

TOWARDS PROFESSIONALISM IN AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION: THE PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION OF EXTENSIONISTS IN SOUTH AFRICA – A DREAM OR A REALITY? THE ROLE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION (SASAE)

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ABSTRACT

More and more organizations/institutions delivering a service to clients call their service a “professional” service executed by “professionals”. The concepts profession, professional and professionalism are being described as well as the role that the South African Society for Agricultural Extension (SASAE) has played to ensure that Agricultural Extension is recognized as a profession. A brief description is given of the Extension and Advisory service in Canada regulated by the Agrologist Act, 1994. The analysis of five professions in South Africa and the process of registration indicated the following: Four of the professions are regulated by an Act, a Council and a Code of Conduct. Only one Profession namely the Association of Veterinary and Crop Associations of South Africa operates under an Operational Code of Conduct and is not regulated by an Act. Two of the Professions have included a program of Professional Development (CPD) for their members, to ensure that they retain and continuously develop their skills and knowledge. Extensionists in S A can currently only register (by own choice) with the South African Council for Natural Science Professions (SACNASP) and although more than 3000 extensionists are currently providing an extension and advisory service to farmers, only 11%

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individuals have registered with SACNASP as agriculturists. SACNASP do not give any recognition to the science and training in Agricultural Extension. It is recommended that SASAE should, as a matter of urgency, negotiate with SACNASP, to ensure recognition of Agricultural Extension as a profession with unique characteristics and specialized extension education and training.

1. INTRODUCTION

All over the world today there is a tendency that more and more organizations/institutions delivering a service to clients call their service a “professional” service executed by “professionals” and what they are doing is a “profession”.

In South Africa the Medical and Engineering professions are well known and many organizations/institutions are currently following the same rout.

The South African Society for Agricultural Extension (SASAE) in its Mission Statement clearly stated that:

“The SASAE is a scientific Society, which in the interest of its members is committed for the promotion of the science and vocation (profession) of Agricultural Extension, through its members”.

More important however and a worrying factor are the accusations that Extensionists in South Africa are not delivering an effective service to farmers (Nkosi, 2006, Nemwangani, 2005) and Ntili (2005), a member of parliament said:” the extension services are failing people”.

At a Workshop in 2005 in Pretoria organized by SASAE, participants from both the Public and Private Extension services came to the conclusion that:

- i) there is a lack of service delivery by Extension
- ii) no long-term goals in extension programs
- iii) Extension is only reactive
- iv) Extensionists do not have self-confidence.

Something urgently needs to be done to save agricultural extension as a profession.

The objectives of this paper are therefore to:

- Ensure a common understanding of the following concepts or terminology:
 - i) a profession and a job
 - ii) a professional
 - iii) professionalism
- Give a short description of the history and current situation and position of Agricultural Extension in South Africa as a profession and the extensionist as a professional with special reference to the role of the SASAE.
- Give a short overview of professionalism in a developed country namely the Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists in Canada.
- Give a short overview of the following professions and professionalism in South Africa:
 - i. The South African Veterinary Council (SAVC)
 - ii. The South African Council for Social Services Professions (SACSSP)
 - iii. The Association of Veterinary and Crop Associations of South Africa (AVCASA) an umbrella Association representing three affiliates:
 - South African Animal Health Association (SAAHA)
 - Croplife SA
 - Agricultural Chemical Distribution Association of South Africa (ACDASA)
 - iv. The South African Council for Town and Regional Planners (SACTRAP)
 - v. The South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions (SACNASP)

- Propose a way forward for the registration of Agricultural Extensionists as professionals delivering a professional service to farmers and other role players in agricultural development and extension programs.

2. A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCEPTS: A PROFESSION, PROFESSIONAL AND PROFESSIONALISM

2.1 A profession versus a job

According to the Collins Dictionary a profession can also be described as:

- an occupation
- a vocation
- a calling/mission/life work

The Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists (SIA, undated: 2) described a profession is an ideal type or an abstract model of superior behavior toward which individuals in an occupation or a particular occupation group, strive in their work and their service to the public. According to the SIA (undated: 2 - 3) a profession has several important characteristics:

- a common body of knowledge
- a system for controlling admission
- rules of conduct
- procedures for discipline and
- public and legal authority

Sociologists (Schaefer & Lamm, 1992:467) use the term profession to describe an occupation requiring extensive knowledge which is governed by a code of ethics. According to Düvel (1990:8–13) a profession refers to an occupation with an intellectual character, while a job, according to the Collins Dictionary, refers to:

- a work; function; odd jobs; a task and to fill a role.

