



AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AND ADVISORY SERVICES POLICY ORIENTED PROCEEDINGS: DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

*Enabling Private Sector-Led Agricultural Extension and Sustainable
Last-Mile Service Delivery in Uganda.*



UGANDA NATIONAL
AGRICULTURAL
EXTENSION WEEK 2026,

**“Unlocking Uganda’s Agricultural Potential:
Multi-actor Extension and Advisory Services
for Resilient, Digital and Market-Oriented Food
Systems,”**

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UGANDA NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION WEEK 2026: TRANSFORMING EXTENSION SERVICES FOR A RESILIENT, DIGITAL AND MARKET-ORIENTED AGRICULTURAL FUTURE.



Dr. Lilian Lihasi Kidula making remarks during UGNAEW2026

Uganda's agricultural sector stands at a defining moment of transformation, where the demand for food is rapidly increasing, markets are evolving, and climate, technological, and socio-economic pressures are reshaping how agriculture is practiced and supported. Within this context, the Uganda National Agricultural Extension Week 2026 (UGNAEW2026) provides a critical national platform for reflection,

learning, and strategic action on the future of Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS). The event brings together government, academia, private sector actors, civil society, and farmer organizations to deliberate on how a more coordinated, professional, and innovation-driven extension system can unlock Uganda's agricultural potential.

Why it Matters!

The importance of this convening lies in its ability to address persistent systemic challenges, including fragmented extension service delivery, weak coordination among actors, limited professionalization of extension workers, and inadequate integration of digital tools and market systems. At the same time, it builds on emerging opportunities, including public-private partnerships, digital agriculture innovations, and multi-actor collaboration models that are already demonstrating success in improving productivity and farmer livelihoods.

UGNAEW2026 is therefore not just a dialogue platform, but a strategic milestone for shaping a more resilient, inclusive, and market-oriented agri-food system. It seeks to reposition extension services as a professional, accountable, and demand-driven system that effectively connects farmers to knowledge, technologies, and markets.

UGNAEW2026 KICKS OFF: PUBLIC–PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS IDENTIFIED AS KEY TO STRENGTHENING AEAS DELIVERY.



Officiating at the Uganda National Agriculture Extension Week 2026 on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Hon. Frank Tumwebaze, Dr. Henry Nakalet Opolot, Commissioner Agricultural Extension and Skills Management at MAAIF commended the Uganda Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (UFAAS) for convening a strategic national platform that continues to strengthen coordination, professionalization, and visibility of Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services in Uganda.

Speaking to the theme, “Unlocking Uganda’s Agricultural Potential: Multi-actor Extension and Advisory Services for Resilient, Digital and Market-Oriented Food Systems,” as timely and well aligned with the country’s agricultural transformation agenda, particularly in advancing productivity, resilience, and commercialization.

In his remarks, he emphasized that agricultural extension remains the critical link between policy, research, and farmers, translating national strategies and scientific innovations into practical solutions at the farm level. He noted that while Uganda has strong agricultural policies, their success depends on effective implementation and last-mile delivery, stressing that transformation must ultimately be reflected in farmers’

ability to meet market demands in quality, quantity, and consistency.

He called for a shift towards a more integrated extension approach that goes beyond production to address market access, value addition, post-harvest handling, access to inputs, finance and insurance, and stronger linkages with cooperatives, processors, and digital platforms.

Dr. Opolot highlighted climate change as a major and growing threat to agricultural productivity, positioning extension workers as frontline agents in supporting climate adaptation through climate-smart agriculture, early warning systems, and sustainable natural resource management. He also acknowledged the expanding role of digital technologies in enhancing extension delivery, noting that mobile platforms, digital marketplaces, and agricultural applications are improving outreach and efficiency, but emphasized that these tools should complement rather than replace human extension workers.

Reaffirming government commitment, he underscored efforts to strengthen a single spine extension system that integrates public services with private sector actors, NGOs, farmer organizations, and academia under a coordinated framework. He pointed to ongoing

government initiatives such as the Parish Development Model, climate-smart agriculture programs, oil seeds and oil palm development projects, and continued investments in mechanization and irrigation as key drivers of this agenda. He further outlined national development targets, including increasing agricultural sector growth to 8 percent, boosting export earnings, reducing agro-based imports, raising productivity by 50 percent, creating 60,000 agro-processing jobs annually, improving food and nutrition security to 85 percent, and increasing agricultural financing to 15 percent, urging all stakeholders to align their efforts accordingly.

He acknowledged persistent systemic challenges, including the limited number of extension workers, inadequate transport and operational resources, weak linkages between research, extension, and farmers,

inconsistencies in training quality, and gaps in professionalism and coordination across actors. He called for deliberate action to strengthen coordination within the pluralistic extension system, advance professionalization and ethical standards, improve research and field-based learning, enhance inclusion of women and youth, expand climate-smart and market-oriented advisory services, invest in continuous capacity development, and establish a clear regulatory framework for extension services.

In closing, Dr. Opolot urged all stakeholders to recognize extension workers as the backbone of Uganda's agricultural transformation and to measure success by tangible improvements in farmers' livelihoods and productivity. He then officially declared the Uganda National Agriculture Extension Week 2026 open.

UNLOCKING UGANDA'S AGRICULTURAL POTENTIAL: WHAT HANGS IN BALANCE!



