

## Extension Toolkit Notes

Roots of Peace ◦ University of California—Davis  
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### Ten Rules of Effective Extension (TREE)

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| 1. Be of Good Behavior          | 6. Record Your Observations & Activities  |
| 2. Know Your Crops              | 7. Be Connected                           |
| 3. Know Your Crop's Environment | 8. Interact with Farmers through Dialogue |
| 4. Know Your Farmers            | 9. Have a Problem-Solving Attitude        |
| 5. Be Observant                 | 10. Have an Impact                        |

1. **Be of Good Behavior.** Always bear in mind that you are a guest where you work. It is important to be courteous and polite to everyone you meet. You must be familiar with—and respectful of—all of the community's social customs. The farmer should be treated with dignity and deference; he must never be made to feel ignorant. It is often the case that a farmer has more than a quarter century experience working with his crop.

Never promise more than you can do, be conscious of what you promise, and do what you promise.

Know the limits of your knowledge. Always be quick to say, "I don't know, but I will try and find out", and then do it.

You must be law-abiding. Poppy cultivation is a likely point of concern. You must make it clear to farmers that you cannot provide them with help or advice concerning poppy cultivation (or that of any other illegal crop); your only advice must be to not cultivate such crops. Likewise, you need to be careful about speaking to others about poppy cultivation in your districts.

Be aware of the potential for social discord in the communities in which you work and make sure it is clear to everyone, as far as possible, that your position is neutral.

2. **Know Your Crops.** *Roots of Peace* focuses its efforts on viticulture and you must become both knowledgeable about grape biology and skillful in grape cultivation. The more you learn and understand about viticulture, then the more effective you will be as an extension agent. You should:
- Understand the advantages and disadvantages of growing different grape varieties in your district
  - Be familiar with all crop management practices
  - Be knowledgeable about the use of agro-chemicals on grapes
  - Appreciate that viticulture is a profit-driven activity

Grape farmers also grow other crops and it is important to understand their cultivation as well. You must understand the management requirements of those crops and how they compete for resources (including the farmer's time) with grapes.

3. **Know Your Crop's Environment.** Environments vary in ways that affect your crop, even within the limits of your district. You must understand how the local environment affects crop production. The soil's texture, pH and fertility vary from site to site, and even within a vineyard. Availability of water and

sunlight (e.g., through shading and vineyard orientation) varies among vineyards. Some vineyards may be located in low areas that are prone to frost.

Furthermore, the local economy is part of the environment. If a farmer is unable to sell his crop as table grapes and must turn it into raisins every year then that will affect how he cultivates his crop.

A good extension agent is an expert about the environments in his district and keeps careful notes about their important features. Managers should ensure that these notes are current and in-depth.

4. **Know Your Farmers.** You must always remember that the farmer—not his crop—is your client. Your goal is to improve the livelihood of the farmer. Therefore, it is important to fully understand the farmer's current status so as to know what improvements are possible.

An agent must know the management behaviors of the farmers in his district. Farmers vary in the details of how they cultivate their crop—the timing of activities, the amount of inputs applied, how inputs are applied, the intensiveness with which they cultivate (e.g., some farmers apply gibberellins while others do not), and their expectations for the crop. These details often vary according to a farmer's circumstances and an agent must understand why a farmer is doing things in a particular way if he is to offer suggestions for improving crop management.

An agent must know the economic position of the farmer because an agent's recommendation must be economically feasible if the farmer is to follow it.

Farmers vary in their willingness to assume risk. The extension agent must know who in his district is likely to be the first to try innovative techniques and who has a conservative approach to farming. Using this information will facilitate the successful adoption of new technologies throughout communities.

5. **Be Observant.** Careful observation requires training and practice. What is obvious to the careful observer may be missed by the casual onlooker.

Whenever you find that everything looks the same, look more closely. If it is a vineyard you are observing, note the vigor of the vines, the color of their leaves, the number of shoots per vine, the length of the internodes, the number of flower/fruit clusters per vine, the length of time since the last irrigation, etc. Compare those attributes with other vineyards in the area. Always keep a mental note of these characteristics for the vineyards in your work area so that you can readily decide whether a vineyard is typical. If it is a farmer you are observing, then consider such things as his age, the size of his vineyard, his sources of income, the size of his family, his willingness to invest resources in his vineyard, etc.

