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A Review of Policy Intent and Institutional Arrangements in Nigerian Agricultural Extension System

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Abstract

This study examined the current status of the institutional arrangements of Agricultural Extension and Advisory System (AEAS) in Nigeria vis-à-vis the National Agricultural Extension Policy (NAEP) launched in 2023 and issues related to its non-legislation over two years after. The review sought to identify critical gaps, constraints, and suggest ways to move forward. A mixed-method involving a desk review, use of secondary data and key informant interviews (KIIs) was adopted. Findings show the prevalence of pluralistic but fragmented arrangement, poor resourcing and associated performance. It was also noted that several unregulated and uncoordinated non-state AEAS provision were on-going and the non-legislation of the NAEP even after it has gone through first reading at the Senate. Most of the stake holders were of the view that a strong lobby group, including the Hon. Minister for Agriculture, Key members of AEAS associations and other high net-worth personalities with interest in AEAS should be engaged to facilitate the enactment of relevant portions of the NAEP into law. The legislation will ensure that key institutional issues like the steering committees, resourcing and coordination of the plural service provision are properly harnessed for implementation.

Keywords: Extension policy and institutional arrangement, Legislation of NAEP

Introduction

Globally agricultural extension is a critical public good that links research, inputs, and markets to farmers. In Nigeria, the extension system has historically been anchored in the Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs). The performance of the ADPs has declined due to underfunding, staff attrition, weak logistics, and poor integration with private actors and digital tools. Current statistics show an extension agent-to-

farmer ratio of 1:5,000 to 10,000, far above the FAO recommendation of 1:800 to 1000 (Tafida, et. al., 2024; Oyelami, Akinwale, and Ladele, 2018; FMARD, 2023; Issa *et. al*., 2025). Consequently, less than 20% of Nigerian farmers receive any form of advisory service, (NAERLS/FMARD, 2024) thereby contributing to low technology adoption, yield gaps, and rural poverty. The policy framework for agriculture in the current administration, that is, , National Agricultural Technology & Innovation Policy, (NATIP) (FMAFS, 2024) acknowledged the need for Extension Services but did not provide clear direction nor the strategy to use.

Policies are instrument of rules that guide actions in a given area, sector or issues that impart on an organization's *modus operandi*. It states what should happen or be done, why it should be done and how it will be done. Therefore, policy is a statement of intent indicating the direction a government or organisation wants to go in resolving challenges or improving situation of affairs in given areas or sectors of the society/organisation.

Institutional arrangement refers to the set of formal and informal rules, roles, structures, and relationships that determine how organizations and actors work together to implement a policy, programme or function (Chritiano & Proietti, 2022). It is the organised system of who does what, how they relate to each other, who coordinates, who funds, who is accountable, and under what authority (Choruma, et al. 2024; Babu et al., 2020). The Institutional arrangements found in the Nigerian Extension system are mostly centralized, like the ADP model of 1975-1995. However, a decentralized arrangement that devolves to States and LGAs with a pluralistic approach involving public and private service providers is proposed for the 2023 NAEP. The NEEP Policy document, a network of digital platforms that link actors and which will be mostly data-driven, is proposed (FMARD, 2023; Choruma, et al. 2024; NAERLS, 2025; Issa et al., 2025). Thus, it is important that a clear and suitable Institutional Arrangement should be in place for fruitful policy implementation as it facilitates who makes what happen, how, and with what authority.

Nigeria, before now, did not have an explicit agricultural extension strategy. A policy without clear institutional arrangements remains a document, and arrangements without authority and resources will not promote development either. The arrangement determines if implementation can happen or not and the efficiency with which the system operates; in terms of role duplication or missing roles; quality, i.e. enforcement of standards, and sustainability in terms of funding and built-in oversights. The institutional arrangement should show the mandate, authority or the legal basis for action by the various actors. Therefore, the Extension Policy (2023), Bill SB.646 before the National Assembly has tried to clarify the roles and authority of the various actors and institutions involved which include FMAFS, ADPs, NAERLS, private firms, NGOs, farmers and their organizations. Such roles and functions may include policy formulation by FMAFS; policy implementation coordination and regulation of private firms to deliver services to farmers in the fields at State level by revamped ADPs. While,; LGAs may register private service providers and farmers. Provision is also made for a coordinating body or mechanism for interactions among stakeholders e.g. the REFILS meetings, National Extension Coordination Council and NEEP platform (Ogunfolaju et al., 2025). Provision for adequate financing through, for example, budget, corporate donations, commodity levy and private endowment were made (FMARD, 2023). Service quality control and

assurance also need to be clarified to ensure accountability and regular reporting of activities at all levels.