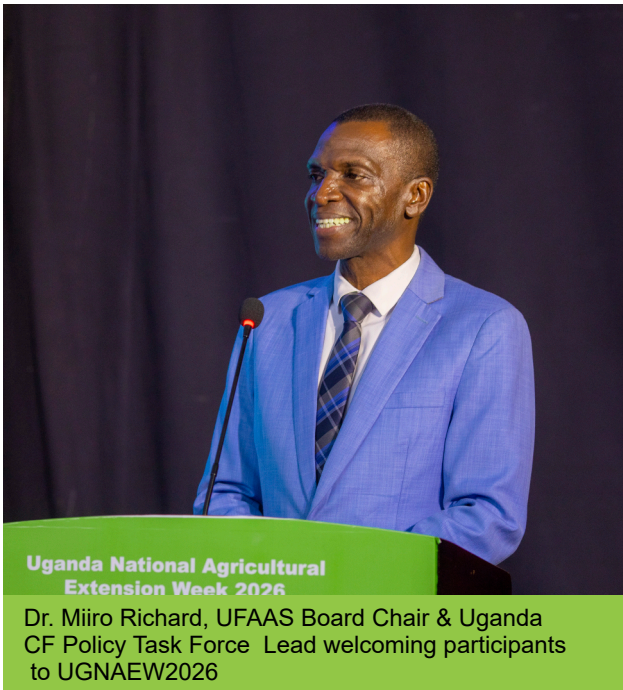
Dr. Sadik Qassim delivering a keynote speech on "Unlocking Uganda's Agricultural Potential: Multi-actor Agricultural Extension and advisory services for resilient, digital and market-oriented Agri food ecosystems"

Delivering his keynote address at the National Agricultural Extension Week (UGNAEW 2026), Dr. Sadik Qassim; Deputy Director General- Agricultural Technology Promotion representing Dr. Yonna Baguma, Director General; National Agriculture Research Organization (NARO) emphasized that passion and commitment are central to transforming agricultural extension and food systems. He described Extension Week as a strategic platform that has evolved into a critical space for policy dialogue, innovation, and partnerships.

Reflecting on the theme, "Unlocking Uganda's Agricultural Potential: Multi-actor Agricultural Extension and advisory services for resilient, digital and market-oriented Agri food ecosystems", he called for the elimination of siloed approaches and urged stronger collaboration across research, extension, and education systems.

He stressed the importance of inclusivity, highlighting the need to actively engage youth, women, farmers, and private sector actors in shaping the future of agriculture. He further noted a shift from production-focused agriculture to systems driven by knowledge, innovation, markets, finance, and digital solutions.

He outlined key priorities, including positioning extension as a core system enabler, strengthening pluralistic partnerships, advancing digitization and climate resilience, and promoting professionalization anchored in accountability and integrity. He concluded by underscoring that extension must be viewed as the “first mile” of agricultural transformation, critical for delivering innovation, improving resilience, and enabling sustainable development.



Relatedly, welcoming Participants at the dialogue, Dr. Richard Miiró, Board Chair of the Uganda Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (UFAAS), underscored the central role of agricultural technologies and extension systems in driving Uganda’s transformation agenda. He commended the leadership of the National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO), particularly the Director General and Deputy Director General (ATP), for sustained collaboration, and recognized Dr. Sadiq Kasim for his contribution to advancing the sector.

The critical role of youth in shaping the future of agriculture remains fundamental thus the sharing and scaling of successful Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS) models remains highly paramount. Dr. Miiró emphasized that multi-stakeholder platforms remain essential for effective coordination and uptake of innovations, noting that while Uganda’s Tenfold Growth Strategy prioritizes agriculture, tourism, and minerals, the agricultural sector continues to face climate variability, emerging pests and diseases, market

volatility, and rapid technological change. The importance of commercialization, structured markets, and strengthening extension systems in aquaculture, livestock, and beekeeping was emphasized, alongside the growing role of private sector actors, including Innovation Transfer Partners. He further called for the professionalization, accreditation, and standardization of extension services, supported by digital transformation and capacity-building initiatives such as artificial intelligence training. He concluded by urging stronger collaboration, shared responsibility, and the documentation of actionable commitments to ensure sustained impact.

Dr. Beatrice Luzobe, Chief Executive Officer of UFAAS, highlighted that Extension Week is a long-standing national platform convening diverse actors across Uganda’s agricultural sector. She noted that the initiative evolved from physical conferences into a large-scale virtual engagement during the COVID-19 period, significantly expanding participation. The 2026 edition, held under the theme “Unlocking Uganda’s Agricultural Potential,” focused on digitalization, resilience, and market-oriented agriculture. Discussions were guided by priorities including scalable extension models, high-value value chains, climate-smart systems, and workforce professionalization. She emphasized that the event aims to strengthen capacity, promote adoption of proven approaches, and build strategic partnerships, supported by broad mobilization strategies and dedicated efforts to generate policy briefs for evidence-based decision-making.

Dr. Patience Rwamigisa, Assistant Commissioner, Agricultural Extension Coordination, MAAIF, emphasized the need to professionalize Uganda’s agricultural extension workforce, referencing the National Agricultural Extension Policy (2016), which introduced a pluralistic and coordinated system. She noted persistent challenges, including weak coordination, limited investment in human resource development, lack of certification and regulatory systems, and weak linkages between training institutions and employment. She stressed that professionalization requires competency-based training, licensing, ethical standards, continuous development, and clear career pathways, while ensuring inclusion of women, youth, and marginalized groups. She highlighted the evolving role of extension workers as facilitators, innovators, and connectors within a modern agricultural system driven by markets, climate resilience, and digital solutions. She called for stronger alignment between

research and farmer needs, and outlined priorities including regulatory strengthening, investment in practical training, and enhancing the attractiveness of the profession. She concluded that professionalization is fundamental to dignity, trust, and effective service delivery, and is essential to unlocking Uganda's agricultural potential.

