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### BRIDGING EXPECTATIONS: EXTENSION AGENTS' PERCEPTION OF A GAP BETWEEN EXPECTATIONS AND EXPERIENCE WHEN IMPLEMENTING THE INDONESIAN BEEF SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAMME

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#### ABSTRACT

Beef self-sufficiency programme (BSSP) was launched in Indonesia in 2004 in response to the massive import of beef from other countries. The objective of the present article is to explore and discuss how Indonesian extension agents perceived the practical implementation of the programme, including their own and others' expectations of their role in the implementation, as well in the programme. Semi-structured qualitative interviews of 14 extension agents (11 males, 3 females) were conducted during December 2013–January 2014 based in the Semarang Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. The extension agents experienced that although the BSSP was supported by the government with a number of diverse activities such as support for artificial inseminations and concentrated feed stuff for farmers, there was no coherent support regarding how to distribute these benefits, disseminate knowledge or assist farmers on how to increase production in their farms and how to balance this with other farm priorities. They generally felt squeezed between—on the one hand—the government's expectations of their implementation efforts and efficiency, and—on the other hand – the farmers' expectations on availability, assistance and donations. The practical framing of and conditions for their work did not seem to match the expectations from either party—neither the farmers nor government. The BSSP was closed in 2014. Referring to their experiences, the extension agents questioned the long-term impact of the programme, the future of self-sufficiency regarding beef production in the country, and how this learning could be captured and used for the future.

**Keywords:** Extension agent, expectations, Indonesian beef self-sufficiency program, policy programmes.

#### INTRODUCTION

Agricultural extension, in a learning context, is the ongoing process of getting useful information to people and assisting them to acquire knowledge, skills, and the right attitude to utilize this information and technology effectively. The agricultural extension service is mainly seen as the process of exchanging knowledge and technology between the extension agent and the farmer. Extension services have played a key role in terms of improving knowledge at the farm level and helping to deliver government agenda to the farmers (Leeuwis, 2004). Overall, agricultural extension is defined as the system that facilitates the access of farmers, their organizations and other market actors to knowledge

information and technologies in their field; facilitate their interaction with partners in research, education, agribusiness and other relevant institutions; and assist them to develop their own technical, organizational and management skills and practices (Christoplos, 2010). The concept of extension has evolved over many years; during a long initial period, it was quite limited and just involved transferring and disseminating ready-made knowledge from research to farmers, or from 'early adopters' to fellow-farmers (Labarthe, 2009). Nowadays, the extension service incorporates a broad range of different approaches, with the aim of not only at supporting farmers but also developing advisory services in viable ways. It requires a consideration on how to improve the methodological approach to the farmers, manage the skills of the extension agents and a better management approach at the government level to facilitate the

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interaction between different actors in the agriculture sector (Faure *et al.*, 2004). Chambers (1997) mentioned that the rural development paradigm, including extension services, implies and demands changes that are institutional, professional and personal. This could imply that the government needs to set concrete, specific and well-motivated goals for their policies, and to support the extension service bodies. Chambers also argued that this needs not only a long-term perspective, but also new methods and approaches to learning; for example, greater appreciation of the importance of the empowerment process in rural communities. Empowerment emphasizes the role of the extension agents to help people not only to express and analyse their situation, but to plan and act accordingly in order to improve their capabilities in the rural community.

Extension agents are described as social workers who regularly interact with citizens in the course of their jobs. Lipsky (2010) emphasized that they should respond to the individual needs or characteristics of the people they serve or confront before taking action. In practice, extension agents not only have to deal with government structure and regulations to achieve the policy objectives originating from the political process, but they also need to use their knowledge and experience to deal with farmers and community situations that require improvisation and responsiveness to individual cases. Furthermore, they may face challenges to fulfill the aims of a particular government policy, which could potentially call for a fundamental change in standard practices based on local traditions or local conditions in the community.

In the case of an Indonesian context, the extension service was initiated by the government based on the Extension Law No 16/year 2006, which stated that extension agents are representatives of government agencies, responsible for introducing government policies and promoting new information and useful knowledge to the farmers. In addition, extension agents could facilitate feedback to government on the agriculture national programme (Kementerian Pertanian Republik Indonesia, 2006). According to the Herianto (2009), later, the central government in Indonesia initiated a process of transferring responsibility and funding for extension services to the provincial governments. The reasoning behind this was to replace the existing top-down approach with a linear research-extension-farmer relationship with a more bottom-up, participatory approach and referred to this as an "autonomy policy".

