

New agricultural advisory services governance models in West Africa

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THE GOVERNANCE MODEL for agricultural advisory services that is still dominant in West Africa is the one where the service is run by the public sector. But over the past ten years, the emergence of new actors has been affecting governance models, which are becoming more complex with multiple actors.

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TRADITIONALLY, rules or regulations for agricultural advisory services are set up by the government. However, advisory services are increasingly provided by a variety of different actors with differing objectives and varied levels of interaction. The main actors have included the public sector (national and sub national governments or parastatals), private-sector companies, civil society including non-governmental organisations (mainly donor-financed) and farmer-based organisations. Major governance models are multiple and respond to different objectives (see table below). Governance is defined as the rule, management, or organisation of institutions, and includes policies, processes and structures.

General trends in governance models. An assessment in West African countries between 2016-2019 shows that agricultural advisory services are mainly the responsibility of ministries of agriculture but pluralistic in terms of providers, with an increasing number of influential nongovernmental actors such as private-sector individuals, producer organisations (PO), and companies such as mobile phone operators.

There is a shift from bureaucratic governance focused on national objectives to a multi-actor model, with greater emphasis on local accountability, relevance, and performance. This is linked to the decentralisation trend where local needs are given consideration and the focus is on being relevant to local actors.

Decentralisation policies are increasingly common, with agricultural advisory services typically decentralised to sub-national offices. This—along with the rise of PO—accentuates demand-driven services and resultant funding, but dramatically changes issues of governance. Since producers are supposed to have more

influence in local fora (see pp. 22–24), decentralisation is seen as complementary to the shift towards more participatory approaches. However, there remain issues for governance and coordination at the national level that influence subnational governance institutions and decision-making. In Nigeria, for instance, advisory services are a priority of the federal government, but each state decides on funding and programs. And in Senegal, regional directorates were given considerable autonomy in designing advisory systems appropriate for their areas and farmers.

Many producers are organised in *groups*, and PO' capacity and influence are growing slowly and variably. Apex producer organisations (national-level or network secretariats of similar organisations that bring all the groups together) play an important role in advisory services in francophone West Africa (e.g. cotton producer organisations in Burkina Faso; federation of potato producers in Guinea; Mali's Farmers' Professional Organisation Association). In general, the organisations lack capacity to adequately provide advisory services to their members. Investments are needed to strengthen their capacity to facilitate service delivery to members, finance advisory services, and undertake group purchasing, marketing and other collective activities. Another constraint is lack of financial sustainability and donor reliance. Models that have multiple sources of funding and include co-funding, no matter how little, by clientele, will assist in greater sustainability (see pp. 28–29).

“We are moving towards a complex new multi-actors system”

Heavy donor reliance - Funding and governance. While agricultural advisory services are back on the agenda of some national governments (e.g. Guinea, Niger, and Nigeria), there is still heavy donor reliance (almost the entire budget

Type of organisations	Model of governance	Main objectives
Government agencies	Bureaucratic	To align with public policy and political objectives
Projects	Technocratic	To further donor development strategies and objectives
Research and development projects	Technocratic	To promote uptake of research
Producer organisations	Local	To meet local needs
Private-sector companies	Vertical	Source goods and markets
Coordination platforms (see example of Naatal Mbay)	Integrated	To achieve defined objectives

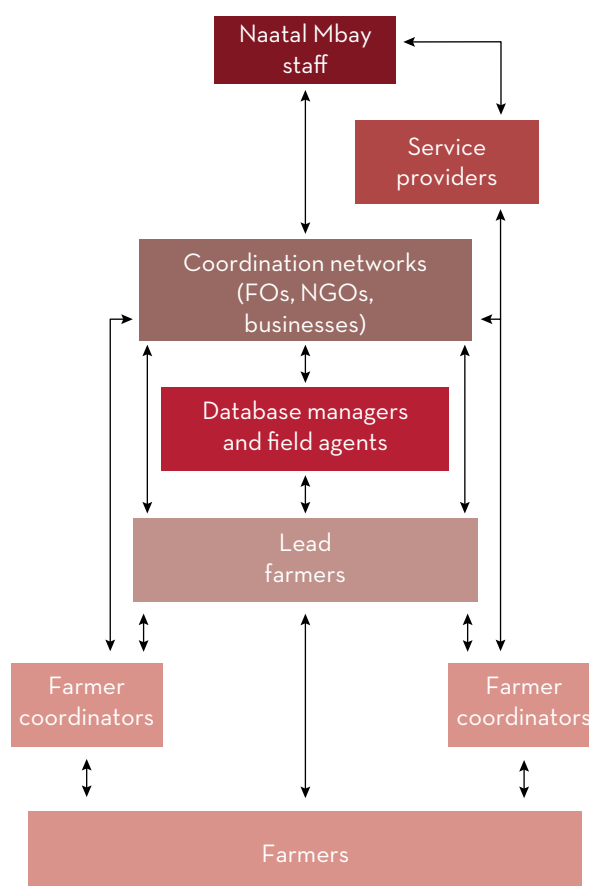
of Ghana's extension services come from Canada (125 million Canadian dollars)). Donor reliance leads to the multiplication of NGOs and projects where many different methods, sometimes conflicting, are used with little coordination or assessment (see pp. 32–33). Moreover, most of the actors provide other farm inputs (equipment, seed, fertiliser, finance, etc.) and advisory services appear as a secondary (and neglected) component of the input supply and agricultural subsidies programs.