Studies indicate that extension outcomes depend on strong institutions. Historically, Nigeria's extension system evolved from colonial export-oriented models, with no formal extension officers, to post-independence where State ADPs which focused on food security had project based extension system. Later, during the SAP-era, pluralism was witnessed where private actors and NGOs provided services to farmers due to budget cuts (Oladokun & Ogundele, 2021). Despite policy shifts, analysts noted that some issues persisted; and these included chronic underfunding, top-down planning, and weak farmer engagement (Davis et al., 2020;). Some scholars (Issa, et.al. 2025) observed that extension reforms often stall without institutional support. However, few studies directly analyse the new NAEP's alignment with reality and provide a recent sector review that could have shown the need for legal backing. This review fills a gap by explicitly comparing Nigeria's draft policy intent with its institutional arrangements, with a view to synthesize the evidence and explore ways to achieve the enactment of the draft policy into law.

Decades of investment in Nigeria's agricultural extension system has not elevated it to the desired level. Service delivery is weak due largely to domination by the public sector with minimal involvement of the private sector. It was concluded that the absence of a national policy to provide guidance and an enabling framework and better facilities was responsible for the woes in the system. A national agricultural extension policy was therefore formulated and launched for implementation in 2023. The nation has not been able to leverage on the policy instrument to efficiently support extension services to farmers due to institutional issues.

The extension system as it stands now is still largely public-sector driven, underfunded, and very low staffing with extension agent-to-farmers ratio at about 1:5,000–10,000, as against the FAO recommendation of 1:800–1,000. There are weak linkages between research, extension, input suppliers, markets, and farmers. The use of ICT, involvement of the private sector and farmer organizations in service delivery is limited (FMARD, 2023; NAERLS, 2025; Issa, *et al.,* 2025). There is a need for the system to be enabled to function through legislative and adequate institutional support/resource provision. There cannot be different results when things are done continuously in the same way. The NAEP need to be implemented otherwise the challenges plaguing the system would remain and even grow worse thereby seriously imparting growth in the agricultural sector and the nation at large.

The core issue is that the institutional arrangements for the policy implementation need to be firmly put in place. The questions are "what has prevented the Nigeria's extension policy from been translated into action"? What institutional arrangements are in place for the policy implementation? What lessons can be drawn for moving forward? This review thus seeks to identify the weak links in the policy implementation process especially with respect to institutional arrangements for its implementation.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of the study was to review the current institutional arrangements for the implementation of the Nigeria's agricultural extension policy (NAEP) 2023. The specific objectives were: To

1. Review the institutional arrangements for extension policy implementation,
2. Assess the system's institutional, operational, and financial performance,
3. Identify gaps and constraints (via stakeholders), and
4. Recommend reforms.

Methodology

The analysis draws on multiple theories. *Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS)* theory (Xu et. al., 2023; Sen et al.,2025) views extension as part of a network of actors (farmers, researchers, private sector) where innovation emerges from their interactions. In Nigeria's context, AIS suggests that a successful extension system needs strong links between research institutes (NAERLS, universities) and farmers. *Institutional theory* (Annosi, 2022) highlights formal rules and legitimacy. It points out that Nigeria's extension agencies lack "regulative legitimacy" (legal authority) without an enactment. *Policy Implementation* theory Sager & Gofen, (2022) explains why even well-designed policies fail: without adequate capacity or incentives, they remain unimplemented. Combined, they explain the design of pluralistic extension, the formal rules required to govern it, and the factors constraining policy execution in Nigeria. These frameworks together imply that without laws, coordination mechanisms, and accountability, the NAEP's reforms will not take hold. Combined, they explain the design of pluralistic extension, the formal rules required to govern it, and the factors constraining policy execution in Nigeria. The AIS emphasizes multi-actor coordination. Nigeria's system needs to bridge public, private and farmer networks; Institutional theory underscores missing formal rules: without a law, extension bodies have no binding mandate; and Implementation theory suggests that objectives would not be met if the institutional context (budgets, governance) is unchanged.

