

INFORMATION SOURCES OF
AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SPECIALISTS
IN INDONESIA

by

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to discover (1) where Indonesian agricultural extension subject-matter specialists (SMSs) obtain technical information, (2) why they use certain sources, (3) how important research-extension linkages are relative to other problems facing extension, (4) how quickly research-derived technologies spread among SMSs, and (5) what the SMSs' unmet information needs are. I conducted two nationwide mail surveys of a stratified random sample of livestock and food-crops SMSs working at province and district-level offices and Agricultural Information Centers. The first survey (response rate = 72%, valid $n = 280$) focused on the first two questions. The second (response rate = 75%, valid $n = 165$) focused on the last three. I also conducted personal interviews with 101 SMSs, local extension officials and other persons connected with the Indonesian research and extension systems.

Respondents obtained most information from other nearby individuals: field agents, other SMSs, farmers, and superiors. The agricultural press and extension publications also were major sources. Research publications and direct contacts with researchers were relatively unimportant as sources.

Multiple regression revealed that SMSs tended to obtain information from a source if (1) the source was familiar, (2) it was perceived to be locally relevant, (3) it was close by and accessible, and (4) it was timely. There was some evidence that SMSs would use a source if (5) it was easy to understand and use, (6) it was credible and complete, and (7) the SMSs thought it their job to use the source. The source type was important in determining which factors influenced the amount of information an SMS obtained from the source.

Research-extension linkages are an important problem in Indonesia -- second only to mobility among the problems listed. Information flows are slow: it took about two years for news about a new technology to reach 50% of the SMSs, and about six years for the news to reach 80%. The main unmet information needs were in regional planning, farm systems analysis, post-harvest processing of both crops and livestock, horticultural crops, and livestock feedstuffs.

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