

working draft #3

This role is called backstopping or support. It is frequently missing or very poorly done. Obviously, technical support personnel must either have transportation or be located close to both knowledge sources and field personnel.

One excellent way to train agents is for the technical specialist to function as guest lecturer with an agent's farmers. This helps insure transference and provides security to the agent as he or she hears the questions answered that will be involved with follow-up. If field visits together are not possible this guest lecturer approach will be very useful in augmenting training workshops. Helping the agent with field demonstrations is also both excellent training and a major step in insuring the practical knowledge of field staff.

In other words, the training role of the TL&S personnel does not end with a formal workshop regarding new technology. Instead it just begins.

6. Use mass media and other aids in support of field programs. Some extension services do not have mass media or the capability to provide visual aids to agents in the field. But where they exist, they should be planned and used together as a part of the dissemination system in parallel and not as separates.

How to put out demonstrations or answers to typical questions about a given technology or problem are examples of support materials of high priority that specialists might provide. Visuals to help people understand by seeing as well as hearing are important too, especially where part of the clientele are illiterate or poorly prepared.

7. Determining progress and identifying new problems must be a concern of all TL&S staff. Efforts to determine these things may be extension wide or even performed together with research colleagues. But TL&S personnel should press for such work and gather the information as best they can within their own sphere of operations. Being able to form good judgments of these matters is essential to developing an effective plan of work for the next season and in helping guide research and field testing.

8. TL&S personnel must clearly not be administrative personnel, as they must be viewed as friends and helpers of the agents. Yet, administrative personnel must be able to ask them for appropriate help, such as providing support for specific personnel. It is essential that TL&S personnel report the results of such work to administration as well as providing early warning to administrators about problems that appear to be emerging (e.g. the build up of insects or diseases). Hence TL&S personnel should report conditions and problems to administration but should not be responsible for personnel actions.

9. Finally, make investments in keeping extension TL&S personnel up to date. A good principle is to employ only as many field staff as you can keep trained and supported.

10. Keep in mind that the role of the TL&S staff is to enhance the use of agricultural information to solve problems and to support development, with special but not exclusive reference to extension. Input suppliers and others who contact farmers are important clients of research and extension. They need to know what is being recommended to farmers so