This study is a desk review of policy documents with emphasis on the NAEP, launched in 2023. Other official reports reviewed were those of ADPs, NAERLS Agricultural Performance Surveys (APS), FMAFS, project documents and published literatures on the administration of Nigeria's extension systems. We examined the NAEP (2023) and earlier policies such as the ADPs extension system, (1980-1990), the Unified Agricultural Extension System (UAES) (1990-2005), Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA), Agricultural Production Policy (APP), FMARD/ADP annual reports, peer reviewed journals and evaluations by organizations (e.g. AGRA, IFAD).

Twelve (12) key-informants (two per group), including ADP extension experts, FMAFS officials, Donor/NGO officials, Researchers and Farmers were interviewed. Their responses supplemented the data obtained from reports.

Findings

Key Gaps Identified

Evolution of Nigeria's extension Policy Versus Actual Institutional Arrangements and Implications for Reform

Table 1 shows the gaps which contrast policy intent versus reality over the years and the implications for reform. The NAEP (2023) and earlier policies such as the ADPs extension system, (1980-1990), the Unified Agricultural Extension System (UAES) (1990-2005), Agricultural Transformation Agenda, ATA), Agricultural Production Policy (APP), were compared as evaluated by organizations. Different themes were emphasized at each era from export oriented and no formal/institutionalized extension service to the ADP era with donor support, although top-down; also the era of proliferation of NGOs and characteristic decentralization and the current era which emphasizes ICT/digitalization, private public partnership and contemporary issues like gender and climate change. The implications are that local needs must be met, system sustainability, coordination, data and cost sharing, farmers' participation. The draft policy which to a great extent addressed critical issues for a sustainable extension system is now in place but yet to be legislated.

Table 1: Evolution of Nigeria's extension policy versus actual institutional arrangements and implications for reform

Era	Policy/Framework	Institutional Arrangement (Reality)	Implication for Reform
Colonial (1900s–1960s)	Export-oriented agricultural policy; no formal extension system	No national extension service; farmers relied on informal networks and colonial agronomists.	Any extension today must build downward accountability (engage local needs).
Post-Independence (1960s–1980s)	National plans for self-sufficiency; introduction of state ADPs	State-run ADPs delivered extension (with donor support); mostly paternalistic, top-down.	Institutionalize sustainable funding (beyond donors) and include farmer input.
SAP & Liberalization (1990s–2010s)	Policies encourage privatization and NGOs (decentralization)	Private firms and NGOs proliferated; many ADPs suffered budget cuts and staffing losses.	Legislate coordination (common standards, data-sharing) for pluralistic system.
Current (2010s–present)	Draft NAEP (2023): ICT use, private sector role, climate-smart focus	Mixed public–private extension; draft policy not enacted, so old institutions persist.	Enact NAEP into law; mandate farmer representation and monitoring as envisioned.

Source: Desk Review, 2026

Institutional Arrangements in the Extension System
The arrangements in the NAEP, 2023 are highlighted and discussed.

Federal level: The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (FMAFS) houses the Federal Department of Agricultural Extension (FDAE). Federal agencies like NAERLS and other research institutes develop training materials, formulate research outcomes into extension messages and carry out evaluation of dissemination technologies on pilot basis to determine their widespread application nationally (Alemnew & Abebe, 2023; Agwu et. al., 2023; NAERLS; Sanusi, et. al., 2024). The FDAE is expected to set national guidelines, organize federal extension programmes, and coordinate donor extension projects (Issa, et al, 2025; Oladokun & Ogundele, 2021). In practice, its authority is limited by the lack of a legal mandate. This seems consistent with the concern of Key Informants as given in Table 2 which suggests that the lack or inadequate institutional set-up for Agricultural Extension Service is partially responsible for the low morale and inadequate support for the Service. It thus buttresses the need for appropriate institutional arrangements for the NAEP to have legal backing as a precursor for their effective support in the implementation of NAEP.

