

Achieving Impact at Scale (AIS)



AIS ICT in Agricultural Extension Policy Roundtable Meeting



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Executive Summary

The AIS ICT in Agricultural Extension Policy Roundtable Workshop was initiated with the goal to gather thoughts to inform agricultural extension policy and interventions in Ghana looking at the current state of ‘unregulated’ multiple players in the agricultural chain. Stakeholders from varied disciplines in the agricultural space were called upon to facilitate this policy dialogue and among these persons were representatives from University of Ghana-College of Agriculture, MOFA-WIAD, MOFA-DAES, MOFA-eAgric, farmers, Outgrower businesses (OBs), Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Grameen Foundation (GF), Farm Radio International (FRI), National Media Commission, Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), Independent Consultants, Agronomists, District Department of Agriculture and Development Practitioners. These representatives constituted the panel members for the policy dialogue, and they represented a cross-sectorial class within the agricultural space in Ghana.

Three (3) motions were tabled before panel members for deliberation, and they exhaustively made commentaries on the motions which eventually ended up in voting. Each motion had arguments from those for and those dissenting. Majority of the panel members agreed with the three motions which reflected in high votes for each motion. Voting on the first motion had 25 people in favour of the establishment of a national platform, one person dissenting and the rest abstaining from voting. On motion 2 which called for a policy to facilitate strong private sector participation in extension delivery witnessed 20 panel members voting for the motion, one person being against the motion and the rest did not vote. The third motion which advocated for the establishment of a dedicated agro-meteorological department to provide geographically localized weather information had all the panel members voting in favour of the motion. Recommendations were therefore made in support of these motions and to facilitate policy consideration by MOFA.

Recommendations:

MOTION 1: *A national digital platform is needed to spearhead the sharing of knowledge/content, harmonization and institutionalization of ICT tools and platforms in agribusiness.*

- a. A national digital platform should be created and owned by MOFA where all players in the agricultural space can have access to content, information and data on farmers.
- b. Creation of a national platform will facilitate monetization of data which can contribute towards financial sustainability.
- c. A national digital platform will facilitate authentication, validation and accurate screening of data before usage and public consumption.
- d. Protection of the privacy of farmers in data collection, sharing and usage should be paramount and adhered to.

MOTION 2. A Policy framework for implementation of a strong private sector participation in the delivery of agricultural extension and agribusiness services is an urgent Issue.

- a. There need to be strong private sector participation in extension services which goes beyond traditional extension delivery but rather business services like market, input, storage, etc. Private sector participation in extension delivery will bring competition and quality service delivery.
- b. Agricultural service delivery should be bundled services instead of the one that rely on only advisory services or individual services.
- c. Extension delivery should be demand driven rather than supply driven. Demand driven mostly targets the needs of the farmer rather than offering wholesale/generic services to farmers as pertains in the traditional extension services.
- d. MOFA should be strengthened to be the regulator of the extension sector, provide and maintain quality guidelines and standards.

MOTION 3: To combat the effects of climate change ad empower smallholders to engage the process and produce in a sustainable manner, it is important to establish a dedicated agro-meteorological department to provide geographically localized user-friendly relevant weather indicators and forecast.

- a. There should be a directorate at the MOFA that provide localized weather information on timely basis to all stakeholders within the agricultural space.
- b. The need to position Ghana Meteorological Department to assist in providing timely and accurate weather information.
- c. There should be a public private partnership in the quest to deliver sustainable weather information.

An assessment on the feasibility of establishing a national digital platform for agricultural extension and agribusiness data and content storage and access based on six criterion depicted that majority of the members held the opinion that the establishment of a national platform satisfies: political feasibility, administrative feasibility, cost effectiveness, gender equality and equity, environmental sustainability and economic wellbeing of smallholder farmers. Between 2 to 2.5% felt a national platform will not be administratively feasible and also not cost effective. Also, based on the six criterion, assessment of feasibility of stronger private sector participation in agricultural extension and agribusiness service delivery showed that it is feasible both politically and administratively and will promote gender equity, have impact positively on the environment, cost effective as well as improve the economic wellbeing of smallholder farmers and their business. A little above 5% and 2% were indifferent as to whether it will have any impact on the environment and will promote gender equity respectively.

1.0 Introduction

The Policy Roundtable meeting commenced around 9:00am and was chaired by Sybil Chidiac with Cecil Osei moderating proceedings. It had in attendance representatives from the academia, social enterprises, agribusinesses, financial institutions, technology organizations, public institutions and non-governmental organizations. Institutions and personalities that took part in the policy roundtable meeting include University of Ghana-College of Agriculture, MOFA-WIAD, MOFA-DAES, MOFA-eAgric, farmers, Outgrower businesses (OBs), Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Grameen Foundation (GF), Farm Radio International (FRI), National Media Commission, Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), Independent Consultants, Agronomists, District Department of Agriculture and Development Practitioners. After constructive deliberations and recommendations on motions, the policy workshop came to a close at 13:00 pm.