To summaries: there is a clear distinction between a profession and a job. A profession requests significantly more from the employee (professional) than from an employee (worker) who only has a job.

2.2 The professional

A professional is, according to the Collins Dictionary, “a person who is extremely competent in a job”, and the following concepts are directly linked to the professional:

- an expert (be at the top of ones profession)
- experienced
- perfection
- dutiful
- obligation (commitment)
- skillful (be good at)
- knowledge (qualification)
- willing
- ability (Willingness + Ability = Empowered)
- ethics
- code of conduct.

The above mentioned concepts can be summarized as competence which can be, according to Van der Wateren (1990:36), described as properly qualified to do the task.

According to SIA (undated) a professional assume responsibility for:

- Defining the nature of their services
- Defining the base of knowledge and skills needed to provide that service
- Defining the limits of their individual ability to apply the knowledge and those skills
- Defining the codes of conduct and ethics to be used to guide and to evaluate their services to others and
- Policing themselves regarding their provision of services to others.

A professional must know what he/she claim to know and have the expertise professed.

Even in the era of criminals today, they are recognized as professionals and according to Schaefer et al (1992:204) a professional criminal is “a person who pursues crime as a day-to-day occupation, developing skilled techniques and enjoying a certain degree of status among other

criminals". Criminals also specialized in different types of crime, namely burglary, safe cracking, hijacking etc. At this stage they do not have to register with a professional council, it is only when they have been arrested by police then they register to attend jail service and in many instances, while in jail, they collect "Continuous Professional Development (CPD) points." Professionals according to sociologists tend to have a great degree of autonomy; they are not responsible to a supervisor or for every action; nor do they have to respond to the customers wishes (Schaefer *et al*, 1992:467).

2.3 Professionalism

This brings us to the concept professionalism and according to Van der Wateren (1990) professionalism is earned on account of competence, and competence means properly qualified to execute a task. A qualification and ability are achieved through training (education) and experience – experience means a life long accumulation of skills, observation and knowledge which as it increases, raises an individual's potential effectiveness. Therefore purposeful training and education (and experience) are the key to professionalism. Car (1987) as cited by Van der Wateren (1990) came to the conclusion that professionalism in Australia is sound training and competent staff. Professionalism is, according to Webster (1988:1076) a vocation or occupation requiring advanced education and training and involving intellectual skills and intellectual meaning "the ability to reason or understand or to perceive relationship and differences etc." The SIA Agrolologists describe that the concept of personal professionalism involves carrying out one's work in a professional manner and the unique measurement of professionalism is service to the community and the criteria for professionalism involve technical competence and personal behavior.

3. AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION IN SOUTH AFRICA AS A PROFESSION AND THE EXTENSIONIST AS A PROFESSIONAL WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE ROLE OF THE SASAE.

3.1 A retrospective view

In August 1966 the South African Institute for Agricultural Extension, today known as the SASAE, was established and one of its main