However, a wide gap remains between local and national government perspectives on the importance and roles of agricultural extension services. Also, the extension service has faced problems related with a lack of resources, budgetary constraints and the autonomy policy (Heriyanto *et al.*, 2009). Much district-level funding is allocated to routine programmes, such as paying the salaries of government employees rather than agricultural development and its extension activities (World Bank, 2002). This means only small funding is actually allocated for extension services; for example, for facilitating networks between extension agents and researchers or for improving the skills of extension agents. In 2004, the Indonesian government implemented the beef self-sufficiency programme (BSSP), which aimed to make the country self sufficient in beef production by 2014 (Kementerian Pertanian Republik Indonesia, 2010). The extension agents were expected to take part as important actors in this policy. The aim of this article is to present, explore and discuss the role of extension agents in the implementation of the Indonesian BSSP.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

**Study Area and Data collection:** All the interviews were based on an interview guide that was designed in such a way as to encourage the interviewed persons to tell their stories in their own words. Data were collected during December 2013–January 2014 in the Semarang Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. This area was chosen as a case study area because it has the second largest beef-cattle population in Indonesia. The study was limited to this area only because of financial and time constraints. The head of the Livestock and Fishery Office was approached as a key informant, who facilitated contact to all fourteen extension agents (eleven males and three females) under the Livestock and Fishery Office. We interviewed all extension agents in the study area in order to explore and discuss the role of extension agents in the implementation of the Indonesian BSSP. Table 1 shows the characteristic of the participants. All the informants were interviewed in the Bahasa Indonesian language.

**The research approach and interview method:** This study was based on individual semi-structured qualitative research interviews.

The qualitative research was chosen because the study aimed to explore and describe a phenomenon through the interviewed persons' experiences and perceptions, as well as their motivations and backgrounds. The aim of such a study is to understand a field better, rather than just to

quantify opinions or experience among a certain group of people.

**Data editing and analysis:** All the interviews took 50-70 minutes, and were recorded using a digital voice recorder, transcribed in full and coded using the software program Transana. Transana is computer programs that assists researchers in the qualitative analysis as well as manage data in qualitative research.

The interviews were analyzed using a modified grounded theory method based on Bitsch & Hogberg (2005), in which the whole text was organized into small statements after transcription of the interviews. The modified grounded theory approach was used because the goal of this study was to generate a model of understanding that helped explain and give insights into the phenomenon of "how the extension agents perceived the implementation

of the BSSP". The purpose of the grounded theory approach was not to test existing theory, but rather to identify themes and categories, in order to develop the aforementioned model of understanding inductively, through interpretations made from the raw data. The analysis process began with transcribing the interview data. This was followed by an axial coding, with the aim being to transform the data to a manageable text and to organize the text in themes. Throughout the process, new codes emerged, which also changed the coding framework. This process was used to develop categories, which were then conceptualized into broader themes. In this article, two main themes were identified based on the coded text bites and a series of sub-themes, which altogether formed and were linked to the main themes, as explained in Figure 1 in the results.

Table 1. Characteristics of the participants.

Extension Agents	Gender	Age
Participant 1	Male	41
Participant 2	Male	39
Participant 3	Male	31
Participant 4	Male	35
Participant 5	Male	55
Participant 6	Male	48
Participant 7	Male	43
Participant 8	Female	35
Participant 9	Male	35
Participant 10	Female	45
Participant 11	Male	31
Participant 12	Female	31
Participant 13	Male	29
Participant 14	Male	38

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis are shown in Figure 1. The themes give a picture of the extension agents' perception of their own role and working conditions in relation to implementing the Indonesian beef self-sufficiency programme. The first main theme, "Expectations", consisted of 4 sub-themes, all about mutual expectations between the Semarang Regency Livestock and Fishery Office (LFO) and the extension agents, as well as between the farmers and the extension agents. The second main theme, "Experiences", consisted of extension agents' perception of their working conditions and their interactions with other actors in relation to beef cattle farming, e.g. the LFOs and the farmers. The arrows, as can be seen from Figure 1, show pressure on the extension agents. In their own view,

this pressure affected their work and caused a feeling of a gap existing between the expectations on them and the actual experiences they encountered when they did their work in the field. As a response to these pressures, they developed strategies to manage conflicts and this gap, which they felt existed between expectations and their experiences. In the following, these themes will be elaborated with concrete examples from the interviews.

### **Expectations from the Livestock and Fishery Office (LFO):**

The extension officers highlighted three main areas of expectations from the LFO to their role: 1) to represent the BSSP programme and the government policies generally, 2) to disseminate knowledge and information to the farmers, and 3) to have an administrative role.

The extension agent’s emphasis on representing the BSSP programme and government policies generally meant that they were responsible for introducing government programmes like the BSSP. Extension agents also had performed practical work, such as making farmer groups aware about programmes initiated by the government. Participant 11 explained they were given responsibility for the practical implementation of the government agenda, e.g. by engaging farmers in activities initiated by the government, such as artificial insemination programme and by providing assistance to the farmers. At the same time, extension agents provide information and feedback to the government about the current condition of the beef sector as well relaying farmers' concerns to the LFO related to the activities initiated by government. After having been introduced to the BSSP by the LFO in 2004, the extension agents were expected to introduce the BSSP to the farmers at an initial farmer group meeting.