1.1 Open Statement by Chairperson

The Chairperson (Sybil Chidiac) for the Roundtable Policy Dialogue welcomed participants to the policy meeting and continued to elaborate on the purpose of the roundtable meeting. She started by laying the preamble to the initiation of the AIS project in Ghana in 2015 which was a shift from the traditional agricultural extension delivery to a more ICT enabled extension and a business orientation to services delivery. In situating the essence of AgroTech to extension delivery in Ghana, she established that across the 216 MMDAs extension delivery is mostly focused on advisory services and GAPs training which are very critical for technology adoption and user. However, she furthered that this do not address the multiple need soft the smallholder farmers, hence the AIS project proceeded to address these multiple needs which include market, weather services, inputs, pricing, storage, harvesting and finance. With this objective, in scaling up the AIS project over 167 active agents have been trained to use the AgroTech SmartEx from an initially number of 50 who were able to reached, register and profiled over 8,000 smallholder farmers.

2.0 Background on Policy Recommendation and Motions

The Moderator took the opportunity to brief participants on the policy propositions and motions for the Policy Roundtable for consideration and deliberation by panel members. He furthered that the three motions tabled before stakeholders in agriculture space in Ghana seek to inform national agriculture policy and programming in the country and West African sub-region. He gave brief background about the AIS project and the ICT solution, AgroTech, which was deployed to test the efficacy and financial feasibility of the solution and the AgroTech model. Cecil established that AgroTech is made of two components: an agent solution approach led by Grameen Foundation and ICT based- radio solution led by FRI. He emphasized that one key strength of the two approaches is their interactivity. FRI uses ICT (Uliza etc.) to allow farmers to interact with the radio programs. The AgroTech agent also depends on a digital

platform (i.e. SmartEx), and a tablet, in order to collect and share custom made information with the farmers, provide them with good agricultural practices (GAPs) coaching as well as provide or link farmers to business services like market, threshing, weather, warehousing, input credit, finance and tractor. To this end, Cecil proposed three key policy motions for discussion and recommendations;

MOTION 1: A national digital platform is needed to spearhead sharing of knowledge/content, harmonization and institutionalization of ICT tools and platforms in agribusiness.

There are several examples, including AgroTech, which shows the deployment of radio, mobile devices and cloud computing in provision of services to smallholders greatly enhances flow/exchange of knowledge, information and data. This promotes better farm management practices, farm productivity, transparency and trust relations and evidence-based decision making and policy formulation. The scattered deployment of ICT tools in agriculture are inimical and there is the need for a national framework in which the various digital platforms can be harnessed.

MOTION 2. A Policy framework for implementation of private sector dominated delivery of agricultural extension and agribusiness services is an urgent Issue.

There is enough evidence that only a private sector dominated extension service provision can deliver the type of service that MOFA seek, especially

- Driven by effective demand
- Financially and operationally sustainable
- Results/impact-oriented
- accountable

MOFA is best placed to play the role of regulator and provider of services to the disadvantage and those who are preparing for a commercial production. Any further delay in policy change is not justified.

MOTION 3: To combat the effects of climate change ad empower smallholders to engage the process and produce in a sustainable manner, it is important to establish a dedicated agro-meteorological department to provide geographically localized user-friendly relevant weather indicators and forecast.

A more reliable, accurate and localized weather information is critical and essential for farm planning and ability to address climate change issues. This therefore calls for a robust agro-meteorological department either attached to MOFA or a private entity to provide such weather information which can be a fee-for- service.

3.0 Deliberations and Voting on Motions

3.1 Discussions on Motion One (1)

MOTION 1: *A national digital platform is needed to spearhead the sharing of knowledge/content, harmonization and institutionalization of ICT tools and platforms in agribusiness.*

There are a lot of different platforms currently collecting farmer information. However, there is no coordination of the information. These different players like Trotor Tractor, VIAMO etc. work independently and collect varied data based on each player's needs and preferences. Based on these fragmented data collection platforms and pluralistic data collections on farmers, a national platform is proposed to serve as a consolidating or centralized point for all data collected on farmers which will be accessible to all players within the agricultural chain by just plugging into the national platform. This help standardize the sector and promote the use of digital platform in delivering agricultural services. Just like in the health sector, this is what we proposing in the agricultural space where in the health sector different players both public and private engage in health delivery, and are expected to provide the Ministry of Health (National Health Insurance Authority-NHIA) with patient information before paid for service delivered.

3.1.1 Speakers on Motion One (1)

Sybil Chidiac: We need data to tackle a lot of the issues in Ghana. We need a consolidated approach to data collection, so as to have a one stop shop. MOFA can supply the standards, so that they can make better inferences on what's going on with farmers. This data will inform a lot of important decisions. She continued that the players in data collection space are also a critical area to look into; thus, who is collecting this farmer data so we can better relate to them? Grameen is focused on the ICT angle, we believe it makes it easier to collect the information; however, agents are still using paper in collecting farmer data. How do they digitalize this information? And the need for agents to transition from paper to digitization. She recounted GF works on Farmer Profile which seeks to understand the various medium of collection data both manually and digitally and how they are used in strategy formulation targeted at farmers.

