

TIP NEPAL: Extension services Report assessment to strengthen and sustain existing system

EU-Nepal Trade-Related Assistance: Facilitating Increased Trade and Participation (TIP) aims to expand the current production of organic and single-origin coffee from Nepalese midlands and highlands to increase opportunities for trade in higher-tier segments of regional and international value chains.

Through bilateral consultations with the National Tea and Coffee Development Board (NTCDB), the approach of the TIP project is to encourage the commercialisation of the coffee sector by equipping family farmers, coffee cooperatives and national agricultural research and extension services with the knowledge and skills necessary to sustain sectoral development.

In Nepal, primarily agriculture-based economy, the role of agriculture extension in increasing production, enhancing competitiveness of the sector, and improving livelihood of its people are ever increasing. Nepal has adopted various extension models and approaches since the beginning of strategic periodic plans in 1956. Various extension approaches such as training and visit program, block development, integrated rural development project, Tuki, and farming system were considered, the focus of which was to largely increase the production through the introduction of technologies and accessibilities of inputs. The public extension was the dominant service provider. However, with globalization, there have been increased market opportunities for diverse agricultural products beyond boundaries especially for coffee. This has created a need for innovative technology, information, knowledge, human resources, and extension approaches. Accordingly, several institutional changes and pluralistic extension approaches have been adopted to improve the adequacy and efficiency of extension policies. Engagement of private sectors' service providers including financial institutions, nongovernmental organization, and cooperatives has emerged as complimentary actors/partners in effective service delivery to coffee sector.

The intention of this extension services assessment for Nepalese coffee sector is to provide informed analysis to a sector action plan that can serve various purposes. It will be used to guide TIP project activities approach to build sustainable services using existing system to link to the national regulatory (NTCDB) and industry representative bodies (NCPA) to their own strategy implementation and industry development services

While supporting SMEs is one pillar of the TIP project, collaboration with national stakeholders in extension service delivery is also crucial. The approach of involving agricultural extension officers is contextualised on the basis that national agencies are responsible for implementing coffee extension programs at the national, regional and provincial levels. Imperative to the success of knowledge transfer, national extension agents are the sole providers of information to coffee farmers on the availability of trainings, materials and subsidies, for example, to procure items such as improved seedlings and new production/processing technologies. However, as the report highlighted that the working modalities of national extension officers prove to be challenging due to various reasons especially remote rural areas. Therefore, working with existing services such as the National Tea and Coffee Development Board (NTCDB) with local-resource persons (LRPs) in cooperatives, will ensure that farmer extension services are securely provided at the grassroots level (i.e. district levels).

In consultation with stakeholders ITC is willing to work with NTCDB and cooperative extension agents so that information on technical assistance activities can reach the needy poor and women farmers, who are the real beneficiaries of this project. ITC will support NTCDB to assess the technical capacity of their technicians and prepare a capacity development plan, accounting for correct budget allocation, for effective extension service delivery. In parallel, Capacity building of LRPs using Council Technical and Vocational Education and Training (CTVET) services will be envisaged to reach the most vulnerable farmers groups. In order to harmonize the extensions support to farmers private sectors/buyers who provide skills to farmers will be invited on the different training.

