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Supporting Smallholder  
Farmers in Asia and Pacific  
Islands Region through  
Strengthened Agricultural  
Advisory Services  
(SAAS Project)

# BEST PRACTICE NOTES



## GREATER INVOLVEMENT OF SMALLHOLDERS IN MODERN FOOD AND FIBRE MARKETS: A ROLE FOR RURAL ADVISORY SERVICES

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### 5 Key Points

#### 1. Challenges and constraints

- Changing food market and rapid urbanization
- Underinvestment in agricultural productivity, specifically in rural advisory services
- Growing environmental degradation & climate change

#### 2. Objective

Integration of smallholder farmers in the modern food and fibre markets through institutional transformation and support from rural advisory services.

#### 3. Methodology

- Agricultural Innovations Systems (AIS)
- Co-innovation
- Scaling of innovations

#### 4. Highlight of result

There is no single solution to the problem and improving the existing approaches is a continuous, experienced-based, learning process.

#### 5. Highlight recommendation

Development of a more inclusive and dynamic AIS as well as ongoing, dynamic discussion between institutions and stakeholders

### Introduction

- Smallholder farmers play a crucial role in meeting the growing demand for food, but they are plagued with too many institutional as well as sociological constraints and existing approaches to agricultural innovation are not enough to address it and may not provide ideal conditions for smallholder farmers to succeed.
- A large fraction of farmers in many developing countries are smallholders, estimated to be contributing about 80% in overall food production, but they are defined differently between countries due to varying agricultural contexts.
- The changing trends in the food market and rapid urbanization as well as underinvestment in rural advisory extension services hinder smallholder farmers from increasing their productivity and participating in the larger scheme of globalized agriculture.
- Rising environmental degradation as well as climate change also affect the growth of smallholder farmers since it diverts investment away from agricultural development, leaving them in non-ideal agribusiness environments with inhibiting factors such as: land rights, access to credit, infrastructure, bad governance, failing education and health systems, poorly developed markets, lack of support services, and weak business linkages.
- Smallholder farmers across south and east Asia, as well as parts of Africa were the basis for assessing the current market situation and industry practices, in order to design a holistic transformation in agricultural innovation systems that will transcend across varying agro-ecological systems.