

EXAMINATION OF CONSULTATION SYSTEM IN EASTERN HUNGARY

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Abstract

As a result of the changes of last decades, such an operation of entrepreneurial and corporate structure formed in the Hungarian agriculture, which raises more and more communication-information questions. The EU accession especially highlighted the question of how to transfer information quickly to the actors of the business sector. Communication-information channels are not harmonizing with the current corporate, entrepreneurial structure.

We believe that professional communication is the flow of professional information inside the sector, and it also covers the flow between the producer and administrative sector. We examined the communication influential factors in consultant systems and agricultural extension networks. The reason for that is to evaluate and understand communication processes and problems which affect actors of the sectors. This research enables to analyze and demonstrate the flow of professional information defined and explained by ourselves

Key words: professional communication, producer, consultant system, agricultural extension

INTRODUCTION

The number of actors considerably rose in the business life, the size of organizations decreased, their production structure simplified, and many owners, farmers, entrepreneurs operate productive organizations without bearing the adequate qualification. For JEUB (2007) the farming sector is faced with huge challenges in our unified and free Europe. *Agricultural consultancy* is such a service that supports producers in developing production flow with training methods. Hereby helps to increase the rate of producer's living, and social adjudication of rural life (KOZÁRI, 2000). By MUCSI (2000) the aim of agricultural consultancy is to help producers analyze their present and future state, augment their knowledge, and help to get missing and useful knowledge. According to GÁLYÁSZ et al. (2001) the most important function of domestic agricultural consultancy is to prepare producers to suit to the inner market of EU.

After change of regime in a radically changed situation by appearance of private farms, form of a supporting organization for entrepreneurs and administrative governance became necessary. After came to give rise and operate of *agricultural extension agents' network* with the aim of support agricultural producers and rural residents to know their way about their opportunities. The most important function of agricultural

extension agent is giving help for forming subsistence farms, giving information continuously to farmers for solving their problems.

In the last decade because of change of regime professional communication systems broke down, their reorganization flow is slow, and sometimes professional-political conflicts and disputes set advancement back. Build up of such a professional communication system should be necessary, that politically and sector-neutral, and can help to inform both enterprises and private ventures, too. Bigger enterprises are able to operate information observer, collector and analyst organization, but they need information services, too. In case of small organizations and subsistence farms operation of a centrally organized and financed communication network is vital. We consider professional communication the flow of professional information inside the sector, and between the producer and institutional sector. Operation of these communication channels is basic organizational and entrepreneurial interest, because they get information that control their activity, function, economical opportunities, and they can build successful business and market relationships by these. For SVOBODA (2007) attention is paid to the importance of data and information for the top managerial decision making, which is the principal of the business management.

In the last decade structure of Hungarian agriculture changed radically (BÁLINT, 2000). Entrepreneurial farms and their association took over the role from cooperative farms and state farms that meant the main part of production so far. In these formations information flow slow down and in lot of cases deformed in its content. Because of this importance of communication channels effective operation is considerably appreciated. Because of diversity of information sources and complexity of connection system lot farmer can not get information without external help (PETŐ - NAGY, 1999). This is the reason why it is necessary to examine professional communication and its influential factors.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Researches were made as the part of “Functional examination of agricultural corporate management” research programme that was worked out in 1994 by the Department of Management Sciences at University of Debrecen in Hungary. In the article we worked up the data of totally 100 questionnaire interviews. The exercise examinations ask for the everyday activities (informal and administrative activities) of interviewees. The groups of factors were defined by professional literature, by the activities that were determined for consultants and agricultural extension agents by the homepage of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and by our own experiences. In the information survey we asked for information

demands of producers, and the role of different information sources at present and in the future. In communication examinations we evaluated the role of communication forms applied for successful working at present and in the future. We examined factors, which influenced upwards (institutional sector) and downwards (to producers) communication.

