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Agricultural extension in Cyprus

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Introduction

Cyprus is an island in the eastern Mediterranean sea with an area of 3,572 sq. miles or 9,251 km². Due to the tragic events in 1974, Cyprus has been forcibly divided and still is divided. Around 63% of the island's territory is under the control of the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus, while the remaining 37% in the north is under Turkish occupation.

I have to clarify right from the beginning that all the data and information given below refer to the Republic of Cyprus and the territory under government control.

In 1990, the population of Cyprus was around 575,000. The country is administratively separated in five districts, namely Nicosia, Famagusta, Larnaca, Limassol and Paphos.

I – Agriculture in Cyprus

The total area of agricultural land is, according to 1990 agricultural statistics, approximately 208,000 ha.

Due to the systematic efforts and the major investment programmes for the execution of water development projects, the State has succeeded to expand permanently irrigated land from less than 11% in 1975 to almost 20% of the total agricultural land.

Agriculture in Cyprus is considered to be an important sector of the economy because of its fair contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment and exports and for its provision of raw materials to local agroindustries.

Due to structural changes in the economy and the increasing role played by other sectors, the contribution of the agricultural sector to GDP decreased from 10% in 1980 to 7.2% in 1990.

As regards employment, the full-time equivalent number of persons employed in agriculture dropped from 16.8% in 1980 to 12.8% in 1990.

Exports of agricultural origin continued to be very significant and, in 1990, their share in total domestic exports was 36.2%.

Land and water hold the key to agricultural development in the island and shape overall production patterns. The land tenure structure is considered as a major technical and institutional obstacle to agricultural development. Agricultural holdings are small and fragmented in a large number of plots, scattered over great distances, preventing the practice of efficient farm management. The average size of agricultural holdings in Cyprus is, according to *1985 Census of Agriculture*, 3.8 ha.

To overcome the handicaps and develop at the same time the comparative advantages of Cypriot agriculture, the government of Cyprus has embarked, since 1975–76, on an enormous unique investment

programme to accelerate agricultural development and raise further the living standard of the rural population. The main objectives of this ambitious programme are:

- ❑ to keep agricultural population in the rural areas,
- ❑ to expand irrigated areas and save and maintain endangered plantations, due to scarcity of water,
- ❑ to increase production and productivity,
- ❑ to encourage export crops and promote the production of other products for imports' substitution,
- ❑ to reallocate water resources in order to revitalize certain areas facing dangers, and
- ❑ to reinforce the research and extension services.

II – Agricultural Extension

As we realize and practice it, “agricultural extension” is a non-formal educational system for adults, through which modern agricultural ideas and techniques are disseminated to farmers with the ultimate target to improve their standard of living.

Agricultural extension in Cyprus is based on the positive promotion of improved agricultural techniques towards the farming community, through a certain programme of activities. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary for us to gain confidence among farmers in order to be as effective as possible.

1. Existing Set-up and Functioning

Agricultural extension in Cyprus is done by the Department of Agriculture, one of the departments of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources (*Table 1*). The Department of Agriculture has the following organizational chart: We have on top of the department the Director, assisted in his job by the two heads of the Agriculture Division and Animal Husbandry Division. Extension work is mainly done by the Extension Section at headquarters and the six District Agricultural Offices of the department. The Extension Section, along with the six District Agricultural Offices, form what is known as the "Agricultural Extension Service". The Extension Section, at headquarters, includes four sectors, namely: Extension Programme Planning and Implementation, Programme Evaluation, Publicity, and Home Economics. This Section has the responsibility of coordinating the planning, implementation and evaluation of Extension and Home Economics Programmes and extension activities in general. This is done in close cooperation not only with the District Agricultural Offices but also with the specialist sections of the department and even with other services of the Ministry whenever needed.