The Moderator: The big idea behind digital data, is BIG DATA. A lot of people are making money just from our clicks on the internet. All the work we are doing with the farmer is very valuable. We know that this is our weakness and we do not have the plans to analyze the big data. We are working towards being able to tackle this data, analyse and determine the behaviour and challenges of farmers for a more targeted services or solutions. A scattered data through varied researches does not help in really determining the real needs and challenges within the agricultural sector especially those relating to farmers, but rather a more consolidated hub for such information can assist in making a more holistic analysis and diagnosis for providing the solutions to these challenges. In conclusion, Cecil established that putting data together on the digital platform is easier compared to having them in pieces. If we own the platform, we can input the data and do a lot of things with it.

MOFA (Simon Von Salakpi PhD.): Defining agriculture is important, and on ICT in agriculture, it depends on the kind of technology (GPS, MIS, GIS etc.) and telecommunications looking at the accessibility of network across the country. He furthered that MOFA have developed a platform exploring ICT4Ag possibilities through the use of mobile phones, etc. Also, MOFA is trying to create a data ecosystem through socio-economic study and policy evolving around best agricultural practices, livelihood, job creation, food security and others. MOFA depends on NITA (Ministry of Communication) for information support and hence, government thinks the information has to be accessible to the public by allowing the private sector access such data to provide services. On content, language barrier is also a key challenge and the need to develop content based on these languages. He saw this data harmonization as really important, and concluded that the convergence is critical but all players are to come on board. The private sector sees this data as money but the government feels this should be accessible to the public which the private sector may differ on that, hence, the need for consensus building. It is good for the private sectors to come on board if MOFA is going for the e-agriculture system as subject of change for gap adoption, content and market for farmers.

Kamal Yakib (Trotro Tractor): As a digital player, we support a national digital platform. This will be essential to my organization and help me in diverse ways. I will be willing to pay for data that makes more sense to my business development than to start all over and conduct new data collection. If this exist, it means Trotro Tractor does not have to pay anyone to travel to collect data to help in our work. If the platform exist, I can save money, time and enhance working faster. Currently, we have to work in the 3 northern regions by reaching to about 15,000 farmers, and this we have to do manually through mapping but if something of this exist then there is no need to go around this again. We also have to look at who is really handling the data. If I have to do market research etc., I won't be able to reach this target this year and may extend to next year. Therefore digital platform is very important. It is also important to know who is taking care of this platform. How do we monetize the data collection? How much do we pay for this data? Anyhow, a platform for digital data is very important.

The Moderator: If we follow the Ministry of health, it will require sharing a minimum of information on your client to the state/government/MOFA. The minimum may be the bio-data of your clients which will be given or shared to the platform. This will help government to know how many farmers are being served under respective services and programmes within the agricultural space. Also, a service provider may be required to share a bit more to inform Government on what kind of service a farmer has received especially if private sector service providers have been engaged for instance under the planting for food and jobs programme.

FRI (Ben): There is a need for sustainability. For a long time, we have been collecting data from farmers and we keep this data for individual projects. Even with government institutions, for the past 4 years, there have been efforts in registering farmers. Where is all of this data? Data is very important for all the work that we do in the agricultural space. When you look at planting, soil profile, harvesting etc. all of these need data analysis and when this exist there is no need to collect this data again. A careful scrutiny of most projects one will realize that all of the projects are servicing the same farmers. Sometimes we think we are helping a lot of farmers, meanwhile we are helping the same few farmers. An independent body should

coordinate this independently, and have a good laid out governance structure and a private interest looking at the need for sustainability. We need a private interest that will enable to realize the commercial value to ensure sustainability since leaving all in the hands of MOFA, sustainability will not be achieved. There should be a centralized point to take care of data so that it will save cost, time and money.

Weblink (Davies Korboe): He established that the need for a national platform cannot be downplayed since there are varied players collecting the same data and sometimes become even conflicting. However, a harmonized platform will help for authentication of data, and before data is delivered for public consumption they are well screened, reviewed, validated and accepted even before being placed on the platform.

CSIR-STEPRI (Wilhelmina Quaye PhD.): I hope we intend to submit the policy to the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA)? This is a laudable deliberation we are having, and if we have to make head ways with the call for a national platform then the policy makers must actively be engaged at another level. We may need to advocate more to the private sector rather than MOFA since left in the hands of MOFA this may not materialize. The issue of data is what is driving evidence and policy decisions. The people who are collecting the data must be qualified. There is no consistency. Data quality issue should also be looked at.

The Moderator: The idea is to submit to MOFA since they are already in motion to developing a national agricultural extension framework. The last policy was in 2002 and updated in 2005. However, there have been several attempts and reforms led by organizations like USAID to inform policy on the need to change the face of extension delivery in Ghana. This roundtable deliberation will push this proposition with detailed recommendation to MOFA so the AgroTech model and the call for national platform can inform extension delivery in Ghana.