objectives in 1966 and which is still one of the main objectives in 2007 is: "To promote the professionalism, status and dignity of the AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION PROFESSION amongst members, the scientific fraternity, agricultural extension practitioners, the general public and with the studying youth" (SASAE, 1987:2; SASAE, 2003:1). IN 1958 a Department for Agrarian Extension was established within Faculty for Agriculture at the University of Pretoria. The first students to attend post graduate studies in Extension Science enrolled in 1959. According to Penzhorn (1987:10) extensionists were for the first time in a position to deliver a service of high quality and their performance were scientifically planned and effectively executed. Another important step that the SASAE took towards professionalism was the establishment of the South African Journal of Agricultural Extension in 1973. This Journal is today world wide recognized as a scientific and professional journal promoting the science of Extension. In the 1970's the Public Administration for public servants in South Africa incorporated a clause in the appointment and promotion of agricultural extensionist, namely that an extension officer can only be appointed or promoted to the rank of a senior extension officer, after successfully completed a Honours degree in Agricultural Extension. This again was a huge step towards professionalism in the Agricultural Extension profession. In the late 1980's this clause disappeared and the process to make it also possible for extension technicians to be recognized as professionals died an early death. The process was taken over by agricultural and other natural scientist which led to the promulgation of "The Natural Scientific Professions Act, 1993 (Act 106 of 1993) and the establishing of The South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions. Several extensionists at that stage have tried to register with the relevant body but only a few were successful and one of the most disappointing aspects was the fact that the professional education in the science of extension was not recognized at all and even today the B Inst Agrar (Honores), MInst Agrar and D Inst Agrar are not recognized by the Council (SACNASP, 2007:8). In 2005 the SASAE was invited to participate in a workshop where the possible affiliation of the Society as a voluntary association with SACNASP was discussed. This aspect of affiliation of voluntary associations with SACNASP is in line with the new Natural Scientific Professions Act, 2003. Unfortunately no further progress has been made.

3.2 The situation in 2007

The Strategic Plan for South African Agriculture (2003:16) identified a "Support Service to farmers" as one of the Core Strategies and one of the key initiatives that need to be undertaken is: "Improved ability and efficiency of the extension personnel within the private sector and Provincial Departments of Agriculture". A clear indication that extensionists are recognized as key role players in agricultural development in South Africa.

In the Agricultural Education and Training Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development in South Africa (2005:9–10) Agricultural Extension has once again been identified as an important role player in Agricultural Development. The retraining and further training of extensionists are frequently mentioned in the strategic objectives and intervention programs of the AET Strategy (2005:19–37).

This is a more positive attitude towards extension as a profession than the idea of government to recruit foreigners to fill critical posts such as specialists in veterinary services, technical research and extension services. Again extension is recognized as a specialized service (den Hartigh, 2006:12).

In the official document "Norms and Standards for Extension and Advisory Services in Agriculture" (2005) it is stated that there is an urgent need to improve the human resources in terms of competence and skills and qualifications (critical elements of a profession and professionalism) to render high quality service to the clients. In the same document extension officers are encouraged to become professionals. With regard to competence and skills the document (p.7) reads: "It is therefore expected of every individual who performs the duties of agricultural extension and advisory services to demonstrate professionalism". Extension officers and advisors, who wish to be in the extension stream, must have a higher degree in extension and must register with the recognized relevant professional body.

The above mentioned positive attitude towards professionalism and extension as a profession and the new Natural Scientific Professions Act, 2003 (Act 27 of 2003) open new possibilities for extension. (There is

also the issue that all people that are referred as extensionist have not got the minimum qualification in extension)

4. PROFESSIONALISM IN AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION: THE SASKATCHEWAN INSTITUTE OF AGROLOGISTS, CANADA

The aim of this chapter is to briefly explore the critical elements of the Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists in Canada, a developed country. It is important to note that there is a principal body namely the Agricultural Institute of Canada (AIC) that supports and promotes Canada's professional and scientific capacity for agriculture. Membership of the AIC is open to individuals, associations and corporate members.

The Profession of Agrology is regulated by provincial legislation called the Agrologists Act, 1994 and By-laws. The Act varies from province to province and each institute has their own membership criteria, fees and standards. Each professional Agrologist (PAg) regardless of where they practice in Canada must:

- Be of good character
- Abide by a common Code of Ethics
- Have a university degree in agriculture or an equivalent, hold a degree in a related field, or in some provinces be able to pass rigorous prescribed examinations
- Have the required relevant experience depending on one's area of expertise.

In Saskatchewan professional agrologists are required by their Provincial Agrologist Act to be registered in order to practice.

The Code of Ethics consists of the following:

"The profession of agrology demands integrity, competence and objectivity in the conduct of its members while fulfilling their professional responsibilities to:

- the public
- the employer or client
- the profession and
- other agrologists". (<http://www.aic.ca/agrology/about.cfm>)

Linked to the Code of Ethics is a Code of Practice which is a guide to the ethical responsibilities of agrologists.

