIF issues guidelines on the role of the different actors including the army.
3. While it is very important to develop the capacity of army personnel to undertake their new roles, we wish to observe that the approach being adopted appears not systematic. In some instances it seems to be adhoc, and unprofessional; and may not yield the desired results. The content of the course being delivered by Makerere University was not guided by what the role of the army will be in extension service delivery system. As a result, the training focuses mainly on the technical areas of agriculture (crop and livestock production, post-harvest technology, irrigation etc.) without considering the roles the army will be playing. It may be important in the near future to undertake a thorough training needs assessment of all actors before such a training is organized.
4. The capacity of UPDF is being developed before the other equally important actors and this may send undesirable signals and complicate coordination of reform implementation. The staff in local governments will also urgently need an orientation on how to work alongside the army for harmonious program implementation.

Conclusions and recommendations

UFAAS notes that the use of the use of para-professionals such as experienced farmers, retired civil servants, the army and other respected members of the community for development has demonstrably been successful, both in Uganda and elsewhere. However, for UPDF's involvement in agricultural service delivery to achieve the desired results, we recommend the following:

1. The Terms of Reference for Makerere University should be geared towards building the capacity of the army officers and other actors to enable them carry out the functions as stated in policy. Content for the training should be appropriate for the task.
2. It is important that the new agricultural extension approach be spelt out by MAAIF with clear implementation manuals where the actors and their roles are well articulated, required capacities are determined, after which capacity development can be undertaken in a holistic manner targeting all actors.
3. Based on the broad Cabinet decisions, some of the required competencies for the army personnel would include:
 - Basics of monitoring field extension programmes
 - Principles of supply and management of logistics/inputs
 - Different kinds of agricultural inputs and their role/importance
 - Principles and basic requirements for appropriate use of various agricultural inputs (e.g importance of timely application)
 - Judging quality of inputs—capacity to differentiate fake from quality inputs
 - Safe handling of agro chemicals and other agricultural inputs
 - Basics of crop, poultry and livestock disease characteristics (to enable them tell whether inputs are diseased)

- Basics of field extension methodology (how to mobilize farmers, communicate and relate with them)
 - Teamwork and interpersonal relations with civilians and agricultural technical staff
4. The curriculum should be tailored to the level of the army personnel most of whom may not have formal qualifications in agriculture or advanced formal education. The training methodologies should be simple, and non-academic (e.g. use of non-formal, interactive adult teaching approaches, well bound simple manuals with key points to remember in the field as handouts for future reference).
 5. The trainers should be well prepared to offer this kind of customized training. Since a majority of Makerere University staff are geared towards academic training, they should be given an orientation towards training this cadre of people through a Training of Trainers course. In addition, competent persons could be sourced from within government establishment and the development world in general as resource persons.
 6. Training and deployment of the army should be preceded by issuing of guidelines by MAAIF in the interim. In addition the following need to be immediately undertaken (i) amendment of the NAADS Act 2001 spelling out the institutional and legal framework for the army's involvement in agricultural service delivery, (ii) clear articulation of policies, structures, operational guidelines for the whole reform by MAAIF.
 7. Government should equitably facilitate all the different actors/arms of government to perform their envisaged roles in the reform and to promote a team approach. Sufficient numbers of extension staff should be employed to serve alongside the army and they should be equally facilitated and retooled, oriented to the new approach/roles involving working alongside the army in the field among others.
 8. Deployment of the army should adhere to the local government structures of deployment of agricultural staff since both cadres of staff are expected to work alongside each other. Deploying army personnel by constituency gives the impression that it is for political reasons and yet UPDF is not a partisan institution.
 9. The mechanism through which the farmers will be able to give feedback on the performance and quality of work of the army should be clearly streamlined.

About UFAAS

The Uganda Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (UFAAS) membership includes individuals and organizations involved in agricultural extension and advisory services in Uganda from the private and public sector, farmers' organizations, local governments, NGOs, and academia. UFAAS is the Uganda chapter of the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS) which together with the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) constitute pillar IV of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), mandated to address agricultural research, technology dissemination and adoption so as to enhance the utilization of improved knowledge and technologies by agricultural value chain actors for improved productivity. Launched in May 2011, UFAAS aims at improving the overall provision of agricultural advisory services in Uganda by improving coordination and harmonization of Agricultural Advisory Services (AAS) amongst AAS actors. UFAAS mission is to "Promote an effective, efficient and innovative AAS system through advocacy, capacity building, information sharing and increased professional development among AAS actors in Uganda.

Contacts: C/O P. O. Box 34624, Kampala ; Tel: +256 312 313400; Mobiles: +256 772 483803 or +256 776 801091, Email: ufaas2013@gmail.com ; Website: www.ufaas-ugandacf.org