MOFA (Simon Von Salakpi PhD): MOFA accepts private players but then those who will engage in this data collection must be certified. Again he called for a combined private and public resources to initiate this national platform. In all these, MOFA has identified organizations that must pay and also some people must sacrifice their profit margins so we can begin.

Sybil Chidiac: How do we monetize the data? Is it monetized differently depending on the type of client (researcher, NGO, business etc.)? How to make profit through this process?

The Moderator: He established that the payment will flow through a chain just like input dealers or those who provide services to farmers get their payment through produce or cash from farmers. On an assumption based on our work, we hold the view that every service provider who deals with the farmer will need data on the farmer and digital services to capture and track farmers. Hence, as a flow chain, the input dealers will pay a subscription fee to the digital service provider or platform owner while the platform owner will also pay to the national platform. The value of the data is for the managers who will analyse to forecast business trends etc.

In conclusion, the moderator posited that MOFA has drafted a regulatory framework, but it has not been finalized. This framework acknowledged the active role of the private sector which is more promising. On the framework, MOFA is still doing broad consultation which Grameen and FRI has been part of the consultation. This roundtable discussion will table recommendations to support the national framework.

3.1.2 Speakers against Motion One (1)

AGRA (Bernard Nimo): Listening to the arguments, and the articulation of the state of our affairs, are we saying that we will be handing this over to MOFA, why would we be handling this to an un-digitalized organization? It will bring its collapse. MOFA will be a regulator. We need all the facts and include the private sector.

MOFA has the skills and capacity to build a national platform but the institution always lacks funding. The representative of AGRA raised a number of questions: If government is going to be the handler of the data platform how do we fund it? And if private sector is going to be the funder then who owns the data? For the private sector there will be monetary interest and therefore being done by the private sector means there is the possibility monetizing data. Citing an example on how to monetize data, AGRA funded one of its grantees to help MOFA monetize data but till date MOFA does not know where such data is. He therefore called for a more concerted effort from both the government and private sector to facilitate the creation of a national platform.

3.1.3 Summary of Commentary

The Moderator established that the regulatory function of MOFA can be done in two ways. Without the national platform, MOFA can still regulate the individual platforms without any centralized data to share. On the other hand, if there is a national platform, private sector can be contracted to manage it which will be more efficient when the funding is there.

Sybil Chidiac re-echoed concerns on privacy issues, and therefore the need for privacy consideration in data collection and usage. Thus, there should be respect for the privacy of farmers since farmers may not need some aspect of their information to be shared. There is the need for farmers to have access to the data, interact with data and validate that data since NGOs and other organizations may benefit from this call for monetization of data to the detriment of the farmers. The privacy issue (of the farmers) and looking at how different NGOs are working with the same farmers, they still need to have their privacy protected. How does the farmer interact or validate this data? They may share their information, but they may not get the needed support. The quality issues from the farmers' perspective must also be considered.

In the estimation of the moderator, feedback should be built into the platform so that farmers validate the data and the use of data. The call is therefore that MOFA should leave extension delivery to the private sector while they focus on the marginalized or disadvantaged smallholder farmers which the private sector may not serve. MOFA generally focuses on skills training but an exception is the planting for food and jobs where MOFA distributes inputs. In this new age,

advisory services go along with other critical services like inputs, market etc. which MOFA does not have the capacity to do rather it can be best done by the private sector. Thus, those who need this kind of services can get in touch with the private sector. In all these, MOFA will still be the regulator as the private sector registers with MOFA. Private sectors lack the capacity to conduct GAP training and this can be taken up by MOFA as a fee for services.

3.1.4 Voting on Motion One (1)

Decision to vote on whether the motion is acceptable or not led to 25 people voting for the motion while one person voted against the motion. The rest did not partake in the voting process. Conclusions from voting suggested that majority of the panel members were in favour of the call for a national digital platform is needed to spearhead the sharing of knowledge/content harmonization and institutionalization of ICT tools and platforms in agribusiness.

3.2 Discussions on Motion Two (2)

MOFA has all the ingredients and ideas about extension provision but lack the funds to execute. MOFA has all the demand driven results etc. which are on paper but faced with challenges on real implementation. Critically, MOFA has had challenges in achieving their objectives and the staff numbers are dwindling. For instance, MOFA lacks the setup required to implement projects like Planting for food and jobs. This is the main reason why MOFA should become a minority player in extension delivery in Ghana. MOFA should take care of marginalized and disadvantaged farmers who cannot be in the commercial space. The second aspect is that MOFA generally focuses on the scale which is highly attainable through advisory extension. Hence, they do not have to provide inputs rather provide information. We are looking at a more holistic approach that provides both information and multiple/bundled business services. However, MOFA can also be a player by constituting a Private Service provider to compete for farmers on the open market by delivering multiple services that farmers need.

There was a call for the amendment of Motion 2, and all panel members agreed to the proposed amendment. Hence, the amended motion 2 reads:

MOTION 2. A Policy framework for implementation of a strong private sector participation in the delivery of agricultural extension and agribusiness services is an urgent Issue.