The Agrologist Act, 1994 provides the SIA with the authority to make the regulatory and administrative bylaws. Some of the interesting regulatory bylaws are:

BY- LAW 1

Membership: Classes of membership

- a) Professional Agrologist
 - A four year degree.
- b) Articling Agrologist
 - A four year degree and three years to complete the articling.
- c) Agricultural Technologist
 - Recognized diploma in agriculture.
- d) Student Affiliate
 - Registered in an undergraduate degree in agriculture.
- e) Retired Member
 - May maintain membership.
- f) Graduate student
 - Enrolled in a graduate program at a recognized university.

5. PROFESSIONS AND PROFESSIONALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

5.1 Introduction

The Medical, Law and Engineering professions are well-known today and nearly all dictionaries refer to these professions when describing a profession and professionalism. However all over the world more and more organizations, institutions and other service providers, mostly because of a demand for a professional service from their clients, have structured themselves to become professional, by registering their

employees as professionals with a professional council or body and regulated by a specific Act. A comparison of the following professions will be made:

- The Veterinarian profession
- The Social Services profession
- The Associate of Veterinary and Crop Associations of South Africa profession
- The Planners profession
- The Natural Scientist profession

5.2 A comparison and discussion of some professions with regard to professional registration

The main objective of this division is not necessarily to compare the professions with one another and to determine which one is the best, but more of an overview of what the processes consist of and to rather compare it with the current position of the agricultural extensionist as a professional. The following aspects will be discussed:

- The Act that regulates the process
- The Council responsible for the process
- Registration requirements
- Code of conduct
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- Any other relevant aspects

5.2.1 *The Town and Regional Planners Profession*

No person in South Africa can be appointed as a Town and Regional Planner if he/she is not registered with the South African Council for Town and Regional Planners (SACTRP).

- i) The Act: The Town and Planners Act, 1984 (Act No 19 of 1984)
- ii) The Council: The South African Council for Town and Regional Planners (SACTRP)
- iii) Registration requirements
 - a) The Act made provision for three categories of registration namely:
 - ▶ Town and Regional Planner

- ▶ Town and Regional Planner in training and
- ▶ Town and Regional Planning Technician

b) Basic requirements for any of the above categories:

- ▶ an academic planning qualification relevant in each of the categories;
- ▶ the completion of a prescribed period of practical training,
 - For instance, a planner in training (after completion of the academic qualification) will need to complete a three year training program before he/she can apply to be registered as a Town and Regional Planner.
 - Practical training must be undertaken under the guidance of a registered town and regional planner.
 - Practical training for the planning technician must be for at least 18 months and under the guidance of a registered town and regional planner.

The final practical training report must describe the following:

- The type of planning work
 - The name and description of the project/s
 - The extent or scale of the project/s
 - The trainers work responsibilities
 - Actual time spent on each type of planning work
- ▶ the Council determines which academic qualifications are recognized.

iv) Code of Conduct

A registered person shall:

- a) At all times order his/her conduct so as to uphold and promote the dignity, standing, and reputation of the profession.
- b) At all times discharge his/her duties to their client or employer in a competent and efficient manner and with complete integrity and without prejudice to his client's or employer's interest and his professional responsibilities.
- c) Ensure that through his/hers conducts the interest and professional reputation on any other registered person are at all times respected (<http://www.saplanners.org.za/sacnav.html>).

5.2.2 *The Social Services Profession*

- i) The Act: The Social Services Profession Act, 1978 (Act 110 of 1978)
- ii) The Council: The South African Council for Social Services Profession (SACSSP)
- iii) Registration requirements
- iv) Code of Conduct
- v) Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of persons registered with the SACSSP.