The organization of the Extension Service in the districts. The 400 villages of the six districts in the area under government control are divided into 30 agricultural “beats” (small areas). These are sub-divisions of the country, facilitating the planning and promotion of extension activities (*Table 2*). The number of villages in each “beat”, ranges from 7 to 20 depending on the intensiveness of the productive agricultural and livestock sectors and on the density of the farming population. The number of farmers per “beat officer” averages at about 1,500.

The 30 agricultural “beats” are served by an equal number of field extension workers called “beat agricultural officers”, all of them being university graduates. They are in close contact with the farmers, assisting them in all possible ways to become professionally more capable and efficient.

The “beat agricultural officers” in their endeavour to implement the Extension Programme and promote the planned objectives, are assisted by subject-matter specialists, posted either at the District Agricultural Offices or at Headquarters. All the university graduates, and mainly the subject-matter specialists, are assisted in their work by well trained agricultural or animal husbandry technicians.

The Extension Service is also in close contact with all the Specialist Sections of the Department of Agriculture, other departments and services of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources and especially with the Agricultural Research Institute, the Veterinary Services Department, the Water Development Department and the Land Consolidation Department. The cooperation existing between the Department of Agriculture (including the Extension Service) and the Agricultural Research Institute, operates on a systematic basis and covers all the aspects of agriculture (agricultural problems, research programmes, development projects, promotion of improved agricultural methods or new varieties, trai-

ning of personnel, etc.). Research findings are communicated through the Extension Service to the rural population while information on problems arising in the farms are transmitted to the Agricultural Research Institute.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the Agricultural Extension Service can be briefly described as follows:

- ❑ systematic training through the use of extension methods and mass media of the farming population on improved methods of agricultural production and on Home Economics, with the object of increasing agricultural production (qualitatively and quantitatively) and improving the standard of living of the rural population.
- ❑ transmission of information to the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources and to the Agricultural Research Institute on the existing situation in rural areas and on problems facing the farming community.
- ❑ promotion, follow-up and evaluation of the implementation of agricultural development projects and Extension Educational Programmes.

3. Programme Planning

Concerning the “Programme Planning” process followed by the Agricultural Extension Service, the following main stages can be pointed out (*Table 2*):

- ❑ agricultural, social and economic analysis of the existing situation in each community – collection of data and identification of wants, needs and problems of the farmers,
- ❑ identification of the agricultural problems,
- ❑ adoption of the best possible solutions to the above problems (improved techniques),
- ❑ setting priorities according to the national agricultural policy,
- ❑ planning of the programme (which includes objectives to be pursued and targets to be accomplished) and which is known as “Annual Extension Programme”,
- ❑ implementation of the programme,
- ❑ evaluation of the programme.

4. Programme Implementation and Evaluation

For the successful implementation of the programme, extension methodology is intensively used, and the progress achieved is checked and evaluated at local and district levels, as well as at headquarters (H. Qs), through personnel follow-up, regular district meetings and detailed reports. It is very difficult for the Service, with the existing limited staff at H.Qs. to undertake scientific evaluation surveys. Nevertheless, from time to time such surveys can be carried out in order to measure the effectiveness of various training methods used, or the progress achieved as far as the objectives of the programme are concerned. Revision of the programme and readaptation is effected whenever needed.

The same procedure is followed for the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the Home Economics Programme.

5. Methodology and Mass Media

To promote improved agricultural techniques, new agricultural technology and agricultural development projects through the implementation of the Annual Extension Programme, extension personnel uses the following individual group and mass methods.

- a) Individual methods
 - Personal contacts (in the office, in public places, on-the-spot)
 - Telephone contacts
 - Written word (letters)

b) Group methods

- Result and method demonstrations
- Lectures and talks
- Educational excursions
- Local short training courses
- Training courses on special subjects at the Farmers' Training Centres, and

c) Mass methods

- T.V. and radio agricultural programmes
- Daily press
- Enlightening leaflets, bulletins and other publications
- The quarterly agricultural magazine of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources known as *Countryman*
- Enlightening campaigns
- Agricultural fairs
- Circular letters, etc.

In applying the extension methodology, the “Beat Agricultural Officers” use various audiovisual aids such as film-shows, slides, posters, maps, charts and others.