3.2.1 Speakers for Motion Two (2)

The Moderator: The private sector is naturally competitive. They will do what they need to do to get what they want (provide services, link up with other service providers etc.). When you have a private sector competing for the market, you create an environment where the

farmers do not lose. We have long time considered farmers as part of the public sector: they are not rather they are part of the private sector.

Sybil Chidiac: There is always the need for players within the agricultural space to think about the needs, market and category farmers they intend to service.

MOFA (MOFA Director, Hohoe): Agriculture should be treated as a business. For example, working with CARE as an AEA, I can be in a position to compare. We should analyze the area better. It is the mapping of who does what? MOFA would continue to provide the service and fill the gaps with others. One disadvantage to MOFA in relation to the private AEA is lack of funds. Every meeting we had with farmers, while working with CARE, farmers are given snacks and T&T. But the scenario is different when working with MOFA, we didn't have the money to provide snacks and T&T.

MOFA (MOFA Director, Biakoye): Strong participation of the private sector in agriculture is overdue. MOFA themselves have gone through discussion, policies etc. and are in the middle of building a framework. Originally I was against it, but the amendment of Strong instead of dominated has changed my position. What goes into extensions: it is to raise the level of productivity. There are various categories of farmers and we want farmers to think of agriculture as a business. The service is demand driven, and MOFA cannot meet this demand currently.

The Moderator: There is no cash payment in providing the advisory extension services. It is not paid up front. As of now, buyers or OBs recover all in one haul. There is no credit you can charge to request for payment for extension. If you accept cash from farmers, you are likely to suffer. It is best to go to buyers. They can monetize the produce from the farmers. Extension services cannot be free forever. You want to move them towards business minded approach. This model works with export crops. It is the food crops that need this product and model. This is what we want to transfer. A service provider will only have a few farmers they can manage.

Reindolf (OB): This call is just like the commodity based approach or model which Agricare is using. This is a perfect model when backed with purchasing power and not just the input credit: the farmer will realize the value of the input when there is ready market for produce. Agricare provides farmers with good agricultural practices (GAP) and seeds as well as provide market. When we monitor their progress, we see that the farmers are doing well because the model have been adopted to farmers' needs. We are not re-inventing the wheel, our call is for policy support to this model.

Kamal Yakib (Trotro Tractor): The role of the private sector is undeniable. We are even having both public and private sector debt with regards to agent -farmer ratio. So far, we have 260 private extension agents which is not enough to serve the farmer population in the country. MOFA has a portal where private service providers are required to register and this is a laudable initiative: www.privateextensionghana.com (all private AEAs should be registered). Private and public sector players in extension delivery both play complimentary roles. MOFA lacks the number of field force to reach out to all farmers, hence, private sector's participation is

important. On the other hand, MOFA has the experiences in GAP training which the private sector can harness to deliver their services. Also, farmers should be trained so as to see farming as a business and not only for subsistence.

MOFA (MOFA Director, Biakoye): We have been running trainings for private AEAs and we recognize the role of the private sector in extension delivery. It is a chain. There are places that the public services will be best in while private sector also has expertise in other fields. Most of the private sector use MOFA staff because they are providing resources to deliver their activities. Through this collaboration, MOFA regulates what these players do and make sure they are doing it well. The private sector can handle certain kinds of crops when it comes to GAPs especially for tree crops. However, in all these MOFA is still involved. Much focus on demand driven services if not regulated well will lead to food insecurity since only few farmers who can pay will be served. We need to change the orientation of our partners.

The Moderator: A lot of the services providers overlap in their activity delivery, which leave room for inefficiencies etc. These activities should be streamlined to avoid duplication of activities on the ground and with the farmers. If we try to change the orientation of the farmers by training to make the more business-like, it will take a long time. Instead, the approach should be “I will help you reach 15 bags of produce. I will provide inputs and marketing etc.” When the farmers hear this, they will know you are not joking around and you meant business. Service Providers or OBs should take the business to the farmers and profess their value propositions.

University of Ghana, College of Agriculture (Dr. Anaglo): MOFA has the strength, but MOFA has come here to tell us their human resources are dwindling. The forecast of MOFA personnel does not look promising. We should look for solutions elsewhere. Even for public funds, they are making it competitive. I went to Kenya to observe their decentralization process. What they told our team is that they came to learn from Ghana. We were surprised. The agriculture ministry in Kenya is well resourced. There is financial discipline in Kenya. The situation in Ghana is quite worrying. The Kenyans came here to learn from us and do well in their own country. In Ghana, we are still struggling.

ACDI/VOCA –ADVANCE (Eric, M&E): There is the high realization that we can train a lot of farmers on GAPs, but they cannot adopt the change because the capacity is not there. The private sector gives the power to the farmer to adopt the practices which MOFA lacks. The guided collaboration (as espoused by Rosemond of FRI) is for MOFA to work with the private sector. The private sector has agents on the field. They provide inputs and other services, and are able to recover their costs. The private sector (aggregators/ outgrowers) sometimes have to train their agents to work and deliver effectively, and this is where MOFA can come in. Going forward, you can route the inputs through more organized structure. The private sector (OBs etc.) are providing services, they can be subsidized etc. and they are more capable of recovering their costs.