CPD is an international, as well as a national means of ensuring that professionals keep pace with developments and advances in their discipline and field of practice. The SACSSP focuses on the quality of the services provided to individuals, families, groups and communities and it is believed that through CPD, quality services will be promoted and the capacity of professionals enhanced. The CPD will contribute to ensuring that registered persons retain and continuously develop their skills and knowledge. It will enable them to:

- Keep abreast of current trends, research and development;
- Improve service rendering to individuals, families, groups and communities;
- Maintain professional standards that promote excellence in practice;

Table 1: The continuing professional development portfolio for the social services profession

Group activities	CPD Points	Individual activiteis	CPD Points
1. Attendance – conference	2/day	1. Self-study • Scientific article • SACSSP newsletter • Further study • Completion of study • Short courses	3 2 10/annum 10 5-10
2. Presentation • Conference i. Plenary session ii. Breakaway • Guest lecturer • Panel session • Poster • Web/video	8 6 2 4 4 4	2. Authorship (publications) • Author • Co-author • Editor • Contribution 2.1 Scientific Article • Author • Co-author 2.2 Professional/practice article • Author • Co-author 2.3 Peer reviews	30 15 20 10 8 4 4 2 2
3. Facilitation/participation 3.1 Workshops • Facilitator • Participant 3.2 Information session • Presenter • Audience member	4/day 3/day 2/day 2/day	3. Policy/Legislation • Written submission	3
4. Small group discussions • Facilitator • Participant	1/hour 1/hour	4. Membership • Professional association • Nat/prov/regional • National/international professional bodies • Union	1 1 1 1

- Facilitate reflective practice;
- Function effectively as a member of the multi-disciplinary team;
- Promote knowledge and skills;
- Improve professional identity and status, thus promoting high morale in the profession

Initially, all registered persons will have to obtain a minimum of 20 CPD points annually.

The CPD portfolio is presented in the Table 1.

5.2.3 The Association of Veterinary and Crop Associations of South Africa (AVCASA)

AVCASA a Section 21 Company was established in 1958 to represent companies in the crop protection and animal industry in South Africa. Today it is an Umbrella Association with a board of directors and it represents three affiliated associations:

- SAAHA – South African Animal Health Association
- Croplife SA
- ACDASA – Agricultural Chemical Distribution Association of South Africa.

AVCASA as umbrella association promotes the interests of its members by:

- Representing them at all levels
- Making representations regarding relevant legislation and registration procedures
- Providing guidelines for the classification, labeling, responsible handling, and storage of products
- Presenting training courses
- Etc.

AVCASA serves the farmer by:

- Providing guidelines for safe storage and responsible use of crop protection products on the farm
- Offering training programs in responsible product handling and use
- Focusing on the needs of emerging farmers (<http://www.avcasa.co.za/about.html>).

An investigation of one of the affiliated associations namely ACDASA (Agricultural Chemical Distribution Association of South Africa) reveals the following:

i) Mission statement: "To provide and maintain a professional agro-science organization acting for and on behalf of member retail agro-science agents/distributors/representatives, pursuing ethical marketing practices, customer and environmental protection, responsible handling, storage and application of agricultural remedies as prescribed by law and published codes of conduct" (<http://www.acdasa.co.za/>)

ii) Operational Code of Conduct

Each duly authorized representative of a registered organization which is a member of ACDASA signs the ACDASA Operational Code of Conduct and undertakes at all times to:

- Act in good faith in the best interest of the customer
- Make recommendations:
 - only after appropriate evaluation of the situation
 - in consultation with and after acceptance by the client
 - in writing
 - in accordance with the registration of products
 - in consultation with recognized experts
- Strive to add value by the cost-effectiveness and quality of recommendations and advice
- Declares that he/she is suitable trained and authorized to recommend and to market products

iii) In an advertisement ACDASA reminds and request farmers to make sure that only advisors/representatives with a valid identity card from ACDASA should advice them (LANDBOUWEEKBLAD, 2006:63).

iv) Although the establishing of these Associations are not directly linked to a specific Act the associations contributes to a number of Agricultural Acts, namely:

- The Agricultural Pests Act, 1983 (Act No, 36 of 1983) as amended

- Animal Health Act, 2002 (Act No. 7 of 2002)
- Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act, 1947 (Act No. 36 of 1947). (National Agricultural Directory, 2004).

5.2.4 The Veterinary Profession

- i) The Act: The Veterinary and Para Veterinary Professional Act, 1982 (Act No. 19 of 1982)
- ii) The Council: The South African Veterinary Council (SAVC)
- iii) Registration requirements
- iv) Code of Conduct
- v) Continued Professional Development (CPD)

All veterinary professionals, registered with the Council and who practice or render professional veterinary services, are required to comply with the system of CPD as a prerequisite to retain registration in terms of the Act.