Dr. Lilian Lihasi Kidula, Executive Director- AFAAS emphasized the need for integrated, system-wide approaches to agricultural transformation, moving away from fragmented interventions toward coordinated multi-actor collaboration. She highlighted the evolving role of extension services as drivers of innovation, resilience, and market integration, connecting farmers to digital platforms, climate information, and investment opportunities. She underscored priorities including investment in extension systems, strengthening partnerships, advancing digitization, and promoting professionalization. She stressed that

extension should be treated as permanent infrastructure rather than short-term projects, supported by strong coordination mechanisms, sustainable investment models, and policy alignment. She concluded by calling for practical commitments linking policy, investment, and scalable innovations to accelerate agricultural transformation.

Dr. Carl Erik Larsen, Executive Secretary, GFRAS, emphasized that while policy discussions are critical, real transformation depends on extension workers who drive change at the farm level. He called for greater recognition and pride in their role, noting that behavior change is central to food systems transformation and climate adaptation. He highlighted the need to reform incentive systems that discourage collaboration, particularly in research and academia, and called for policies that reward joint action. He recommended practical approaches, including understanding farmers' aspirations and promoting



Dr. Carl giving his insights, calls for farm-level integration of a holistic extension ecosystem

peer learning among extension workers. He emphasized that extension systems should be viewed holistically, integrating public, private, NGO, and farmer-led services. He further highlighted the importance of digital tools in linking farmers to markets, finance, and information, and underscored the role of public-private partnerships in scaling impact. He concluded that while solutions are known, the key challenge lies in addressing implementation barriers and aligning systems to support effective delivery.

THEMATIC OVERVIEW PRESENTATIONS: REIMAGINING EXTENSION SYSTEMS FOR MARKET-DRIVEN, DIGITAL, AND PROFESSIONALIZED AGRICULTURE



Dr. Rosemirta Birungi calls for a paradigm shift in the conceptualization of AEAS

Presenting her insights, Dr. Rosemirta Birungi, Africa-wide AEAS, Technical Lead, AFAAS, called for a fundamental shift in how agricultural extension and advisory services are conceptualized and delivered, emphasizing a move toward market-driven and business-oriented models. She noted that agriculture must transition from being viewed as a subsistence or welfare sector to one that generates income and competitiveness. Drawing on experiences from countries such as Madagascar, she highlighted the potential of scalable extension models despite high farmer-to-extension ratios, underscoring the urgency of innovation in service delivery across Africa.

She emphasized that profitability and sustainability must be central, particularly given the pressures on natural resources, and stressed that extension systems must evolve to reach more farmers effectively through

differentiated and scalable approaches. She pointed to emerging demand from non-traditional actors, including export and logistics companies, as evidence of shifting dynamics toward commercially oriented advisory services. She further underscored the importance of public-private partnerships in expanding outreach and enhancing service quality.

Dr. Birungi highlighted the growing importance of value addition and aligning agricultural production with global market requirements, noting that competitiveness depends on meeting international standards. She emphasized that digital integration through data systems, payment platforms, and real-time reporting tools is no longer optional but essential for modern extension systems. She concluded by urging a transition from traditional advisory roles to trade facilitation, alongside investments in capacity building, stronger

data systems, and scalable business models, while acknowledging persistent challenges in public extension outreach.

Sharing his perspective, Mr. Nasib Mugwanya of the National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) explored the role of artificial intelligence in strengthening agricultural extension systems. He highlighted the increasing demand for faster and more responsive advisory services, positioning AI as a complementary tool that enhances, rather than replaces, human expertise. He described AI as a “smart assistant” capable of delivering personalized recommendations and synthesizing insights from diverse data sources.

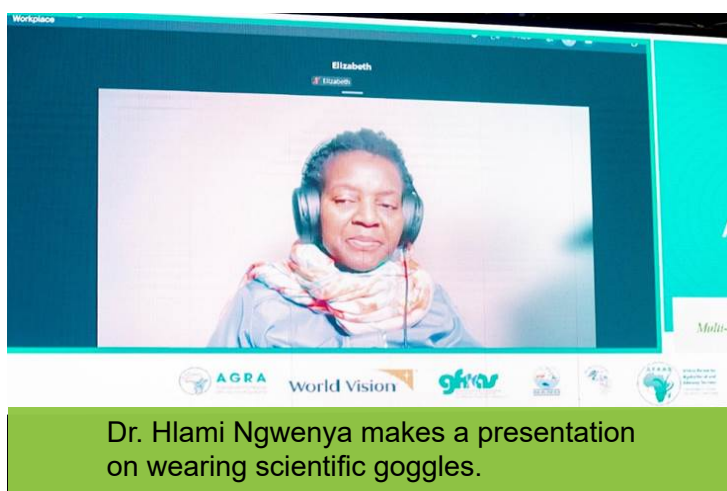
He noted that AI has the potential to significantly improve the speed, scale, and reach of extension services, but cautioned that adoption remains limited, largely confined to pilot initiatives. Key challenges include low technical capacity among practitioners and the lack of localized, digitized data necessary for effective AI deployment. He emphasized that critical datasets remain underutilized, often stored in non-digital formats at the district level. He called for policy incentives to strengthen collaboration between farmers and research institutions, investment in capacity building, and the development of robust data systems. He also stressed the importance of quality assurance in extension to meet export standards and advocated for the registration of farmer trainers to improve accountability. He concluded by underscoring the need for coordinated stakeholder engagement and responsible data governance.