6. Problems – Prospects

Although we reached a satisfactory level concerning our organization and functions, we face several problems which affect our efficiency. The most serious ones can be summarized as follows:

- The percentage of time allocated by extension agents, for regulatory work is rather high.
- Part-time farming has been tremendously expanded especially in dry land areas during recent years. Full-time farmers seek for a better job in the towns and industrial centres, becoming finally part-time farmers. This creates problems to extension workers in trying to establish systematic contacts with part-time farmers as they must plan and promote extension work beyond normal working hours. Successful systematic efforts are made to train the female population who normally undertake the farm activities.
- Urbanization creates problems to our Service because rural people, and especially rural youth, leave their communities seeking for a better life in towns. Social phenomenon, in several rural areas, leads to less success of the educational and developmental efforts made by the service.
- The service has certain weaknesses due to its inability to fully succeed the broader objective of the proper utilization of the big rural development projects promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources and to meet successfully the rapid socio-economic changes.

Finally, we would like to say that the efforts for the further development of the Extension Service will be focused on the following:

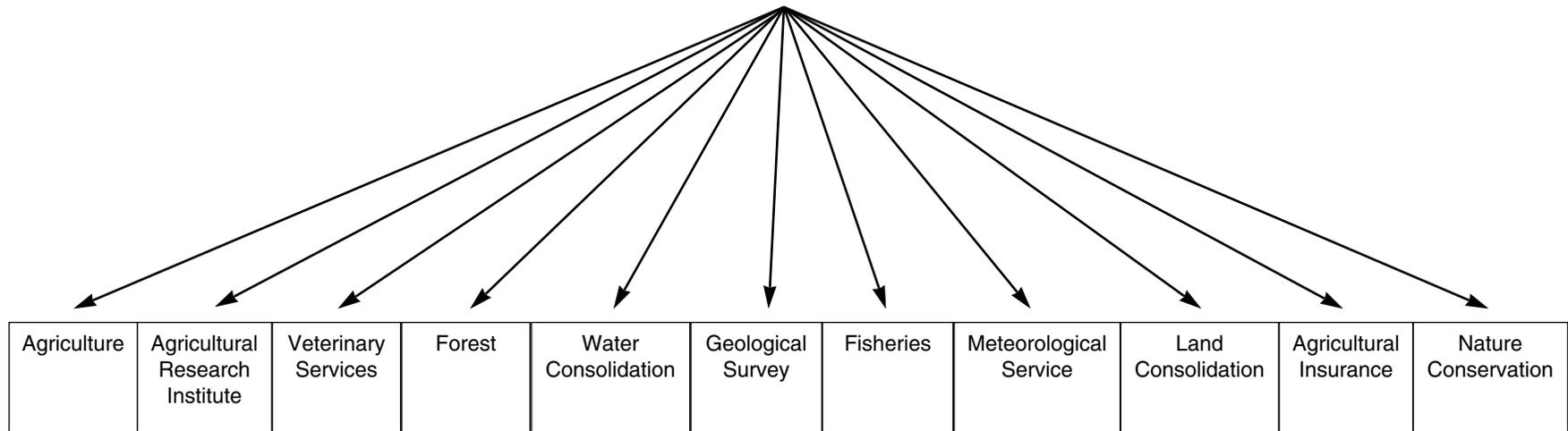
- reorganization and strengthening of the Service,
- motivation of the personnel leading to more efficiency,
- continuous and systematic training of staff (locally and abroad),
- awareness of the Service on new developments in the fields of agricultural technology and extension science,

Having in mind the rapid and drastic socio-economic changes in the Cypriot society as well as the radical changes that are being noted in the field of extension work in most European and other countries of our region, I believe that our Service is on a crossroad, where decisions have to be taken as to the future and prospects of agricultural extension work in Cyprus.