All veterinary professionals shall accumulate not less than 60 CPD points, of which 20 points have to be structured activities within every three year cycle.

The CDP portfolio for the veterinary profession is presented in Table 2. (<http://www.savc.co.za/cpdguide.htm>).

5.2.5 The Natural Scientific Profession

- i) The Act: The Natural Scientific Professions Act, 2003 (Act 27 of 2003)
- ii) The Council: The South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions
- iii) Requirements

The requirements and categories of registration are presented in the Table 3. (<http://www.sacnasp.org.za>).

Table 2: The Continued Professional Development Portfolio for the Veterinary Profession in South Africa

Structured activities	CPD points	Unstructured activities	CPD points
CPD courses/conference/ Seminars	1/hour	In-practice training and instruction	1/week
Presentations/publications - Refereed papers - Non-refereed papers - Papers for lay public	5 3 2	Supervision of under-graduates	1/day
Correspondence courses	Specific	Collegial discussion	1/2hour
Written assessment	1/test	Reading	1/2hour
Lecturing - Undergraduates - Postgraduates	1/hour 2/hour	Non assessed correspondence courses	1/2hour
Masters promoter	5	Non veterinary related courses	1/hour
PhD promoter	10		
Examinations	2/day		
Review articles/books	2/item		
Policy/curriculum defense	2/day		
Inquiry bodies/expert witness	2/day		
Non veterinary formal programs, NQF 6	specific		

It is important to note that Agricultural Scientists and Animal Scientists are included in the fields of practice as a natural scientists.

Essential elements of acceptable training include the following:

- Work requiring the solution of problems
- Problem solving
- Planning, design and communication
- Execution
- Responsibility

Table 3: The categories of registration and requirements to register as natural scientists

Registration categories	Qualification requirements	Experience requirements (Vocational experience)
Professional Natural Scientist (Pr.Sci.Nat)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4-year B.Sc/B.Sc. Agric - B.Sc Hons/N.H. Dip - B.Tech - M.Sc/M.Tech - D.Sc/Ph.D/D.Tech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 years appropriate experience (one year in position of responsibility) - 2 years appropriate experience - 1 year appropriate experience
Candidate Natural Scientist (Cand.Sci.Nat)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 4-year B.Sc. or B.Sc. Agric. B. Sc Honours N.H. Dip./B. Tech 2. M.Sc./M.Tech 3. D.Sc./Ph.D/D.Tech 	N/A
Certificate Natural Scientist (Cert.Sci.Nat)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 3-year National Dip 2. 3-year B degree 	One year appropriate experience (gained after qualification was obtained)

iv Code of Professional Conduct

Although the categories of registration have changed as indicated above the Code of Conduct still refers to the previous categories of registration. No changes occur within the Code and it still consists of 13 elements.

v) Grandfather Clause

The Council acknowledges the fact that certain individuals did not have the opportunity to obtain tertiary education for various reasons and to accommodate them the Grandfather Clause came into effect from 18 May 2006.

- vi) Document: "Professional Registration: Field of Practice Agricultural Science".

A very promising aspect is the above document provided by SACNASP (2007). This document specifically refers to Agricultural Extension and mentioned 12 aspects which can be divided into two categories namely:

- Aspects related to technical agricultural activities

A total of nine technical agricultural aspects are mentioned.

- Aspects related to agricultural extension activities

- i) Conceptualization of conscious and unconscious needs and problems of farmers, and determination of the agricultural development priorities, objectives and strategies. The potential of human and natural resources and national and international consumer demands must be taken into account.
- ii) Writing of scientific and semi-scientific articles concerning agricultural and extension aspects.
- iii) Academic research in the agricultural and extension fields towards the attainment of post graduate qualifications.

The above mentioned extension related activities give some recognition to the agricultural extension profession and to extension as a science. According to the 2005/2006 Annual Report of the SACNASP the registration statistics are indicated in the Table 4.

According to Table 4 only 11.1% of all registered natural scientists are agriculturists and animal scientists, while it is estimated that there are more than 3000 officials working as extensionists in the nine provincial departments of Agriculture in South Africa. It should be further noted that only 300 persons are currently members of the SASAE.