Presenting on systems strengthening, Dr. Biryomumisho Dickson emphasized the importance of professionalizing extension services through standardization, certification, and clear regulatory frameworks. Drawing lessons from Rwanda, he highlighted the value of certifying private extension providers and establishing minimum qualifications, operational guidelines, and structured remuneration systems to improve service delivery.

He stressed the need to leverage digital tools, including artificial intelligence, to streamline operations and improve coordination across institutions. He further emphasized the importance of whole-of-government approaches, proposing stronger coordination through central institutions such as the Office of the Prime Minister to reduce duplication and inefficiencies. He noted that farmers, particularly commercial producers, respond more effectively to practical demonstrations than theoretical instruction, reinforcing the need for demand-driven and context-specific extension approaches.

Dr. Dickson highlighted ongoing challenges in policy implementation, including weak enforcement and gaps in the registration of extension actors. He called for improved implementation strategies, strengthened regulatory oversight, and the operationalization of systems such as extension registration platforms. He concluded by emphasizing the importance of aligning policy incentives, fostering collaboration, and leveraging digital innovation to modernize extension systems while ensuring quality, accountability, and responsiveness to market needs.

OVERVIEW ON WEARING THE SCIENTIFIC GOGGLES: ASKING YOUR WORK VISIBLE AS AN EXTENSION PRACTITIONER.



Presenting on “Wearing the Scientific Goggles: Making Your Work Visible as an Extension Practitioner,” Dr. Hlami Ngwenya challenged participants to rethink how knowledge in agricultural extension is generated and shared. She described “scientific goggles” as a mindset that enables practitioners to view their everyday work as valuable data and evidence. Using the example of two professional academic and one field-based practitioner, she illustrated the imbalance between published knowledge and practical experience, noting that while academics dominate formal research outputs, practitioners generate rich, real-world insights that often remain undocumented.

She emphasized that this disconnect limits the visibility and influence of field-based innovations, with many success stories and practical solutions going unrecorded. She called for a shift in recognizing practitioners not merely as implementers but as knowledge creators, urging stronger collaboration between academia and field actors through co-authorship and joint research. She further highlighted systemic gaps, including weak documentation culture, limited publishing support for practitioners, and the exclusion of field knowledge from emerging systems such as artificial intelligence.

Dr. Ngwenya encouraged the adoption of simple, practical research approaches that fit within daily extension work and called for institutional reforms to value diverse forms of knowledge. She concluded by urging practitioners to actively document and share success stories that demonstrate real impact, positioning visibility as critical to influencing policy, research, and innovation in the sector.

Presenting the agriculture sector perspective, Mugisha Bruce from the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries outlined Uganda’s agro-industrialization agenda for 2025–2031, highlighting agriculture as a cornerstone of the economy, contributing significantly to GDP and employment. He noted recent sector

growth driven by government interventions and emphasized agro-industrialization as a pathway to increased productivity, value addition, and market competitiveness, aligned with national frameworks such as Vision 2040 and the National Development Plan.

He underscored persistent challenges, including high post-harvest losses, limited compliance with international quality standards, low mechanization, weak farmer organizations, and constrained access to finance and insurance. He emphasized that strengthening extension services is central to addressing these gaps by improving knowledge transfer, technology adoption, and farmer practices. He further highlighted ongoing government efforts, including farmer training, irrigation support, distribution of improved inputs, and investment in agro-processing infrastructure.

From a policy and implementation standpoint, he called for increased investment in extension services, stronger coordination among stakeholders, and enhanced monitoring systems to ensure accountability and results. He advocated for scaling up farmer training in post-harvest handling, improving access to affordable finance, strengthening quality assurance systems, and leveraging digital technologies to improve service delivery.

Across the discussions, key messages emerged on the need to bridge the gap between research and practice by recognizing and documenting field-based knowledge, while simultaneously strengthening agro-industrialization efforts through improved extension systems, financing, and coordination. The sessions reinforced the importance of collaboration, practical learning, and integrated approaches in driving productivity, resilience, and sustainable transformation within Uganda’s agricultural sector.

PARALLEL WORKSHOPS: PAPER AND CASE STORY PRESENTATIONS



Side session in progress: Participants share knowledge and experiences on Agro Ecology

In the session on scalable and market-driven AEAS delivery, Christine Kyomugisha Kamubona of Sasakawa Africa Association outlined integrated models such as farmer learning platforms, private extension services, seed multiplication, agro-processing centers, and community financing mechanisms, emphasizing that scale comes from combining technology, markets, and farmer-driven systems. Sandra from PELUM Uganda complemented this with an agroecological lens, highlighting Farmer Field Schools and experiential learning as critical for building trust and adoption. Stewart Ategeka of Eazy-Agric introduced digital transformation through AI tools, data-driven advisory, and credit scoring, while David Vanderpool stressed that extension must be anchored in real-time market intelligence. Across presentations, consensus emerged that profitability drives scalability and that hybrid models blending digital tools with participatory approaches are essential, alongside stronger institutions and market-oriented extension systems.