In light of the limited government resources and growing population, one important trend is the use of *farmer advisors* at the local level to supplement official services (see p. 25). Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal use farmer advisors, in donor-funded projects, cooperatives, and apex producer organisation advisory services. This implies governance at the community level, as communities are often involved with selection of the agents and presumably the content that they work on.

A complex new multi-actors system. For better coordination, national system platforms are emerging in Senegal, Niger, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Togo (see Afaas, pp. 22–24). Senegal, through the financing of the National Agro-Sylvo-Pastoral Development Fund, tried to resolve coordination issues by assigning the coordinating role to its national advisory system but the system is not yet fully operationalised. In Niger, the Agency for the Promotion of Agricultural Advisory Services aims for coordination between different advisory service schemes, mobilisation of skills to ensure cross-cutting functions, and connecting teams from public and private advisory providers. As a result of new actors in advisory services, governance has evolved.

Senegal: an integrated and complex model of relationships. In Senegal, there is an integrated and complex model of relationships supporting an effective cereal production and marketing system, in which an advisory services system and producer organisation structure have evolved as an important foundation for the Naatal Mbay program.

In the program, some 123 PO track production and loan repayment and monitor rainfall for 60,000 farmers. Each Network forms a team of Lead Farmers, Field Agents, and a Database Manager to manage the data collection and analysis. An important component of the project's strategy is developing *farmer-owned data systems* which provide farmers with information about their farms, both physical measures, such as GPS field surveying for estimating areas and yields, and management data such as costs and returns. A project-supported system enables the Ministry of Agriculture to access key information from producer networks. Local ICT providers are refining applications to integrate information across the value chains and link producer networks, banks, insurance providers, and input suppliers. The project



Organigram of Naatal Mbay's extension approach.

The arrows indicate main reporting pathways.
Source: Franzel, Steven; Ndiaye, Amadou et Tata, Joyous S. (2018). *Senegal: In-depth Assessment of Extension and Advisory Services. Developing Local Extension Capacity Project.* USAID, Washington DC.

strives to empower women as advisory services providers and to promote women's access to services, to recruit more women in leadership positions, and to increase the proportion of female trainees (see p. 35).

There are also *federations* of producer organisations providing advisory services to members, managing development projects and lobbying the government on behalf of members, for instance, the Federation of Nongovernmental Organisations in Senegal which comprises 31 associations of farmer groups.

Toward more effective agricultural advisory services in West Africa. Activities should promote more effective agricultural advisory services in West Africa. Firstly, there is a need to build capacity of PO, strengthening management systems and commercial operations and providing incentives for service provision. A second recommendation is to strengthen coordination between pluralistic advisory service providers through national platforms such as the AFAAS country forums, but also other existing platforms. Thirdly, these platforms should be strengthened to be more inclusive and sustainable, able to collect, analyse, and use data for advocacy. Relatedly, advisory services actors should advocate with ECOWAS for West Africa's agriculture development strategy review to integrate agricultural advisory services as a focus. There is also need for evidence on which types of ICTs provide effective and sustainable services, reach women and other marginalised groups.

On the issues of sustainability and coordination, funding calls by donors should require organisations to submit joint proposals with the private sector and other relevant actors. At the same time, governments should set up mechanisms to ensure accountability to funders and users of services, assessment and improvement of performance. ■