Table 4: Total registration statistics for natural scientists, with special references to agricultural and animal scientists, 2005/2006

Registration categories	Number of natural scientists per category	Percentage %	Number of agricultural scientists per category	Percentage %
Cert.Sci.Nat. Certified Natural Scientist	58	2	4	0.1
Cand. Sci. Nat. Candidate Natural Scientist	171	5	14	0.4
Pr.Sci.Nat. Professional Natural Scientist	2962	93	338	10.6
Total	3191	100	356	11.1

Can we really boast that extension is a profession and that extensionists are professionals or is extension a “dying profession” finding ourselves in the “dying moments of the match?”

6. THE WAY FORWARD: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary

A serious effort was made to:

- Describe the concepts of a profession, a professional and professionalism
- Give an overview of the role the SASAE have played since 1966 to ensure that agricultural extension is recognized as a profession and the agricultural extensionist as a professional, including the

promulgation of the Natural Scientific Professions Act of 1993 as well as the new Natural Scientific Act of 2003, and the invitation to the SASAE to affiliate as a voluntary association with the SACNASP. Although very little progress was made.

- Official documents from the Department of Agriculture not only clearly indicate the importance of an extension service (farmer support) to farmers, but also the importance of extensionists to be recognized as professionals and their registration with a recognized professional body, giving recognition to Agricultural Extension as a profession.
- Describe the process of registration of Agrologists with the Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists in Canada, including aspects such as A Code of Ethics and Code of Practice.
- Give an overview of the processes of registration, of the following professions in South Africa:

The Town and Regional Planners Profession;

The Social Services Profession;

The Association of Veterinary and Crop Associations of South Africa;

The Veterinary Profession and

The Natural Scientific Profession.

With regard to the above-mentioned first four professions no person can provide a service to clients if he/she, or their umbrella organization, is not registered with the relevant Council or Body. This is applicable to private organizations/institutions/practices as well as government departments. It is currently not applicable to natural scientists including agriculturists employed in government structures. Registration is only compulsory for natural scientists practitioners in a private consulting practice. Agricultural Extensionists can however register with the SACNASP as agriculturists by own choice.

The nearest an Agricultural Extensionist can get to be recognized as a professional in extension is with the SASAE and its categories of membership, namely:

- Professional membership
- Full membership
- Associate membership and
- Institutional membership.

Table 4 indicated that only 11.1% of agriculturists are currently registered with SACNASP and only 300 extensionists are members of SASAE. Why should anybody or organization give attention to extensionists and their profession?

6.2 Recommendation

With due observance of the preceding discussions it is clear that for many years agricultural extensionists, with the support of the SASAE, believe and promoted extension as a profession. In 1990 Düvel (1990:10) indicated that higher professional demands are being expected from the extensionist than from a medical practitioner. A positive development is the change of the Natural Professions Act in 2003 and the importance of professionalism in extension as it is described in the document: "Norms and Standards for Extension and Advisory Services in Agriculture", published by the Department of Agriculture in 2005.

The question is: What can be done? Are extensionists prepared to do something or are we going to be "buried" with the dream to be recognized as professionals?

The following possible steps are hereby recommended to enable the dream to become true:

1. The Board of the SASAE, in close cooperation with the Department of Agriculture (National), starts immediately to negotiate with the SACNASP to ensure the recognition of agricultural extension as a profession with unique characteristics, as well as the recognition of specialized extension education and training programs.
2. The Board of the SASAE negotiates and supports the Department of Agriculture to establish a National Forum for Extension.

3. The Board of the SASAE and its Branches engaged (within the next 12 months) in a purposeful program to promote extension as a science and as a profession by means of symposiums/seminars/workshops etc., in the provinces of South Africa.
4. The Board of the SASAE should meet urgently with Organized Agriculture (NAFU, AGRISA and TAUSA) and requested their support for a professional extension service to the farmers.
5. The Board of SASAE meets with agribusinesses and get their support for a professional extension service, possible in-service training of extensionists, and for possible sponsorships of the proposed symposiums/seminars/workshops and future conferences.
6. The Board of SASAE need to investigate the formation of linkages and agreements with relevant National and International organizations/institutions/institutes and associations involved in Extension.

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