However, the extension agents were of the view that, in reality, at the time, they had not felt able to explain the whole programme, including its overall aims, to the farmers, because of the low educational level of many of the farmers and due to time constraints. Therefore, the extension agents had only explained a little part of the BSSP, typically around the activities that they had learnt about at the LFO information meeting that were in focus and planned for each particular area, such as the feeding programme or the programme about live cattle donations. This was summarized by Participant 12 in the following way: "We were responsible for making make sure that the farmers were obtaining services or that we were resolving complaints and providing information to the farmers regarding governmental functions or agriculture services related with beef-cattle farming. We have a function as spokespersons for the government because we worked directly with the farmers and are always in touch with the farmers".

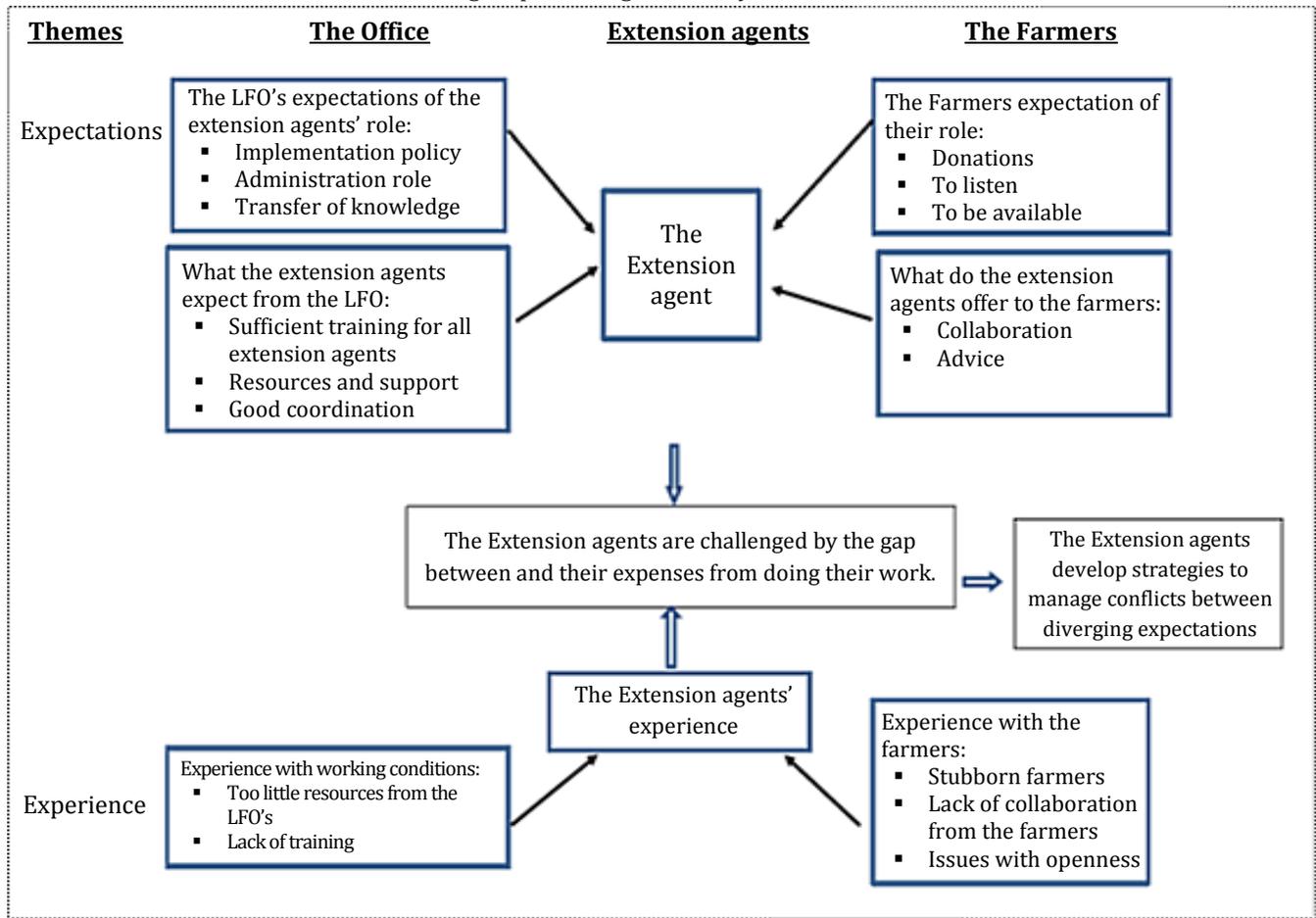


Figure 1. Results of the interview study with extension agents from 19 different districts. All the expectations and experiences are seen from the extension agents’ point of view.

At the same time, the extension agents did not feel that they had substantial decision powers over policy development, like they had no influence on the implementation of the BSSP. This point was emphasized by Participant 4, who added that the LFO lacked the full information essential to improve the programme and target activities in order to reach the most vulnerable farmers.