It is especially important to carefully observe disease progression in vineyards and identify the causative agent. You should note the symptoms—when they first appear and how rapidly they progress—the frequency of diseased vines in the vineyard, and the frequency of vineyards in your district that contain diseased vines.

It is your job as an extension agent to keep your skills of observation well-developed and practiced.

6. **Record Your Observations and Activities.** Keep your daily-log current and write a monthly report of your activities. Your log should reflect not only your ability to observe, but also to discern what is important from what is irrelevant. It should be neat and clearly written. Weekly meetings with your manager should focus on improving the recording of your observations. Your monthly report should

summarize the main points of your observations. It also should provide a description of your activities and the number of farmers you have served.

- 7. Be Connected.** If you are to be of service to farmers, then you must maintain good contacts with a variety of professionals. Frequently, a farmer's problem has to do with not having the appropriate contact. The needed contact might be with the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry (MAAH), the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources, a local government official, a loan officer, an agro-chemical dealer, a grape/raisin trader, or another NGO. The wider an agent's source of contacts, the more valuable he is to the farming community he serves. The agent should be the farmer's primary resource when it comes to determining where help can be found.

Being connected also means that you develop access to resources that can help you understand and solve problems. These include your supervisor, personnel in MAAH, the Faculty of Agriculture at Kabul University, and other NGOs.

- 8. Interact with Farmers through Dialogue.** Agricultural extension is not simply delivering knowledge and technology to farmers; those things are only tools of extension. Agricultural extension is about dialogue with farmers. Effective dialogue means that an extension agent must know when it is appropriate to teach and when it is appropriate to learn. You first must understand a farmer's problems before you can be of help. Therefore, you first must interact with a farmer through a learning mode. Moreover, other farmers in your district already may have found feasible solutions to a problem; an agent should be alert to learn about these possibilities. Feasible solutions to agricultural problems are found by the collaborative efforts of the agent with the farmer. Failure to collaborate usually results in imposed solutions that are poorly adapted to a farmer's needs and are not feasible.

Once an agent begins to dialogue with a farmer he must investigate all possibilities for a solution and promptly get back to the farmer. Failure to do so will result in the extension agent acquiring a reputation for being unreliable and he will lose credibility in the eyes of the farmer.

- 9. Have a Problem-Solving Attitude.** You must view the crop, its environment, and the farmer with his family as one system. Any recommendations you make to a farmer will always impact, and be impacted by, each component of this farming system. Recommendations must be technically appropriate for the crop in its environment and must be economically feasible for the farmer.

Remember that the first step to solving a farmer's problem is to correctly frame it in the proper context.

Always view things from the perspective of looking for impediments and constraints to the farming system. The farming system may include vines and livestock grazing on those vines. It is not enough to tell the farmer that grazing is bad for the vines. The farmer needs a solution that will benefit both his vines and the livestock (e.g., perhaps the farmer could intercrop alfalfa with the grapevines and harvest it as forage for the livestock instead of allowing the animals to graze on the vines). The point is that an extension agent's role is to help solve problems. His solutions must not create other more serious problems. Considering the whole system when developing solutions minimizes the likelihood a solution will have unintended negative effects.

- 10. Have an Impact.** You must have tangible, measurable and documented impact on the communities you serve. Delivering extension messages and holding farmer meetings are not examples of impacting farmers. Impacting farmers means changing their farming behavior. For example, if you demonstrate how to prepare and use lime-sulfur but no farmer uses it, then you have had no impact. The impact would be the number of farmers who make their own lime-sulfur, or use it, as a result of your extension message. The impacts you have on a community are the criteria used to evaluate your performance as an extension agent. These impacts must be documented in your monthly reports. It is

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always good to include quotes from farmers in your reports (along with their names and the date of quote) stating the impact you have had. Managers should make sure that agents adequately document their impact, along with their activities, on farming communities.