State level: Each of Nigeria's 36 states and the FCT operate the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) which is the extension arm of the States Ministry of Agriculture. The ADPs were established since the 1980s. They hired all hierarchy of extension staff with Block Extension Agents [BEAs] and Village Extension Agents [VEAs], run demonstration farms, and implement field level extension services to farmers. Notwithstanding the State Edicts legally supporting the ADP as an Extension organisation, performance has dwindled in many states due to the cessation of World Bank funding (Isibor et al., 2024; Ojo et al., 2024; Dimelu et al., 2023). Many existing ADPs struggle to operate with limited state governments low budget releases. Reviews such as NAERLS, 2020; NAERLS and REFILS reports show that States differ widely in terms of funding and resourcing: Kano, Kaduna, and Oyo ADPs are relatively well-funded, whereas Kogi, Ebonyi, and Zamfara ADPs operate with tiny budgets while Edo State ADP and some others are trying to operate at mid-level (Omoregbee & Koyenikan, 2022; Oguniyi et. al, 2020; Ojo et. al. 2024; Tafida et al. 2024). Yet, some others have gone moribund. Much as private sector should be encouraged to play a complementary role by investing in agricultural development, it is a hard fact that investment in Agricultural extension should be a public responsibility.

It therefore, does not seem that the availability of legal backing alone would guarantee required support for NAEP as noted by Key Informants in Table 2. While it seems that the political will to do what is right is what might be required. It cannot be over-emphasized that the availability of appropriate laws will considerably support the advocacy for stronger institutional framework or arrangement for the proper implementation of the policy (NAEP) instrument.

Local Government (LGA) level: The Nigerian Constitution places Agricultural Extension Services on the concurrent legislative list. This allows the three tiers of government to play a role in ensuring efficiency of Agric. Extension Services delivery to farmers as a public good. Unfortunately, only the Federal and State Governments play significant roles of Extension Services support to farmers. Though the LGAs have agricultural officers, these officers hardly have defined responsibilities in

Extension. The LGAs rely on ADPs for staff and funding (NAEP, 2023; FMARD. 2016). There is no separate national mechanism to ensure the LGA carries out its extension duties. However, the NAEP provides for the policy, Agricultural Extension Implementation Steering Committees (AEISC) at the LGA, State and Federal levels; i.e. LAEISC, SAEISC and NAEISC to provide oversight functions for the policy implementation at those levels, (NAEP, 2023). These Committees may never be constituted, talk less function as planned if the NAEP law is not in place, and even at that, with the benefit of hindsight, it will require heavy push for these committees to function. This is why a more critical or workable Institutional arrangement backed by law is not just required but absolutely necessary for the good of the system.

Non-state actors: A variety of NGOs, farmer cooperatives, input companies, and donor projects also deliver extension-type services. For example, the World Bank's Fadama projects, USAID initiatives, and private agribusinesses provide training and inputs. These actors supplement ADPs but operate on their own targets (Agwu et. al. 2023; Abdullah et. al., 2021). There is no unified structure for integrating them into a single system, leading to coordination challenges.

Institutional Operational Performance

The desk review found a persistent gap between the institutional arrangements proposed in Nigeria's draft National Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services Policy and current practice. While the policy outlines a coordinated, pluralistic, and accountable system, implementation is undermined by the absence of legislation, chronic under-resourcing and weak coordination (Okafor & Omoniyi, 2025).

The policy proposes clear mandates for Federal, State, LGA, and actors at the farm levels, with a District Extension Platform to harmonize public, NGO, and private actors. In practice, extension remains an unfunded mandate at the LGA level, resulting in uneven coverage and fragmented service delivery at the field level. Without a legalized institutional coordination framework, NGOs and donors operate in silos, causing duplication in some areas and neglect in others [Oladokun & Ogundele, 2021; Financing and resourcing fall short of policy intent. The draft calls for ring-fenced budgets and a National Extension Fund, yet State and LGA allocations remain below 30% of need, with funds often delayed or unreleased. . This leaves agents without transport, materials and ICT tools, limiting farmers' coverage to less than one visit per year. Reliance on short-term donor projects further disrupts continuity (ADP reports).