Participant 3 expressed their feelings regarding the implementation of the BSSP. He agreed with the government programme's aims for the nation to become self-sufficient from 90% of domestic production, but questioned why there was no estimated goal on assessing how much a particular district should produce to contribute to BSSP. Many programmes, like the feeding programme, were initiated even before the implementation of the BSSP. He added that for the monitoring and evaluation of the BSSP, extension agents had the responsibility to report on the total population in a particular area as well as what kind of activity they had done over the year, but in return, he never received any detailed evaluation of the implementation of the BSSP back from the government. Participant 3 questioned whether the implementation of the BSSP would continue in the long run.

The extension agents further expressed that they were pulled in many different directions on a daily basis to do a lot of different activities, such as visiting farmers, answering phone-in questions, doing research to be able to answer farmer enquiries, planning programmes, preparing presentations and educational material, adjusting material before disseminating it, and meeting with the LFO and other stakeholders. However, one really time-consuming thing was the level of paperwork and report writing. They referred to this as their administrative role for the LFO. Participant 7 said that their days were full of paperwork: "In every first month of the year, we were busy preparing the annual extension plans (Programa) and then, at the end of the year, we needed to submit reports of the annual evaluation work, and there were also quarterly progress reports and the submission of monitoring reports about the current situation of the farming system in our area of work".

As part of this reporting, the LFO expected the extension agents to provide information about the current situation in the field, such as the total number of livestock, as well as gathering information about what farmers' needed to improve their farming systems.

#### **The extension agents' expectations of the LFO to support extension services:**

The extension agents' expected the LFO to support extension services by providing them with training, information beyond the monthly meetings and resources. The limited resources not only led to a lack of training and other resources, but also created conflicts in the group of extension agents, as explained by participant 14: "There were training and courses related to farming systems offered by the central or provincial governments. It was good for us to improve our services to the farmers. However, we are 14 extension agents and it seemed that there were jealousies among us, because only a few extension agents could attend the courses. I wish the LFO could have facilitated courses for all the extension agents". He added that during the courses or workshops, they received information not only about farming systems but also information about new policies and regulations, such as the implementation of the BSSP. Resources such as operational and transport fees, multimedia tools (for example, computers, the Internet, projectors), and more literature were also very scarce. The interviewed persons had difficulties in contacting experts and saw an unused potential in facilitating networking with universities or researchers, which was not exploited by the LFO.

The extension agents furthermore experienced a lack of coordination among government staff in the LFO in relation to the implementation of the BSSP, and which was highly demotivating e.g. for working together. According to Participant 7, this might happen because many government staff did not clearly know their job description, and they were constantly multitasking. When asked "what problems did you see in terms of coordination among the staff?", they immediately replied: unclear, multiple, conflicting and uncooperative. Participant 13 endorsed that "Lack of coordination among us in the LFO is concerning. It happened repeatedly when we had activities or extension services involving many staff members. In my opinion, the LFO needs to integrate a process that creates trust and openness and allows coordination throughout the LFO between government staff".

#### **Experience of expectations from the farmers:**

According to the interviewed extension agents, the farmers expected a wide variety of services from them, like access to donations, availability at all times to help farmers and attentiveness towards farmers' concerns. The interviewed extension agents experienced that most of

the farmers thought that extension agents always knew how to solve their problem and the farmers desired to get the answer at earliest. One of the participant quoted "I did not need to be ashamed when the farmers had questions and I couldn't answer appropriately. I just told them fairly that i don't know but I'll try to find out the right answer for the communication over to you considering my responsibility of correct information dissemination".

Another respondent "Participant 13" added that he had experienced that he was expected by the farmers to listen to their concerns and challenges, for example regarding the blantik (the middle man in trading with the cattle) or in cases of increased feed prices, and then to pass on their concern to the LFO, thus acting as a kind of liaison between the farmers and the LFO.

**The extension agents' perception about what they want to offer to the farmers:** The extension agents focused mostly on advice and collaboration with farmers when they spoke about their own wishes on what they could and wanted to offer to famers. The BSSP included several individual programmes such as feed subsidies, an artificial insemination programme, a disease prevention programme, live cattle donations and providing loans to the farmers. Participant 6 illustrated how to supervise a farmer group facilitating access to loans significantly, because numerous papers were required to complete the bank loan requirements, but in general, they saw their role as somebody who was available for the farmers, when called on to help in all kinds of matters. Participant 2 revealed about the great importance of building trustworthy mutual relationships with the farmers. He believed that such relationships existed because the farmers could get benefits from the extension services for the improvement of their farm production. A good relationship, in which the extension agent could help improving the farm production and introduce the governmental programmes "justified" their existence, so to speak. Good relationships though needed effective collaboration with the farmers and the extension agents were also aware that it helped improve the farmers' active participation and helped them to take an interest in and ownership over government programmes such as BSSP. Participant 7 also mentioned the expected attention and trust from the farmers when delivering extension services.