Reliability of data was tested with Chronbach alpha index. This index's values in case of every questionnaire are 0.9048 for consultant, and 0.9009 for agricultural extension agents, these were higher than defined 0.7 value (BARRETT, 2001). So we found data suitable for further analyses. Preparations and analyses were based on descriptive statistical methods: division and precedence examinations by classifying criteria's, analysis of variance; main component analysis and cluster-analysis.

RESULTS AND DISSCUSIONS

By examining the activities we tried to find the answer how often examined activities were presented in the activities of consultants and agricultural extension agents, what was the rank of these activities, and what kind of differences could be experienced in their job (*figure 1*). By the results of summarized averages interviewees evaluated squarely with the highest points holding daily connection and the role of giving assistance in demanding agricultural advocacy. Giving assistance to make tenders got a lower qualification.

Regarding the answers we have found that producers demand the assistance of consultants and agricultural extension agents for writing tender the least. For consultants holding consultant hours got the lowest qualification. The reason is that a number of persons think it is useless to appoint and hold up a date for this, since people who need help, always can reach them. The assistance on forming subsistence farms got the highest qualification for agricultural extension agents, and giving assistance in forming co-operations and machinery was largely ignored. So asking for assistance in forming farms was preferred compared to the assistance in forming co-operations. Organization of producers' days and courses got a low qualification.

By the comparison we have found that agricultural extension agents evaluated these factors to a higher level than consultants, so in their job these activities became highlighted. In other activities they served the same average values.

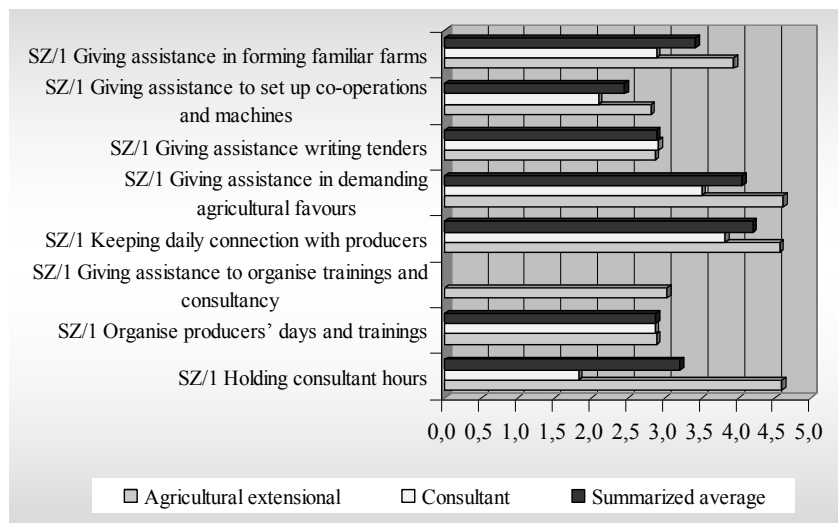


Fig. 1: Comparing general activities of consultants and agricultural extension agents

In information examinations we tried to find the answer for the question what kind of information producers were interested in, what information consultants and agricultural extension agents needed to give correct answers and what kind of sources they used for it. Information demand of producers is demonstrated in *figure 2*.

