

# Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy

Global Learning and Evidence Exchange



June 21–23, 2016 | Bangkok, Thailand

Photo courtesy of Fintrac Inc.

## The Role of Agricultural Extension Services in Supporting a Multisectoral Approach to Improving Nutrition

Andrea Bohn, Associate Director of the INGENAES project



# Introduction



**IN**

Integrating

**GE**

Gender and

**N**

Nutrition within

**A**

Agricultural

**E**

Extension

**S**

Services

# Multi-sectoral approach to improving nutrition: An orchestra of top performers?



**The AGRICULTURAL  
sector,  
with many players,  
including  
EXTENSION?**

# What Nutrition and Health should know about Agriculture

---

## Farmers are beholden to:

- Markets
- Agro-ecological constraints, opportunities
- Climate
- Pests and diseases (crops, livestock)
- Risk: *Household welfare depends on minimizing risk*
- **Gender-defined division of labor**

# What Nutrition and Health should know about Agriculture

---

Other considerations:

- **Homestead food production** (for home consumption, not primarily for market) is a part of the answer, but typically has limited impact on food systems compared to market-oriented agriculture which affects larger supply, market prices, availability/access etc. **This arena is dominated by women.**
- **Trade-offs:** e.g. introducing a new crop has implications for existing patterns of production and land use, labor (**division of roles and time burden**), cash flow, etc.
- **Reinvesting/planning for the future** (ag is not a one-time endeavor, it builds on previous year's successes & failures)

# WHO provides agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (EAS)?

---

## Government

- Ministries of agriculture or the like
- Hire extension agents and conduct extension activities

## NGO (without fee-for-service)

- International, national, local
- Provide innovative EAS, often with holistic approach

## Private Sector (commodity model)

- Agribusinesses provide EAS for contracted purchase of outputs (e.g., poultry, cotton, tobacco)

## Private Sector (Sales or fee for service)

- Give advice for a fee or in conjunction with sale of inputs

## Farmer Organizations

- Coordinate forums to provide EAS to member farmers
- Contract consultants

## Universities, Research

- Develop and – to some extent – disseminate new practices and technologies
- Cooperative EAS in the U.S.

# WHAT do EAS providers do?

---

- **Give advice**
- **Train, teach, demonstrate, engage**
- **Transfer technology and better practices**
- **Facilitate interaction with other players**
- **Assist in developing technical, organizational, managerial skills**

# WHAT are the topics?

---

- **Agronomy, horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries**
  - Inputs, practices, mechanization, ...
- **Natural resource management, soils, water**
- **Weather; climate change adaptation**
- **Post harvest storage and processing**
- **Market access, information**
- **Farm management, business planning**



# STRENGTHS of EAS in a multi-sectoral approach to improving nutrition:

---



- **Established infrastructure**
- **Reach**
- **Community trust**
- **Cultural awareness**
- **Empathy, understanding**
- **Methodological skill set**
- **Building on what EAS is already doing to improve food security**

# Food Based Approaches promoted by EAS:

---

- Train on **GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES** (IPM, safe use of chemicals, safe irrigation)
- Promote **DIVERSIFICATION** of crop production & consumption (incl. indigenous and biofortified varieties) and livelihoods for better nutrient mix and to reduce seasonality of food-insecurity
- Support production & consumption of **ASF** (fisheries/poultry/livestock; sanitation)
- Advise on how to **REDUCE POST HARVEST LOSSES** and improve storage. Plan for hunger periods

# Furthermore

---

- Advise on income generation and budgeting.
- Strengthen linkages of producers to **MARKETS** to sell/buy nutritious foods
- Provide **women** with the tools and technology to improve their own livelihoods and reduce their work and time burden, thus addressing (some aspects of) women's empowerment
- Advise on **better utilization of foods** (produced/purchased: cooking practices, recipes, food safety)
- Educate on **good nutrition and care practices**

# WEAKNESS of Ag Extension in Supporting Nutrition Agenda

---

- Nutrition: **yet one more item on the long “to do” list** for extension!
- **Limited knowledge/understanding of nutrition.** EAS staff lack training in even the basics of nutrition.
- The AG and nutrition sectors use **different language, priorities, and terms**, which **constrains integration**. (*“Dominance of MCHN, SUN and ENHA”*)
- Lack of joint planning and dialogue at all levels. **Coordination of planning and dialogue among the relevant agriculture, nutrition and health actors** does not happen. → identify and leverage existing mechanisms and avenues for collaboration. What are the **“super messages”** and how to adapt them locally?
- Even if role of EAS were clear, **lack** of commitment to provide **resources** for capacity development, operational funding, excellent management to implement? [Consider real mandates of pluralistic set of actors]