**Challenges experienced in the field:** Apart from a multitude of conflicting expectations as outlined above, many extension agents faced general challenges related to

their jobs, e.g. in terms of too much travelling, as for examples illustrated by Participant 3: "I have worked as an extension agent for almost 20 years. I have helped the farmers by providing them with practical information while bringing their concerns to the LFO. Delivering these services in a huge geographic area with a limited travel budget and staff, that was a challenge. We had to develop a strategic plan to guide our efforts to address the issues that the farmers faced, while maximizing our limited resources". Although the government provided additional resources to buy gasoline, it did not fully cover the expenses. Most extension agents used their own motorcycle, which also implied repair costs. In addition, some extension agents sometimes had used their own money to buy snacks or cigarettes to facilitate good contact with the farmers, even though they realized that this might not facilitate the dialogue, but was more to just attract attention.

Some of the extension agents told about their experience with the farmers, and narrated how they sometimes saw them as stubborn and not collaborative. However, one extension agent gave an example of how she had initially seen farmers as stubborn, but then changed her practice regarding the extension service: "I often asked myself: Why don't farmers use our information more often? I've gone to their meetings and presented my idea, but they still did not seem to want to hear what I have to say, or to follow my advice. Then I realized that understanding, dialogue and shared knowledge were key elements. Consultation, rather than giving instruction, was a central component of facilitating farmers' decisions" (Participant 8). This extension agent had changed her practice, so that now when she gave advice to individual farmers, she based it much more on dialogue and questions to the farmers about their perception and practices, compared to what she used to do, and she felt that the results were now better. She emphasized that the collaboration with farmers was really important, and maybe even especially so during the planning phase of the extension services in a particular area. The normal practice is that extension agents plan the implementation of their extension services, without involving farmers, so this would mean a completely different approach.

Other extension agents gave examples of present challenges where they did not feel that the farmers addressed important issues sufficiently, e.g. sanitation, cattle diseases, reproduction and feeding practices. They mostly explained due to the low education in farming

systems and practices. Participant 7 dictated: "It was my task to help the farmers and provide advice for them to better manage their beef-cattle farming, but sometimes their responses were beyond my expectations. For example, according to them our advice was too expensive or they were too lazy to follow it, because it required resources and time. I could see their cattle looked skinny and malnourished. Of course, this condition will not increase their income and resulted in poor performance of the whole farming system".

Other extension agents had positive experience with working with the farmers, and found most of the farmers' cooperative, open and responsive to advice. Participant 14 argued: "I enjoy working with the farmers. They are humble and help each other, even sharing costs to buy feed for their cows. Mostly, I have a great time working with the farmers, who are friendly and responsive to the advice as well as to the government programmes. It was important to know them personally and it took time to develop trust with the farmers".

He gave an example of how he collaborated with the farmers and found it important to listen to them in order to help them find ways forward: "Whenever the farmers need advice, I will sit and listen to their problem, so that then I can help them formulate what it is they really need, not what I perceive they should do. This means to help them to take action. Many of them were open-minded for farm-management improvement. However, some of the farmers were not open-minded to advice because it was not sufficient for improvement".

**Challenges related to government donations:** The extension agents faced challenges related to donations, where they had to attempt working together with the farmer groups to ensure involvement of all farmers in governmental donations. This was important to avoid jealousy and internal conflicts among the farmers, but was sometimes difficult, and they had to involve the village leaders. Some extension agents also realized that donations from the government made the farmers dependent, as, for example, was explained by Participant 11: "When we had a farm visit or group meeting, most of the farmers always asked about when will they get a donation again. I can see right now, they were more or less dependent on the donation. As an extension agent we were trying to educate them to be self-reliant and to analyze their own problem to realize how to solve the problem regarding farming system. Even though I realized they obtained benefit from the donation, they always

seemed dependent on the donation, which was not very helpful for the farmers to improve their productivity". He gave an example on how he had tried to make farmers more independent of feed donations. He helped the farmers improving the palatability and nutritive value of rice straw by chopping and soaking it in water or a salt, which slightly increased feed intake and its digestibility.

**Challenges of being a female extension agent:** Three of the interviewed extension agents were females. They found it challenging to combine their role in extension services with their roles as housewives. Their jobs required travelling over large distances. On the other hand, their responsibility as a housewife did not allow them to do many activities, especially in the evening when farmer groups normally arranged their meetings. Participant 10 told: "It was difficult for me to travel in the evening, I felt unsafe; it was too dark and a bit dangerous for a female to travel alone, but that was our work. I would ask my husband or my colleague to accompany me during the visit in the evening. *I felt so guilty to my children, with my workload I couldn't stay with them all of the time, often coming back home quite late, still doing paperwork after arriving home. I felt I performed poorly, compared to my male colleagues*".

The female extension agents also explained about difficulties in communicating with the farmers. They told how farmers (who mostly were males) would have a closer relationship with the male extension agents, and sometime the farmers did not take their advice seriously. According to Participant 12, many farmers felt that male extension agents were more experienced than female extension agents.

**Working with farmer groups:** The extension agents faced a different type of challenges when they were working with farmers in a group, compared to working with individual farmers. They had to make sure that everyone was involved in all group activities, and that certain members' specific own interests or voices did not dominate. Furthermore, they sometimes had difficulties in reaching decisions, for example regarding distributing the donations and this could result in internal conflicts, which made some of the farmers lose interest in participating in the farmer group.