3.2.2 Speakers against Motion Two (2)

University of Ghana, College of Agriculture (Dr. Anaglo): The private is actually doing very well. The issue is around dominated or strong private sector. The Private sector should rather be harnessed and monitored to be doing well. Even the private extension agents are still using the MOFA staff. He suggested that MOFA should still dominate in the extension delivery space while the private sector supplement such efforts.

FRI (Rosemond): It should not be dominated by the private sector. In as much as the private sector contributes, they are not well resourced in human capital. They are not on the ground. It should rather be a guided collaboration between the public and the private sector. We as the private sector, let us have an agreement, this is what MOFA needs to do, this is what we will be doing... etc. If MOFA has a digital resource centre, how have they been using it? When you go to the field, NGOs etc. always work with the same cluster of farmers, leaving the large masses of farmer unattended. This is why it should be a guided collaboration. Decentralization has crippled MOFA. If the DCE does not care much for agriculture and not interested in non-physical activities rather the physical things since he is only looking to be elected again then we will have this challenges on the ground with respect to the activities of MOFA. Once we do a guided collaboration it will work better.

3.2.3 Voting on Motion Two (2)

At the end of the voting, majority (20) of the panel members agreed with the motion tabled before them, and held the view that a policy framework for implementation of a strong private sector participation in the delivery of agricultural extension and agribusiness services is an urgent Issue. One person dissented while others abstained from voting.

3.3 Discussions on Motion Three (3)

MOTION 3: Weather information to combat the effects of climate change and empower smallholders to engage the process and produce in a sustainable manner, it is important to establish a dedicated agro-meteorological department to provide geographically localized user-friendly relevant weather indicators and forecast.

Looking at climate change, we believe that this is the time that the Metro Department to be resourced and join universities to consolidate and provide good localized information on weather and climate. Some agencies are already providing some of the weather information, but it should be more localized. In one of our research and trainings, we inquired from the OBs, whether they can assure farmers a guaranteed level of yield. The answer was no, and the first reason they provided had to do with unpredictable weather.

3.3.1 Speakers for Motion Three (3)

The Moderator: We work with insurance, but they also rely on weather information to be sure. The provision of very good weather information is important in moving agriculture towards business. It should be a priority either from MOFA, private sector or another sector, to harness all the people working in the agricultural sector to share the information.

MOFA (MOFA Director, Hohoe): He agreed with the motion by establishing that weather is a critical element in agriculture. Citing an example, he stated that in Hohoe: 2016 rains began in the middle of January; 2017, in the middle of January and 2018, started in the middle of February. The rains signal the farmers to start their farming activities and practices. So we need weather information.

VIAMO (Country Director): With the weather, it also speaks to public private partnership. If it is not one of the priorities of Ghana Meteorological Department then it should belong to MOFA.

3.3.2 Voting on Motion Three (3)

All the panel members voted in favour of the motion.

4.0 Panel Members' Assessment on Proposed Policy Steps for ICT4Ag

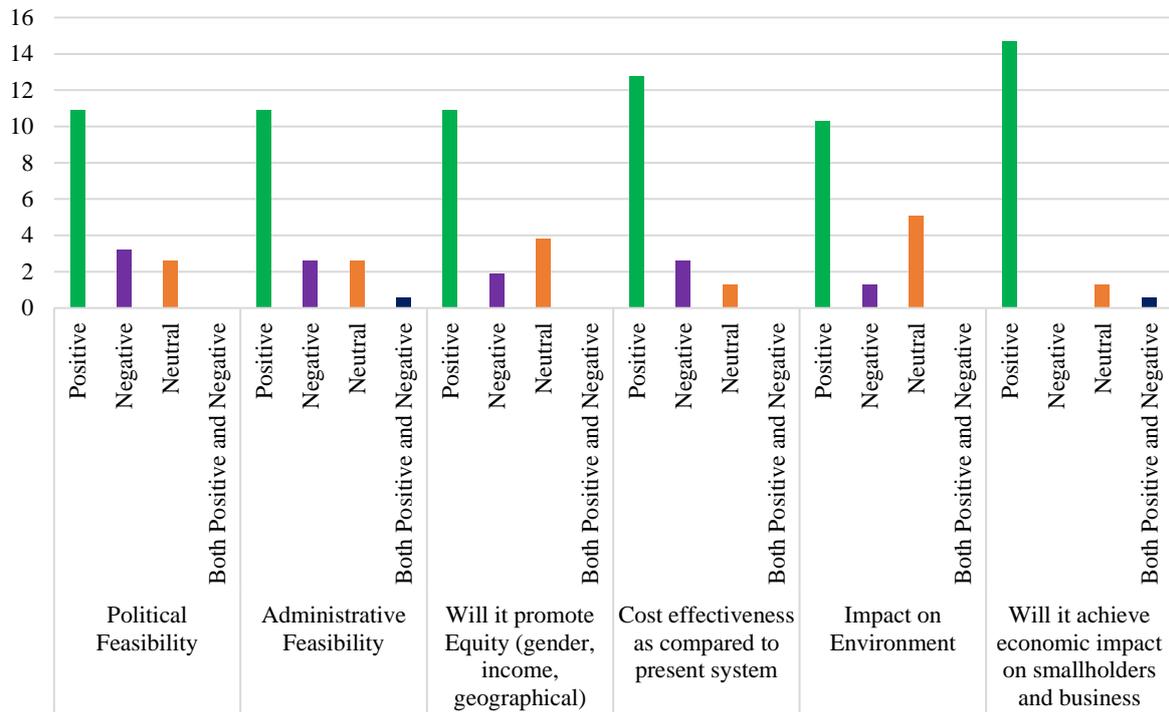
Table 4.1: Assessment Result on Policy Steps for ICT4Ag