# Weaknesses of HEALTH and NUTRITION EDUCATORS in terms of AG and EAS

---

- **Not deeply familiar with farming systems, crop and livestock production, post harvest handling, processing, marketing**
- **Not deeply familiar with economic dimension of decision making in farming**

Diversification may make sense from nutrition standpoint, but not from economic standpoint: no market, economies of scale, more nutritious crops and indigenous varieties may not fetch good prices, risk minimization may be more important than “good nutrition”

- **Diversification of production may mean need for more diverse inputs** (e.g., seeds, plantings, livestock) and require **specific knowledge** of production of those crops, animal husbandry

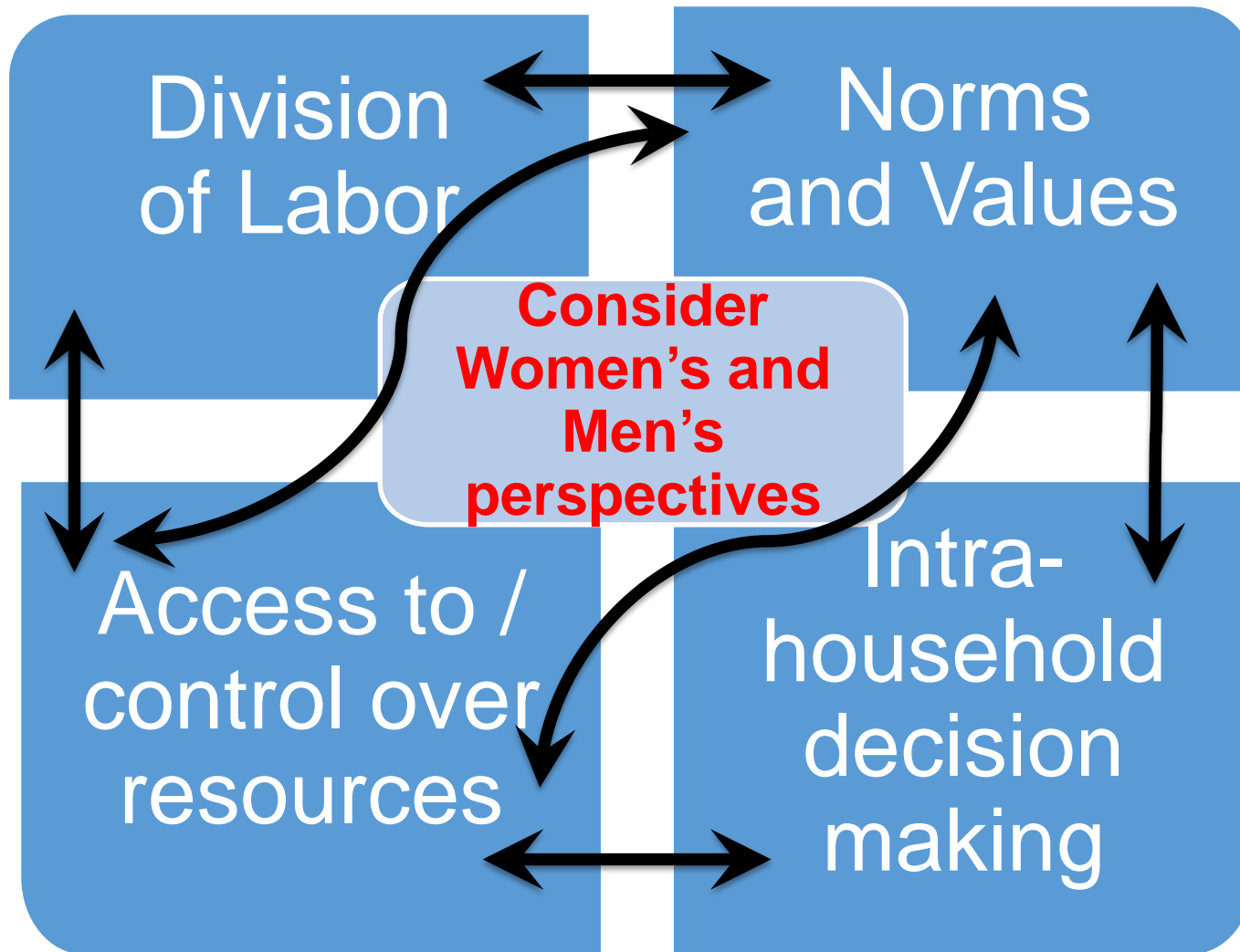
→ Are actors in place to provide inputs, EAS, and is there a demand beyond the household?

# All actors need to address gender and hold themselves accountable for improving gender equity

---



# Gender Relations Framework



*Adapted from Verhart et al, 2015*

# Key Takeaways

- Need a better understanding of who does what well and on how actors from different sectors can complement each other.
- Don't impose expectations
- All need to get better at providing gender equitable services
- Good plans and resource allocation must align