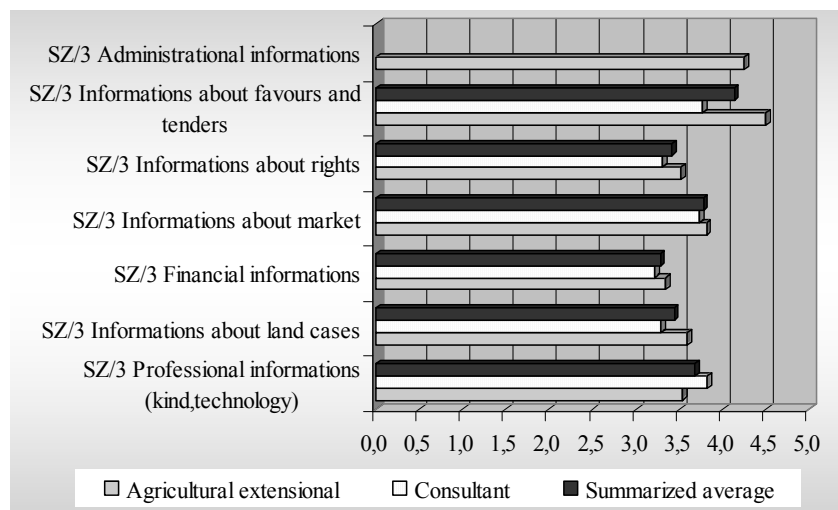


Fig. 2: Information demand of producers

By the summarized averages we have found that information in connection with tenders and advocacies were the most important by

respondents. In the ranking information about market and profession were indicated on the second and third place by the respondents. Producers are well-informed about land case- and financial information by the data, so this information got the lowest qualification.

The examination results of upward (to upper administrative sector) communication influential factors are demonstrated in *figure 3*. The values of summarized averages are rarely homogeneous. By the results the most important influential factor of communication is the structure of consultant organization.

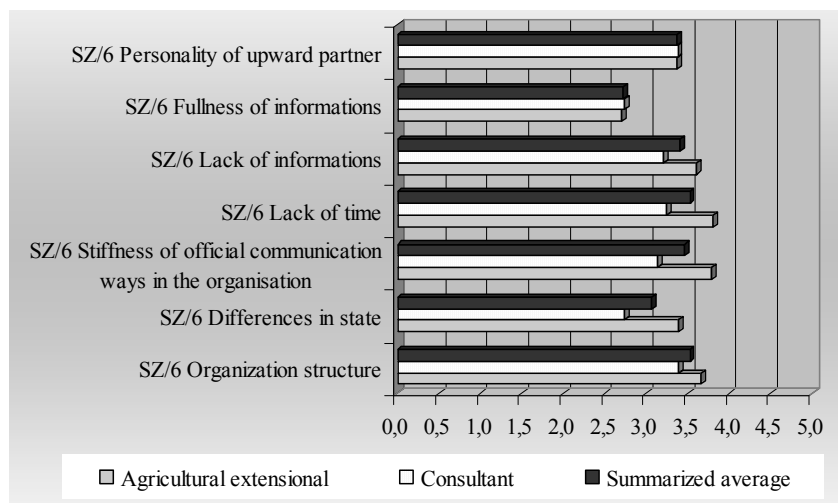


Fig. 3: Influential factors of upward communication

Improper organization structure is an important obstructive factor in efficient professional communication. Average rank of lack of time, the stiffness of communication ways in organization and lack of information got not much lower qualification. The stiffness of formal communication ways is usually connected to lack of time factor. In many cases because of less time subordinates can't get correct information from upper leaders, or the problem will be solved somehow or losing its importance while the superior leader could get the information. Usually this situation guide to the lack of information. The personality of upward partner and its management style strongly influences the effectiveness of communication, so it has an indirect effect on the effectiveness. Upward communications are obstructed by fullness of information and differences in state the less.

CONCLUSIONS

By the examination we have found that job of consultants and extension agents have similar characteristics. In these two ways of communication the exercises are not separated, and often repeated. Research results indicate that producers mostly demand economic information, for example economic, application and market information. The demand for professional, technologic and technical information is just secondary. We think that upward and downward communication has special position in consultant organizations. In this structure downward communication has the same difficulties as upward communication. In the organizational structure of the consultant organizations there is no downward hierarchy and inferior-superior relation. The success and effectiveness of downward communication is determined by the factors of producers' information need and the authenticity of consultant. The structure of organization and internal ways of organizational communication has a basic role in information flow, as the influential factor analysis shows. The stability of consultant structures and the build up and stabilization of communication ways have basic importance in professional communication. Changes of the last few years in agriculture caused the transformation, abolishment of these information and communication systems in Hungary.

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