**The gap between the perceived expectations and the challenges:** The gap that has been explored in this study focused on the conflict between, on the one hand, the expectations which extension agents experienced from the LFO and the farmers, and on the other hand, working

in the field and not being able to meet these expectations for a number of widely different reasons, as mentioned above. In this sense, according to Participant 13, the extension agent needs to realize the existing gap and to overcome their administrative role so they could focus more on the dialogue with the farmers. According to the most of the extension agents, the low level of education among farmers required a certain way of communicating with them to make the farmer understand their advice, and to explain their needs, and this also required special skills in communicating, which they as extension agents had not had as part of their education.

Also, the huge areas covered by each extension agent made it very challenging. There were 14 extension agents to cover the whole of the Semarang Regency, which consisted of 19 Districts. They emphasized that in their daily routine, they faced many tasks, including planning, reporting, monitoring, dealing with new laws, visiting farmers and contacting stakeholders. On top of this, a number of tasks were called 'additional', such as assisting and supervising the farmers to make financial reports when the farmers got donations from the government in terms of live cattle, feed support or money.

Participant 6 told: "The farmers need our help to make reports regarding the donations. It was very irritating requiring hard work, helping them to work with computations, a computer and the receipts. And imagine, my area covers 19 villages, I had to travel from one village to another village and spend the day with them. While, on the other hand, I had many things to do or others tasks that I needed to finish. It was not our main task, but we had no choice. We needed to help them with the financial report, otherwise the farmers would get into trouble in the future. Although, in reality, I remained desirous to focus more on the dialogue with the farmers. For me, the important thing in our job was dialogue with the farmers, helping them to cope with their farming problems ...".

The semi-structured interviews also opened up aspects on the importance of being a government employee, because it is a relatively secure job. Participant 3 observed that some colleagues did not put more effort into the extension services as they said they would still get paid "without doing anything", suggesting that those colleagues thought that it did not matter because they would still get salary every month. Indeed Participant 3 also speculated about the consequences of this when there was a lack of effort from extension agents in giving services to the farmers, saying: "We were working for the

government, we get salary every month. This system can also have an *indirect effect* on the work such as we did not put much efforts to supporting the farmers, as long as we did activity based on the Programa".

Moreover, Participant 5 explained about the different perceptions between senior extension agents and the younger generation of extension agents. One of the senior extension agents argued that their younger colleagues put less effort into developing communication with the farmers.

Participant 5 told: "... building trust and ways of communicating with the farmers is not something we can do in one day. It takes time and energy. However, the development technology right now makes everything easier but it is important to visit and communicate with the farmers face to face, not only by phone. I observed that there was a communication gap between the farmers and the extension agents, especially the younger extension agents. They were not very communicative and less concerned about the farmers' situations".

**Extension agents' strategies:** The semi-structured interviews also revealed information about the extension agents' strategies to support their work in the implementation of the BSSP. According to Participant 7, building networks with other stakeholders is very important, such as village leaders, co-extension agents and researchers. This involved building trust and a good relationship with the village leader or community leader in order to receive more information on working with the farmers. Village leaders can help extension agents to identify farmers' needs. In order for the extension services to function effectively, extension agents need to meet with the village leader periodically, listen to their advice about current extension programmes and get their input on future programmes. Moreover, listening to the experience from extension co-workers was also very important in order to get assistance from them. Also, collaboration among extension agents was very important, because it could help to more efficiently carry out extension services and administrative duties, such as budget planning and marketing extension in the farmer community.

According to Participant 8, being an agent means being a leader. It also means learning new things to better serve the farmers. It is important for the extension agents to identify their own learning needs in order to take advantage of professional improvement opportunities. In order to enhance the learning and professional

development of extension agents, the LFO have sent extension agents to attend workshops and courses related with organizational improvements and cattle farming. The agents also actively search out additional information about farming systems through use of the Internet.

Important strategy for extension agents is Good communication and interaction with the farmers appeared significant strategy adopted by the extension agents. These are probably invaluable for building trust between the agent and the farmer. It also can be said that the extension agent must realize that the personal influence of the extension agent can be a critical factor in helping a farmer with their farming problems, and can also be instrumental in getting the farmer to participate in extension activities or other government agriculture programmes (Participant 1).

Meanwhile, another effective method for good interaction and dialogue during extension services is communicating with farmer groups. This method makes it easier for the government to provide services to the farmers. Providing services to farmer groups is more effective than to individuals, as more people can be served at the same time. Part of the government's tasks can be taken over by improving the role of farmer groups, such as the transfer of information, or the distribution of live cattle and cash money as part of donations from the government, providing loans, vaccination of animals, developing demonstration plots, etc.