Accountability and human resource gaps persist. The policy mandates farmer validation, public M&E, and professionalized staff pathways, but current practice remains supply-driven with no feedback mechanisms ADP. Agent-to-farmer ratios average 1:5,000–10,000, far below FAO's recommended standard ratio of 1:800-1000. These challenges are partly responsible for the low morale in the system which some Key Informants alluded to as in Table 1 and it drives staff turn-over rate resulting in high vacancies [Adebayo & Idowu, 2017; Abdullah, et. al., 2021].

This review attempts to synthesize policy–implementation gap summed up in under-resourcing, fragmentation with poor coordination which combine to make the extension system unresponsive. Reports document that ADPs are chronically underfunded and understaffed, NGOs, private firms, and state agencies has improved outreach to farmers in some places or locations but this often results in

duplication. Project-based extension service has been very popular in many areas but often lacks coherence and sustainability and there have been calls for them to have formal mandates from concern institutions to ensure a streamlining of their operations to meet national objectives. Okafor & Omoniyi, (2025) stress that Nigeria's draft extension policy needs enforcement mechanisms. However empirical analyses of why the NAEP is not enacted are scarce.

The Agricultural Extension Implementation Steering Committees at the three tiers of governance are expected to provide some coordination. Provision was also made in NAEP for an Agricultural Extension Institute to coordinate and regulate and ensure quality control and assurance in field level operations of a pluralistic system. The non-legislation of relevant portions of the NAEP is a challenge to the policy implementation. Without the law, enforcement of policy goals will at best be based on personal disposition of the government officials in position. (Babu, et al, 2020; Oguniyi, et al, 2020; Issa, et al. 2025). The State ADPs which are currently implementing extension activities are doing so because of the importance such states place on Agriculture and support to farmers. Such support varies widely from state, to state depending on budgetary releases and political support.. Well-funded states reach more farmers. Data show that better-funded, well-managed ADPs achieve far higher adoption of innovations (NAERLS, 2021). Non-state actors such as input dealers, NGOs, which operate in parallel to the ADPs often train farmers' groups and farmer associations which are active but not formally linked. Financing and resource flows are a critical weakness (Babu, et al, 2020; Oguniyi, et al, 2020; Issa, et al. 2025; Agwu et.al, 2019). Federal funds for extension are small and project-based. States are expected to pay ADP salaries and cover budgets, but many do not fulfil this obligation. Overall, the evidence confirms that unless institutional arrangements are overhauled, the NAEP's goals may not be realized.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) Summary

Table 2 presents the summary of the responses of the different stakeholders to issues related to the NAEP. The responses reveal clear institutional perspectives on the national extension policy. Federal-level actors like FMARD prioritize legal backing, coordination control, and dedicated budget lines, while State ADP key informants focus on cost-sharing, staffing, and autonomy. Donors and NGOs emphasize evidence, pooled funding, and third-party M&E to avoid past project failures, and research institutes stress formalized linkages and data-driven justification. Farmer organizations consistently highlight grassroots accountability, service guarantees, and direct representation. This divergence shows that enactment alone is insufficient; the policy must reconcile competing incentives across levels by embedding legal mandates, fiscal responsibility mechanisms, and bottom-up accountability tools. The review study revealed that the NAEP, as a policy document, should not be treated like the previous policy statements which never received appropriate institutional arrangement and the force of law to operate effectively. The relevant portions of the NAEP need to be supported by law to ensure adequate implementation. In terms of institutional arrangement, we note that Agricultural Extension Services has never been supported by law at the federal level and the relevant authorities; the Minister, House and Senate Committees on Agriculture, national and international bodies and farmers' organizations have to rise up to the challenge.