In the session on high-value chains (coffee and horticulture), Joseph Male of Avail Group Ltd presented an integrated agribusiness model combining horticulture, agritourism, and consultancy to attract

youth and ensure financial sustainability through diversified income streams. Prof. Kanti Kanyarusoke expanded the discussion to rural industrialization, emphasizing the Parish Development Model, value addition, and micro-factories as catalysts for transforming subsistence farming into commercial production. Kazigati Grace Fatuma from The National Avocado Federation of Uganda (NAFOU) highlighted the growing potential of the Hass avocado value chain, noting persistent challenges in extension coverage, quality assurance, and irrigation. The session reinforced that successful value chains depend on integrating production, value addition, and markets, supported by targeted investments and strong partnerships.

Focusing on livestock, aquaculture, and entomoculture, Dr. John Walakira of NAFIRRI traced the growth of aquaculture while pointing out constraints such as high feed costs, limited quality inputs, and weak extension systems, calling for stronger investment and innovation platforms. Aron Kyomujuni highlighted structured beekeeping models that support farmers' progression and value addition, supported by inclusive training systems. Dr. Ali Mohamed Ssemwaga of AGRENES presented dairy

innovation hubs as centers for training, technology adoption, and commercialization, with strong inclusion of youth and women. Discussions emphasized value addition, accessible training, and multi-stakeholder collaboration as critical for scaling impact across value chains.



Dr. Volaniaina ROBSONA, Madagascar country Fora coordinator, GPSEAP submitting during a side session on Africa Regional Agroecology

In the Africa regional agroecology session, Dr. Carl Erik Larsen of GFRAS emphasized a shift toward participatory, farmer-centered extension systems. Dr. Rosemirta Birungi highlighted agroecology as a pathway for resilience, nutrition, and income, driven by farmer-led innovations. Dr. Beatrice Luzobe of UFAAS shared experiences from the APISIDE project, demonstrating the effectiveness of co-creation approaches, localized learning tools, and innovations such as Black Soldier Fly technology and biochar. Drawing Insights from Madagascar, Dr. Volaniaina ROBSONA reinforced the importance of soil health and advisory services in a challenging climate as articulated in the Africa Union Soil Observatory Initiatives (AUSO). For Madagascar, the AFAAS Global Project on Agroecology has articulated the need for Soil Health Solutions to promote "farmer innovations from below". Practical innovations presented by various speakers showcased low-cost, farmer-driven solutions, while discussions underscored the need for stronger policy integration, financing, and scientific validation. The session concluded with a clear call for inclusive, well-funded extension systems centered on farmer innovation; as well as support African Countries in the development or improvement of National soil health strategies.

The AI for agricultural extension session focused on building practical digital competencies among

practitioners. Participants were introduced to multiple AI tools and trained in structured prompting techniques such as Role-Task-Context and Ask-Refine-Verify. The facilitator emphasized AI as a support tool for tasks like reporting, training content development, and advisory services, while cautioning against risks related to misinformation, privacy, and overreliance. Reflections showed that structured use of AI significantly improves productivity and creativity, with a strong takeaway that human judgment remains central even as AI enhances extension delivery.

Finally, discussions on community-based seed systems and agroecological practices highlighted farmer-led solutions to climate variability, input access challenges, and declining productivity. Farmers organized seed banks, adopted sustainable practices such as composting and agroforestry, and strengthened post-harvest handling and value addition. Supported by partners like PELUM Uganda, these approaches improved resilience, incomes, and market access, demonstrating the effectiveness of localized, organized agribusiness systems driven by farmer institutions.

The side event on enhancing scalable agricultural extension and business development services in Northern Uganda, under the GIZ RUDEV Programme in collaboration with GOPPA AFC, brought together diverse stakeholders to explore integrated models linking extension to enterprise growth. The programme, implemented under the Ministry of Local Government, was presented as a multi-sector initiative supporting farmers' transition to market-oriented production through climate-smart agriculture, MSME inclusion, and access to finance and business services, reinforced by emerging national BDS standards.

Two implementation models were central to the discussion. The Farm Enterprise Trainer (FET) model was presented as a localized solution to extension gaps, where trained cooperative farmers deliver advisory services within communities while remaining embedded in district systems. However, concerns were raised about fragmentation due to multiple parallel extension approaches, highlighting the need for harmonization. Complementing this, the Business Growth Expert (BGE) model demonstrated how specialized, hands-on business support can strengthen agricultural SMEs through diagnostics, coaching, and exposure, though sustainability depends on transitioning businesses toward paying for services.

A practical enterprise case shared by Keri Naturals illustrated the impact of structured business support, showing how targeted BGE interventions enabled growth from a basic shea butter enterprise into a formalized brand linked to 1,500 women, supported by digital tools and improved financial systems. Discussions emphasized that Uganda's extension and

business support ecosystem remains fragmented, with a strong call to integrate extension with business development, prioritize practical learning, and accelerate digital adoption. The session concluded that aligning models like FET and BGE under coherent national systems is critical for bridging production and enterprise gaps.

DRAWING LESSONS, EXPERIENCES AND INSIGHTS FROM AGRA PROJECT.



Experts share knowledge on AEAS models: Dr Richard Miiro chairs session

It was noted that Uganda's extension reforms have evolved over time, including earlier attempts to privatize service delivery through public-private models. One such effort led to the establishment of NERGS, which operated for over a decade and generated important lessons on the role of private extension actors, but also exposed challenges linked to heavy dependence on government funding.