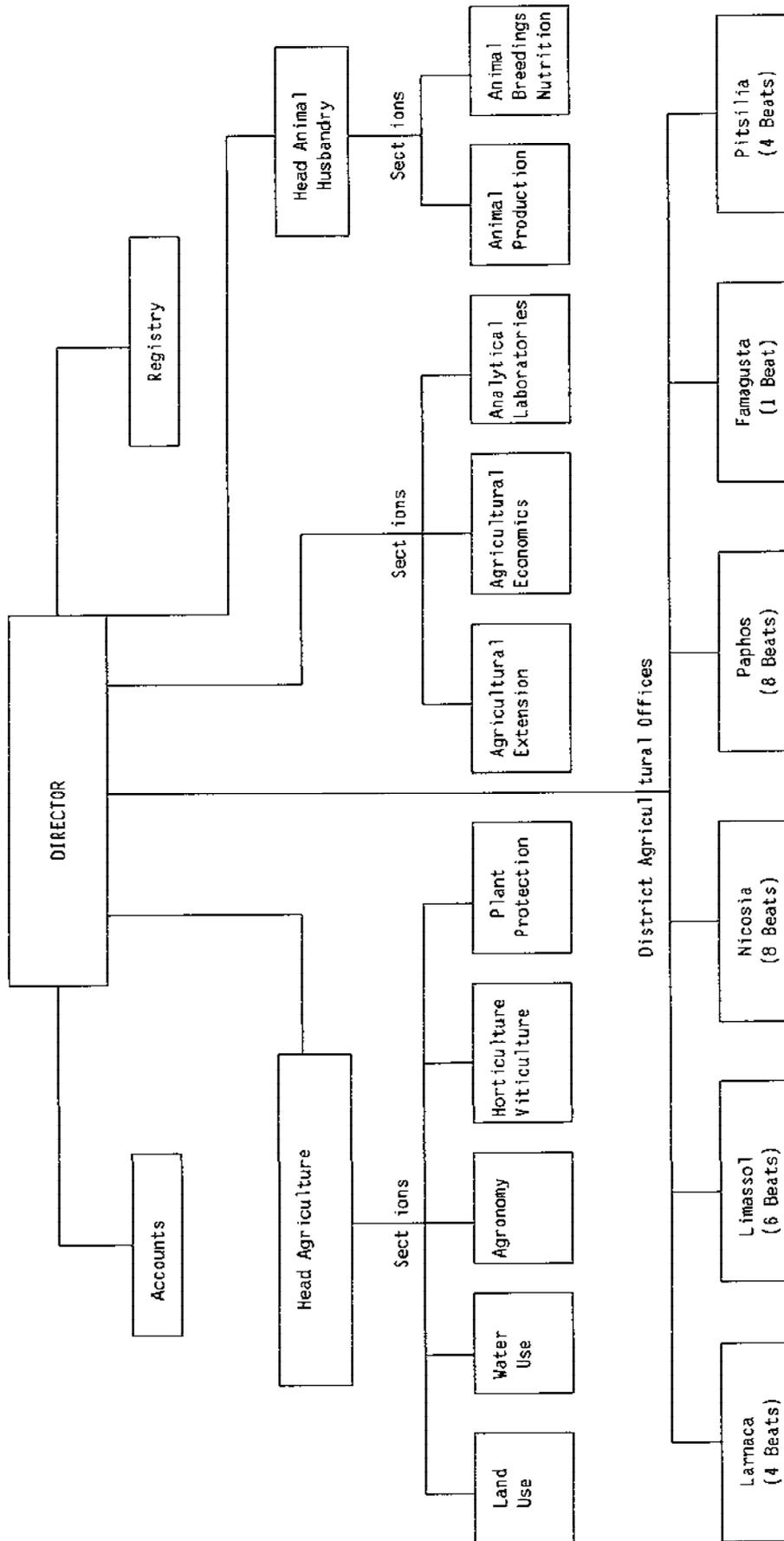
Table 1.

Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources
Minister
Director General



Directors

Table 2. Organization of the department of agriculture, 1987



Cyprus

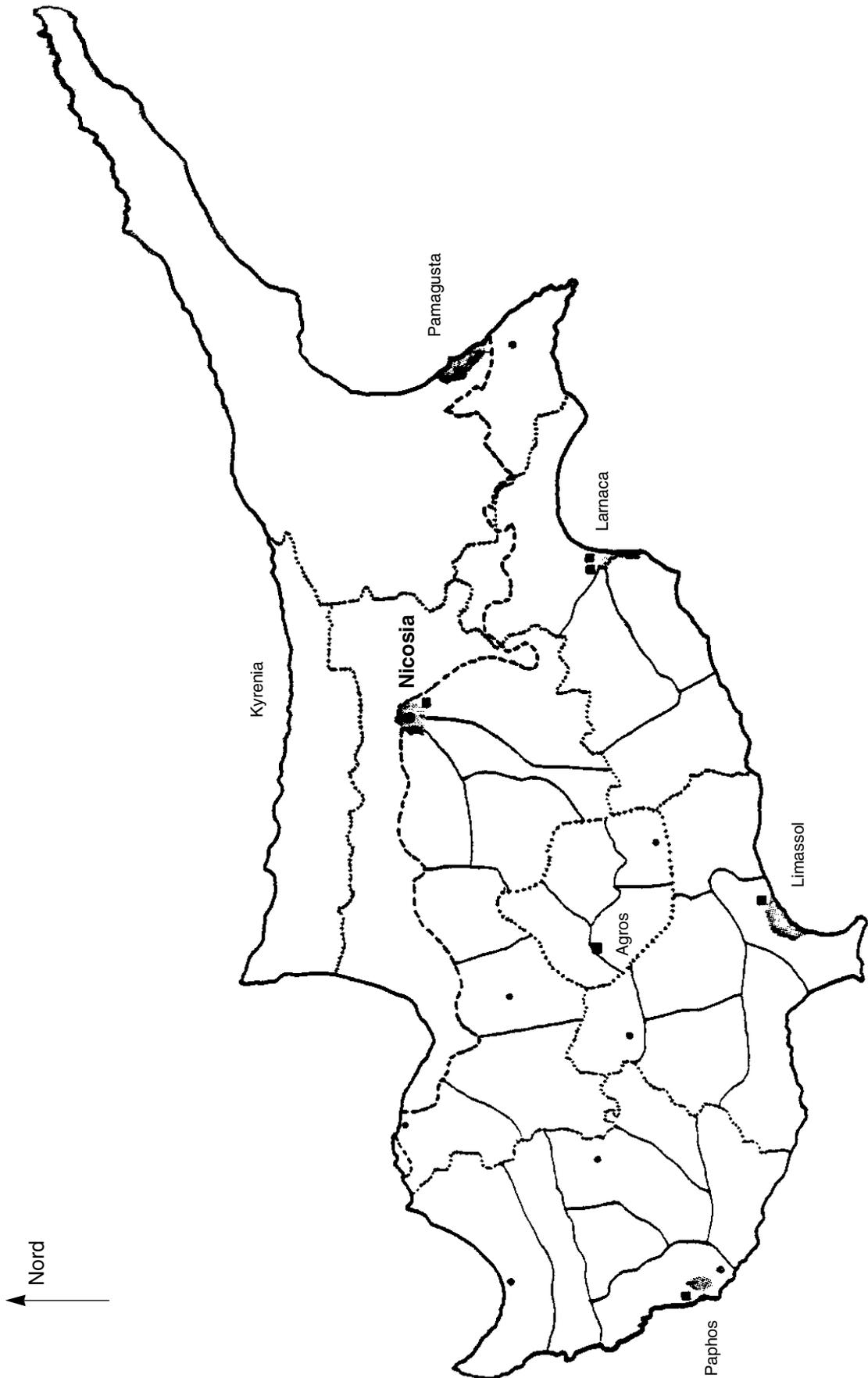


Table 3. Extension Programme Planning (Never Ending Process)