Indicate your assessment in the boxes as follows: '+' for positive; '-' as negative; '0' as neutral; '(+ & -)' for both/ either positive or negative

Key Policy Steps Required	Political Feasibility				Administrative Feasibility				Will it promote Equity (gender, income, geographical)				Cost effectiveness as compared to present system				Impact on Environment				Will it achieve economic impact on smallholders and business			
	+	-	0	Both (+ & -)	+	-	0	Both (+ & -)	+	-	0	Both (+ & -)	+	-	0	Both (+ & -)	+	-	0	Both (+ & -)	+	-	0	Both (+ & -)
Strong Private sector players registered to participate in extension and agribusiness service delivery	17	5	4	0	17	4	4	1	17	3	6	0	20	4	2	0	16	2	8	0	23	0	2	1
Private sector players trained on regulations and service delivery standards	17	3	6	0	22	1	3	0	19	0	7	0	22	2	2	0	20	0	6	0	24	0	2	0
MOFA equipped to regulate and maintain service delivery standards	19	3	4	0	13	8	5	0	17	1	7	1	15	7	4	0	21	0	5	0	22	2	2	0
National platform established for agricultural extension and agribusiness data and content storage and access	20	1	5	0	18	3	5	0	22	0	4	0	20	4	2	0	21	0	5	0	22	0	4	0
Private digital platforms registered to support delivery of customized service provision and harmonization of the value chain data	20	1	5	0	19	3	3	1	19	0	7	0	21	3	2	0	19	0	7	0	22	1	3	0
Provision of Agro meteorology information prioritized and consortium of allied agencies formed	21	2	3	0	20	3	3	0	20	0	6	0	23	0	3	0	26	0	0	0	23	1	2	0

Source: AIS ICT in Agricultural Extension Policy Roundtable

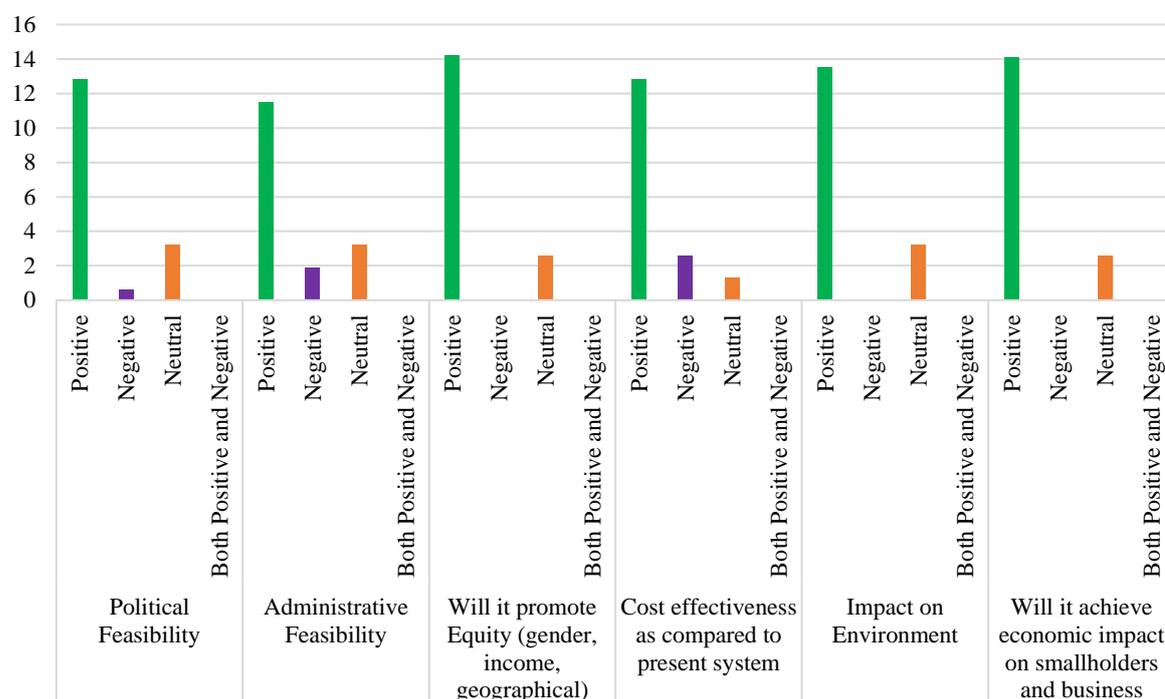
Figure 4.1: Assessment of Feasibility of Stronger Private Sector Participation in agricultural Extension and Agribusiness Service Delivery