Title 2: Summary of the key informant interviews (KIIs)

KII Themes/Questions	FMARD, FDAE-Director	State ADP Manager	Donor Partner & NGO	Research Institute	Farmer Organization Leader
From your experience, what specific political or institutional conditions must exist before a national extension policy can move from draft to enactment in Nigeria?	Minister's political will and National Assembly committee support	Governors should sign MoU on cost-sharing	Evidence of impact and alignment with SDG 2	Data on failure of T&V system needed to justify law	Farmers should publicly demand the law through advocacy
Who are the most critical stakeholders that must champion a national extension policy for it to be enacted, and what incentives would get them fully on board?	FMARD seeks coordination authority; National Assembly seeks constituency projects	State governments require clear benefits and control	Alignment with donor strategy and visibility	Institutional mandate for technology transfer	Guaranteed services and representation on governing boards
What past agricultural or rural development policies succeeded in getting enacted, and what lessons from those cases should we apply to extension policy?	ATA lacked legal backing and became unsustainable	ADP succeeded due to World Bank support and ADP structure	Project-based interventions are unsustainable; system reform needed	Existing ARCN law overlooks extension services	Policies often fail because farmers are excluded from formulation
Assuming a national extension policy is enacted tomorrow, what 3 structural changes at federal and state levels would most facilitate its actual implementation?	Establish National Extension Council; dedicated federal budget; staffing standards	Legal autonomy for ADPs; 50:50 funding arrangement; staff integration into civil service	Pooled funding basket; performance contracts; digital farmer registry	Strong research-extension linkage; joint planning units	Ward-level extension posts; community oversight; service charter
What funding and resource mobilization strategies would make the policy sustainable and not donor-dependent after 5 years?	First-line charge and Agricultural Development Fund	States fund personnel while FG funds operations and capital projects	Blend of grants and loans with phased donor exit	Research commercialization levy	Private-sector levy on inputs and modest user fees
How should the policy address the current fragmentation between FMARD, ADPs, research institutes, universities, and private extension providers to ensure coordinated	FMARD-led Coordination Council with oversight authority	Clear MoU defining federal and state roles	Unified national monitoring and evaluation framework	Mandatory joint annual work plans among institutions	Farmer representation in all coordination committees
What accountability and M&E mechanisms need to be built into the policy from the start to ensure states and agencies actually implement it, not just adopt it on paper?	Annual reporting to FEC; KPI-linked funding	Peer review among states and federal audits	Independent verification before fund disbursement	Monitoring technology adoption rather than extension visits alone	Farmer SMS scorecards to assess extension agent performance
What are the biggest risks or resistance points you foresee during implementation, and what policy provisions could pre-empt or reduce them?	Political transition risks; enact law to ensure continuity	State resistance to funding; provide incentive grants	Capacity limitations; allocate budget for capacity development	Need for stronger institutional capacities and coordination	Political transition risks; enact law to ensure continuity

Source: Desk Review, 2026

Recommended Reforms

The study recommends the following reforms to the NAEP to ensure a more dynamic policy and better implementation in the future

1. Revise the institutional arrangement for the NAEP to ensure a robust and stable policy implementation. The provision for Agricultural ExtensionAEISC at all level of governance may need to be reconsidered especially as the membership criteria and modalities for operation are presently not clarified.

2. The initial provision for a coordinating body to ensure Quality Control and Assurance (QCA) such as an Agricultural Extension Institute has not been clarified in the NAEP and this needs to be provided to ensure proper operation of the proposed pluralistic service delivery.

3. The issue of financing the policy implementation needs to be properly considered and provided for to avoid leaving the funding of the prescribed activities at the whims and caprices of individual officials of government. The Agricultural Extension Trust Fund (AETF) initially provided for should be restored or a reasonable percentage of the national agricultural development fund (NADF) be set aside for NAEP support.

4. The suggested reviews need to be effected before the relevant portions of the policy are finally enacted into law for a robust support to and increased productivity of the agricultural value chains in the country for enhanced food security and economic growth.

5. The enactment of the National Agricultural Extension Policy into law would formally empower the Federal, State, and LGA to play their roles and carry out their financial commitments as prescribed in the policy. For example, it could require states to allocate a fixed percentage of their agricultural budgets to extension and legally establish farmer advisory councils. Making the policy statutory would compel governments to convert strategy into action (e.g. funding, staffing) rather than treat it as aspirational guidance.