Participant 1 emphasized with the role of extension agents as educators and facilitators. The extension agents need to facilitate knowledge sharing through collaborative, experiential learning instead of relying on instruction. The demand for detailed knowledge of local conditions and farmers' characteristics is important when an extension services is initiated. Consultation, rather than giving instruction, is a central component of facilitating farmers' decisions

Perceived lack of support from the LFO to the extension agents

The semi-structured interview showed that the extension agents felt they lacked support from the LFO in terms of resources and time to deliver their extension services. This was one major challenge in the implementation of the BSSP in Indonesia, and that influenced the motivation of the extension agents for engaging in their work. A study by Karami, Ismail, Binti Omar, Binti Abdul Wahat, & Badsar (2012) proved that organizational support influences achievement motivation. When extension

agents felt supported, they increased their efforts to meet the goals of the organizations, and they were more committed. Karami et al. (2012) added that it feeling supported generates a sense of responsibility to pay back the helpfulness of the organization, which is shown through the extra effort of the worked, i.e. the extension agent. The solution to this – the problem of the severe gap between the expectations on the extension agents, and the available resources – can only be solved with support at a higher governmental level. Ferriset al. (2009) added that the supportive strategies of organizations are the most significant contributors to employees' performance. This includes support to attain the work goal and to help them develop professional skills, as well as to develop in general, as extension agents and humans, as well as general support from the leaders in a friendly environment.

Some of the results in this study pointed to extension agents feeling that the communication with the farmers was difficult, and that, for example, the distribution of donations was a difficult task, which often created conflicts in farmer groups. All these issues point to a need for training in skills in communication, farmer group guidance and conflict management, besides their professional training in livestock management. Alibaygi & Zarafshani (2008) suggested that to improve job effectiveness, extension agents must receive continuous training in accordance with identified training needs. In other words, there is a mutual relationship between job satisfaction and the opportunities to having one's educational needs fulfilled. Hammer (1987) suggested that employees provided with opportunities to meet educational needs would be more satisfied than those unable to access training. In many cases, the government offered training sessions for the extension agents. However, the interview results indicated that sometimes this training was not directly targeted at the actual situations that the extension agents were actually confronted with, for example gender analysis.

The extension agents pointed out that the financial support and technical support were not sufficient during the implementation of the BSSP, and that existing resources were not distributed optimally. Like with the training, this could not be solved at the level of the extension agents themselves, but needs the active enrollment at a higher governmental level. In their own opinion, the extension agents performed their roles and provided services to the farmers as well as they could

under the given circumstances, but resources were scarce and did not allow them to deliver the level of services which they could see were needed. This was in conflict with the feelings of responsibility they felt to disseminate knowledge from the LFO to the farmers and to serve as the vital *links between the government* and the farmers. Furthermore, the extension agents had occasionally observed some lack of coordination among government staff in LFO. Many government activities, like for example the BSSP, as well as extension services, involve different types of governmental institutions, each of which must direct its own resources. Since each office has to take charge of its own legitimate missions, responsibilities and jurisdiction, each of them uses its own command and control processes, and the result can be, as perceived by the interviewed extension agents, that these uncoordinated efforts result in duplicative and conflicting efforts. They were unaware of what other actors were doing, and seemed – from the interviewees’ perspectives – not willing to make an effort to find out and cooperate. This seemed clearly to be an area where improvement could be relevant. Mosse (2004) pointed out that one of the keys to the success of government policy is the interactions and collaboration among the actors to work together in the implementation of the policy, while Li (1999) mentioned that the success of a given programme depends upon the active enrolment of the actors from different institutions and the active participation of the community. This suggests that the implementation of BSSP in Indonesia could have been more successful and thought through, if it had been coordinated with other agricultural- or livestock-related programmes, so that they all pulled in the same direction in a more resource efficient and coordinated way. For instance, one major programme which might have been relevant to coordinate with is the so-called import quotas policy, which was running in the same period as BSSP. The study by Permani (2011) concluded that the result of a government decision to cut beef import quotas would have long-term impacts on the relative domestic price, which would make local beef more price competitive over imported beef.

**Working with farmers who “expect something” but “refuse to collaborate”:** The result shows that the extension agents faced problems related with their interaction with the farmers. During the implementation of the BSSP, government offered several programmes related with donations, such as live cattle donation or

cash money donation. However, the farmers began to rely on the donation, and thus the *donation* can damage local *farmers* by making them effectively “unaware peasants” *dependent* on donations from the government. Farmers are not fully aware on the negative effects of the donation. Some of the farmers also just want a donation and refuse to collaborate with the extension agent.

The extension agents have an expectation in the success of the extension services, not only to provide appropriate services to the people but also to maintain a relationship with the farmers and to build a meaningful relationship with the farmers. They need to be able to listen to farmer’s concern, and to what the farmer’s want to help them improve their farm. The extension agents are often confronted by farmers with many questions, such as relating to the donation from the LFO. The concern was that the answer needed in ways to help them maintain their relationship with the farmers. It is important to meet the farmers on their own farm to most effectively deal with the issues of importance to them and the priorities to be solved. The extension agents have to accept that farmer’ needs are tightly linked to their social context, which are most known to the farmers themselves. Then we can argue that any relationship between government employees designed to work with the farmers should consider certain fundamentals such as a farmer’s life situation. Farmers are the only people who can come close to deciding how such the programme can answer their problems (Chambers, 1997).