During the session, it was highlighted that these lessons informed the 2015 reform process, which culminated in the National Agricultural Extension Policy approved in 2016. The policy is implemented through a strategic framework, supported by guidelines, certification systems for extension workers, and a draft National Agricultural Extension Bill currently in advanced stages of approval.

UFAAS was acknowledged during the session for its central role in facilitating consultations and supporting the development of key frameworks, as well as its continued leadership in mobilizing private sector actors within the extension sub-sector.

Emphasis was placed on the need for stronger coordination across all agricultural value chain actors, including extension workers, agro-input dealers, processors, and market actors, particularly to improve implementation at local government level where services are delivered.

During the session, it was stressed that while policy development has progressed, greater focus is now required on implementation, especially through the integration of micro-actors and resilience concepts into practical extension delivery systems.

A related presentation highlighted increasing efforts to strengthen partnerships and volunteer engagement in extension services, with growing recognition of the importance of inclusive participation of diverse actors.

The role of agro-input dealers was further emphasized as part of the evolving extension system. They were described as key private sector actors involved not only in input supply, but also in farmer awareness

creation, informal advisory services, quality assurance, credit facilitation, and participation in both input and output markets.

During the session, it was underscored that agro-dealers have become critical last-mile actors within agricultural transformation, particularly due to their proximity to farmers and their growing multifunctional roles.

In conclusion, the session reaffirmed a clear shift towards a more pluralistic, market-driven, and inclusive agricultural extension system that integrates multiple actors to strengthen last-mile delivery and improve agricultural productivity and resilience.

DIALOGUE ON EXTENSION AND IN AGRO ECOLOGY CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND BREAKTHROUGHS



Dr. Roselline Nyamutare (R) joins a panel discussion on sharing Agro Ecology insights

The session opened with a strong call to rethink agricultural systems in the face of growing global and local pressures, representing the Country Director; the Head of Programs of PELUM, Mr. Jude Ssebuliba, highlighted the realities of climate change, land degradation, water stress, and biodiversity loss already affecting livelihoods and food systems, even as millions remain food insecure due to systemic failures.

Keynote speaker Mr. Joseph Okee, Senior Agro extension coordinator, MAAIF built on this by emphasizing that agroecology can only scale through professional, coordinated, and accountable extension systems, noting that sustainable adoption depends not just on technologies but on how services are delivered. He stressed that without standards, even well-designed innovations fail to achieve impact, and called for coherent policies, stronger regulatory frameworks, capacity building, increased investment, and farmer-centered research, alongside a firm

commitment to long-term transformation and partnerships.

The panel discussion reinforced these insights from multiple perspectives. Mr. John Lodungokol, Assistant Commissioner, crop production MAAIF highlighted government efforts to integrate agroecology into national systems while acknowledging gaps in policy, coordination, extension capacity, and regulation, particularly the risks of unregulated actors and misinformation. Sandra Akiror, farmer representative from Church of Uganda Teddo Soroti brought a practical field perspective, pointing to limited access to reliable extension, weak markets, financial constraints, and knowledge gaps affecting farmers, while calling for stronger and more regulated extension services. Dr. Roselline Nyamutare emphasized the need to restore professionalism, ethics, and credibility in advisory systems, stressing mentorship and accountability, while Mr. Joseph Okee reiterated that extension must be treated as a professional discipline.

Collectively, the discussion underscored that achieving agroecological transformation in Uganda will require stronger policies, professionalized extension systems, improved coordination, increased investment, and a sustained focus on quality, capacity, and farmer-centered approaches.

In the session on Africa regional capitalization of agroecology experiences, Adongo Lydia highlighted personal development as a foundation for effective extension, emphasizing continuous learning, peer exchange, and skills building to strengthen confidence and performance. Munyole Andrew underscored the role of public-private partnerships in co-creating and financing agroecological interventions, while

acknowledging coordination and resource challenges. Gerald Kacita shared Zimbabwe's experience, demonstrating how integrated systems, coordination platforms, and village-based advisors improve service delivery through trust and collaboration. Guru

In closing, Dr. Rosemirta Birungi called for stronger linkages between research, practice, and extension, emphasizing documentation, evidence sharing, and capacity building to scale agroecological outcomes including Africa wide soil health solutions. Overall, the session reinforced that agroecology thrives on skilled extension workers, strong partnerships, and integrated systems.

PROFESSIONALIZATION OF AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE: DRAWING INSIGHTS FROM THE GURUS.



Dr. Miiro Richard (R) joins panel of experts to discuss professionalization of AEAS ecosystem

The panel discussion on professionalization of the agricultural workforce focused on the urgent need to formalize and regulate extension service delivery in Uganda. Speakers noted that the current system is highly fragmented, with many unqualified actors operating without standards, leading to inconsistent messaging and weak farmer trust. The discussion emphasized that professionalization would improve service quality, credibility, and long-term adoption of innovations, but is constrained by policy gaps, weak coordination, and lack of certification and accreditation frameworks.

Key challenges included the proliferation of informal advisory providers, limited enforcement of standards, weak alignment between training and practice, and low motivation among extension workers. Despite this, opportunities exist to establish a recognized professional cadre, leverage digital platforms for verified information, and strengthen collaboration across sectors. The panel recommended developing a national certification and licensing framework, establishing a regulatory body, harmonizing training curricula, and regulating agricultural information shared media and digital platforms. The session concluded with a strong call for coordinated action to build a credible, accountable, and well-regulated extension system capable of driving agricultural transformation in Uganda.