6. Establish statutory coordination mechanisms. Create legal platforms (e.g. State and Local Government Extension Platforms) to coordinate all service providers. Such bodies, enshrined in law, would bring together ADPs, NGOs, private firms, universities, and farmer representatives to harmonize extension activities. By defining minimum standards for training and data-sharing, a coordination framework would reduce overlap and ensure coverage. For instance, joint planning forums could set common targets (number of village visits, trials) across agencies.

7. Guarantee minimum resourcing: There should be baseline funding and staffing for ADPs in the law. The law could recommend that each state spends at least 10% of its agricultural budget on extension services. Federal matching grants could incentivize compliance. Multi-year budgeting (beyond annual cycles) would stabilize operations. With ring-fenced budgets and defined worker-to-farmer ratios, ADPs would be able to hire and equip required number of extension agents to reach more farmers. This reform targets the clear resource disparities documented in this study.

8. Institutionalize accountability and ICT standards. Regular conduct of monitoring and evaluation procedures should be mandatory. The law should require ADPs to regularly collect performance data (e.g. adoption rates, farmer needs analysis and satisfaction) and report them publicly every year. It should also specify the standard use of technology (ICT) in a pluralistic system – for instance, adoption of mobile advisory apps or e-extension management systems. Embedding these in law will ensure continuous tracking of progress.

9. Provision should also be made for a five-yearly review to address emerging challenges and issues in the Extension processes to enable policy adjustments.

Each of these recommendations addresses a core gap identified in the review. Without adequate legal backing, it could be difficult for the policy to become efficient in delivery of its objectives as resource provisions would become voluntary rather than mandatory. Providing dedicated funds and creating forums for joint planning will enable better coordination rather than fragmented efforts and thus ensure an integrated system for effective service delivery. Crucially, accountability mechanisms as envisioned in the NAEP will only work if they are backed by law. Passing an extension law is the keystone reform; it would convert policy provisions (mandated roles, budgets) into enforceable rules. A legal body assigned coordination role would unify extension service provision and ensure standards, professionalism, demand-driven extension services provision while enabling shared responsibility in achievement of extension objectives. Dedicated ring-fenced funding will tackle the root cause of staffing and resource shortfalls. A mandatory use of ICT and deployment of M&E tools will facilitate transparency and accountability for a modern extension services delivery.

Way Forward

Successful enactment and implementation of a national extension policy in Nigeria hinge on balancing federal oversight with state ownership, securing predictable multi-year funding, and institutionalizing coordination among FMARD, ADPs, research, and farmers. Without legal backing and clear role definition, previous initiatives like ATA stalled, while T&V collapsed due to unsustainable donor dependence.

1. Stakeholder collaboration: Bring government, private sector, and farmer leaders together to champion these reforms. Multi-stakeholder task forces or piloting the policy implementation in districts/LGAs could demonstrate the benefits of a coordinated system for NAEP implementation.
2. Donor alignment: Development partners should fund system-strengthening activities such as extension training programs, establish ICT platforms, etc. rather than fragmented projects. This can encourage governments to maintain extension investments and thus facilitate sustainability of extension services.
3. Next steps: Advancing legislation is urgent. It might be suitable for FDAE to facilitate establishment of parliamentary committee or appointing a champion minister to drive the NAEP law enactment process. Donors and NGOs can support by helping to draft necessary laws and by integrating the reforms into their programs.

4. AESON should lead other relevant professional bodies to provide strong advocacy through production of policy brief that will be widely publicized on the need to legislate the NAEP for its effective resourcing and implementation so that the extension system can achieve the desired results.

Conclusion

This review demonstrates that bridging the gap between policy intent and practice requires substantial institutional change. The draft National Agricultural Extension Policy (NAEP) articulates a modern, demand-driven, pluralistic extension system, but this alone cannot transform extension services. Simply doing the same thing and expecting different results is unrealistic. The core finding is that legal and systemic reforms must underpin any policy. If the NAEP institutions are not adjusted and the policy remains unlegislated, Nigeria's extension system will continue on its fragmented, under-resourced trajectory. It could be very difficult for the policy to achieve its desired objectives.

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