



UGANDA FORUM FOR AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY SERVICES (UFAAS)

P. O. Box 34624, Kampala, Tel: +256 312 313400, Mobile: +256 776 801091 / +256 772 483803 / 0772502887

Email: ufaas2013@gmail.com , Website: www.ufaas-ugandacf.org

REF: UFAAS/ADV/06

Dated: 27th May 2014

A PRESS STATEMENT OF THE UGANDA FORUM FOR AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY SERVICES (UFAAS) ON THE PROPOSED REFORMS TO MAINSTREAM EXTENSION INTO MAAIF AND RESTRUCTURE NAADS INTO THE NATIONAL AGRIBUSINESS PROMOTION AGENCY (NAPA)

Preamble

We are giving these views as members of Uganda Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (UFAAS) whose 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 4 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 extension and advisory services in Uganda by improving coordination and harmonization of Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS) 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.

UFAAS Observation

UFAAS has read and deliberated on the two position papers that articulate the drive to revitalize the extension system in Uganda. These papers are:

- The report by the Inter-ministerial technical committee submitted to the Minister for Presidency.
- The report on Establishment of the National Agri-business Promotion Agency (NAPA) Secretariat functions and structure.

As UFAAS, we commend Uganda Government for the efforts to streamline the operations and efficiency of extension services in the country. We appreciate the efforts by the inter-ministerial committee in coming up with the two documents. We are cognizant that stakeholders have already given their views on the same. But we

are convinced that there is need to address some fundamental issues inherent in both documents before a final position is taken by Cabinet.

The inter-ministerial report articulates two positions, namely, establishment of a directorate of extension under MAAIF and establishment of a semi-autonomous agency, NAPA. The two positions appear contradictory, and it is not clear how they are to be harmonized. The issues are highlighted below:

1. From page 14-26, the report argues for mainstreaming of NAADS into MAAIF at the national level to operate as a Directorate of Extension and Agribusiness. It also roots for NAADS mainstreaming at local government level into the Production Department. Then from page 27-29, the report articulates the agency--NAPA. It is not clear whether (or how) the idea of the directorate is linked conceptually with NAPA.
2. The inter-ministerial report puts a lot of efforts in articulating the structure of the directorate and the agency at national level. However, it has not fully articulated how the services of the directorate and NAPA will be organized at the local government level to benefit poor small scale farmers even though this is the most crucial point where services will be delivered.
3. NAPA is proposed to concentrate on the higher end of agricultural system with no links to the local governments, the Directorate of Extension and NARO. This is going to repeat the same mistake of disjointed intervention.
4. The budget of the NAPA at the national level is elaborate, but that at the local government is missing.
5. The report also does not clearly show how the proposed agency NAPA will be different from the Department of Agricultural Investment and Enterprise Development under the new Directorate of Extension and Agribusiness. Indeed NAPA seems to be a mutation of NAADS without clear mandates and outputs.
6. The report recommends the Executive Director to head NAPA with a monthly salary of 15 million while that of the Director of

Extension is 2.4 million. This wide disparity which has been a source of conflict and demotivation for staff of MAAIF and local governments since 2001 is unfortunate. We find this not different from the current arrangement of NAADS.

7. The structure of NAPA is recommended to have three departments, namely, Department of Technical and Agri-business Services, Department of Finance and Administration, Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. We find this proposed structure inherently deficient because it is heavily leaning on administration rather than service delivery, i.e. two administrative departments versus one service department.
8. The report catalogues the achievements of NAADS and the factors that contributed to its failure.

Key shortcomings included failure to operationalize other pillars of the Programme for Modernization of Agriculture (PMA), other stakeholders including the mother ministry not playing their anticipated roles, absence of assumed capacities at local government and farmer levels, failure to mainstream NAADS into local governments resulting in parallel structures among others. It is remarkable to note that all failure factors are external to NAADS design and the report does not indicate the planned safeguards to ensure that these factors will not affect the new agency.

Since the problem of NAADS as articulated on page 12 and 13 do not stem from the design but from flawed implementation modalities, they do not call for a structural or design solution as is being proposed

The proposed reforms of creating an extension directorate in MAAIF and an agency of NAPA are only going to reverse any gains of NAADS (however small), and will be more disruptive and costly than the current arrangement. They don't provide remedies to the root causes of the problems.

9. NAADS was created to address the challenges and inefficiencies of a public extension system. Reverting to a public extension system is not prudent at this time.

Ways and means should be sought to strengthen NAADS rather than dismantling it.

Conclusion and recommendations

The inter-ministerial committee report provides no strong justification for the radical reforms of NAADS being proposed. NAADS was designed to be a programme of 25 years, judging it harshly to the extent of proposing its dismantling, moreover based on the factors external to the programme, is not a wise decision. It is a waste of the huge national resources committed to the program so far. Following the theory of change, the impact of NAADS cannot be fully judged before its lifespan. The benefits of NAADS will be felt many more years to come. What is currently needed is to strengthen and empower NAADS rather than dismantling it.

Mainstreaming of NAADS into MAAIF should be discouraged. It is going to be disruptive under an environment where the problems of a lethargic public service have not been addressed; and the chain of command between the local government and the centre has not been clarified. This arrangement is also likely to alienate some key stakeholders, notably the development partners who can decide to withhold the needed support.

Extension reforms need thorough diagnosis of the root causes of the problems and careful crafting of solutions especially with an input from independent stakeholders not directly part of the reform. UFAAS as a think tank is willing to offer and champion this process.

For success of any agricultural extension reform, the fundamentals will have to be addressed, namely; providing sufficient qualified technical personnel at all levels; optimal budget for the extension system with sufficient operational funds at field level; and operationalization of well-coordinated complementary services to extension as envisaged under PMA (notably agro input supply, marketing, agro processing and value addition, research). The disjointed institutional arrangements being proposed may not offer the much needed coordination and coherence.