SWITCHING TO POLICY ACTION

A conglomeration of three days' deliberations identified a number of systemic and policy challenges to the extension services ecosystem and proposed actionable recommendations to harness a more rewarding AEAS in Uganda.

#UGNAEW2026| POLICY INSIGHTS BRIEF 1

BACKDROP

Uganda's agricultural extension system has evolved from a predominantly public service into a more pluralistic arrangement involving government, private actors, civil society, and farmer organizations. Despite this transition, the system remains constrained by structural policy and institutional gaps that limit the effective participation and scaling of private sector-led approaches.

Emerging models driven by private actors have demonstrated strong potential to deliver efficient, market-oriented, and responsive services to farmers, particularly at the last mile. However, these models continue to operate in an environment that does not adequately recognize, regulate, or incentivize their role. At the same time, extension services remain largely supply-driven, with insufficient focus on profitability, markets, and value addition.

African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS), UFAAS, through the Uganda

Agricultural Extension Week 2026 (UGNAEW2026), provided a platform for National stakeholders' engagement to discuss and explore ways to actionize an enabling private sector-led extension and sustainable last-mile delivery of bundled services in Uganda. The main activities during the workshop included: keynote addresses and presentations on the theme and subthemes by subject matter specialists; speeches from partners and government dignitaries; a dialogue on the AEAS system in Uganda; parallel workshops and side events; field visits and Exhibitions. The workshop highlighted the importance of partnerships and coordination in pluralistic approaches to agricultural extension and advisory services (AEAS).

Insights from national stakeholder engagement, including contributions from technical experts, research institutions, and continental leadership, pointed to the need for a fundamental shift in how extension services are conceptualized and delivered. These included repositioning extension as a business-oriented, market-driven service, strengthening digital integration, professionalizing service delivery, and building stronger linkages across the agricultural value chain, reorienting knowledge systems within AEAS to ensure that practitioners are formally recognized as co-creators of knowledge.

This policy brief outlines the key systemic constraints and proposes targeted reforms to create an enabling environment for sustainable, scalable, and inclusive extension service delivery in Uganda.

Context and Problem Statement

Agriculture remains central to Uganda's economy and livelihoods, yet productivity and resilience continue to be constrained by limited access to timely, relevant, and market-oriented advisory services. Public extension systems have expanded over time, but remain insufficient to meet the growing and diverse needs of farmers. In many cases, farmer-to-extension ratios remain extremely high, leaving large segments of the farming population unreached.

Evidence from across Africa shows that in some contexts, extension services operate at significantly higher outreach ratios, yet still deliver impact through innovative and scalable models. However, in Uganda, the persistence of traditional, resource-intensive approaches have limited efficiency and scale.

Private sector actors have stepped in to fill these gaps by introducing innovative models through an integrated advisory mechanism. These models have shown strong potential to improve productivity and strengthen farmer linkages to value chains. However, weak coordination, limited public-private collaboration, and inadequate policy support, among others have constrained their growth.

At the same time, the extension system remains insufficiently aligned with market demands. Advisory services are often disconnected from value chains, export requirements, and emerging opportunities in logistics and value addition. This has limited the ability of farmers to compete effectively in both domestic and international markets.

AEAS policy framework and relevance to private sector-led extension:

Policy / Framework	Key Provision	Relevance to Private Sector-Led Extension	Key Policy Gaps
National Agricultural Extension Policy (NAEP, 2016)	Promotes pluralistic extension system (public, private, CSOs).	Provides formal entry point for private actors.	Weak operational guidelines for private sector integration and contracting.
Agricultural Sector Strategic Plan (ASSP)	Emphasizes commercialization and value chains.	Encourages market-driven extension models.	Limited mechanisms to operationalize PPPs in extension delivery.
National Development Plan (NDP II, III & IV)	Agro-industrialization and productivity focus.	Supports private sector involvement in value chains, coordination.	Extension is not explicitly structured as an intervention area for private sector scaling (NDP IV). Advocate for policy support for full actualization.
Single Spine Extension System	Central coordination under MAAIF.	Enables coordination of multiple actors. Policy / Framework	Public-sector dominance limits private sector leadership space.
Draft Extension Bill	Would regulate AEAS actors and standards.	Would formalize private extension providers.	Non enactment leaves private actors unregulated and informal.

Key Policy Issues

1. Regulatory gaps:

The regulatory environment remains underdeveloped, with no comprehensive systems for accreditation, certification, or quality assurance of extension service providers. This has resulted in inconsistent service delivery and weak accountability. Existing guidelines are also poorly enforced, limiting overall policy effectiveness.

2. Unprofessionalism tendencies:

The increasing reliance on non-conventional providers such as farmer trainers and private extension agents has exposed the absence of formal recognition and regulation mechanisms. Many operate without standardized qualifications or oversight, contributing to inconsistent advisory services despite their important role in reaching farmers.

3. Weak incentive environment:

Private sector participation remains constrained by limited incentives and high operational risks, particularly in rural and underserved areas. This has made it difficult for private actors to scale extension services sustainably.

4. Limited business orientation:

Extension systems are not sufficiently anchored in viable business models. While approaches such as last-mile delivery, bundled services (BEAS), and partnerships like those with Equator Seeds show potential, there is still limited emphasis on linking farmers to value addition, logistics, and export markets. Without a focus on profitability, scaling remains a challenge.

5. Fragmented coordination:

The extension system is fragmented across government, private sector, and research actors, leading to duplication of efforts, inefficient resource use, and siloed implementation.