However, the results show that there is still a lack of participation of farmers in the implementation of the BSSP. It seems the farmers are just expected to take whatever extension agents offer to them. Indeed, most farmers were not aware of existing policies like BSSP. This leads to another argument about the importance of the involvement and dialogue with the farmers. This process will not only increase farmers’ participation in the implementation of the policy but will also enhance common understanding between the farmers and the extension agents to build the same perspective and priorities and respond to the farmers’ local needs and realities.

Successful implementation of the BSSP needed collaboration between the relevant government institutions and the farmers. Leeuwis (2004) emphasized that the collaboration process is influenced by social conditions, the political situation, leadership and the goals of a programme and must be evaluated in terms of the

contribution to goal achievement. Moreover, the importance of communication between farmers and extension agents must be stressed. In some situations, the farmers were articulated the expectations from the government programmes. This is a challenge for extension agents to communicate with the farmers.

**Learning from experience: how can expectations and working conditions be bridged?:** The study shows that the model of “dissemination” does not involve the farmers very much and still quite old-fashionably sees the farmers as “recipients”. The active involvement of the extension agents is needed as well as good collaboration with local people to reach the goal of the BSSP. Moreover, Long (2001) noted that emphasizing listening to the farmers, strengthening the local organization and acceleration of the power injected from outside would improve the development of programmes in order to shift the balance of forces towards more forms of local self-determination. In other words, it is important for government employees such as extension agents to imply the idea of empowering people through strategic intervention to promote development programmes.

The present article has presented a discussion about the gap between the expectations and the experiences of extension agents in performing their duties, while likewise, Lipsky (2010) mentioned that social workers are part of the policy structure in their field, and their decisions on how to carry out their work in the field influence the success of governmental programmes in that area. It is important to improve workers skills by looking at what kind of skills, experience and training are necessary and that need improving. Many extension agents talked about the tension that existed between what they found in the field and their experience of their own organization and expectations on them. Extension services faced similar problems regarding finance, management, technical support and overload with non-extension activities. This should be an indicator for the government to start dealing with these problems in order to create adequate support for farmers, even if this implies a greater investment of economic, human and social capital into the service. Without essential reforms of the extension service, the farmers won't be optimally supported.

The main motivation behind the implementation of the BSSP was to make the country self-sufficient in beef (to limit imports to a maximum of 10%), by the end of 2014. However, according to the interviewed extension agents,

no formal report exists at any level – from the central government to the Semarang Regency – regarding an evaluation of the BSSP. A report about the number of live cattle in the Semarang Regency was the only report that the extension agents had access to. The data from the Indonesian Statistical Bureau showed that there were an increasing number of beef cattle in the region from 2004-2014. However, there was a different understanding among the various actors at the government level about whether the BSSP had fulfilled its purpose, or not. The detailed calculations did not exist for example of how much each region should produce. The BSSP was closed in January 2014, and based on their experiences, the extension agents questioned the long-term impact of the programme, the future of self-sufficiency in beef production, and how the learning could be captured and used for the future. The aim of the BSSP was to address the country's self-sufficiency of beef cattle to reduce imports and to improve the local supply of beef cattle, and through this, to contribute to improvements in farmers' livelihoods and in the marketing system, e.g. less dependence on the “blantik system”. The BSSP looked beyond the agriculture system from producer to consumer. This promoted shared responsibility and a feeling of ownership among stakeholders. The long-term rural development of a programme such as BSSP requires institutional strengthening and the development of management systems in order to build the capacity to gather, share and analyze the local situation.

#### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATIONS**

The paper presents a picture of the extension agents' perception of their own role and working conditions in relation to implementing the Indonesian beef self-sufficiency programme. The interviewed extension agents revealed many aspects of how they felt squeezed between and often unable to meet all the expectations that they perceived the government had on their contribution to the sector and the implementation of the BSSP and on the expectations from the farmers. At the same time, the extension agents did not feel that they had substantial decision power over policy development, and that they had no influence over the goals for the implementation of the BSSP. The LFO planned the implementation, but was challenged by not having an insight into the conditions among farmers and an overview over what the farmers actually needed, as the farmers were not involved at any step in the planning. Some of the effort and planning reflected a lack of coordination among governmental staff

and institutions related to the implementation of the BSSP. The extension agents did not receive what they felt was sufficient training, or sufficient resources e.g. for travelling to visit the farmers. In addition, they faced challenges such as farmers' reliance on donations and potential conflicts in farmer groups related to this. We conclude that the government needs to develop supportive strategies to improve employees' performance and develop professional skills, such as offer training sessions for the extension agents and develop friendly environment in working place. Moreover, the government needs to put some effort to increase good collaboration with local people to reach the goal of the BSSP as well as dialogue with the farmers.

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