Source: AIS ICT in Agricultural Extension Policy Roundtable

Figure 4.1 shows that panel members largely believe that having a stronger private sector participation in extension and agribusiness delivery services is feasible both politically and administratively and will promote gender equity, have impact positively on the environment, cost effective as well as improve the economic wellbeing of smallholder farmers and their business. However, a little above 5% and 2% could not determine whether it will have any impact on the environment and will promote gender equity respectively. About 0.6% established that strong private sector participation in extension delivery could have both positive and negative impact on the economic wellbeing of smallholder farmers and businesses and also could either be administratively feasibility or not respectively.

Figure 4.2: Assessment on the Feasibility of Establishing a National Digital Platform for Agricultural extension and agribusiness data and content storage and access



Source: AIS ICT in Agricultural Extension Policy Roundtable

Most panel members agreed to the recommendation that a national platform should be established. This was depicted in figure 4.2 as majority of the members stated that the establishment of a national platform satisfies the six criterion; political feasibility, administrative feasibility, cost effectiveness, gender equality and equity, environmental sustainability and economic wellbeing of smallholder farmers. Between 2 to 2.5% felt a national platform will not be administratively feasible and also not cost effective.

5.0 Conclusions

A lot of thoughts and insight were provided in the three motions tabled for discussions which are of great importance in the quest to moving towards a centralized digital system, and how the sector will improve and change.

The Chairperson for the Roundtable Policy Dialogue expressed gratitude to all panel members from varied works of lives and entreated them that their commentary will be fashioned into the final report. She furthered that the roundtable meeting allowed us to bring in various actors from the government and private sector to discuss important topics critical to agriculture. Finally, she extended her well wishes to members and called for continued collaboration.

6.0 Recommendations

Based on extensive discussions and commentary on the three (3) motions the following recommendations have been proposed;

MOTION 1: A national digital platform is needed to spearhead the harmonization and institutionalization of ICT tools and platforms in agribusiness.

- i. A national digital platform should be created and owned by MOFA where all players in the agricultural space can have access to content, information and data on farmers.
- ii. Creation of a national platform will facilitate monetization of data which can contribute towards financial sustainability.
- iii. A national digital platform will facilitate authentication, validation and accurate screening of data before usage and public consumption.
- iv. Protection of the privacy of farmers in data collection, sharing and usage should be paramount and adhered to.

MOTION 2. A Policy framework for implementation of a stronger private Sector participation in the delivery of agricultural extension and agribusiness services is an urgent Issue.

- i. There need to be stronger private sector participation in extension services which goes beyond traditional extension delivery but rather business services like market, input, storage, etc. Private sector participation in extension delivery will bring competition and quality service delivery.
- ii. Agricultural service delivery should be bundled services instead of the one that rely on advisory services.
- iii. Extension delivery should be demand driven rather that supply driven. Demand driven mostly targets the needs of the farmer rather than offering wholesale/generic services to farmers as pertains in the traditional extension services.
- iv. MOFA should be strengthened to be the regulator of the extension sector, provide and maintain quality guidelines and standards.

MOTION 3: To combat the effects of climate change ad empower smallholders to engage the process and produce in a sustainable manner, it is important to establish a dedicated agro-meteorological department to provide geographically localized user-friendly relevant weather indicators and forecast.

- i. There should be a directorate at the MOFA that provide localized weather information on timely basis to all stakeholders within the agricultural space.
- ii. The need to position Ghana Meteorological Department to assist in providing timely and accurate weather information.
- iii. There should be a public private partnership in the quest to deliver sustainable weather information.

7.0 Participant List

AIS ICT in Agricultural Extension Policy Roundtable Meeting					
23 rd February, 2018					
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8.0 Appendix- Sampled Pictures



Panel Members listening to Moderator



Chairperson (Sybil Chidiac) of the Policy Roundtable meeting making submission on the motions



FRI Country Director (Ben Fiafor) on assessment of the Key Policy Steps for ICT4Ag



Panel members' assessing on Key Policy Steps for ICT4Ag



Panel members' assessing the Key Policy Steps for ICT4Ag



VIAMO Country Director making submissions on the motions



Cecil making presentation on the motions



George Asare (DOA, District Director, Hohoe) making submission on the motions



Cecil's (GF- Lead, Content and Services) presentation during the Roundtable Meeting



Simon Von Salakpi (National Coordinator, MOFA EAgric) making submission on motions



Dr. Doris (National Media Commission) making submission on motions



Dr. Anaglo (College of Agriculture, University of Ghana) making submission on motions



Voting on Motions



Apepe Amakwafa (DoA, District Director, Biakoye) making submissions on motions