6. Weak partnerships:

Collaboration between research institutions and extension systems remains limited, constraining the translation of research into practical farmer solutions. Opportunities to integrate extension with sectors such as health and environmental management are also underutilized.

7. Limited digital integration:

Although digital platforms, payment systems, and AI tools present strong opportunities, their adoption in extension remains low and fragmented, limiting their potential to expand reach and efficiency.

8. Weak data systems:

Critical data for extension services remains inaccessible, underutilized, or stored in non-digital formats at decentralized levels, constraining effective advisory delivery and planning.

9. Weak market orientation:

Extension services remain largely production-focused, with insufficient attention to market linkages, trade facilitation, and compliance with quality standards, limiting farmers' ability to access competitive markets.

10. Limited value chain integration:

There is inadequate support for farmers to engage with broader value chain actors such as logistics providers and exporters, which restricts their ability to benefit from higher-value opportunities.

11. Limited reach:

High farmer-to-extension ratios and resource constraints continue to limit the reach of public extension systems, particularly in remote areas.

12. Capacity constraints:

The system faces skills gaps, especially in emerging areas such as digital tools and data-driven extension, affecting the ability to respond to evolving demands.

Policy recommendations:

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and coordinated set of reforms aimed at strengthening the enabling environment for private sector-led extension and sustainable last-mile service delivery.

1. Reposition extension as a market-driven system:

- The government should transition agricultural extension from advisory provision to trade facilitation and market integration.
- MAAIF should lead the promotion of farmer-centric, demand-driven extension models aligned to market needs.
- The private sector should scale integrated business models linking farmers to inputs, markets, finance, and value addition.

Local Governments should operationalize market-oriented extension approaches at the district level.

2. Strengthen policy and regulatory frameworks

- The government should explicitly recognize and define the role of private sector actors in extension policy frameworks.
- MAAIF, through Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS), should institutionalize national accreditation, certification, and quality assurance systems for extension service providers. Access to these systems should be made accessible to the actors, including private sector operators.
- MAAIF and Local Governments should formalize, register, and regulate farmer trainers and non-conventional extension providers.

- The government should strengthen enforcement of extension policies, standards, and guidelines.

3. Create a supportive incentive environment:

- The government (Ministry of Finance) should design and implement risk-sharing mechanisms to attract private sector investment in extension services.
- MAAIF should develop policy guidance for paid extension service models with tiered incentives.
- The private sector should invest in and scale sustainable, commercially viable extension service models.
- The government, through MAAIF should increase budget allocations for extension systems to with CAADP commitment.
- Government should lobby development partners to provide catalytic financing and de-risking instruments to entice private sector participation.

4. Strengthen coordination and partnerships amongst actors:

- MAAIF should lead the development and operationalization of public-private partnership (PPP) frameworks in extension.
- Government (through the Office of the Prime Minister) should strengthen inter-ministerial coordination to reduce duplication and improve efficiency.
- MAAIF should institutionalize structured multi-stakeholder engagement platforms.
- CSOs and sector platforms should facilitate coordination, dialogue, and knowledge sharing among actors.

5. Accelerate digital and ai integration into the aeas ecosystem:

- The government (MAAIF and Ministry of ICT) should invest in digital extension platforms and AI-enabled advisory systems.
- MAAIF and Local Governments should lead the digitization of agricultural data, including district-level datasets.
- The government should establish data-sharing frameworks aligned with data protection standards.
- Universities and training institutions should build capacity for digital and AI adoption in extension systems.
- Private sector actors should develop and deploy digital solutions for extension delivery.

6. Promote market-oriented and quality-driven extension:

- MAAIF and the Ministry of Trade should integrate quality standards and export compliance into extension services.
- The private sector should strengthen value chain linkages and market access for farmers.
- The government should support agro-industrialization through investments in value addition infrastructure and create an enabling environment through policy reforms.
- MAAIF should align extension services with trade, logistics, and market requirements.

7. Reform knowledge systems and evidence generation

- The government, through MAAIF should formally recognize extension practitioners as co-creators of knowledge.
- Universities and research institutions should institutionalize co-authorship frameworks with practitioners.
- MAAIF should integrate practical documentation tools into extension workflows.
- Training institutions should build practitioner capacity in research, communication and knowledge publication.
- CSOs and extension platforms should promote documentation of field innovations and success stories.
- Government and academia should reform knowledge systems to value experiential and indigenous knowledge.
- MAAIF and research institutions should strengthen university–extension partnerships.

8. Strengthen evidence-based systems

- MAAIF and the Uganda Bureau of Statistics should improve agricultural data collection, management, and utilization.
- The government should promote real-time, data-driven decision-making across extension systems.
- MAAIF should institutionalize continuous learning, monitoring, and feedback mechanisms.
- Development partners should support investments in data systems and evidence generation.

Call to Action

There is an urgent need for policymakers, development partners, and sector stakeholders to act decisively in advancing reforms that enable private sector participation in agricultural extension. This includes investing in capacity building, strengthening digital systems, promoting partnerships, and ensuring that extension services are aligned with market realities.

A shift toward trade facilitation, data-driven decision-making, and business-oriented service delivery will be critical in building a resilient and future-ready agricultural extension system for Uganda.

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AND ADVISORY SERVICES POLICY ORIENTED PROCEEDINGS: DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

*Enabling Private Sector-Led Agricultural Extension and Sustainable
Last-Mile Service Delivery in Uganda.*

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